



EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMMES

A MANUAL FOR REVIEWERS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

of the Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency Hanover
(ZEVA)

January 2023

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
1 Preamble.....	3
2 Assessing and Developing Quality: Profile and Mission of ZEvA.....	4
2.1 History.....	4
2.2 Internal Quality Management.....	4
3 External Assessment of Study Programmes: Aims and Benefits.....	5
4 Eligibility.....	6
5 Main Steps of the Assessment Procedure.....	7
5.1 Contracting Phase.....	7
5.2 Assembly of an Expert Panel.....	7
5.3 Self-Report.....	8
5.4 Site Visit.....	8
5.5 Assessment Report.....	9
5.6 Final Accreditation Decision.....	9
6 Assessment Framework.....	9
7 Appeals and Complaints.....	12
8 Annex.....	14
Annex 1: Template.....	14
Annex 2: Sample Agenda of a Site Visit.....	0
Annex 2: Useful Links.....	2

1 Preamble

This document outlines the assessment framework and the general procedure for quality reviews of educational programmes as applied by the Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (ZEvA). It is meant to serve as a practical guide for higher education institutions (HEIs) applying for the accreditation of their study programmes. Also, it provides guidance to expert reviewers in preparation for their task.

Since the start of the Bologna Process in the mid-1990s, external quality assurance in teaching and learning has gained increasing importance for European higher education institutions. Since 1995, ZEvA has been a major actor in this field both nationally and internationally. ZEvA is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) and of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA). The agency is also listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

ZEvA carries out different types of quality reviews outside Germany: the focus may be on study programmes (as described in this brochure), or on the entire higher education institution and its internal quality management system (cf. ZEvA Institutional Accreditation Manual).

The methods and criteria of assessment as applied by ZEvA are fundamentally rooted in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), which have also gained wide acceptance outside Europe. Hence, we see our prime task in monitoring adherence to internationally approved standards instead of imposing our own standards on higher education institutions (cf. assessment framework outlined in Chapter 5). The review procedure serves to assess whether the institution has clearly formulated its aims in teaching, learning and research, whether it has implemented adequate strategies and has allocated sufficient resources to reach those aims, and whether there is verifiable evidence of success.

Higher education institutions across Europe have undergone rapid changes since the Bologna Process was launched. Their social, political, economic and cultural roles and functions have diversified, and new ideas of teaching, learning and institutional governance have emerged. However, in spite of the immense diversity of the European higher education landscape, there is still solid common ground: essentially, the European Higher Education Area is “based on academic freedom and autonomy, on student-centred learning and on the link between teaching and research, which will continue the development of institutions which have been changing for 800 years”.¹

As a partner of higher education institutions, it is part of our mission to safeguard these fundamental values and principles.

¹ Floud, Roderick 2007 “Convergence and Diversity” in Froment, Kohler, Purser, Wilson (eds), *EUA Bologna Handbook, Making Bologna Work*, A 1.2.-1

2 Assessing and Developing Quality: Profile and Mission of ZEvA

2.1 History

The Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency Hanover (ZEvA) was set up in 1995 by the Lower Saxony Conference of Higher Education Institutions (LHK) with the task of supporting quality improvement of teaching and studies at higher education institutions.

ZEvA began with state-wide evaluations of study and teaching at all higher education institutions in Lower Saxony and still offers universities, universities of Applied sciences and universities of cooperative education the organisation and implementation of external evaluation procedures as a service – naturally also outside of Lower Saxony. ZEvA thus provides assistance to higher education institutions in quality development and improvement in all areas related to study and teaching.

ZEvA was accredited in 2000 as the first agency in Germany for programme accreditation and in 2008 also for system accreditation. Furthermore, ZEvA offers international accreditations (institutional and programme), institutional audits (mainly in Austria), consulting, certification, and validation.

ZEvA is a member of ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), CEENQA (Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) and ECA (European Consortium for Accreditation). Furthermore, ZEvA has been listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since March 2008. The periodical renewal of this registration guarantees an external quality assurance in regular cycles.

2.2 Internal Quality Management

ZEvA uses various instruments of internal quality assurance. These include Jours Fixes (entire team, divisional, management team), procedural evaluations of the satisfaction of reviewers and higher education institutions, annual closed meetings and, of course, the ZEvA Commission (ZEKo) which meets three times a year. The commission consists of 20 persons and, in addition to the Scientific Director of the ZEvA, is made up of representatives of the various study areas of universities and universities of applied sciences, representatives of quality management at universities, representatives from professional practice and student representatives of a university and a university of applied sciences.

The tasks of the ZEKO include

- final decisions on accreditations, quality audits, certifications, and validations
- formal appointment of the expert groups (delegated to two members from the relevant study areas and one member each from professional practice and the student body)
- Decisions on complaints and appeals by ZEvA's clients regarding the course of proceedings on the basis of a vote by the Appeals Commission
- Election of the members of the Appeals Commission
- Discussion and introduction of quality assurance topics at higher education institutions, further development of procedures and thus ensuring science-led procedures

The entire quality management serves to realise the following objectives:

- High quality of the assessments

- Customer satisfaction
- Expertise, appropriateness of decisions and reliability
- Efficiency and effectiveness
- Transparency
- Compliance with procedural principles

By defining appropriate measures, the achievement of these objectives is operationalised in the ZEvA quality management manual.

3 External Assessment of Study Programmes: Aims and Benefits

External quality reviews provide an opportunity for higher education institutions to further enhance the quality of their educational programmes and their internal management based on the recommendations of independent and renowned experts. By having their programmes accredited, universities can also gain competitive advantages on the higher education market.

ZEvA quality reviews are based on the peer review principle: the assessment is conducted by a panel of qualified and experienced experts from inside and outside academia. Based on the self-report of the higher education institution and the outcomes of a 2–3-day site visit, the experts generate an evaluation report including a final vote. In case the ZEvA Commission takes a positive accreditation decision, the agency awards its quality seal for a limited period of time (usually 6 years). The university receives accreditation certificates and may also use the ZEvA seal for PR purposes. The typical milestones of the peer review process are described in more detail below (cf. Chapter 5 of this manual).

First and foremost, ZEvA quality reviews are designed to support higher education institutions in achieving their strategic goals. Beyond assessing adherence to European quality standards, a strong focus is placed on quality enhancement and quality development.

The following pages contain a detailed description of our standard procedure for the quality assessment and accreditation of study programmes. The assessment framework is outlined in detail, and a template is provided in order to assist higher education institutions in compiling the self-report (see Annex 1).

The sample questions provided in the template should not be mistaken for a comprehensive “checklist”, but rather function as a general guideline on what kind of information is expected in each chapter.

4 Eligibility

On principle, ZEvA works together with higher education institutions both inside and outside the European Higher Education Area. To be eligible for accreditation (at programme level or at institutional level), a higher education institution should meet the following requirements:

- ✓ It should be state-recognized (though it may be privately funded) and hence legally entitled to award academic degrees.
- ✓ Its degree programmes should incorporate international academic standards and qualifications frameworks, as well as the principles of the ESG.
- ✓ The institution should not serve any political or religious causes or doctrines which compromise its neutrality in teaching and research or cause it to disregard general principles and standards of the scientific community.
- ✓ Making financial profit should not be its prime mission.
- ✓ It should take a student-centred and outcome-oriented approach to teaching and learning. Degrees should be awarded based on the achievement of intended learning outcomes (acquisition of knowledge and competencies).
- ✓ It should have defined quality standards for all central areas of activity and should have developed instruments to monitor adherence to these standards.
- ✓ It should be able to demonstrate that it is well established in the national and international scientific community, as, for instance, by membership in university networks.

It should be noted that a quality assessment in the form of an accreditation or certification may not be combined with consultancy on the same subject matter. If, for example, ZEvA provides content-related counselling with regard to the conception or the further development of a curriculum or of an institution's internal QA system, it cannot assess the same educational programme or QA system in the context of a subsequent accreditation or certification procedure.

5 Main Steps of the Assessment Procedure

As a general rule, English should be the language used by all parties involved throughout the entire review procedure. Sometimes it may be advisable to engage a professional interpreter for assistance.

The institutional self-report must be written in English. Crucial supplementary documents like the course descriptions or the examination regulations should be translated into English if necessary.

On average, a programme accreditation procedure as described below is completed within 9-12 months.

5.1 Contracting Phase

ZEvA is happy to provide all information regarding its services to interested higher education institutions, including a quotation of costs. A personal meeting with a representative of the agency may be helpful in order to clarify the particular needs and wishes of the HEI and the type of service required.

In case the HEI decides to engage ZEvA for a quality review, the exact nature of the service to be provided, the costs incurred, and the time schedule will be laid out in a contract. The agency assures strict confidentiality.

5.2 Assembly of an Expert Panel

A careful selection of experts is of central importance for the quality and success of an assessment procedure.

The selection of experts lies with the agency. All panels must be formally approved by the ZEvA Commission. On principle, each panel consists of university professors in the subject discipline, professionals from outside academia and student experts.

The size of a panel may vary, depending on the scale and nature of the review procedure, the number of subjects/academic disciplines involved etc. As a general rule, the peers will not only have an unquestionable academic reputation but should ideally possess solid experience in higher education management and quality assurance, too. Ideally, at least one member of the panel should be familiar with the language and culture of the country the HEI is located in.

Apart from these qualifications, members of a review panel should be characterized by the following personal qualities:

- ✓ a demonstrable commitment to the principles of quality assurance and quality audit in higher education,
- ✓ a critical but constructive disposition,
- ✓ powers of analysis and sound judgment,
- ✓ personal authority and presence, coupled with the ability to act as an effective team player,
- ✓ the ability to make appropriate judgments in the context of unfamiliar environments,
- ✓ a high standard of oral and written communication, preferably with some experience of writing formal reports to deadlines,
- ✓ good time-management skills.

The HEI has a right to object to a reviewer selected by the agency for well-grounded reasons (as e.g. concern of conflicting interests). All experts must confirm their independence as part of their contract with ZEvA.

5.3 Self-Report

The HEI (or the department/faculty in charge) generates a self-report that includes a detailed description of the institutional profile and mission, the internal quality assurance system, and the programmes to be assessed. The following should be kept in mind during this process:

- ✓ All aspects of the assessment framework (cf. Chapter 6) should be covered by the report, in as much detail as necessary.
- ✓ The HEI should also submit a separate reader containing central documents like the course catalogue/course syllabi, regulations for student admission and assessment, Diploma Supplements etc. (cf. Chapter 8). Please note: it may be necessary for the purpose of the assessment to have some of the documents translated into English.
- ✓ The final self-report report should be submitted to the agency **at least** 6 weeks prior to the site visit. We strongly recommend handing in a draft version for a pre-check about 10 weeks prior to the site visit.

Prior to the on-site talks, the final version of the self-report is forwarded to the panel members for desktop validation.

5.4 Site Visit

On average, the site visit takes about two to three days. The members of the expert panel interview representatives of the HEI's internal and external stakeholders (leadership board, faculty and staff, students, graduates, employers etc.) and gain a hands-on impression of the HEI's infrastructure and resources (cf. sample schedule in Annex 1). The responsible ZEVA project coordinator is also present during the visit in order to provide assistance to the experts and the HEI whenever necessary.

The purpose of the site visit is to clarify questions left open by the self-report, to learn more about the views and perspectives of different stakeholders on the study programmes, to verify that policies and procedural rules are put into practice, and to collect evidence of the outcomes of quality assurance measures.

Interviews are usually conducted with the following stakeholders:

- ✓ Members of the leadership board of the HEI (President/Rector, Vice-Rector(s), Deans etc.)
- ✓ Staff of the quality assurance department (if applicable)
- ✓ Senior staff and faculty responsible for the development, implementation, and quality assurance of study programmes
- ✓ Academic coordinators of the study programme(s) to be assessed
- ✓ Members of faculty involved in the study programme(s)
- ✓ Students and graduates of the programme(s), including members of student representative bodies
- ✓ Employers of graduates from the programme(s)

Interviews are typically organized in separate sessions of 60-90 minutes.

5.5 Assessment Report

Based on the outcomes of the assessment, the expert panel drafts an assessment report which contains the experts' appraisal of the study programmes, as well as their central conclusions and final vote.

Wherever appropriate, the experts' findings are expressed as:

- ✓ **commendations** of good practice
- ✓ **affirmations**, which recognise improvements the institution has already initiated as a result of its self-analysis
- ✓ **recommendations** for improvement.

As soon as the expert report is finalised, the project coordinator passes it on to the HEI for notification and comment. The HEI may lodge a brief written statement in response to the report (1-2 pages) in order to correct factual errors and to comment on the experts' assessment and recommendations. The response of the HEI is made known to the experts and the ZEvA Commission and may therefore have an impact on the final decision. It is also published along with the final accreditation report.

5.6 Final Accreditation Decision

Based on all relevant documents and the oral report of the project coordinator, the ZEvA Commission takes the final accreditation decision and awards the ZEvA quality label to the study programme(s) for a limited time period. At present, the standard accreditation period is 6 years.

Accreditation may be awarded under conditions if a programme does not (yet) fully meet all accreditation standards. The commission may also decide not to award the quality label and issue the accreditation certificate before all conditions are fulfilled (pre-conditions).

Higher education institutions may lodge appeals to accreditation decisions or complaints regarding procedural errors or irregularities (Cf. Chapter 7).

6 Assessment Framework

Each educational programme for which an institution seeks accreditation must be consistent with national legal requirements. Furthermore, the programme(s) should be in line with the central requirements of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the ECTS Users' Guide. The following assessment framework is based on these key documents of the European Higher Education Area.

1. Intended Learning Outcomes [ESG 1.2]

The educational objectives of the study programme are clearly laid out and published. Graduates are familiar with the principles, methods and theories of science and research in their chosen field(s) of study.

The programme also ensures that

- ✓ its students do not only acquire key competencies within their chosen field of study but also relevant ones outside it,
- ✓ the future employability of students is taken into account in the design of learning outcomes,

- ✓ the intended learning outcomes of the study programme are in line with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and comply with the general standards of the discipline and/or the professional field.

2. Programme Design and Curriculum [ESG 1.2, 1.4]

The design of the study programme ensures that

- ✓ the intended learning outcomes are achieved and that it is possible to achieve them within the allocated time frame,
- ✓ the knowledge and skills imparted are in line with the international standards of the discipline,
- ✓ the qualifications of incoming students are accounted for,
- ✓ appropriate processes and criteria for student admission and selection are in place,
- ✓ there is a course catalogue or equivalent document describing the intended learning outcomes, the contents and methods of teaching, the average student workload, and other details for each educational unit,
- ✓ the ECTS key features are reflected in the structural design of the curriculum, including the national and international transfer of credits and adequate procedures for the recognition of prior learning that are in line with the Lisbon Convention,
- ✓ students have sufficient opportunities for practical placements (where appropriate) and study periods abroad.

3. Teaching Faculty [ESG 1.5]

The higher education institution ensures that

- ✓ there is a sufficient number of qualified teaching faculty with sufficient educational expertise that cover all subject areas and disciplines included in the study programme,
- ✓ there is an institutional policy and practice to support and enhance the faculty's scholarly competence and research productivity,
- ✓ policies and strategies are in place for the continuous professional development of the teaching staff,
- ✓ fair and merit-based procedures for staff recruitment and promotion are in place.

4. Infrastructure, Resources and Student Support [ESG 1.6]

The higher education institution ensures that

- ✓ the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate, especially with regard to the study programme(s) to be assessed,
- ✓ there is a sufficient number of technical and administrative staff to support teaching and learning activities and to provide advice to students in personal, social and career matters,
- ✓ the infrastructure and facilities (lecture rooms, labs, computing facilities etc.) are adequate with a view to the intended learning outcomes,
- ✓ there is an adequately equipped library at the students' disposal,

- ✓ the programme has sufficient financial resources,
- ✓ equal opportunities and diversity policies are implemented and accounted for at all levels.

5. Student Learning and Assessment [ESG 1.3]

The higher education institution ensures that

- ✓ the chosen forms and methods of delivery are well-aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the programme(s),
- ✓ a balanced mixture of teaching methods is applied across the programme which encourage students to take an active role in the learning process,
- ✓ the students' capability of autonomous learning and problem-solving is enhanced,
- ✓ students receive sufficient guidance and instruction from the teaching faculty,
- ✓ the chosen forms of student assessment are apt to monitor the achievement of intended learning outcomes,
- ✓ the criteria, regulations and procedures for student assessment are clear, published and consistently applied,
- ✓ examinations are organized in such a way that they are feasible for students (e.g., limited number of examinations within one exam period, options of repeating exams),
- ✓ there is a compensation scheme for disabled students, as e.g., alternative forms of assessment or more flexible time regimes.

6. Quality Assurance [ESG 1.1, 1.4, 1.7, 1.9]

The HEI has developed and documented its own vision of quality in teaching and learning to create a basis for the development and realisation of its study programmes.

It has implemented and published its policy and procedures for assuring and enhancing the quality of programmes and awards.

In particular, the quality assurance system should ensure that

- ✓ internal and external stakeholders of the HEI are involved in quality assurance procedures and programme development,
- ✓ instruments and procedures are in place for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of programmes and awards, as e.g., course evaluation, student satisfaction surveys, monitoring of student workload, tracing of student progression, and the graduates' professional careers, internal peer reviews etc. State-of-the-art management information systems should be implemented for this purpose.
- ✓ non-standard programme profiles (joint programmes, distance learning, blended learning etc.) and the special needs of the students enrolled in these programmes are accounted for.

7. Transparency and Public Information [ESG 1.4, 1.8]

The HEI regularly publishes up-to-date, accurate information about the programmes and awards offered (including the examination regulations, admission policies, credit recognition procedures, equal opportunities policies etc.).

All students receive adequate documentation of their qualification upon graduation, including a Diploma Supplement or equivalent document.

7 Appeals and Complaints

Higher Education Institutions and other ZEvA clients can lodge appeals or complaints in connection with all ZEvA procedures. For this purpose, ZEvA has set up an Appeals Commission consisting of experienced university teachers and representatives of professional practice and the student body. The current composition of the Appeals Commission can be found here:

<https://www.zeva.org/de/die-agentur/revisionskommission/>

ZEvA distinguishes between **appeals** against the formal outcome of a procedure and **complaints** against procedural steps or professional conduct of the persons involved:

1. Appeals against Formal Decisions and Outcomes

An appeal against the formal outcome of a procedure can be lodged if the institution comes to the conclusion that this outcome is not based on sound evidence, that the relevant criteria have been applied incorrectly or that the outcome has been tainted by inconsistently applied processes.

ZEvA's international programme accreditation procedures conclude with a formal decision on the accreditation of the respective study programme. An appeal against these decisions can be lodged within 4 weeks after receipt of the decision.

If an appeal against a formal outcome is sustained, the result may be a change of the decision, e.g., the deletion/modification of a condition or recommendation or the conversion of a refusal into an accreditation.

2. Complaints Regarding Procedural Steps and Professional Conduct

ZEvA's clients may lodge complaints against any procedural step if they consider it not to have been properly carried out in accordance with the contract and the procedural rules. This may concern, for example, the conduction of the site visit or the preparation of the assessment report. They may also file complaints against the professional conduct of ZEvA's staff or the experts involved in the respective procedure. These complaints can be lodged at any time during the procedure until it concludes with the final formal outcome.

If a complaint against a procedural step or against the professional conduct of staff or experts is sustained, it may result in a repetition, modification, or supplementation of a procedural step, e.g., a renewed site-visit, a revision of an assessment report or a supplementary opinion by an additional expert. The agency may also decide to assign a different staff member or exchange individual experts.

Appeals and Complaints Procedure

Complaints and appeals must always be substantiated in writing and have to be addressed to ZEvA's management. If necessary, a detailed substantiation can be submitted after a formal complaint to observe the 4-

week deadline. The complaint or appeal, including the justification, is forwarded together with an assessment by ZEvA's management to ZEvA's Appeals Commission, which then makes a recommendation as to the extent to which the complaint or appeal should be upheld. This recommendation, together with the appeal or complaint, is sent to the ZEvA Commission (ZEKo), which takes the final decision. Once the ZEKO has taken its decision, no further appeal or complaint can be lodged against the same issue.

8 Annex

Annex 1: Template

Self-Report of XXX (Name of Higher Education Institution, Faculty/Department)



List of Study Programmes to be Assessed:

Name of the Programme	Degree Awarded	ECTS Credits	Duration of the Programme	Type of Programme ²				
				Distance Learning	Full-Time	Part-Time	Teacher Training	Joint Programme
Programme A								
Programme B								
....								

² Please mark with a cross.

Preliminary Remarks

The self-report should be (at least roughly) structured according to the following template. HEIs should make sure that all focus areas outlined in Chapter 6 are covered to a sufficient degree. To this end, the template includes cross-references to the assessment framework wherever appropriate.

Some of the standards described above apply to the higher education institution as a whole while others are more programme-specific. Accordingly, the self-report should be divided into a first part that covers more general issues and a second part which focuses on the study programme(s) to be assessed.

Wherever appropriate and necessary, cross-references to the general part and/or to the relevant appendices should be made in the programme-specific chapters in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of information.

The sample questions provided for each chapter should be taken as a general guideline that need not be followed meticulously. You may also choose not to address certain topics and discuss other aspects instead which might not be mentioned in the template at all but are nonetheless significant for the understanding of your institution and your programmes.

There are no pre-defined limits to the length and scope of the self-report. However, a maximum of 80 pages should only be exceeded in exceptional cases.

As far as aspects of form and design are concerned (as, for instance, font type and size) you are free to apply your own standards, provided they do not impair the legibility of the document in any way.

The provided list of appendices is not exhaustive – you may add anything you consider relevant, as long as it does not exceed a reasonable scope (maximum: ca. 200 pages).

Course catalogues/syllabi are a central part of each self-report, as they usually contain extensive information on each educational unit, its contents, intended learning outcomes etc. This manual includes a sample course description (excerpt from the ECTS Users' Guide). If your own course catalogues/course syllabi do not match this format, this is no problem – in this case, please submit the documents that you use in your everyday practice, instead of creating new ones based on the template.

Part 1: General Information on the Higher Education Institution

a) Core Facts and Figures

Central questions to be addressed:

- When, by whom and why was the HEI founded? What development has the HEI taken since then?
- What is the institution's mission and profile? (classical university, business school, public or private sector, teacher training institution, art college/conservatory...)
- What are its focus areas in teaching and research?
- How many students are currently enrolled?
- Which study programmes in which academic disciplines are offered?
- Are the programmes and/or the institution accredited under national law?
- Is the HEI a member of national and/or international associations and networks?

b) Basic Information on the National Higher Education System

Central questions to be addressed:

- Who are the central actors within the national higher education system, and what are their responsibilities? What are the most fundamental legal regulations impacting the HEI?
- What degree of autonomy does the HEI have regarding the design of curricula, the appointment of faculty and staff, research projects etc.? Which issues concerning teaching and learning are decided upon at ministerial/governmental level?
- Is the HEI located in a member state of the European Higher Education Area? Have European standards been implemented in the national higher education system?
- At what age do the students usually enter third level education?
- What are the general entrance requirements? (Secondary school degree, entry exams etc.)
- Do students direct their application to the HEI, or is there a state-organized (pre-)selection procedure?

c) Governance, Management and Quality Assurance

Central questions to be addressed:

- Who takes decisions and holds the main responsibility for the study programmes? Who/which stakeholders are involved in decision-making and quality assurance processes?
- Is there a students' union or similar organization? Do student representatives participate in decision-making processes? At what levels, in which contexts?
- Is there an equal opportunities policy? What measures are taken to create equal opportunities at all levels and for all members of the university? (Student selection procedures, recruitment of faculty and staff, support services for students with special needs etc.)

- Does the HEI possess an internationalization strategy? What is done to increase the level of internationalization? (International Office, number of incoming/outgoing students, number of incoming/outgoing lecturers, general support of student and teacher mobility, recognition of credits/learning agreements, cooperative relationships with foreign institutions, participation in joint/double degree programmes etc.)
- Does the HEI have an official policy for quality assurance and quality development?
- What quality cycles (PDCA cycles) have been implemented?
- How does the HEI collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of its study programmes and other activities? (Course evaluation, monitoring of student workload, alumni surveys, student satisfaction surveys etc.)
- What were the most significant results of quality surveys conducted during the past few years? What consequences were drawn from them, and what concrete measures were taken to remedy identified deficiencies?

⇒ ***Cf. Chapter 6, Standards 4, 6***

d) Teaching Faculty, Resources and Infrastructure

Central questions to be addressed:

- What are the main quality criteria for the selection of faculty/teaching staff? Who is involved in the selection procedure?
- Do all faculties/departments employ a sufficient number of teaching staff to run the study programme? Does the composition of the teaching staff allow for adequate coverage of all subject areas and disciplines included in the study programme?
- Are the members of faculty active as scholars/researchers? Is there an institutional policy and practice to support and enhance the teaching staff's scholarly/research production?
- How does the institution ensure that all members of the teaching staff have appropriate pedagogical qualifications? Are policies and strategies in place for the continuous professional development of teaching staff?
- Are state-of-the-art lecture rooms, laboratories, libraries, computing facilities etc. at the students' disposal?
- What student support services does the HEI offer? (Counselling and advisory services, career counselling, international office, services for disabled students etc.)

⇒ ***Cf. Chapter 6, Standards 3, 4***

Part 2: Description of the Study Programmes

Preliminary Remark:

If the assessment refers to a cluster of closely related programmes, it may be more convenient to create one general chapter that covers all of the shared aspects and to focus on more specific issues in the programme-related chapters.

Programme A

a) Profile and Intended Learning Outcomes

Central questions to be addressed:

- When and why was the study programme implemented? Is it a long-established subject/one of the HEI's core programmes, or is it a new/experimental/innovative and more recently established part of the programme portfolio? What role does it play for the overall institutional profile?
- Have Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) been formulated for the programme and for each curricular component?
- Are the ILOs in line with the corresponding level defined by the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (Dublin Descriptors) ?
- Is the employability of future graduates an explicit educational goal of the programme?
- Do the ILOs include preparing students for active citizenship and supporting them in their personal development?
- Does the programme qualify students for particular employment sectors/positions?

⇒ **Cf. Chapter 6, Standard 1**

b) Structure and Content of the Study Programme

Central questions to be addressed:

- Are the ECTS key features (awarding of credits for achieved learning outcomes) applied throughout the programme?
- How many ECTS credits are awarded in total and for each educational component?
- Is the programme designed in such a way that students can achieve the ILOs within the calculated time frame?
- Are the programme contents in line with the corresponding level defined by the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (Dublin Descriptors)? Do they comply with the general requirements of the discipline and/or the professional field?
- What teaching methods are applied in the delivery of the curriculum? (Lectures, seminars, tutorials, case studies e-learning, team projects, internships etc.)
- What role does research play within the programme? Do students gain hands-on experience in research?

- To what extent and in what ways does the programme offer international perspectives?
- Does the curriculum offer mobility windows for study periods abroad or practical placements?

How does the recognition of credits/prior learning work in practice? Are applications for recognition usually successful?

⇒ ***Cf. Chapter 6, Standard 2***

c) Student Learning and Assessment

Central questions to be addressed:

- How can you describe the general didactic approach of the programme?
- What are the main methods of assessment and how do they relate to the teaching methods applied?
- In how far do the chosen forms of assessment ascertain the achievement of the intended learning outcomes (in terms of knowledge and competencies) formulated for each educational component?
- What kind of grading system is being used in examinations and assessments?
- Is the ECTS grading scale applied?
- Can special arrangements be made for students with special needs? (students with health impairments, students with children etc.)
- How often and within which period of time may failed examinations be repeated?
- Are the examination regulations made accessible to all students?
- What happens in case of conflict between students and lecturers? Is there an official complaints and appeals procedure?
- Do students have easy access to all information that is of relevance to them (course catalogues, exam regulations, other rules and guidelines)?
- What documentation of their qualification do the graduates receive? (Transcript of Records, Diploma Supplement etc.)

⇒ ***Cf. Chapter 6, Standards 5, 7***

d) Brief Self-Assessment of the Programme

Possible questions to be addressed:

- Where do you see particular strengths and weaknesses of the programme?
- Why was this programme selected for international accreditation?
- What, from your point of view, could be enhanced or changed about the programme?
- Where do you see the programme in five years' time?

If possible, please fill out the following chart for each programme in order to illustrate its structure, contents and the standard progression path through the programme. Alternatively, you may of course create your own illustration of the curriculum and its components and insert it into the text (or, alternatively, include it in the appendix).

Curricular Structure of the Study Programme

Educational Units and Courses	Semester	Form of Examination/Assessment	Workload (hours)		ECTS-credits
			Contact Time	Self-Study Time	
Unit 1					
Course 1 (name, content)					
Course 2 ...					
Course n					
Unit 2					
Course 1					
Course 2					
Unit 3					
Course 1					
Course 2					
Unit n					
Course 1					
Course 2					
Internship					
Thesis					
Total					

Programme B, Programme C, Programme D ...

Part 3: Supplementary Material (all in English)

- ✓ Mission statement of the HEI
- ✓ Course catalogue or equivalent document
- ✓ CVs of core faculty involved in the programme(s) (max. 1-2 pages per person)
- ✓ Regulations for student assessment
- ✓ Regulations for the recognition of credits and prior learning
- ✓ Relevant cooperation agreements with industry or other HEIs (if applicable)
- ✓ Diploma Supplement(s) for the study programme(s)
- ✓ Quality assurance policy
- ✓ Survey questionnaires (course evaluation, workload monitoring, alumni surveys etc.)
- ✓ Equal opportunities policy

Further documents as considered appropriate.

In case of doubt, please contact the agency.

Statistics on Faculty & Students

Chart 1: Survey of Teaching Faculty and Staff

Name	Academic degree	Position	Qualification/Academic Discipline	Full-time/Part-time	Area of Teaching
Max Miller	Ph.D.	Full Professor/ Assistant Professor/ Senior Lecturer/ Visiting Lecturer/ Professional etc.	Engineering, Computer Science, Management etc.		Please name educational units/lectures/courses/laboratories

Please create a separate chart for each study programme, unless the staff involved is largely the same for all programmes of the cluster.

Chart 2: Acceptance Rates

Study Programme:	Number of Applicants					Number of First Year Students					Acceptance Rate				
	minus 4	minus 3	minus 2	minus 1	Current Year	minus 4	minus 3	minus 2	minus 1	Current Year	minus 4	minus 3	minus 2	minus 1	Current Year
Programme A															
Programme B															
Programme C															
....															

Chart 3: Student Numbers

Study Programme:	Total Number of Students					Female Students					Foreign Students				
	minus 4	minus 3	minus 2	minus 1	Current Year	minus 4	minus 3	minus 2	minus 1	Current Year	minus 4	minus 3	minus 2	minus 1	Current Year
Programme A															
Programme B															
Programme C															
....															

Chart 4: Drop-Out Rates and Graduates

Study Programme	Number of Graduates						Drop-Out Rate (%)					
	Minus 5	Minus 4	Minus 3	minus 2	minus 1	Current Year	Minus 5	Minus 4	Minus 3	Minus 2	Minus 1	Current Year
Pro-gramme A												
Pro-gramme B												
....												

Annex 2: Sample Agenda of a Site Visit

Please notice: The sample agenda is subject to change in order to meet the individual needs and demands of the expert panel and the HEI.

Day 1: Weekday, date

Arrival of panel members and ZEvA project manager; transfer to the hotel

(Optional: dinner, get-together)

Day 2: Weekday, date

08.30 Breakfast + transfer to university

09.00 **Internal meeting of the review panel**

Topics: Mission of the expert group, distribution of roles and tasks, information/briefing reg. the national higher education system, accreditation framework & criteria etc., analysis of the university's self-report; open questions

11.30 Talks with members of the **university leadership board**

Topics: General strategy and development plan of the university, position of the programme(s) in the general portfolio; future perspectives of the programme(s) from the leadership's point of view, internationalization strategy, quality assurance, equal opportunities policy etc.

13.00 Lunch (panel members and project managers only)

14.00 **Tour of the campus**/viewing of laboratories, classrooms, general facilities etc.

16.00 **Internal meeting of the review panel**

17.00 Transfer to the hotel; dinner

Day 3: Weekday, date

08.30 Breakfast + transfer to university

09.00 **Internal meeting of the review panel**

10.00 Talks with **heads of the faculties/departments (deans, vice-deans etc.)**

Topics: Role of teaching and learning + of the study programmes within the faculties/departments, teaching personnel, general goals and future perspectives, infrastructure + equipment, organizational and managerial aspects, quality assurance

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Talks with **programme managers and teaching faculty** involved in the programme/s

Topics: Intended Learning Outcomes, curricula, contents, teaching methods; advisory and support services for students, design and organization of exams, employment market for graduates, further training & qualification of teachers, mobility of students and faculty, internationalization



- 17.00 Internal discussion of the panel members
18.30 Transfer to the hotel + dinner

Day 4: Weekday, date

- 08.30 Breakfast + transfer to university
09.00 Internal discussion of the panel members
10.00 Talks with **students** of the study programme(s)
Topics: Intended learning outcomes, contents and structure of study programme(s), workload, examination system, student support and advisory services, general study conditions, student mobility, quality assurance and student participation
12.00 Talks with **graduates** of the study programme(s)
Topics: Intended learning outcomes, employment experiences and career prospects, contents and structure of study programs, workload, examination system, student support and advisory services, general study conditions, student mobility, quality assurance and student participation
13.00 Lunch
14.00 Final **internal discussion** of the review panel
16.00 **Final feedback meeting**
Topics: Open questions, general feedback of the expert group, further proceedings + milestones of the accreditation procedure
17.00 Transfer to hotel + dinner

Day 5 (weekday, date)

Transfer to airport and return flights



Annex 2: Useful Links

ZEvA Website:

<https://www.zeva.org/en/international/>

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA):

<http://www.enqa.eu/>

ECTS Users' Guide:

https://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf

European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area:

<http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/>

Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Framework_for_Qualifications_of_the_European_Higher_Education_Area



Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency
Hanover (ZEVA)
Lilienthalstraße 1
30179 Hannover

Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Prof. Dr. Ulrich Teichler

Managing Director

Henning Schäfer

Contact

Tel.: 0511 54 355 701 (Secretariat)

Fax: 0511 54 355 999

www.zeva.org