

CRITERIA FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION (DECISION OF THE AQAS STANDING COMMISSION OF 19./20.08.2019)

AQAS is an independent organisation accredited by the German Accreditation Council (GAC) since 2001 (re-accredited in 2006, 2011, and 2016). It is therefore a notified body for the accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes in Germany. AQAS is also a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) which confirms that our procedures comply with a common set of principles for quality assurance in Europe.

While the criteria and procedure for accreditation in Germany are defined by GAC and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, the agency uses the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG), on which all Bologna countries agreed, as a basis for accreditation procedures abroad. The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal as well as for external quality assurance in higher education.

The core idea of a programme-accreditation by AQAS is to assess if the programme is run in accordance with the ESG (in their current form) while ensuring that the curriculum meets current academic standards. Since the demands of the ESG are formulated in general terms, AQAS developed its own criteria and indicators on the basis of the ESG which allow the panel of experts to focus on relevant indicators of teaching and learning processes. AQAS follows the main idea that the prime responsibility for teaching and learning in a programme, hence also the quality of a programme, lies with the university. Consequently, the criteria have to be put in the respective context of the programme, also allowing to consider individual targets set by the institution in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER). In the accreditation procedure, the experts assess whether the programme is able to achieve the defined targets and criteria.

If the panel of experts positively evaluates the programme, the positive decision of the AQAS Standing Commission of AQAS confirms that the programme meets the requirements defined by the AQAS criteria in line with the ESG.

1. Aims and structure of the doctoral programme [ESG 1.2]

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are defined and available in published form. They reflect both academic and labour-market requirements and are up-to-date with relation to the relevant field. The design of the programme supports the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The academic level of graduates corresponds to with the requirements of the appropriate level of the national qualifications framework or the European Qualifications Framework.

The curriculum's design is readily available and transparently formulated.

2. Procedures for Quality Assurance [ESG 1.1, 1.7 & 1.9]

The programme is subject to the higher education institution's policy and associated procedures for quality assurance, including procedures for the design, approval, monitoring, and revision of the programmes.

A quality-oriented culture, focusing on continuous quality enhancement, is in place. This includes regular feedback mechanisms involving both internal and external stakeholders.

The strategy, policies, and procedures have a formal status and are made available in published form to all those concerned. They also include roles for students and other stakeholders.

Data is collected from relevant sources and stakeholders, analysed, and used for the effective management and continuous enhancement of the programme.

3. Learning and Assessment of students [ESG 1.3]

The form of supervision and/or course structure is adequate and corresponds with the intended learning outcomes.

Students are assessed using accessible criteria, regulations, and procedures, which are made readily available to all participants and which are applied consistently.

Assessment procedures are designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

4. Legal status, admission and certification [ESG 1.4]

The institution is entitled to award a doctorate.

Consistently applied, pre-defined, and published regulations are in place which cover student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

5. Academic level of supervisory staff [ESG 1.5]

The composition (quantity, qualifications, professional and international experience, etc.) of the staff is appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Staff involved with teaching is qualified and competent to do so.

Transparent procedures are in place for the recruitment and development of staff.

6. Support and research environment [ESG 1.6]

Guidance and support are available for students which include advice on achieving a successful completion of their studies.

Appropriate facilities and resources are available for learning and research activities.

7. Public Information [ESG 1.8]

Impartial and objective, up-to-date information regarding the programme and its qualifications is published regularly. This published information is appropriate for and available to relevant stakeholders.