Note

Receiver(s) > ENQA Board

Follow-up report in relation to ENQA Agency Review in 2016

In 2016, the Danish Accreditation Institution (AI) was subject to an international evaluation organised by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The ENQA agency review described AI as a well-established quality assurance agency, recognised by all stakeholders, and characterised by a very high level of professionalism. Yet the ENQA panel recommended AI to work for an integration of all aspects of the ESGs into the work of AI and to enhance stakeholder involvement. This has provided an important guideline for AI to grow as an accreditation organisation. As described below, AI has taken measures at all level of the organisation to address the recommendations and achieve full compliance with all ESGs.

- *Concerning the integration of all aspects of the ESGs.* On November 30 2017 the Danish Parliament passed several amendments to the Accreditation Act. The amendments came into force on January 1 2018 and imply a number of changes in relation to the process of institutional accreditation and the portfolio of tasks given AI. Two changes are of particular significance to the panel's recommendations. First, the Act implies that quality assurance of exams are a part of the criteria for institutional accreditation, and this change will be effective when HEIs apply for an institutional accreditation for the second time. Second, the Act entails that AI may now carry out assessment tasks in three new areas. It includes assessing if non-publicly recognised educations qualify for State Educational Grant and assessing the level of non-publicly recognised educations in relation to the Danish and European Qualifications Framework (see Annex 1, measure 2 and 4).

- *Concerning the enhancement of stakeholder involvement*. AI has taken several measures to increase stakeholder involvement and include stakeholders in discussions on the future of quality assurance. Activities with this purpose span from regular meetings with rectors to analysis projects (see Annex 1, measure 1, 4-5, 9-11 and 15). As the second round of institutional accreditations will begin in the fall of 2019, AI have, moreover, strengthened its dialog with stakeholders to support the process of refining the concept of institutional accreditation, a process that has contained a discussion of how AI can fulfill the panel's recommendations. AI took the first significant steps by hosting the conference "What have we learned, and what is the future role of accreditation in a changing education system". The conference was held at the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen on November 9 2017. Here AI together with a range of stakehold-

ers took stock of the experiences of institutional accreditation and discussed ideas for the development of the design of the second round of institutional accreditation. Since then, AI has focused on how to improve conceptual and methodological approaches. To this end, AI has been looking into how AI can clarify and improve (1) the object of analysis, (2) data and methods, (3) mutual learning across Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and (4) Student Centred Learning. In addition, AI's management and the Accreditation Council have considered the many suggestions and discussed them with stakeholders (see Annex 1, measure 2-3, 6, 8-10 and 12).

In addition to the above, AI has initiated a number of activities and adjustments guided by the recommendations made by the ENQA panel. To provide a summary of the organization's doings and improvements, the following table, found in Annex 1, briefly describes which measures AI has taken to address the panel recommendations with the ambition to achieve full compliance with all criteria the ESGs. The table follows the structure of the ENQA report, except that it only includes ESGs where AI did no achieve full compliance, i.e. ESG 2.1, 2.3, 2.6, 3.6 (substantially compliant) and ESG 2.2, 2.7, 3.1 (partially compliant). Finally, Annex 2 contains a list of relevant documentation that AI is ready to translate into English and make available on request.

Annex 1. Panel recommendations and measures taken by AI, divided by ENQA criterion

ENQA criterion *Compliance level*	Panel recommendations	Measures taken by AI
ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance *Substantially compliant*	To advocate for integrating all aspects of part I of the ESG into the accreditation criteria when the envisaged reform of the accreditation system is going to take place	1. *Initiating dialogue with Ministry of Higher Education and Science.* At a meeting between Chairman of the Accreditation Council, AI Executive Director and the Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Higher Education and Science in October 2017, the Ministry made it clear that it envisaged only a limited reform of the Danish accreditation system, thus not entailing a fundamental redistribution of tasks between AI and the Ministry, as the ENQA panel otherwise recommends. In this context, AI has not deemed it realistic for the time being to strive for integrating all aspects of part I of the ESG into the Danish accreditation criteria. Yet a number or political developments have increased AI's involvement in more aspects of the ESG. See measure 2-4 below. 2. *Focusing on examines.* The new Accreditation Act includes quality assurance of exams as part of the criteria of institutional accreditation. The new criterion will come into force as of January 1 2018 and be applied in the second round of institutional accreditation. AI is currently considering how to assure the quality of exams in the second round of institutional accreditation. 3. *Focusing on Student Centred Learning*. As a response to the new ESG on Student Centred Learning, AI currently considers how to assure and enhance Student Centred Learning as part of the second round of institutional accreditation. As an important preparation for this process, AI has met with representatives of HEIs to get to know their understanding of Student Centred Learning. In 2017, AI also carried out a study of Student Centred Learning, resulting in the publication *Hovedperson i egen læring – studentercentreret læring i et dansk og europæisk perspektiv* [Principal in Own Learning - Student Centred Learning in a Danish and European Perspective]. For more on this issue, see measure 15 (ESG 3.1). 4. *Considering new opportunities for quality assurance in the private domain.* The revised Accreditation Act enhances the role of AI in assuring the quality of HEIs, since AI may now assess whether non-publicly recognised institutions should qualify for State Educational Grant. Also the revised act allows AI to assess the educational level of non-publicly recognised educations within the

Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. To develop the proper conceptual and methodological approach to do so, AI is currently leading the discussions of a committee consisting of representatives from three relevant ministries: Ministry of Higher Education and Science, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture. During the fall of 2018, AI will host a conference, inviting all shareholders to discuss the future concept, share experiences and develop ideas, which will be taking into consideration when designing the final concept for assessing the educational level of non-publicly recognised educations. On this basis, AI expects to proceed the first applications in 2019.

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose *Partially compliant*	To further reduce workload and the amount of documentation gathered in the institutional accreditations, making clear what data to require and for what purposes	5.	*Formalising dialogue with HEIs to secure purposive documentation.* To reduce the load of documentation in institutional accreditation, AI has worked towards securing that HEIs provide the relevant and necessary documentation only. To that end, AI has developed a more systematic procedure to secure a close dialogue between AI and HEI around documentation for audit trails. It is now common practice that AI consultants organise a meeting with relevant HEI staff, by phone or physically, to make clear what kind of documentation AI needs and for what purposes, while HEI staff may ask questions and guide AI in the direction of accessible and appropriate data material.
		6.	*Aiming to reduce HEIs' workload.* AI, the Accreditation Council and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science have as a common goal to reduce the workload of HEIs, a wish also expressed by HEI representatives. Hence, discussions on the second round of institutional accreditation focus on reducing HEIs' workload as one of its four, main concerns. AI is currently considering questions of methodology in relation to institution accreditations, especially how data and methods can be improved and re-designed in order to reduce the burden of documentation, while maintaining a satisfying level of empirical evidence.
	To introduce follow-up procedures in all accreditations	7.	*Gathering information on follow-up procedures internationally.* AI is looking into follow-up procedures developed by other recognised higher education accreditation organisations. Further decision awaits.
	To play the lead role in the discussions about designing new procedures	8.	*Facilitating discussions on new procedure.* AI aims to play a leading role in the discussions about designing new procedures. For this reason, AI attempts to facilitate fruitful discussions concerning the second round of institutional accreditation. Apart from discussing data and methods at a general level, AI is considering how it can enhance Student Centred Learning among HEIs and sup-

port mutual learning between HEIs by adjusting existing procedures and, to a minor degree, constructing entirely new ones. Moreover, AI has engaged with Ministry of Higher Education and Science as well as stakeholders in the area of higher education, discussing the future set-up of institutional accreditation. Also see measure 1 and 3 (ESG 2.1) and measure 9-11 (ESG 2.2).

To intensify stakeholder involvement, in particular in the design of AI methodologies

9. *Organising stakeholder conference.* The Accreditation Council hosted the conference "What have we learned, and what is the future role of accreditation in a changing education system?". Held at the Danish National Museum in the heart of Copenhagen on November 9 2017, the conference brought together the Accreditation Council, AI and decision makers from HEIs, student unions, Ministry of Higher Education and Science, and the labour market. [1] On the basis of presentations, panel discussions and general debates, participants shared their experiences from the first round of institutional accreditation and discussed what adjustments to make and which elements to maintain in the second round of institutional accreditation. There were many positive responses, some criticisms, and a few concrete suggestions for improvement, which AI consider in the further discussions.

10. *Involving stakeholders when redesigning the concept of institutional accreditation.* AI strives to take into account the views, questions and ideas of stakeholders when planning the second round of institutional accreditation, a goal that is manifest at all level of the accreditation organisation. Hence, AI consultants have meet with representatives of HEIs to discuss how to secure mutual learning and transverse communication of best practice as intrinsic to the process of institutional accreditations. At management level, AI Executive Director has, among other things, presented and discussed some of the initial ideas regarding the second round of institutional accreditation with Danish University Board on August 15 2017. Moreover, the Accreditation Council has contributed to the goal of involving stakeholder in the discussion of the second round of institutional accreditation. As an example, Chairman of the Accreditation Council met with the Board of Governors at the Technical University of Denmark in the fall of 2017 to discuss expectations for the revised concept of institutional accreditation.

11. *Intensifying continuous dialogue.* To strengthen the dialogue with stakeholders, AI has intensified its tradition of meeting with rectors groups from the different sectors of higher education on a continuous basis. Besides that, AI meets with individual HEIs that wish to discuss particular concerns or broader questions regarding accreditation and the quality in higher education. For instance, AI Executive Director will meet with the management of the University of Southern Denmark in October 2018.

ESG 2.3 Implementing processes *Substantially compliant*	To introduce follow-up procedures in all accreditations	See measure 8 (ESG 2.2)
ESG 2.6 Reporting *Substantially compliant*	To consider giving recommendations in all reports and to add a summary in reports	12. *Providing recommendations.* AI intends to give recommendations in all reports in the second round of institution accreditation, although the exact form is not yet defined. Currently AI is considering the need and possibility of developing the existing report section "Comprehensive Assessment" with the purpose of providing a more clearly defined summary, as recommended by the panel.
ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals *Partially compliant*	To formalise and make transparent to all HEIs when and how opportunities are given to complain	13. *Clarifying and formalising existing opportunities to complain.* Apart from the already ongoing informal discussions between the Executive Director of AI and rectors of HEIs, AI intend to raise the awareness of existing opportunities to complain by clarifying and formalising when and how HEIs can use the Danish Public Administration Act and/or when they should write directly to the Accreditation Council.
		14. *Gathering information on appeal and complain procedures internationally.* AI has looked into appeal and complain procedure developed by accreditation organisations in Great Britain, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain, among other countries. A brief overview of these procedures will provide the backdrop for a further discussion on how AI can clarify when and how HEIs may complain.
ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance *Partially compliant*	To further elaborate on stakeholder involvement in order to fulfill AIs vision to contribute to the enhancement and further development of the quality work at institutions	15. *Engaging stakeholders' perspectives on Student Centred Learning.* AI involve stakeholders in various ways to fulfil its vision to contribute to the enhancement of quality work at HEIs, as described by measure 9-11 (ESG 2.2). Apart from that, AI takes into account stakeholders' perspectives through its analysis projects, for instance in the report *Hovedperson i egen læring – studentercentreret læring i et dansk og europæisk perspektiv* [*Principal in Own Learning - Student Centred Learning in a Danish and European Perspective*]. The report was published in 2017 and gathers HEIs' experience with Student Centred Learning based on qualitative interviews with vice-chancellors, lecturers and students at Danish universities, university colleges, business academies,

and art schools. The report has (1) provided a departure point for discussions with external stake-holders and (2) communicated a stakeholder perspective in the internal discussions of AI on how to measure and assess Student Centred Learning in the second round of institutional accreditation. As such, AI considers stakeholders' perspectives in the discussion on the future development of quality and quality assurance in higher education.

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct *Substantially compliant*	To supplement the memo on the quality assurance policy by adding descriptions of the various internal quality assurance procedures including responsibilities, timing etc.	16. *Improving Procedure Handbook.* AI has revised its *Procedure Handbook* by adding more links to procedures and elaborating on procedure descriptions. Among other things, AI has thus improved the sections on audit trail selection, teamwork, report feedback, and the use of statistical data. In addition, AI has improved the handbook with hyperlinks, and so the *Procedure Handbook* now collects all relevant background information, procedures, and standard documents.

Note: [1]The following people participated as speakers or panel discussants at the conference "What have we learned, and what is the future role of accreditation in a changing education system?" on 9 November 2017: Per B. Christensen (Chairman of Accreditation Council), Mads Tofte (Rector of IT University of Copenhagen), Harald Mikkelsen (Rector of VIA University College), Camilla Wang (Rector of Absalon University College), Berit Eika (Prorector of Aarhus University), A.K. Winding (student, Vice Chairman of the University of Copenhagen Education Strategy Council, Executive Committee Member of the Student Council at the University of Copenhagen), (Mads Hareskov Jørgensen, Vice Chairman of National Union of Students in Denmark), Mette Nielsen (Consultant in Confederation of Danish Industry), Bo Smith (formand for Advisory Committee for Assessment of Provisions of Higher Education), Hans Müller Pedersen (Executive Director of Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education), Bjørn Stensaker (Accreditation Council Member and Professor at Department of Education, University of Oslo) and Anette Dørge (AI Executive Director).

Source: Program for Akkrediteringsrådets seminar den 9. november 2017 [Programme for Conference, 9 November 2017]

Annex 2. Relevant documentation, divided by ENQA criterion

All documents are available in Danish, but will be translated on request.

ESG 2.1
Lov om ændring af lov om akkreditering af videregående uddannelsesinstitutioner [Revised Accreditation Act, Act no. 1564 of 19 December 2017]

Bekendtgørelse om akkreditering af videregående uddannelsesinstitutioner og godkendelse af videregående uddannelser [Executive Order on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Approval of Higher Education Study Programmes]

ESG 2.2
Program for Akkrediteringsrådets seminar den 9. november 2017 [Programme for Conference, 9 November 2017]

Referat af Akkrediteringsrådets seminar d. 9. november 2017 [Resume from Conference, 9 November 2017]

ESG 3.1
Hovedperson i egen læring – Studentercentreret læring i et dansk og europæisk perspektiv [Principal in Own Learning - Student Centered Learning in a Danish and European Perspective]

ESG 3.6
Procedurehåndbogen [Procedure Handbook]

Ændringslog for Procedurehåndbogen, sidst redigeret i maj 2018 [Log on Changes in the Procedure Handbook, last Updated May 2018]