



center of accreditation and quality assurance  
of the swiss universities

## **Accreditation of Study Programmes in Pharmacy / Pharmaceutical Sciences**

### **Guide to external evaluation**

Recommendations for experts

September 2010

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## Introduction

The Swiss accreditation procedure is based on international best practice in the field. It comprises an internal evaluation (self-evaluation) by the academic unit<sup>1</sup> followed by an external evaluation (peer review) by a group of independent experts. Both phases of the procedure allow the examination of pre-defined topics grouped into areas and sub-areas characterised by given quality standards.

In addition to this guide the following documents should be considered in the accreditation procedure:

- “Accreditation of Study Programmes in Pharmacy / Pharmaceutical Sciences, Quality Standards” (April 2010).<sup>2</sup>
- “Accreditation of Study Programmes in Pharmacy / Pharmaceutical Sciences. Guidelines for Self-Evaluation. Instructions for Academic Units (April 2010)”.<sup>3</sup>
- “Federal Law on Medical Professions of 23 June 2006 (MedBG)”.<sup>4</sup>
- “Guidelines of the Swiss University Conference for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland (Accreditation Guidelines) of 28 June 2007”.<sup>5</sup>

The Swiss Evaluation Society provides additional information on the ethical dimension of the evaluation procedure.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The term “academic unit” that will be used throughout this document describes the academic unit responsible for the study programme in pharmacy (Dept. of pharmaceutical sciences, University of Basel; Section des sciences pharmaceutiques, Université de Genève, Université de Lausanne) resp. pharmaceutical science (Dept. für Chemie und Angewandte Biowissenschaften, ETH Zürich).

<sup>2</sup> [www.bag.admin.ch/themen/berufe/03937/03939](http://www.bag.admin.ch/themen/berufe/03937/03939)

<sup>3</sup> [www.bag.admin.ch/themen/berufe/03937/03947](http://www.bag.admin.ch/themen/berufe/03937/03947)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/8/811.11.de.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cus.ch/wEnglisch/akkreditierung/richtlinien/index.php>, referred to in this document as the “Accreditation Guidelines”.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.seval.ch/en/standards/index.cfm>

## 1 External evaluation

The on-site visit by the group of experts is the third phase of the accreditation procedure. It follows the application for accreditation and the self-evaluation report drawn up by the unit seeking accreditation. The accreditation decisions taken by the Swiss Accreditation Council (Art. 47 MedBG) and the Swiss University Conference (SUK/CUS) constitute the fourth phase of the procedure.

During the visit, the experts will talk to various individuals in positions of responsibility, and with other people who represent the academic unit (students, non-professorial academic staff, upcoming academics, technical staff, etc.) or the environment in which the academic unit operates (e.g. health officials and representatives of the university).

These discussions should allow the experts to judge the degree of compliance with the quality standards and with the conditions for accreditation described in the law (Art. 24 Para.1, MedBG). The experts may also make recommendations with the aim of enhancing quality. Recommendations impose no obligations on the academic unit unless they become part of conditions imposed when accreditation is granted.

## 2 Chronology of the accreditation procedure

Overview of the accreditation procedure:

Application for accreditation osv minus 25 weeks	Self-evaluation phase	Self-evaluation report goes to experts osv minus 5 weeks	on-site visit (osv)	Draft expert report 4 weeks after osv	response of unit 6 weeks after osv	Final expert report 8 weeks after osv	Draft of OAQ final report 12 weeks after osv	Response of OAQ scientific council and MEBEKO 16 weeks after osv	OAQ final report 18 weeks after osv	All documents sent to MEBEKO Swiss Accreditation council and SUK

As specified in Articles 18 to 23 of the “Accreditation Guidelines”, the on-site visit takes place approximately four months after the start of the self-evaluation. One month before the start of the external evaluation the experts receive the self-evaluation report drawn up by the academic unit.

Once the on-site visit has been completed, the group leader is required to draft a report on the external evaluation and distribute it to the other members of the group for approval. The group leader sends the draft report agreed by the experts to the OAQ no later than four weeks after the on-site visit has been completed. The OAQ forwards the draft report to the evaluated unit which may express an opinion on the content of the report within two weeks of receiving it. The experts are free to revise or not to revise their report in the light of the

opinion expressed by the evaluated academic unit. Factual inaccuracies or misconceptions must be corrected. The final expert report should be submitted to the OAQ no later than eight weeks after the on-site visit. The final report must contain a recommendation on the accreditation decision (accreditation yes / yes with conditions / no).

### **3 Sub-areas to be evaluated**

In accordance with the WFME-Standards<sup>7</sup>, the standards are grouped into nine areas of interest, subdivided into sub-areas to be evaluated in the accreditation procedure. One or more quality standards have been assigned to each sub-area. The standards are complemented with annotations.

The on-site visit allows the experts to check the information given in the self-evaluation report and to expand their knowledge of the programme in further detail. The programme's compliance with the standards in each sub-area is subsequently evaluated by the experts and their assessment documented in the report.

## **4 The group of experts**

### **4.1 Composition of the group of experts**

The group of independent experts is selected by the OAQ. It generally comprises three to five members. Article 20 of the "Accreditation Guidelines" lists the selection criteria that apply. The experts receive remuneration in accordance with the OAQ's scale of fees. One member of the group is designated by the OAQ to head the group.

### **4.2 Tasks of the group of experts**

Contractual agreements subject to civil law are concluded with the external experts detailing what the OAQ expects of the experts (cf. Article 21 of the "Accreditation Guidelines").

The experts have the following tasks:

- To critically analyse the self-evaluation report with the goal to optimally prepare the on-site visit;
- To participate in the on-site visit which has the purpose to check whether the actual performance of the academic unit meets the quality standards. Experts are advised to keep written records of the discussions held with representatives of the academic unit during the on-site visit;
- To present suggestions for enhancing quality assurance and quality at the end of the on-site visit;
- To contribute to writing the external evaluation report.

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<sup>7</sup> The original standards of the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) can be found at [www.wfme.org](http://www.wfme.org)

The group leader coordinates the activities of the experts and is responsible for writing the report. The experts bear joint responsibility for their judgements. Where no consensus can be reached, minority judgements should be made transparent in the report.

## 5 Support by the OAQ

The OAQ ensures the continuity of the procedure (self-evaluation phase and the external evaluation).

During the on-site visit, the members of the OAQ assigned to accompany the group of experts make sure that the external evaluation proceeds as intended.

If necessary, the OAQ will arrange to have the report translated.

## 6 On-site visit

### 6.1 Preparation of the on-site visit

At the end of the self-evaluation phase, a member of the OAQ visits the academic unit. The objective of this meeting is to ensure a smooth and successful progress of the on-site visit. The status of preparatory work is checked and questions concerning the organisation of the on-site visit and the interviews are clarified.

Before the on-site visit, the experts examine the self-evaluation report and any associated documents.

The experts receive the following documents from the OAQ in order to prepare for the on-site visit:

Schedule	Documents for the experts
On-site visit <b>minus two months</b>	<p>“Accreditation of Study Programmes in Pharmacy / Pharmaceutical Sciences. Quality Standards” (April 2010)</p> <p>“Accreditation of Study Programmes in Pharmacy / Pharmaceutical Sciences. Guidelines for Self-Evaluation. Instructions for Academic Units (April 2010)”.</p> <p>“Federal Law on Medical Professions of 23 June 2006 (MedBG)”</p> <p>“Guidelines of the Swiss University Conference for Academic Accreditation in Switzerland (Accreditation Guidelines)” of 28 June 2007*</p> <p>“Guide to external evaluation. Recommendations for experts (September 2010)” (this guide)</p> <p>List of names and addresses of the expert group members</p>

On-site visit <b>minus four weeks</b>	Self-evaluation report of the academic unit Other relevant documentation of the academic unit
On-site visit <b>minus two weeks</b>	Schedule of the on-site visit**

\* The quality standards specified in Art. 9-12 in these guidelines are contained in the sets of quality standards for Medical professions and must not be considered separately.

\*\* The experts are requested to notify the OAQ of any changes they would like to make (e.g. partners for one-on-one interviews, additions to the schedule, etc.) within three working days after receiving the schedule so that the academic unit may be informed in good time.

**Important:** All questions of the experts concerning the schedule, candidate for accreditation etc. must be addressed to the OAQ in its function as the coordinating office.

## 6.2 Preparatory meeting of experts (briefing)

The day before the visit, a preparatory briefing is organised by the OAQ. Its purpose is to make the experts acquainted with the work plan (schedule and the contents) of the on-site visit and with the general framework of basic medical and pharmaceutical education in Switzerland.

During this meeting the experts may also discuss their initial impressions based on the self-evaluation report and decide on the topics to be tackled in the interview sessions.

Sample agenda for the briefing:

- Information on the Swiss system of higher education and of accreditation;
- Information on the legal framework for the accreditation of medical professions in Switzerland;
- Information on the Swiss higher education policy and the Swiss health system;
- Information on the accreditation candidate und on the accreditation instruments;
- Explanation of details concerning the schedule of the visit;
- The experts' tasks (explanation and assignment of tasks);
- Discussion

The meeting is followed by a dinner of the group of experts and the accompanying member/s of the OAQ and further discussion.

### 6.3 On-site visit

During the on-site visit, the experts are accompanied and assisted by one or two members of the OAQ. Generally, the duration of the on-site visit for a programme of pharmaceutical education is two to a maximum of four days.

Sample schedule for the on-site visit

First day

08.30 – 09.30	Opening discussion with senior university representatives
09.30 – 09.45	Coffee break
09.45 – 12.00	Session 1: Interviews
12.15 – 13.30	Lunch, discussion among experts on past interviews and on topics of interviews to come
13.45 – 16.00	Session 2: Interviews
16.00 – 16.15	Coffee break
16.15 – 18.30	Session 3: Visit of learning and clinical facilities, research laboratories, IT-infrastructure, etc.
19.00	Dinner for experts

Last day

08.30 – 09.30	Session 4: Interviews
09.30 – 09.45	Coffee break
09.45 – 12.00	Session 5: Interviews
12.15 – 13.30	Lunch, discussion among experts on past interviews and on any further requirements
13.45 – 17.00	Internal meeting of experts: preparation of oral assessment
17.15 – 18.15	Debriefing session: presentation of oral assessment to all parties involved
18.15 – 18.30	Discussion among experts of next course of action

Interviews will last an average of three quarters to one hour each. Between interviews there is a break of 15 minutes. Provision is made for both individual and group discussions.

### 6.3.1 Partners for interviews

- University management / dean / Quality assurance manager;
- Persons responsible for departments / clinics;
- Students;
- Non-professorial academic staff / young academics;
- Lecturers / other teaching staff;
- Administrative / technical staff;
- Representatives of programme commissions;
- Study coordinators, representatives of the student's office;
- Persons responsible for learning- and IT-facilities.
- Persons responsible for teaching- and programme evaluation;
- Alumni
- External environment: professional organisations, cooperation partners, health officials, etc.

#### Other possible interviewees:

- Persons responsible for mobility of students and staff;
- Persons responsible for equal opportunities;
- Persons responsible for financial questions;

### 6.3.2 Tour on the facilities during the on-site visit and further activities

- Visit of skills labs, learning- and IT- facilities, libraries, etc.;
- Visit of research laboratories, assessment of research projects;
- Visit of practical courses;
- Examination of documents written by students (reports on internships, theses, dissertations, publications).

#### 6.4 Oral report (Debriefing)

Towards the end of the last day, the experts gather to exchange experiences and produce their oral report. Roughly three hours should be allowed for this.

The presentation of the oral report by the group leader (debriefing) concludes the on-site visit. It should present all (positive and negative) core aspects to be included in the expert report. The objective is to provide an initial feedback on the experts' impressions and to give recommendations on teaching and studies at the academic unit. The experts should bear the following in mind:

- be supportive and constructive;
- concentrate on the main points, no details;
- analyse the main strengths and weaknesses;
- highlight positive aspects; negative aspects should be presented constructively;
- reward innovative ideas and approaches;
- point out possibilities for development;
- propose alternatives for solving specific problems;
- emphasise that this is only a preliminary report;
- no mention of any recommendation on accreditation.

## 7 The expert report

### 7.1 Content

The report should be analytic and focus on the core aspects of the quality of teaching and of the programme. It should generally not exceed a maximum of thirty pages. The accreditation criteria contained in the MedBG are examined and assessed on the basis of the quality standards. Strengths, weaknesses and special characteristics of the academic unit are described. In addition, the experts formulate concrete recommendations on quality improvement. The report ends with a recommendation on accreditation.

If the report does not meet the requirements in terms of form and content, the OAQ reserves the right to ask for improvements.

### 7.2 Recommended report format

- Title page (includes the title of the document “Expert report”, the name of the study programme and the date of issue of the report);
- List of the members of the expert group;
- Short introduction to the academic unit;
- Appreciation of the self-evaluation report;
- Short description of the on-site visit;
- Body of report:
  - Assessment regarding the programme’s compliance with the standards (fulfilled, partially fulfilled, not fulfilled) within **each sub-area**;
  - Assessment regarding compliance with the legal requirements;
  - Formulated statement on the overall impression of the quality of teaching and of the study programme;
  - Profile of strengths and weaknesses; special features of the academic unit;
  - Recommendations on assuring and improving quality.
- Recommendation on accreditation:
  - Accreditation is granted unconditionally;
  - Accreditation is granted under certain conditions (conditions formulated);
  - Accreditation is refused.

If a single standard in a sub-area is not fulfilled at all, this should be mentioned explicitly in the expert report.

### **7.3 Organisation of report writing**

The group leader is responsible for writing the report. He/she circulates the draft report among the experts for completion and comments. The report must be approved by a majority vote of the experts. Ideally, the report should be the result of a consensus among the group. If no consensus can be reached, minority viewpoints must be specified, however. Drafting the first version of the report should take a maximum of four weeks.

### **7.4 Documents to be considered when authoring the report**

- Self-evaluation report of the academic unit;
- Records of interviews (taken by OAQ representatives and experts);
- Knowledge and information gained during the on-site visit;
- This guide.

### **7.5 Opinion of the academic unit seeking accreditation**

The group leader sends the draft report and any dissenting votes (cf. 7.3) to the OAQ no later than four weeks after the end of the visit; the OAQ forwards the draft report to the academic unit which may submit its opinion within two weeks.

### **7.6 Final expert report**

The group of experts should submit its final report to the OAQ no later than eight weeks after the end of the visit. The report may have been revised before submission in response to the opinion of the academic unit. The group leader is responsible for coordinating this task.

## **8 Accreditation decision**

The OAQ evaluates the self-evaluation, the expert report and the opinion (if any) submitted by the academic unit. On this basis, the OAQ writes a draft of its final report which is passed to the Scientific Advisory Board and to the Commission for Medical Professions (MEBEKO, section of basic education) for consultation. Together with the self-evaluation report, the expert report and the academic unit's opinion, the finalised report of the OAQ is submitted to the Swiss Accreditation Council and the SUK for decision on accreditation.