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Ihr Zeichen, Ihre Nachricht vom

Unser Zeichen
-/GF

Durchwahl, Name
-10, Dr. Iring Wasser

Datum
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Subject: Membership of ASIIN in ENQA, Follow-up

Dear Dr. Grolimund,
dear members of the ENQA Board,

in its decision concerning ASIIN's membership in ENQA from 7 December 2016 the Board identified three main findings that should be addressed by ASIIN within two years. First of all, it was remarked that ASIIN lacked a Thematic analysis (ESG 3.4) of its own external quality assurance activities. Further weaknesses were detected regarding ESG 2.4 "Peer-review experts" and ESG 2.7 "Complaints and appeals".

Against these issues, ASIIN appealed presenting additional information on 7 February 2017. After analysis of the provided documents and explanations, the ENQA Appeals and Complaints Committee (ACC) on 8 June 2017 concluded that ASIIN was indeed substantially compliant with the standards and criteria. Consequently, ASIIN's status as ENQA Member under review was overturned and two of the originally identified issues were considered to be resolved (ESG 2.4 and ESG 2.7). In the following I would therefore like to focus on ASIIN's developments regarding the remaining issue of Thematic analysis (ESG 3.4).

In the evaluation report from 2016 the peers and the Board outlined that “ASIIN does not regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their own external quality assurance activities that would feed back to the stakeholders and society, and that would also strengthen the internal quality assurance of the agency.” In the aftermath ASIIN had pointed out that several feedback circles were already in place. A Newsletter informed the interested public about ASIIN’s activities and developments and open meetings with ASIIN members and stakeholders were regularly held. Nevertheless, the ACC concluded that there was no systematic reporting of analyses established yet. Such analyses were not carried out by then but only envisaged. Hence, a public and open reflection of ASIIN’s Quality Assurance activities was not in place. In conclusion, the ACC decided that ASIIN was only partially compliant in this regard.

In the meantime, we have been active to close the identified gap and further develop our analysis of our standard requirements and recommendations. Two points should be especially brought to notice:

First, the German Accreditation Council has carried out a nation-wide statistical analysis of the requirements and recommendations issued by the licensed German accreditation agencies. The fundamental results of this analysis can be accessed here:

http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/fileadmin/Seiteninhalte/AR/Veroeffentlichungen/Berichte/Bericht_Auflagenstichprobe_final.pdf

This survey allowed us to position the evaluation practice at ASIIN in relation to the other German agencies. It becomes apparent, that compared to all other agencies ASIIN follows a comprehensive and detailed requirement practice whereas the pronunciation of requirements is a comparatively rare verdict with our competitors.

Thematic analysis of accreditation practices has been a major issue in German politics for the past twelve months due to a major reform of the national accreditation system. Since 1 January 2018 a new legislation for the National German Accreditation Council (Akkreditierungsrat) has been enforced; therefore, the years previous to this date as well as the developments since have been scrutinized on national as well as agency level. At ASIIN, several of our stakeholders have been active in the ongoing discussion and analysis in our own regular newsletter and other media.

Exemplary contributions are:

- Hermes, Siegfried (2017), Wege aus dem Stimmungstief, in: Jan Wiarda Blog (Weblog), 4. Oktober 2017. Online-Publikation: <https://www.jmwiarda.de/2017/10/04/wege-aus-dem-stimmungstief/>
- ASIIN Newsletter: <https://www.asiin.de/de/service/newsletter.html>
 - Newsletter 14 and 15 with contributions concerning the German accreditation reform

- Newsletter 13 with a thematic focus on Double Degree-Programmes
- Newsletter 12 with a thematic focus on the challenges for external quality management in the context of internationalized HEIs
- Newsletter 11 with a thematic focus on orientation towards learning outcomes

Secondly, ASIIN has launched its own impact analysis in order to identify what aspects are in which frequency subject to ASIIN's requirements and recommendations. An evaluation of a sample of 222 programmes that were accredited in 2017 has already been carried out and is online accessible under <https://www.asiin.de/en/about-us/politics-of-quality/thematic-analysis.html>. This impact study was designed to evaluate the overall impact ASIIN's accreditation procedures have on higher educational institutions and whether ASIIN fulfils its self-imposed objectives of securing and advancing the quality of academic education.

This systematic analysis will be continued on a regularly basis. In the upcoming meetings of our Technical Committees and Accreditation Committee on 6 and 7 December the findings will be presented and discussed with our stakeholders. Summaries of the respective analyses will also be published regularly on our website.

The issue of thematic analysis has proven a challenging one, especially against the background of the major disruptions in the German accreditation systems. Nevertheless, as has been previously outlined we have successfully initiated the process in the past two years and are positive to consequently meet the appropriate criteria, standards and guidelines. We also thank ENQA for its comments and pieces of advice that made us focus more intensively on these important matters.

For any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iring Wasser', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Iring Wasser
Managing Director