

# o a q

organ für akkreditierung und qualitätssicherung  
der schweizerischen hochschulen

## **Annual Report 2003**

organe d'accréditation et d'assurance qualité  
des hautes écoles suisses

organo di accreditamento e di garanzia della  
qualità delle istituzioni universitarie svizzere

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Annual Report 2003

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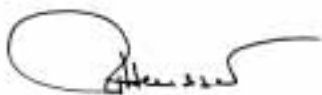
## Foreword

For the OAQ, the year 2003 was marked by the beginning of its operational activities. Twenty quality assessments were started in the year under review in accordance with international standards (audits, evaluations, accreditation procedures). One particularly important focus of this work was the evaluation of the quality assurance systems at all the public cantonal universities in Switzerland. Well-established quality assurance systems in universities ensure that the universities' teaching and research performance meets high standards.

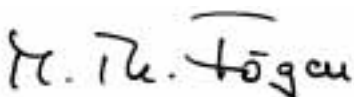
Universities and programs have been able to request accreditation since the beginning of 2003. In the reporting year both public and private universities took advantage of this facility. Since accreditation decisions allow international comparisons of study performance to be made, it is to be expected that quality assessments of this kind will play an increasingly significant role as the European higher education space becomes more of a reality.

In 2003 the OAQ established a firm place for itself among the quality assurance and accreditation bodies operating in Europe. Active participation in all the major European and international networks ensures that the quality assessment procedures implemented by the OAQ conform to the highest international standards and can be adapted continuously to emerging developments. The work done by the OAQ was presented at a number of European conferences where it met with great approval. The positive international response to the ENQA workshop on quality audits organized by the OAQ in December 2003 was particularly gratifying. This workshop took place in Zurich and was attended by 40 participants from 19 European countries.

The OAQ has also pursued intensive networking activities in Switzerland. A network bringing together all the individuals responsible for quality at Switzerland's public universities was launched on the initiative of the OAQ. Also, quality descriptors for bachelor and master programs were discussed with the authorities and other interested groups. The OAQ's objectives cannot be realized without close cooperation with other bodies, and it is with this in mind that we would like to extend our special thanks to all the institutions, organizations and individuals who supported us and collaborated with us in the year under review.



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of the Swiss Universities (OAQ)



**Prof. Marie Theres Fögen**  
President of the Scientific Advisory Board

## 1 The OAQ's activities in 2003

### 1.1 OAQ Office

The OAQ Office pursued both operational and conceptual activities in the year under review. A total of 20 quality assessments were started in 2003 (12 audits, 2 evaluations of public and private universities, 6 accreditations). Audits were carried out to evaluate the quality assurance systems of all the public cantonal universities. The development of concepts and tools for these evaluation processes necessitated a review of experience in Europe and took up the first three months of the reporting year.

In January 2003, the OAQ slightly revised the accreditation guidelines approved in December 2002 by the Swiss University Conference (CUS). Quality standards for distance and e-learning programs and quality criteria for the accreditation of medical faculties and programs were developed. Preliminary work was done on the accreditation of continuing education in the psychological and medical professions at the request of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (SFOPH). The OAQ also expressed an interest in the possible accreditation of universities of applied science and colleges of further education.

Another important field of activity was international and national collaboration. The OAQ is playing a leading role in the newly created European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA), whose stated objective is the mutual recognition of all national accreditation decisions reached in the European partner countries. Cooperation agreements were signed in 2003 with Austria, Germany and Spain with the aim of further intensifying inter-country accreditation and quality assurance efforts. The OAQ is also an active member of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). In Switzerland the OAQ initiated a network of individuals responsible for quality at all the public universities (Swiss University Quality Network). A further working group was set up in conjunction with the Bologna project group of the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS). This working group is focusing on current work being done in Europe to establish a profile of competences for new bachelor and master programs.

### **1.2 Director and academic staff**

The OAQ Office is headed by the Director, who represents the OAQ outside the organization and is responsible for planning and implementing all activities. The number of academic staff employed by the OAQ grew by two in 2003. Sabine Felder, who has a doctorate in the history of art from Zurich University, and Stephanie Maurer, who has a law degree from Basel University and experience in administrative law, are now working for the OAQ. All the academic staff were involved in organizing and carrying out various quality assessments during the year. They are also responsible for special fields (such as the recognition of accreditation, GATS treaties and their impact on Switzerland, the quality of distance learning programs, quality assurance aspects of implementing the Bologna process, etc.). The OAQ was represented at a number of international quality assurance and accreditation meetings and conferences by the Director and the academic staff. The OAQ's work featured in lectures and presentations at eight international meetings (in Germany, Austria, France, Ireland, Spain and Norway).

The academic and administrative staff together organized and held three international workshops in Switzerland during the year under review. These activities allowed the OAQ to establish itself successfully within the circle of European quality assurance bodies. Close contact with other bodies enabled the OAQ to recruit international experts for quality assessments in Switzerland.

The OAQ took part in some 170 discussions, meetings and presentations in Switzerland which promoted the exchange of information, knowledge and experience. The Director was elected to a number of international (President of the Scientific Advisory Board of the German accreditation agency AHPGS, member of the steering committee of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education and national SFOPH working group on the introduction of the new law on the psychological professions, election to the Federal Commission of Universities of Applied Science) bodies during the year under review.

### **1.3 Secretariat at the OAQ Office**

Two part-time members of staff in the secretariat support the Director and the academic staff. After two years in the secretariat, Martina Schwarzmann left the organization to return to her original sphere of activity. The OAQ would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Schwarzmann for her great contribution to setting up the organization. She was replaced by Sabine Dombrowski, who has a solid commercial background and many years of experience in communication and public relations.

#### **1.4 Scientific Advisory Board**

The Scientific Advisory Board and the OAQ Office held four working meetings during the year under review at which the strategic aspects and content of the OAQ Office's work were discussed. The main focuses of the meetings in 2003 were the approval of concepts for carrying out the new quality audits, the selection of experts for quality assessments, and discussion and interpretation of the results of the first quality audits carried out by the OAQ. The introduction of accreditation in Switzerland was discussed at a joint meeting of the Scientific Advisory Board with representatives of the CUS, the CRUS and the Federal Office for Education and Science (OFES). A consensus was reached to the effect that the federal government and the CUS will forego their right to request that universities be accredited, while the rectors of the universities will support programs and universities which seek accreditation independently. The composition of the Scientific Advisory Board remained unchanged in the year under review.

#### **1.5 Pool of experts**

In accordance with international standards, external quality assessments of universities are two-stage procedures. A self-evaluation phase is followed by an on-site visit by a group of external experts who verify whether the defined criteria and quality standards are being met. The OAQ's regulations require the majority of these external experts to be based in other countries, to be impartial, and to be acknowledged experts in their fields.

In order to carry out the quality assessments initiated in the reporting year, the OAQ, assisted by the universities and international partners, created a pool of 40 renowned experts. Among them directors of European quality assurance agencies and a number of people with management experience in higher education (rectors, deans, etc.). The involvement of these experts in Switzerland supports the work of the OAQ and ensures the credibility of the procedures employed by the OAQ (see Appendix for a list of the experts).

## 2 Accreditation

### 2.1 Accreditation in Switzerland and Europe: where are we today?

The meeting of European ministers of education held in Berlin in September 2003 assigned a key role to accreditation in the process of implementing the Bologna Declaration. It was agreed that by 2005 national accreditation systems will be set up in all the countries. Independent agencies established by the state will check whether universities and the programs they offer meet international quality requirements. A total of 25 countries in Europe currently have national accreditation systems, including Switzerland since 2002. The Swiss accreditation system was established in keeping with best international practice, and this was confirmed by a European comparison of accreditation institutions carried out by the Netherlands.

Since accreditation decisions permit international comparison of university services, they create an important basis for ensuring the student mobility required by the Bologna Declaration. Accreditation decisions also give students, employers and politicians the assurance that universities are providing high quality services. And not least, of course, the universities benefit from the accreditation process because the seal of quality conferred by accreditation increases their attractiveness to students and teaching staff and their competitiveness and compatibility in the international arena. Efforts are being made to ensure that in future accreditation decisions taken in one country are recognized in other countries to facilitate the international recognition of diplomas and qualifications. This is the objective of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) co-founded by Switzerland in the year under review.

For the above reasons the OAQ expects the reticence that is currently still tangible to disappear. In contrast to other European countries, the OAQ's objective is not to accredit all the programs offered by universities in Switzerland; the aim is rather to use accreditation in cases where it will be of benefit to the universities (e.g. for internationally oriented programs, in the strategic positioning of new courses, where required by professional associations or the employment market, etc.).

### 2.2 Accreditation procedures in 2003

Three accreditation procedures were started during the year under review, and five preliminary evaluations of private institutions were carried out. In addition, the OAQ carried out quality assessments – using accreditation tools – of two institutions at the request of the Federal Office for Education and Science (OFES) in order to ascertain their eligibility for federal funding. By the end of 2003, therefore, the OAQ had gained some initial impressions of the acceptance and efficacy of the Swiss accreditation system. Surveys carried out among the external experts involved in the process and the universities indicated good acceptance of the accreditation procedures and the associated quality standards.

### **2.3 Guidelines for academic accreditation in Switzerland and specific quality standards**

The accreditation guidelines were revised slightly in 2003 and declared valid for an indefinite period at the Swiss University Conference (CUS) meeting on 16 October 2003. The revised version of the text gives more specific details concerning applications from private universities. It also defines the procedure for accrediting institutions, which have not begun operations, or have only recently started operating (preliminary accreditation). The quality standards were not modified.

- *Quality standards for medical education*

The OAQ worked closely with the deans of the faculties of medicine and the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (SFOPH) to develop quality standards for medical education in Switzerland in preparation for the accreditation of the Swiss medical faculties. The document closely follows the quality criteria used by the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) in order to ensure international acceptance and validity. The accreditation standards for human medicine were approved at a meeting of the Swiss Medical Interfaculty Conference (SMIFK) in June 2003 and, once they had been translated, were submitted to the CUS for approval. It should therefore be possible to carry out the first accreditations in human medicine during 2004.

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

In the first half of 2003 the OAQ gave intensive consideration to the question of whether the interdisciplinary accreditation standards used by the OAQ for study programs could also be applied to distance learning and e-learning programs. International research showed that they are indeed applicable in such situations, although the quality criteria were made more specific for these programs. For example, particular emphasis is placed on the question of liaison with students and invigilation of exams in the context of distance learning programs.

- *Quality standards for bachelor and master degrees*

There is a growing consensus in Europe that the generic descriptors (known as the Dublin descriptors) developed for bachelor and master degrees by the Joint Quality Initiative network (see also 3.6.3) should form an integral part of a European Qualification Framework. These descriptors define for all disciplines the skills and abilities that a candidate with a bachelor or master degree should attain. The qualification profiles are formulated so generally that they can be used in all European countries and in no way limit the innovative potential or autonomy of individual study programs. The Dublin descriptors can provide an important benchmark for curriculum development activities at universities because they clearly illustrate the differences between the bachelor and master levels. For this reason, the OAQ is recommending that universities in Switzerland should look at the Dublin descriptors in detail. It can be assumed that these generic descriptors of qualifications and quality will be integrated into the Swiss accreditation system at a later date.

#### **2.4 Accreditation in the medical professions**

The planned revision of the Law on the Medical Professions foresees that all continuing education courses offered to the medical professions will require mandatory accreditation in future. At the end of 2003, the OAQ was given a mandate by the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (SFOPH) to draw up an international survey of the status of accreditation for continuing education in the medical professions and to use this as a basis for developing accreditation tools for Switzerland. The OAQ will carry out this work in close collaboration with the professional organizations concerned (FMH, SSO, etc.). The intention is for the tools being developed to be deployed in the ordinary accreditation procedures carried out during 2005 for some 50 continuing education programs in human and dental medicine.

#### **2.5 Accreditation in the psychological professions**

In the summer of 2003, the OAQ was requested by the SFOPH to scrutinize the regulations for accreditation of continuing education programs contained in the draft of the new Law on the Psychological Professions. The OAQ accordingly started a small international research project to compare the accreditation rules in the current draft of the "Psy Law" with the status and trends elsewhere in Europe. This comparison showed that the regulations contained in the draft law largely coincide with the requirements in place in other European countries for recognition and accreditation in these professions. Once the Law on the Psychological Professions enters into force, it will be possible to carry out accreditation of continuing education programs for the psychological professions in Switzerland.

#### **2.6 Planned accreditation of universities of applied science**

The OAQ supports the cause of establishing national accreditation for the universities of applied science in Switzerland in the near future to ensure that they are treated in the same way as the universities of applied science in other countries. This would put Switzerland on a level footing with other European countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Austria, which are already offering national accreditation for this category of higher education. Since it was established, the OAQ has repeatedly been approached by Swiss universities of applied science seeking national accreditation for their institution or programs by the OAQ. The OAQ is willing to take on this function for the universities of applied science in Switzerland. If the new Law on the Universities of Applied Science enters into force as planned on 1 January 2005, and if a basis is created for the OAQ to proceed in this field, the first accreditations of universities of applied science could be carried out from this date.

### 2.7 Accreditation of colleges of further education

The problems experienced by foreign students at colleges of further education in Switzerland have led various affected bodies (the federal government, associations, colleges) to call for official recognition or accreditation of institutes of this type. Although a legal basis for official recognition is for the most part lacking, there is little disagreement as to the need for such a step. The intention is therefore to introduce a voluntary accreditation system for colleges of further education for the sake of expedience. At the end of 2003, the OAQ was mandated by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET) to produce a draft concept for a voluntary accreditation system of this kind. If the OPET approves the final concept, the accreditation system for colleges of further education could be introduced as early as the end of 2004.

### 2.8 National contacts

Collaboration and networking with national partners is one of the OAQ's priorities. In 2003 the OAQ took part in over a hundred meetings, discussions and events in Switzerland, provided information about its work and sought cooperation with partners in Switzerland. In the year under review, the OAQ met, in some cases on a regular basis, with representatives of the universities (students' associations, lecturers' associations, the ETH Board, representatives of the CRUS), universities of applied science, federal authorities (SFOPH, OFES, OPET, Swiss Science Agency) and national institutions (CUS, EDK, etc.) and other interested organizations and bodies (professional associations, academies, etc.). The OAQ initiated two networks in the course of 2003:

- *Swiss University Quality Network*  
An association of individuals responsible for quality and evaluation at the twelve public cantonal universities (see also 3.3).
- *«Bachelor/Master Descriptors» Working Group*  
A joint initiative of the OAQ and the Bologna project group under the CRUS with the aim of discussing qualification and skill profiles at the level of bachelor and master degrees and doctorates (see also 3.4).

The OAQ also collaborates with national partners through its involvement in the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) network set up by the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities.

A further positive aspect is the election of the OAQ's Director to the Federal Commission on Universities of Applied Science, not least because the future accreditation of this area of higher education is an important topic for this body. The OAQ is also a member of a commission set up by the SFOPH to consider the new law on the psychological professions, and as such can put its national and international experience of accreditation to good use.

## **2.9 International cooperation on accreditation**

One of the OAQ's main concerns since it was set up has been to cooperate internationally with other bodies involved in accreditation and quality assurance. Active participation in international accreditation networks ensures that the work done by the OAQ is in line with best international practice and that emerging international trends can be incorporated into this work. Involvement in international networks and conferences also creates opportunities to recruit experts for quality assessments in Switzerland and to publicize the OAQ's work internationally. Surveys carried out among experts show that the OAQ's activities are recognized internationally. Today, Switzerland is considered to be one of the European leaders in developing quality audit procedures.

### **2.9.1 Cooperation in international accreditation networks**

#### **2.9.1.1 The foundation of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA)**

The European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) brings together the national accreditation agencies operating in Europe. It was set up in November 2003 with a view to Europe-wide recognition of national accreditation decisions in Europe in the future. It is hoped that the objective of mutual recognition of accreditation decisions will be achieved by 2007 at the latest. The OAQ is one of the founding members of the ECA, is represented in the steering committee, and is active in three of a total of five working groups. The OAQ has prepared a code of good practice for the ECA, which governs in detail the working practices of all the accreditation agencies in Europe, and has drafted a cooperation agreement. Both documents were signed by the OAQ and eleven other European accreditation agencies in November 2003 in Spain. The ECA will be offering its proposals and drafts for use at the next meeting of the European ministers of education in Bergen in 2005.

#### **2.9.1.2 The cooperation agreement between Germany, Austria and Switzerland (D-A-CH)**

Acting in the firm belief that the higher education systems in Germany, Austria and Switzerland employ the same quality standards and that there is a high level of agreement between the accreditation processes used by these three countries, the national accreditation agencies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland signed a cooperation agreement on 15 July 2003 which governs the close collaboration between these countries on matters of accreditation. Their objective is to achieve rapid mutual recognition of their national accreditation decisions. The D-A-CH network held four meetings during the year under review, the first of them in Switzerland. It was the OAQ who initiated this network.

### **2.9.1.3 The cooperation agreement between Spain and Switzerland**

In September 2003 a bilateral cooperation agreement was signed with the Spanish national accreditation agency ANECA. The aim of this agreement is to promote collaboration on accreditation and quality assurance procedures and to institutionalize a reciprocal exchange of experience and information. The first task of this collaboration will be to produce a detailed comparison of the Spanish and Swiss accreditation systems to provide a basis for more detailed discussion of their common features and differences.

### **2.9.2 Participation in international conferences on accreditation and quality assurance**

In the year under review, the OAQ participated in 16 international conferences and workshops. The Director presented and discussed the organization's work at eight international meetings. The OAQ also organized three workshops in Switzerland, which were attended by an international audience. One particularly gratifying experience was the positive response to a workshop on quality audits held in December 2003 in conjunction with the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Quality assurance experts from 19 European countries attended this workshop. It was decided during the plenary session to publish the results, and an international working group headed by Switzerland, Norway and the United Kingdom was established to consider in greater detail the methodological aspects of quality audits.

### 3 Quality assurance

The legal basis of the OAQ confers on it a mandate to safeguard and promote the quality of teaching and research at Switzerland's universities. To this end the OAQ carries out quality assessments, develops guidelines for the internal quality assurance activities carried out by the universities, and offers related services. Under the Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities, universities or university institutions must «provide high quality work which has been evaluated by the body responsible for quality assurance» in order to qualify for financial assistance. In 2003 the OAQ received a mandate from the Federal Office for Education and Science (OFES) to develop concepts for evaluating quality suitable for use as part of the procedure for qualifying for federal financial aid. The quality assessments carried out under this procedure are described in more detail below.

#### 3.1 Summary quality assessments as required by the Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities (UFG)

High quality work in teaching and research can be provided by an institution if it has a comprehensive quality assurance system. It is therefore appropriate to deploy audits during summary quality assessments to evaluate the internal measures adopted by a university or university institution to assure quality. Universities are expected to have efficient and effective quality assurance systems and to use them to monitor and promote the quality of teaching and research activities within the university. The mandate to plan and carry out quality audits of this type was granted by the Federal Office for Education and Science (OFES) in February 2003. The OAQ subsequently implemented the following steps:

- *Creation of a concept*  
Using the latest international experiences with quality audit procedures, the OAQ created a concept for carrying out summary quality assessments. This document outlines the principles of quality audits and describes the basic requirements that university quality assurance systems are expected to meet. It was approved by the OFES in May 2003 following consultation with the universities.
- *Guidelines for the universities*  
This document explains how summary quality assessments are carried out. The evaluation process comprises two stages: self-evaluation by the university, followed by an external appraisal by a group of independent experts from abroad. The documents "Guidelines for the universities" and "Concept" were sent to all the universities at the end of May 2003.
- *Additional information on the self-evaluation report*  
This document was published in early July by the OAQ and shows universities how the self-evaluation report should be structured and which quality assurance questions need to be answered in the process.

- *Start of summary quality assessments*

On 1 July 2003 the summary quality assessments were started following consultation with the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) and the Federal Office for Education and Science (OFES). The twelve public universities in Switzerland were requested to draw up a self-evaluation report on their internal quality assurance measures within a period of four months. This work was completed with a slight delay; in November, the OAQ was in possession of all twelve self-evaluation reports from the universities.

- *Creation of an expert pool and production of guidelines for external experts*

The OAQ worked closely with the European quality assurance and accreditation agencies and the international accreditation networks to form – within a very short time – a pool of experts willing to work on summary quality assessments in Switzerland. The selection criteria require a team of experts to comprise four individuals from different countries, some of whom must have experience of managing a university (experience as a rector) and experience of quality assurance (prior work in quality audit procedures). In October 2003, the OAQ gave the external experts who had been selected written guidelines providing detailed information on summary quality assessments and the tasks of the experts.

- *On-site visits*

The on-site visits for the summary quality assessments are scheduled for early 2004 at all the public cantonal universities in Switzerland. It has been ensured that all experts will visit several universities (stable composition of expert groups) to ensure that all universities are evaluated under the same conditions and to permit subsequent comparisons to be made between the various quality assurance systems used by the universities. The results of the summary quality assessments are likely to be published in the summer of 2004.

### **3.2 Evaluations carried out as part of the qualification procedure for subsidies under the Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities (UFG)**

The federal government wishes the OAQ to carry out detailed evaluations of institutions applying for financial aid from the federal government for the first time and of those which have been granted provisional recognition in order to assess whether the teaching and research being carried out by these institutions at university level is of good quality. The same quality standards will be used as for full accreditation procedures. The OAQ carried out and concluded two quality assessments of this kind in 2003 (the Graduate Institute of Development Studies in Geneva and the Swiss Distance Learning Foundation in Brig).

### 3.3 Constitution of the Swiss University Quality Network

At the OAQ's initiative, and with the approval of the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS), a network of quality managers at the twelve universities in Switzerland was constituted. Each university is usually represented in the network by two people (one with a staff office function and the evaluation officer). CRUS is also represented in this network. Meetings are chaired by the OAQ by agreement with all the members. One of the network's central functions is to permit a reciprocal exchange of information, experience and best practices. It was decided that the top priority for 2004 would be to discuss the results of the summary quality assessments and, where appropriate, to learn from them for the future.

### 3.4 Working Group «Bachelor/Master Descriptors»

At the initiative of the OAQ and the Bologna project group established by the CRUS, a ten-strong working group was set up in April 2003 consisting of representatives of the universities, the CRUS, the VSS, the Conference of Universities of Applied Science, the Federal Office for Education and Science and the OAQ. In the light of the decisions taken by the meeting of education ministers in Berlin in 2003, the stated objective of this group is to initiate discussion of generic and specific quality descriptors for bachelor and master programs in Switzerland. The working group held four meetings at which it focused on evaluating the Dublin descriptors, which define interdisciplinary skill profiles for bachelor and master degrees in Europe. The working group produced the following conclusions and recommendations in an interim report submitted to the CRUS in December 2003:

- The Dublin descriptors have been internationally validated and are eminently suitable for describing bachelor- and master-level qualifications and skills in general terms. It is recommended that the Dublin descriptors be publicized extensively in the Swiss universities. It is possible that these quality descriptors will be integrated into evaluation and/or accreditation systems in Switzerland at a later date.
- The Dublin descriptors must be operationalized, put into context and formulated in such a way that they can be used in individual disciplines.
- A broadly based dialogue focusing on the development of a national qualification framework in Switzerland needs to be initiated (representatives of the authorities, universities, the OAQ, etc.).

### **3.5 International ENQA Workshop on Institutional Quality Audits, 1/2 December 2003, Zurich**

In December 2003 the OAQ and the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) organized an international seminar in Zurich on the topic of institutional audits and quality audits. The aim of the workshop was to enable an exchange of experience with quality audits of this type in various European countries and to identify any features common to the countries. The workshop was attended by 40 participants from 19 European countries. The two-day seminar in Zurich was a great success; the results were published on the ENQA website and made available to a wide circle of interested individuals as a special workshop report in paper form. One of the outstanding achievements in Zurich was the definition of a catalogue of test criteria for quality assurance systems in the academic setting. The work done by the OAQ on quality audits is considered in many countries to be exemplary. The participants at the workshop in Zurich agreed to form an international working group to consider in more detail the continuing development of the methods used in quality audits. Switzerland is playing a leading role in this activity.

### **3.6 Involvement in international quality assurance networks**

#### **3.6.1 European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)**

The ENQA was founded in 1998 following a recommendation by the EU Council; today it encompasses 46 quality assurance agencies in 23 European countries. The intention expressed at the conference of education ministers in Berlin in 2003 is for the network to take on a central role in coordinating quality assurance efforts in Europe. Switzerland is represented in the ENQA through the OAQ and participates in a number of working groups.

#### **3.6.2 International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)**

The OAQ joined this international network of quality assurance agencies in early 2003. The OAQ described its work, its tasks and the outcome of a summarizing comparison of the accreditation systems in Germany, Austria and Switzerland at the general meeting of the INQAAHE in Dublin in the spring of 2003. The OAQ collaborates closely with the working group that is developing a code of good practice on behalf of the INQAAHE and is making the results of this work available to the European accreditation networks.

### **3.6.3 Joint Quality Initiative (JQI)**

The JQI was founded in 2001 and brings together eleven countries (national quality assurance agencies and representatives of education ministries). The aim of this network is to develop generic descriptors for the qualifications attained at bachelor, master and doctor level which will be valid throughout Europe. A major outcome of the work done by this network are the Dublin descriptors, approved in 2002. This document regulates, independent of discipline, the skills and abilities that a candidate with a bachelor or master degree should acquire and identifies the differences between bachelor and master degrees. The Dublin descriptors are an important guide for all universities in Switzerland. The OAQ is an active member of the Joint Quality Initiative.

### **3.6.4 UNESCO's Global Forum on Accreditation and Quality Assurance**

The OAQ has received regular invitations to attend meetings of this newly established forum since the start of 2003. Major topics handled by the forum include the global deployment of accreditation and quality assurance systems, international recognition of titles and qualifications, and the new challenges of the international education market (GATS treaties, e-learning programs, etc.).

## 4 Information and communication

### 4.1 Implementation of the 2002 plus communication concept

The OAQ drew on the assistance of an external communication expert to create the basis for a coherent, long-term information and communication policy for the organization. Major emphasis has been placed on defining the various target groups for the OAQ's messages. The communication concept also defines specific measures for achieving its communication objectives (e.g. development of a newsletter, production of position papers and an OAQ mission statement, targeted deployment of media releases, etc.).

### 4.2 2002 Annual Report

The Annual Report for the year 2002 was published at the end of March in four languages (G/F/I/E). It describes in detail the preliminary work done by the OAQ to develop a national academic accreditation system and the process of networking the OAQ both nationally and internationally. The Annual Report was distributed widely both within Switzerland and in other countries (to some 700 addresses) and met with a good response.

### 4.3 Self-portrait of the OAQ

In early 2003 the OAQ produced a self-portrait to provide interested readers with a compact brochure detailing the organization's objectives, tasks and activities, introducing the OAQ staff, and explaining how the OAQ works. The self-portrait was published and distributed in February 2003 with the "Guidelines for academic accreditation in Switzerland" approved by the CUS.

### 4.4 Website

The OAQ website was updated continually during the year under review. A "News" heading was introduced to highlight new OAQ publications and current developments. During 2003, the OAQ website was accessed around 10,000 times. There are plans to include interactive elements in the website in the future.

### 4.5 Public relations and media liaison

#### 4.5.1 Lectures abroad

The OAQ's work was presented at the following international meetings:

- International accreditation seminar at the National School of Public Health, Rennes, France
- General meeting of the accreditation agency for remedial education, nursing, health and social work programs (AHPGS), Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany
- Annual meeting of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), Dublin, Ireland

- OECD Forum on trade in educational services, Trondheim, Norway
- European Expert Seminar: Institution-related questions – Institution-related answers. Today's practices and future developments of the German accreditation procedures; organized by the Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN), Project Q of the Rectors' Conference of German Universities, European University Association (EUA), Schloss Hofeck, Germany
- Meeting of the Rectors' Conference of the German Universities (HRK) on international quality assurance networks, Cologne, Germany
- Meeting of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA), Cordoba, Spain
- International workshop of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) on institutional quality audits, Zurich, Switzerland

#### **4.5.2 Presentation of the OAQ's work in Switzerland**

During the year under review, the Director and the academic staff at the OAQ took part in approximately 170 events, conferences and meetings in Switzerland. This presence enabled the OAQ to inform a wide variety of interested parties about the current status of the OAQ's work (representatives of universities, academies and professional associations, administrative bodies, private organizations, etc.). The presentation of the OAQ's activities to the Finance Commission of the National Council on 30 June 2003 stands out among these events.

#### **4.5.3 Media releases and liaison**

In February 2003, the OAQ issued a media release reporting on the launch of the Swiss accreditation system. Numerous enquiries from the media were handled throughout the year. Various media reported on the OAQ's activities, for example an article in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" in February 2003 and an item on accreditation and the significance of the OAQ in edition 1/2003 of the magazine "Vision".

#### **4.5.4 Other publications**

During the year under review, the OAQ wrote a number of reports for Swiss journals, including an article on the Swiss accreditation system in the bulletin of the "Schweizerische Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften" (Swiss academy of humanities and social sciences) and an article on the GATS treaties in the magazine "Aussenwirtschaft für internationale Wirtschaftsbeziehungen" (in collaboration with the Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development [CSEND] in Geneva).

## 5 Finance

### 5.1 Balance sheet and profit and loss statement for 2003

#### Balance sheet as at 31 December 2003

<b>Assets</b>	<b>CHF</b>
Cash, PC	1,208.45
Federal current accounts, BEKB savings account	368,470.74
Withholding tax on accounts receivable	252.40
Deferred assets	45,012.05
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>414,943.64</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Accounts payable	190,796.85
Prepaid expenses	15,180.00
Deferred liabilities	24,764.35
Reserve (unused contributions from 2003)	184,202.44
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>414,943.64</b>

#### Income statement for the period 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>CHF</b>
Personnel expenses, including social security and Advisory Board fees	1,052,720.45
Public relations project, website, trustee services	60,491.15
<b>Operating costs</b>	
Rent/refurbishment	60,544.05
Furnishing	11,971.40
Hardware/software, including database	54,132.45
Operating expenses	206,470.27
Organization of meetings and workshops	84,794.35
Accreditation costs (documents, translation, legal support)	215,206.18
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>1,746,330.30</b>
Formation of reserve (unused contributions from 2003)	184,202.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,930,532.74</b>

**Income**

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Contributions from the cantons	
BS	88,408.00
BE	128,124.00
FR	81,773.00
GE	157,302.00
VD	100,581.00
NE	37,382.00
SG	41,047.00
TI	12,064.00
ZH	227,819.00
Federal contribution	874,500.00
Third-party contributions (private and federal mandates)	30,950.00
Workshop and course fees	6,486.15
Liquidation of reserve from 2002	129,104.74
Interest income	14,991.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,930,532.74</b>

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## 5.2 Auditors' report

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



MONBIJOUSTRASSE 45, CH-3003 BERN

Reg. Nr. 1.4045.327.00349.02

# 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 2003 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.

Wir empfehlen, die vorliegende Jahresrechnung zu genehmigen.

Bern, den 10. März 2004

EIDGENÖSSISCHE FINANZKONTROLLE

Hans-Rudolf Wagner  
dipl. Wirtschaftsprüfer

Robert Homberger  
Revisionsexperte

## 6 Annual Program 2004

The OAQ has set itself the objectives of becoming a nationally and internationally recognized center of excellence in matters relating to academic quality assurance, of participating in the establishment and expansion of a quality assurance structure at Switzerland's universities, and of making a fundamental contribution to integrating Switzerland into the European higher education space. The following activities are planned for 2004:

### 6.1 Accreditation

By the end of December 2003, the OAQ had received six applications for university programs or institutions to be accredited. These full accreditation procedures will be carried out in the course of 2004, as will five preliminary evaluations of private institutions which have applied for accreditation. Since accreditation decisions facilitate the comparability of study achievements in Europe and neighbouring countries are already pursuing accreditation systematically, it is likely that the interest in and need for accreditation in Switzerland will also grow in the near future.

The OAQ will be carrying out a range of preliminary work in 2004 in anticipation of its accreditation activities expanding in the future (e.g. accreditation of continuing education programs for the medical and psychological professions, accreditation of universities of applied science and colleges of further education).

A meeting of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) is scheduled for 2/3 December in Zurich. The OAQ will be organizing this international event. It will also be working on the development of major European position documents (e.g. code of good practice, position paper on accreditation for Bergen in 2005) through its involvement in the ECA. Regional cooperation with the accreditation agencies in Germany and Austria (D-A-CH network) will focus on progress in the inter-country recognition of national accreditation decisions.

### 6.2 Quality assurance

The on-site visits for the summary quality assessments of Switzerland's public cantonal universities will be carried out in early 2004. The purpose of these visits is to ascertain whether the universities are employing effective quality assurance systems. The OAQ will report on these quality assessments at the end of May 2004, and a comparative analysis of the quality assurance systems at all the universities in Switzerland will be produced in June. The results of these quality audits will be discussed with representatives of all the universities in the Swiss University Quality Network. The international experts involved in the summary quality assessments will meet

in June 2004 to discuss their experience with the first round of quality audits and to determine how the procedures can be refined for the next evaluation cycle which will take place in 2007/2008. At the European level, these questions will be discussed by an international working group constituted following the ENQA workshop on institutional audits and quality audits held in early December 2003 in Zurich.

During 2004, seven quality assessments will be carried out at universities under the federal qualifying procedure for financial aid, including an evaluation of all the faculties at Lucerne University.

### **6.3 National and international collaboration**

The OAQ will be continuing its international activities in 2004. The European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) is expected to take some important decisions. For example, a political position paper needs to be drafted ahead of the 2005 meeting of education ministers in Bergen, Norway, which will explain the benefits of and ways of using accreditation in the European higher education space. This position paper will describe the standards and procedures agreed on by the ECA member states. The OAQ is actively involved in this work through its presence on the ECA steering committee and in a number of ECA working groups. In addition, the regional network of German, Austrian and Swiss accreditation agencies is also expected to take specific steps towards inter-country recognition of accreditation decisions. Finally the OAQ also wants to play an active role in the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI), which is planning to establish generic qualification descriptors for doctoral titles in March 2004. These activities will be of major importance for universities in Switzerland. Finally, the OAQ is aiming to expand consistently its generally acknowledged role in providing impetus for quality audit procedures in Europe. There are firm plans for at least two meetings of the newly founded working group on quality audits in 2004.

In 2004 the OAQ will also be giving priority to its national networking activities. Discussions within the new Swiss University Quality Network will be of decisive importance, focusing on the findings and consequences of quality audits that have already been carried out at Swiss universities. Other topics in the network will be the quality of research and the establishment of reporting systems at universities. One aspect of particular importance for the OAQ will be ways of gaining direct access to students and lecturers at Swiss universities in order to inform them about international developments in quality assurance and accreditation and about the state of work at the OAQ.

#### **6.4 Services**

In future, the OAQ will be involved to a greater extent in the provision of services, such as evaluations and other forms of quality audits carried out for third parties.

#### **6.5 Information and communication/events**

The OAQ plans to publish various position papers in 2004, including one on the significance of and ways of using accreditation systems in Switzerland and one on efforts to clarify responsibility for quality at Swiss universities (areas which are the responsibility of the federal government, the OAQ or the universities).

The OAQ is planning to publish a mission statement in the spring of 2004 which will form a framework for its current and future activities. The mission statement is intended to provide orientation both within the organization and outside it, to justify the OAQ's activities in the social and academic environment, and to provide staff with guidelines for their work.

The OAQ website will be revised in 2004 after two years of existence. The OAQ is also planning to introduce a regular newsletter, which will be available in both electronic form and on paper.

During 2004, Switzerland will be host to a number of national meetings and various international events focusing on quality assurance and accreditation. At the end of April, for example, a national conference organized jointly by the OAQ and the Swiss academy of humanities and social sciences will be held in Berne on the importance of accreditation for the social sciences and humanities. Bilateral meetings with the national accreditation agencies in Germany, Austria and Spain are scheduled to take place in Switzerland in May and June 2004. And in December 2004, the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) will be holding a two-day workshop in Zurich.

Finally, other important tasks in 2004 will be intensification of the OAQ's liaison with the media, regular distribution of media releases (on the results of quality audits, the international ECA workshop in Zurich, etc.) and greater emphasis on collaboration with editorial offices.

### **Experts who worked on behalf of the OAQ in 2003**

*Dr. Gudrun Bachmann*, Leiterin e-Learning und Koordinatorin des LearnTechNet, Universität Basel, Schweiz

*Prof. Ingeborg Bø*, Executive Director of the Norwegian Association for Distance Education (NADE), Oslo, Norway

*Prof. Jacques Bury*, Directeur de l'Agence pour le Développement et l'Evaluation des Politiques de Santé (ADSAN), Carouge, Suisse

*Prof. Allan D. Cochrane*, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Open University, Milton Keynes, UK

*Prof. Giovanni Andrea Cornia*, Professore straordinario, Dipartimento di Scienze Economiche, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italia

*Prof. Emanuel De Kadt*, Chair of Cultural Anthropology, University of Utrecht, Netherlands

*Prof. Pierre de Senarclens*, Institut d'Etudes Politiques et Internationales (IEPI), Université de Lausanne, Suisse

*Damien Desjonquères*, Directeur des Programmes Care France, Paris, France

*Prof. Karl Einhäupl*, Klinik für Neurologie, Humboldt-Universität Berlin/Charité, Vorsitzender Deutscher Wissenschaftsrat, Berlin, Deutschland

*Dr. Sandra E. Elman*, Executive Director of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), Washington DC, USA

*Prof. Lluís Ferrer i Caubet*, Rector Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Espanya

*Prof. Luc François*, Director Department of Educational Affairs, University of Ghent, Belgium

*Prof. Muzio Gola*, Direttore del Dipartimento di Meccanica, Politecnico di Torino, Italia

*Prof. Jon Haakstad*, The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), Oslo, Norway

*Prof. Kauko Hämäläinen*, Department of Education, University of Helsinki, Finland

*Prof. Nick Harris*, Vice Director Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), Gloucester, UK

*Prof. emeritus Gotthard Jasper*, Rektor der Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Deutschland

*Prof. Jean-Loup Jolivet*, Président du Comité national d'évaluation (CNE), Paris, France

*Sami Kanaan*, Associé et Consultant senior, bureau Evaluanda, Genève, Suisse

*Prof. Jürgen Kohler*, Rechts- und Staatswissenschaftliche Fakultät,  
Universität Greifswald, Deutschland

*Prof. Helmut Konrad*, Präsident Österreichischer Akkreditierungsrat, Wien, Österreich

*Dorte Kristoffersen*, Director of development, Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA),  
Copenhagen, Denmark

*Prof. Rainer Künzel*, Präsident Universität Osnabrück, Deutschland

*Prof. Jacques L'Ecuyer*, Directeur de la Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial,  
Québec, Canada

*Prof. Ossi V. Lindqvist*, Chair of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council  
(FINHEEC), Helsinki, Finland

*Prof. Francesco Lurati*, Director of the Executive Master of Science in Communications  
Management, Università della Svizzera italiana, Svizzera

*Prof. emeritus Evelies Mayer*, Institut für Soziologie der Technischen Universität  
Darmstadt, Deutschland

*Prof. José-Ginès Mora*, Director Centre for Higher Education Management (CHEM),  
Technical University of Valencia, Spain

*Prof. Peter R. Nippert*, Direktor Institut für Ausbildung und Studienangelegenheiten (IfAS),  
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Deutschland

*Prof. Ramón Pascual*, Departement de Física, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Espagna

*Prof. Johannes M. Rainer*, Institut für Österreichisches und Europäisches Privatrecht,  
Universität Salzburg, Österreich

*Prof. Friedrich Schneider*, Vizerektor für Aussenbeziehungen, Johannes Kepler  
Universität, Linz, Österreich

*D<sup>r</sup> Andrée Sursock*, Secrétaire générale adjointe, European University Association (EUA),  
Bruxelles, Belgique

*Prof. Christian Thune*, Director Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA), Copenhagen, Denmark

*Prof. Massimo Tronci*, Vicepresidente Dipartimento di Meccanica e Aeronautica  
e Associazione Italiana Cultura Qualità, Università di Roma «La Sapienza», Italia

*Prof. Dirk van Damme*, President Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad (VLIR)  
(until December 2003), Brussels, Belgium

*Prof. Guy Vanderstraeten*, Head Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation,  
Ghent, Belgium

*Prof. Marco Vitale*, Dipartimento di Anatomia Umana, Farmacologia e Scienze  
Mediche Forensi, Università di Parma, Italia

*Dr. Ton Vroeijenstijn*, Head Quality Assessment Division, Association of Universities  
in the Netherlands (VSNU), Utrecht, Netherlands (until December 2003)

*Prof. Staffan Wahlén*, National Agency for Higher Education, Stockholm, Sweden