

Follow-Up-Report ZEvA

to the renewal of ZEvA's ENQA-membership 2016

1 Introduction

ZEvA has been re-accredited by the German Accreditation Council (GAC) in 2016. The assessment also included the procedure for the renewal of ZEvA's full membership in ENQA as well as the renewal of our inclusion in the EQAR. Both have also been granted in 2016. The accreditation by the GAC was granted under certain conditions, all of which have been met, as the GAC has confirmed in February 2017.

ZEvA is grateful for ENQA's recommendations concerning our fulfilment of the ESG, as they give us valuable input to improve our procedures further. We strive to follow all of these recommendations and implement them in our procedures. Several of the recommendations pertain to issues already covered by the GAC conditions and have thus been implemented in the process of fulfilling these conditions.

In the following, we comment on each recommendation in turn and describe measures already taken and plans for further improvement.

2 Implementation of the Recommendations

Recommendation 1: All quality assurance procedures offered by the agency in the higher education sector should be clearly aligned with the ESG Standards from Part 1 and that this is made transparent (ESG Standard 2.1).

All our quality assurance procedures are aligned with the ESG Standards from part 1. National programme and systems accreditation procedures are based on the criteria of the accreditation council which, in turn, are aligned to the ESG. The criteria for doctoral programmes in Lower Saxony are, in turn, based on the criteria of the Accreditation Council. For all other procedures, the criteria defined by ZEvA are directly derived from the ESG as stated in our manuals for evaluation, international procedures and certification. Annex 59 of our self-report provides an overview of the alignment with the ESG. In some procedures, the scope is limited to a few standards (e.g. an ongoing evaluation of examination systems), as others are not relevant for the project, but the relevant standards and guidelines are nevertheless adhered to. The manuals can be found on our website under the following links:

https://www.zeva.org/fileadmin/Downloads/Handbuch_Evaluation_2010.pdf

https://www.zeva.org/fileadmin/Downloads/International/ZEvA_Manual_External_Assessment_of_Study_Programmes.pdf

https://www.zeva.org/fileadmin/Downloads/Zertifizierung/2018.10.22.Leitfaden_Zertifizierung.pdf

Recommendation 2: The agency should provide information on the procedure for the accreditation of doctoral programmes in a transparent and appropriate way and be able to demonstrate that the procedure can achieve its objectives (ESG Standard 2.2).

The procedure for the accreditation of doctoral programmes is the same as the procedure for the accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's programmes. This is made transparent in our manual for programme accreditation and on our website (see recommendation 3). It only differs in the defined criteria and in its outcome (no quality seal of the accreditation council). Thus, it is able to achieve its objectives in the same way as our procedure for programme accreditations. The outcome of each accreditation is made transparent by the published accreditation reports.

Recommendation 3: The procedure for the accreditation of doctoral programmes should (even if it is not an stand-alone procedure) be defined and presented externally, just as the other quality assurance procedures offered by ZEvA, in a way that renders the procedure components (self-evaluation, external assessment, reporting and follow-up) transparent (ESG Standard 2.3).

The procedure for the accreditation of doctoral programmes (which is the same as for the accreditation of Bachelor's or Master's programmes) is described on our website and in the manual for programme accreditation, which can also be found on our website:

<http://www.zeva.org/programmakkreditierung/promotionsstudiengaenge/>

http://www.zeva.org/fileadmin/Downloads/Leitfaden/Leitfaden_Programmakkreditierung.pdf

Recommendation 4: ZEvA should specify and publish clearly designed procedures for the selection, nomination and appointment of its experts for all of the quality assurance procedures it offers in accordance with the requirements from ESG Standard 2.4 and the corresponding guidelines (ESG Standard 2.4).

The procedure for the selection of experts is defined in our quality handbook for all types of procedures:

http://www.zeva.org/fileadmin/Downloads/Qualitaetshandbuch_ZEvA.pdf

Recommendation 5: ZEvA should intensify its efforts to increase the proportion of experts who take part in the agency's preparatory seminars (ESG Standard 2.4).

To increase the proportion of experts who receive training by our agency, ZEvA is in the process of designing webinars that could accommodate and reach far more experts and potential experts than the traditional seminars. In 2018, we have piloted the webinar format and will implement webinars as regular experts-training from 2019 onwards.

These are intended as an addition to the seminars to be held in Hanover, which will still be carried out. A new concept for these seminars will also be implemented in 2019. We hope that these measures will greatly improve the percentage of experts who have undergone training by ZEvA.

Recommendation 6: The criteria for the accreditation of doctoral programmes should be clearly defined and published (ESG Standard 2.5).

The criteria are defined by the Ministry of Higher Education and Culture of the state of Lower Saxony and have been published on their website:

http://www.mwk.niedersachsen.de/portal/live.php?navigation_id=6322&article_id=19110

Recommendation 7: ZEvA should ensure that the complete expert reports are published in all of the quality assurance procedures it offers. In the handbook concerning external evaluations of higher education institutions, the agency should avoid giving the impression that reports may, where applicable, not be published in full upon the request of the higher education institution (ESG Standard 2.6).

In all procedures within the scope of the ESG, the reports are published in full. The handbook for external evaluation (see Recommendation 1 for a link to the manual) has been amended so as to eliminate the passages which seemingly suggested that at the request of the HEI parts of the reports could be withheld.

Recommendation 8: ZEvA should define a complaints and appeals procedure for all of the quality assurance procedures offered by the agency and should publish these in a prominent position on the agency's website. The procedure should allow for objections to formal decisions as well as complaints about the way procedures are conducted (ESG Standard 2.7).

We provide information on our website about our appeals and complaints process, demonstrating that they have been implemented for all of our quality assurance procedures:

<http://www.zeva.org/ueber-die-zeva/revisionskommission/>

Recommendation 10: The agency could highlight with even greater clarity how and to what extent the findings from its analyses could be used in its daily work and for the benefit of the higher education institutions (ESG Standard 3.4).

Our analyses benefit our procedures immensely and help us to improve them constantly. Our analysis of the German accreditation system and the state of the Bologna process in Germany (2012) led to revisions of our assessment procedures. Likewise, a market analysis (2012) was instrumental in aligning our procedures more closely to the

needs of the institutions we work with. Our evaluation of dual study programmes (2016), as an example of our more recent thematic analyses, serves as a reference point in the accreditation of these programmes. At the moment, we are conducting an analysis of exam systems at Lower Saxony HEIs, and the results will lead to a better understanding of exams in higher education and thus will also help us in the assessment of study programmes. See the following links:

<https://www.zeva.org/evaluation/thematische-evaluation/duale-studienkonzepte/>

<https://www.zeva.org/evaluation/pruefungswesen/>

Recommendation 12:

ZEvA's internal quality assurance system should be updated and expanded to incorporate all of the procedure types offered by the agency (ESG Standard 3.6).

Our quality assurance system applies to all procedure types, as stated in our published quality handbook, which can be found under the following link:

http://www.zeva.org/fileadmin/Downloads/Qualitaetshandbuch_ZEvA.pdf

Henning Schäfer, Hanover, 30/11/2018