e,c,a,
european consortium for accreditation

**Agreement on mutual recognition of accreditation results[1]
between Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur (CTI)
and Organ für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung der Schweizerischen
Hochschulen (OAQ)**

Introduction

The European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) was founded in 2003 and consisted originally of 12 accreditation organisations from 8 countries. Since then, ECA was enlarged with 3 organisations and 2 countries. As a consequence, there are 15 ECA members from 10 different European countries in 2007.

ECA acts as a project organisation aiming at mutual recognition of each others accreditation decisions. The recognition of qualifications and the mobility of students and graduates would highly benefit from the trust in quality as expressed by mutual recognition of accreditation decisions. By striving towards and fulfilling this aim the ECA partners contribute to the accomplishment of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which includes the important development of national qualifications frameworks in accordance with the overarching European Qualifications Framework.

The partner organisations in ECA realise that their recognition of each others decisions should be based on (earned) trust and thorough mutual understanding of accreditation frameworks, procedures and decision-making. ECA members have made a lot of efforts to reach that trust and mutual understanding. They have committed themselves to common standards and principles, and compared and observed each others frameworks, procedures, and decision-making.[2]

The ECA partners realise that the effects of this mutual recognition agreement will be highly increased if national governments and recognition authorities would include this agreement in their national policies on the recognition of foreign qualifications.[3]

---

[1] In some countries the national legislation enables accreditation organisations to take legally binding accreditation decisions and to accept accreditation decisions of other accreditation organisations as their own. In some other countries this is not the case and mutual recognition may refer to "accreditation results" (the judgements made on the quality) rather than to "accreditation decisions" in a legal sense. It is up to the accreditation organisations to take into account the legal context in their respective countries and to decide whether in a certain agreement it is appropriate to use either "accreditation decisions" or "accreditation results". In both cases what is mutually recognised is the judgement on the quality. This mutual recognition agreement does not include consequences (e.g. funding) that may be connected to accreditation in a given national setting but that do not apply to foreign accreditations.

[2] An overview of the ECA approach towards mutual recognition and the results achieved are included in the ECA report for the London Ministerial conference and can be downloaded from:
http://www.ecaconsortium.net/index.php?section=content&id=20

[3] The signing accreditation organisations will do their part to facilitate the recognition of qualifications, e.g. by disseminating this mutual recognition agreement to national governments and recognition authorities and by participating in the information tool on accredited qualifications.

Preamble

Aiming to contribute to the internationalisation of higher education and to enhance the mobility of students and graduates in Europe;

with the purpose to facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications by informing recognition authorities on the quality of these qualifications;

with the additional purpose of facilitating joint programmes and degrees by eliminating multiple accreditation procedures in different countries and implementing one procedure under supervision of one of the signatory agencies;

convinced that mutual recognition agreements between accreditation organisations enhance transparency in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and provide important information on the quality of foreign institutions and programmes for students, higher education institutions and the labour market;

relying on the work of ECA since 2003 to build up mutual trust between the member organisations;

based upon the ECA Agreement of Cooperation (2003), the ECA Code of Good Practice (2004) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2005), the ECA Principles for the Selection of Experts (2005) and the ECA Principles for Accreditation Procedures regarding Joint Programmes (2007);

realising that the trust building activities leading to mutual recognition have increased mutual understanding, good practices and the validity of the work of the accreditation organisations;

taking into account the positive external evaluation results of the signing agencies and the results from in-depth comparisons and observations of their accreditation procedures and standards;

acknowledging the variety of national higher education systems and accepting the existence of different legal prerequisites for accreditation procedures, standards and decisions.

Agreement

The signing accreditation organisations agree to regard their accreditation procedures, standards and results as free of significant differences;

and confirm that within their competences they accept the results of the accreditation procedures of the other signing accreditation organisation;

on the condition that the signing agencies continue to exchange information about their accreditation systems on a regular basis. Substantial changes of the accreditation systems should be communicated without delay.

The signing accreditation organisations agree to give each other access to all relevant documents relating to the accreditation results. Documents that are not published must be treated confidentially.

This agreement is valid for 3 years and can be extended after re-evaluation of the preset conditions.

Any of the signing accreditation organisations may denounce this agreement by written notification to the other party at any time. The written notification must include the reasons for and the date of the termination of this agreement.

Bernard Remaud   Rolf Heusser
Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur (CTI)   Organ für Akkreditierung und
                                                    Qualitätssicherung der Schweizerischen
                                                    Hochschulen (OAQ)

Signed on: 10th December 2007 in Barcelona (Spain).

Cc:
- National and recognition authorities
- ECA Coordinator
- Swiss University Conference
- State Secretary for Education and Research, Switzerland

Clarification by CTI

- CTI accreditations refer to programme accreditations (Ingénieur diplômé – master grade) in higher education in engineering.
- Accordingly, CTI accreditation results refer to specific criteria as indicated below.

For the evaluation and accreditation of engineering programmes, specific criteria and procedures may be formulated according to "References and Orientations – 2006":

Criteria

The higher education institutions, in a global and complex context have to adapt and innovate, as long as they comply with these four essential components of engineering education.

- A strong and broad basis in fundamental sciences in order to guarantee analytical competences and the capacity for adjusting in the long term the demanding evolutions of the engineering and management activities.
- The engineering sciences provide a guarantee of efficiency and short term adaptation to a professional activity (experience and innovation).
- Business culture and economic, social, human, environmental ethics awareness (partnerships of the higher education institutions with the profession, involvement of professionals in training, internships in industry, entrepreneurship,..).
- Communication skills and international awareness (international partnerships, intercultural experiences, language skills, joint diploma, ..).

Fulfilment of these criteria is a condition for good employability in engineering activities.

The education is based on a coherent curriculum of 300 ECTS awarded in higher education.

Procedure

- At least one representative of the engineering profession or of the industry is member of the external panel.