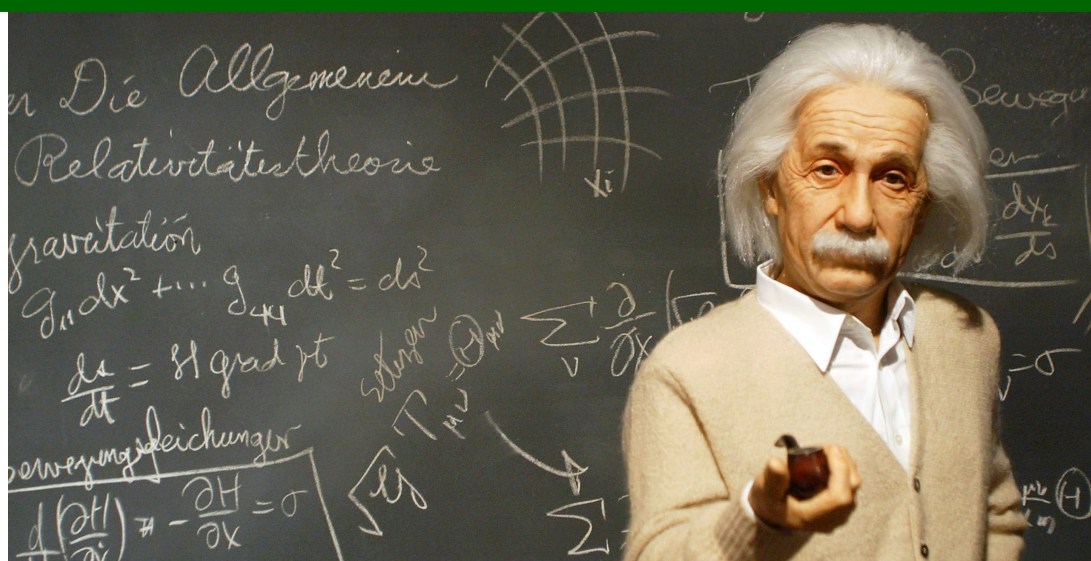
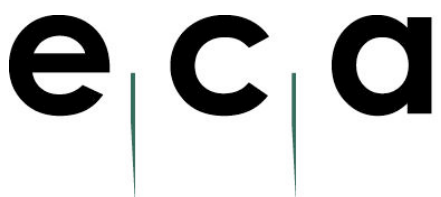


Learning Outcomes in Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Principles, recommendations and practice



European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education



european consortium for accreditation

JOQAR Project output

Learning Outcomes in Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Principles, recommendations and practice

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1. INTRODUCTION

Accreditation organisations reaffirm that Higher Education Institutions (HEI) are responsible for the quality assurance of their study programmes. This means that the main accountability for setting and defining Learning Outcomes (LO) lies in the hand of the HEI. In order to support HEI in this task, accreditation organisations consider the aspect of LO in their external quality assurance procedures and aim at contributing to the further development and improvement in the use of LO, thus to the greater effectiveness of LO assessment as an integral part of students' learning processes.

In Europe, learning outcomes are defined as statements¹ of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a period of learning².

ECA has been advocating a stronger focus on learning outcomes in quality assurance procedures since 2006. The importance of learning outcomes related to quality assurance has been very recently confirmed in the Bucharest Communiqué³ where the consolidation of the EHEA is linked explicitly to the meaningful implementation of learning outcomes under various perspectives, including quality assurance. More precisely the Communiqué says: “The development, understanding and practical use of learning outcomes is crucial to the success of ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance – all of which are interdependent”.

¹ *A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*, Bologna Working Group on Qualifications, p 29.

² For the purpose of this document *Period of learning* refers to standard length of *programme* (AP degrees, Bachelor and Master).

³[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/\(1\)/Bucharest%20Communique%202012\(2\).pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Bucharest%20Communique%202012(2).pdf)

ECA's first contribution on this matter included the *ECA General Principles regarding learning outcomes in accreditation procedures*, available at ECA Webpage⁴. These principles were developed in 2009 in order to increase mutual trust and transparency for recognition purposes, as well as to further develop and improve external quality assurance procedures.

Furthermore, in 2010 ECA went a step forward and developed the *ECA Principles and recommendations regarding learning outcomes in accreditation procedures* that were presented in Graz in June 2010 for plenary discussion at the annual members seminar. It was agreed that the recommendations, considered explanatory notes or examples of practices rather than regulatory prescriptive requirements, would be transferred to a third document called *Learning Outcomes in Quality Assurance and Accreditation: principles, recommendations and practice*.

The practices gathered in this document are the output of the experience of different ECA organisations that have analysed how they apply the principles on learning outcomes in their accreditation procedures. In order to fully understand these practices it is especially important to take into account the context where the practice takes place. This explains why the last part of this document contains a brief description of the profile of each ECA organisation, providing the needed information (contexts in which learning outcomes are taken into account) in order to fully understand the different practices.

For this purpose, ECA members have agreed to produce this document, which aims at providing a source of assistance and guidance to accreditation organisations undertaking external quality assurance activities.

⁴http://www.eaconsortium.net/admin/files/assets/subsites/1/documenten/1267697028_eca---principles-regarding-learning-outcomes-in-accreditation-procedures.pdf

2. PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Accreditation organisations should take into account learning outcomes in their assessments, thus enhancing Mutual Recognition of accreditation decisions.

Principle 2: Accreditation organisations should assess whether the learning outcomes are in line with the National Qualifications Framework and/or the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Principle 3: Learning outcomes are a shared concern of stakeholders and thus accreditation organisations should assess whether the higher education institutions consider stakeholders opinion when designing or revising programmes and learning outcomes.

Principle 4: Accreditation organisations should assess whether learning outcomes and their assessment by higher education institutions are understandable and public.

Principle 5: Accreditation organisations should assess whether curriculum design and content enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes and whether higher education institutions apply proper procedures to assess it.

Principle 6: In the case of programme accreditation, accreditation organisations should make explicit reference to the programmes learning outcomes in their reports.

Principle 7: In the case of institutional accreditation, accreditation organisations should evaluate the institution's provisions regarding the implementation and assessment of learning outcomes.

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3. PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Principle 1: Accreditation organisations should take into account learning outcomes in their assessments, thus enhancing Mutual Recognition of accreditation decisions.

A. Accreditation organisations explicitly include LO and their assessment in their external QA procedures.

B. Accreditation organisations assure that their LO-related standards and criteria are applied consistently and that experts are trained accordingly.

C. For programme assessments, accreditation organisations assure that the intended LO of the programme are available to the review team at the start of a QA procedure⁵.

Principle 2: Accreditation organisations should assess whether the learning outcomes are in line with the National Qualifications Framework and/or the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

A. Accreditation organisations assess whether the intended LO satisfy national and/or international requirements regarding the respective educational level and, if applicable, the particular subject/discipline. These requirements may originate from the National Qualifications Framework, the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, from the academic community and/or from the professional field.

B. Accreditation organisations assess whether an awarded qualification is at the stated level in the stated discipline and they evaluate how the institution monitors it.

Principle 3: Learning outcomes are a shared concern of stakeholders and thus accreditation organisations should assess whether the higher education institutions consider stakeholders opinion when designing or revising programmes and learning outcomes.

⁵ Recommendation 1.C would be particularly important in case of ex-ante accreditations.

A. Accreditation organisations consider whether programmes and/or institutions have clearly identified both their internal and external stakeholders.

B. Accreditation organisations assess whether both internal and external stakeholders are involved in the process of designing and revising the programme's LO, for example by participating in meetings, pedagogical boards, satisfaction surveys, evaluation procedures, etc.

Principle 4: Accreditation organisations should assess whether learning outcomes and their assessment by higher education institutions are understandable and public.

A. Accreditation organisations evaluate whether the LO and the methods by which they are assessed are published conveniently and easily accessible to the relevant stakeholders.

B. Accreditation organisations evaluate whether the LO and the methods of assessing them are described in a comprehensible way. Thus, they could pay particular attention to aspects such as:

- Whether LO are defined in clear and concrete terms (short and simple sentences),
- Whether LO focus on what students are expected to be able to demonstrate and describe observable abilities which can be assessed,
- Whether methods of assessing LO are results-oriented and clearly described.

Principle 5: Accreditation organisations should assess whether curriculum design and content enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes and whether higher education institutions apply proper procedures to assess it.

A. Accreditation organisations assess whether the educational aims and objectives are adequately transformed into intended LO.

B. Accreditation organisations analyse whether the teaching and learning activities together with the content of the programme enable students to reach the intended LO.

C. Accreditation organisations evaluate whether the assessment methods applied by the HEI are appropriate to measure the achievement of the intended LO. They determine the degree of alignment between LO, teaching and learning activities and assessment methods.

D. Accreditation organisations assess whether the internal quality assurance measures of the programme include mechanisms to ascertain the achievement of the intended LO.

E. Accreditation organisations assess whether higher education institutions assure that students achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Principle 6: In the case of programme accreditation, accreditation organisations should make explicit reference to the programmes learning outcomes in their reports.

Accreditation organisations include the assessed programme's LO in their reports. Reference is made to the LO that are valid for the programme at the time of the accreditation.

Principle 7: In the case of institutional accreditation, accreditation organisations should evaluate the institution's provisions regarding the implementation and assessment of learning outcomes.

A. Accreditation organisations assess whether the implementation and assessment of LO are based on a carefully tailored strategy at the institutional level.

B. Accreditation organisations assess whether the internal quality assurance system of HEI includes provisions for the implementation and assessment of LO as well as mechanisms of ascertaining the achievement of the intended LO.

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4. PRINCIPLES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRACTICE

Principle 1: Accreditation organisations should take into account learning outcomes in their assessments, thus enhancing Mutual Recognition of accreditation decisions.

Recommendation 1.A:

Accreditation organisations explicitly include LO and their assessment in their external QA procedures.

Agency:

Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), The Netherlands

Procedure:

All programme level assessments: initial accreditation and accreditation

Practice:

Learning outcomes are addressed in NVAO's assessment frameworks and included in all of NVAO's assessments of programmes. Learning outcomes are explicitly referred to in the standards to be assessed and in the mandatory documentation a programme should provide.

Each of the assessment frameworks includes a threefold focus on learning outcomes. In practice this means that expert panels assess:

- Whether the programme's intended learning outcomes align with the relevant qualifications framework (i.e. the right level) and correlate with international requirements of the discipline and, where relevant, the professional field (i.e. content and orientation);
- Whether teaching and learning (i.e. curriculum, staff, services and facilities) ensure that students are able to achieve the intended learning outcomes;

- Whether the programme has an adequate system of student assessments, which demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes, are realised.

These standards are not only used in all types of procedures but are applied for all types of programmes, thus including e-learning, work-based learning, cross-border provision, etc.

In addition to a self-evaluation report (referred to as the Critical Reflection in NVAO's accreditation system), each programme needs to present all of its learning outcomes in mandatory appendices. This refers to learning outcomes at programme and module level:

- The programme's intended learning outcomes;
- The learning outcomes of curriculum components (as included in for example the ECTS Course Catalogue).

In addition to NVAO's assessment frameworks, NVAO has issued a specific guideline outlining how expert panels are expected to assess final project which demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes ([Guideline for assessment of final projects - nvao.com](https://www.nvao.com/guideline-for-assessment-of-final-projects)) The required learning outcomes are of course the level-specific and intended subject-specific learning outcomes as defined by the programme and (positively) assessed by the panel.

Reference: www.nvao.net

- (Initial) accreditation framework Flanders (2005)
- Assessment Framework The Netherlands (2010)
- NVAO guideline for the assessment of final projects by panels during the external assessment procedures for accreditation and (if applicable) initial accreditation

Recommendation 1.B:

Accreditation organisations assure that their LO-related standards and criteria are applied consistently and that experts are trained accordingly.

Agency:

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA), Denmark⁶

Context:

Focus of assessment: *Programme level*

Type of learning outcomes: *Intended learning outcomes*

Practice:

Together with expert panels EVA assess new programs as well as local provisions of existing programs. Often we assess many provisions of the same programme at the same time, e.g. the 17 local provisions around the country of the teacher programme. Each local provision always gets its own accreditation assessment and in such an accreditation system inconsistent use of the accreditation criteria would be most conspicuous. This enhances the need for consistent use of the criteria even more. Accordingly this is a major concern of EVA, which we continuously address in various ways:

- From the beginning of an accreditations process it is stressed to the experts that assuring consistent assessments is a very important part of the job, which all involved must be aware of and support.
- Experts are supplied with a version of the Danish qualification framework in which the differences between the programme types and degrees are highlighted with different

⁶ This document has been written in the period during which EVA undertook accreditation as described. However please note, that from 1 July 2013 EVA will no longer be conducting accreditation, but only thematic evaluations. From this point the accreditation tasks will be conducted by the Danish Accreditation Institution (a merger of ACE Denmark and (a smaller part of) EVA). At the same time the Danish external quality assurance system will change from programme accreditation to institutional accreditation.

Though the examples therefore no longer describe current practises, it is hoped that they may still be of interest to the reader

colours. This helps the experts to be aware of the specific features concerning the level of the programme they are to assess.

- The panels are organised in a way that contributes to consistent assessments: Each panel consists of four experts who typically assess 2 programs or local provisions together. During the accreditation process one or two of the experts swap places with experts from another panel and the new panel composition assesses 2 more programs or local provisions. In this way the experts actively exchange knowledge between panels, which contributes to assure that no panel makes much harder or milder assessments than the others. The table below illustrates how 8 experts altogether may assess 8 programs or local provisions:

	Expert	Expert	Expert	Expert
Programme/local provision A	1	2	3	4
Programme/local provision B	1	2	3	4
Programme/local provision C	1	2	5	6
Programme/local provision D	1	2	5	6
Programme/local provision E	7	8	5	6
Programme/local provision F	7	8	5	6
Programme/local provision G	7	8	3	4
Programme/local provision H	7	8	3	4

- A project group of 4 – 6 EVA consultants work closely together and meets several times during the process to discuss consistent assessment of each of the criteria. Each consultant is responsible for a number of programs or local provisions, and the consultants team up two and two to take part in each other’s expert meetings and site visits. In this way knowledge is shared actively.
- In addition each consultant holds a special responsibility for a number of criteria and is expected to go deeper into the possible transverse problems, i.e. the problems that more than one programme or local provision have regarding a specific criterion.
- The project manager quality assures all reports at least twice with regards to consistency.

References:

- Qualification framework for higher education – commented edition (in Danish only) :
« Kvalifikationsrammen for de videregående uddannelser – Kommenteret udgave »
- Introductions to the task of being member of an expert panel (in Danish only) :
« Orientering om opgaven som ekspert – eksisterende uddannelser », « Orientering om opgaven som ekspert – nye uddannelser og udbud »

Recommendation 1.C:

For programme assessments, accreditation organisations assure that the intended LO of the programme are available to the review team at the start of a QA procedure⁷.

Agency:

National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA), Spain

Context:

Focus of assessment: *Programme level*

Type of learning outcomes: *Intended learning outcomes*

Practice:

The provision of the intended learning outcomes might be implemented in different ways: either by an external organisation or by the institution itself

- The intended learning outcomes might be published by an official body/organisations, such as the Ministry responsible of Higher Education or a Professional body
- There may be subject benchmarks, or a list of intended LO for field of study
- The National Qualification Framework
- The institution provides and publishes the intended LO of its own degrees
- The quality assurance agency provides adequate guides and evaluation handbooks for the review teams. In these handbooks, the agency may provide alternative referents of intended LO of other institutions that offer the same degree at national or international level

⁷ Recommendation 1.C would be particularly important in the case of the ex-ante accreditations.

After the implementation of the external QA, the agencies should collect information for meta-evaluation. Thus, they might consult their experts about the availability and the quality of the LO provided.

References:

- Evaluation of Official University Higher Education Degrees: <http://www.aneca.es/eng/Programmes/VERIFICA>
- ENQA Workshop Report 17: Quality Assurance and Learning Outcomes <http://www.enqa.eu/files/WSR%2017%20-%20Final.pdf> (Chapter 2: Learning Outcomes in External Quality Assurance)
- Bulletin Official del Estado (Spanish Official Journal. In Spanish Only. Based on “Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning”, from The Official Journal of The European Union): <http://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2011/08/03/pdfs/BOE-A-2011-13317.pdf>

Principle 2: Accreditation organisations should assess whether the learning outcomes are in line with the National Qualifications Framework and/or the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Recommendation 2.A:

Accreditation organisations assess whether the intended LO satisfy national and/or international requirements regarding the respective educational level and, if applicable, the particular subject/discipline. These requirements may originate from the National Qualifications Framework, the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, from the academic community and/or from the professional field.

Agency:

Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), The Netherlands

Procedure:

All programme level assessments: initial accreditation and accreditation;

Practice:

Each of NVAO's assessment frameworks includes a focus on intended learning outcomes in relation to international (not just national) requirements. In practice this means that expert panels assess whether the programme's intended learning outcomes align with the relevant qualifications framework (i.e. the right level) and correlate with international requirements of the discipline and, where relevant, the professional field (i.e. content and orientation);

This can be made clear by an example: a Bachelor of Nursing. This programme has to refer to the relevant requirements for the level, here Bachelor, and for the subject, here nursing.

For the level (Bachelor), the intended learning outcomes have to explicitly correspond with the descriptors of the relevant qualifications framework. This can be an international framework: in our example either the Bologna Process' (pan-European-level) Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) or the European Union-level European Qualifications Framework (EQF). If there is a national qualifications framework,

which is the case in The Netherlands and Flanders, the intended learning outcomes have to explicitly respond to the level descriptors in this framework.

For the subject (Nursing), the intended learning outcomes have to correspond with the academic and professional developments in the discipline & field of Nursing. In some case however, there can be international and/or national requirements that have to be met. In our example, there is a European Union directive on professional qualifications. This directive outlines the requirements governing programmes leading to the Nursing qualifications. In addition, there might be national professional profiles, which have to be taken into account.

Reference: www.nvao.net

- (Initial) accreditation framework Flanders (2005)
- Assessment Framework The Netherlands (2010)

Recommendation 2.B:

Accreditation organisations assess whether an awarded qualification is at the stated level in the stated discipline and they evaluate how the institution monitors it.

Agency:

Swiss Centre of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (OAQ)

Context:

Focus of assessment: *Programme level*

Programme accreditation in the field of Universities of Applied Sciences

Type of learning outcomes: *Intended learning outcomes / Achieved learning outcomes*

Practice:

All UAS Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes are federally accredited. UAS may request accreditation of their degree programmes by sending their request to an accreditation agency recognised by the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER). The accreditation agency then reviews the degree programme to ensure that it matches established quality standards and then sends its accreditation

recommendation to the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). SERI then prepares the accreditation (decision) on behalf of the EAER. Positive accreditation is linked to the right to deliver degrees.

UAS and degree programmes are accredited if they fulfil the standards according to the Directives for the Accreditation of UAS of 4 May 2007.

The accreditation standard 3.05 states: “The competencies that must be acquired (learning outcomes) during the bachelor's and master's programmes are clearly distinguished (progressive competence profiles)”.

The accreditation standard 3.06 states: “The conditions for admission to the university of applied science ensure internal coherence between the competencies acquired during a bachelor's programme and those required for admission to a master's programme”.

More generally, standard 3.02 (“The programme focuses on teaching and learning objectives and a qualification, which is generally professionally oriented with a clearly determined profile”) refers to the European context in this explanatory note: “One should refer to the Dublin Descriptors, which rule the multi-disciplinary and specific competencies within the European context, as well as the Diploma Supplement, which makes explicit the form and content of the study programme for each Bachelor and Masters degree”.

References

http://www.oaq.ch/pub/en/documents/EVD_Richtlinien-d.pdf

Principle 3: Learning outcomes are a shared concern of stakeholders and thus accreditation organisations should assess whether the higher education institutions consider stakeholders opinion when designing or revising programmes and learning outcomes.

Recommendation 3.A:

Accreditation organisations consider whether programmes and/or institutions have clearly identified both their internal and external stakeholders.

Agency:

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA), Denmark⁸

Context:

Focus of assessment:	<i>Programme level</i>
Type of learning outcomes:	<i>Intended learning outcomes</i>

Practice:

Ex-ante: The expert panel assesses whether the programme is directly relevant for the labour market, and whether there is a need for the programme at the labour market. To illustrate this, the institution must have identified all the relevant groups of employers. They must also have conducted a qualitative survey among relevant employers showing their need for competences. And the learning outcomes of the programme must clearly reflect and be appropriate to meet the needs of the employers.

Ex-post: The expert panel assesses whether the relevance of the programme is ensured through on-going contact with employers and graduates. To illustrate this, the institution must show which groups or fields of employers the programme is relevant for, presently and

⁸ This document has been written in the period during which EVA undertook accreditation as described. However please note, that from 1 July 2013 EVA will no longer be conducting accreditation, but only thematic evaluations. From this point the accreditation tasks will be conducted by the Danish Accreditation Institution (a merger of ACE Denmark and (a smaller part of) EVA). At the same time the Danish external quality assurance system will change from programme accreditation to institutional accreditation.

Though the examples therefore no longer describe current practices, it is hoped that they may still be of interest to the reader

potentially, and that there is on-going contact with an adequate part of these. The institution must also show how the contact with employers and graduates takes place and how the knowledge obtained from the employers and graduates is considered and possibly used to improve the relevance of the programme or local provision.

One of the members of the expert panel for both new and existing programs always has to have deep insight in the relevant labour markets and the developments taking place there, in order to thoroughly assess the institutions activities

References

Guidelines for accreditation (in Danish only):

- For new programs:
<http://www.eva.dk/projekter/akkreditering-af-nye-uddannelser-og-udbud/vejledning-til-akkreditering/vejledning-og-ansogningskema-forar-2012>
- For existing programs:
<http://www.eva.dk/projekter/akkreditering-af-eksisterende-uddannelser/vejledning-til-akkreditering/vejledning-eksisterende-uddannelser-november-2011>

Recommendation 3.B:

Accreditation organisations assess whether both internal and external stakeholders are involved in or refer to in the process of designing and revising the programme's LO, for example by participating in meetings, pedagogical boards, satisfaction surveys, evaluation procedures, etc.

Agency:

Commission des Titres d'Ingénieurs (CTI), France

Context:

Focus of assessment: *Programme level*

Accreditation of engineering degree programmes

Type of learning outcomes: *Intended & achieved learning outcomes*

Practice:

External and internal stakeholders are identified in the self-assessment guide (“guide d’auto-évaluation”) provided by CTI in order to help higher education institutions when writing their self-assessment report. This guide is also used by the audit teams when preparing the on-site visits.

CTI takes explicit account of external stakeholders in its “opening and partnerships” chapter (sections: companies, research, international, national, regional and local authorities).

Internal stakeholders are considered in the following chapters: “image, notoriety and attractiveness of the HEI for teaching staff and students”, “human resources” (sections: researchers, permanent and visiting lecturers, administrative and technical staff), “student life”, “management and organisation” (sections: decision-making and coordination bodies, management team).

One of the chapters of CTI’s self-assessment guide deals specifically with the actual involvement of the stakeholders: «Taking into account stakeholders », and includes the following sections: “participation of the different stakeholders to the decision-making and coordination bodies”, “involvement of each stakeholder in the quality improvement strategy of the institution”, “relationship with each stakeholder”, “stakeholders’ satisfaction”. Some of the activities mentioned in these sections are: the definition and reformulation of programmes and consequently of the intended programme LO; teaching and course assessment by the students; periodic alumni survey; internship assessment and the description of the profile of young professionals by the companies, etc. In each accreditation process, CTI verifies that the main external stakeholders are represented in the decision-making and coordination bodies of the institution.

Additionally, during the on-site visits, confidential meetings (which do not include the management team of the institution) with the different external and internal stakeholders are included: students, teaching staff, researchers, administrative and technical staff, industry representatives, alumni, and representatives of the industry who employ the graduates (in order to make sure that the intended LO are achieved).

The audit team also demands access to different relevant documents, such as the internal rules and regulations of the institution, which include information on the composition of the different decision-making bodies, the minutes of the different management meetings, the

annual alumni survey, rules for the course and teaching assessment by the students, rules for internship assessment, etc.

References

« **Guide d'auto-évaluation** »:

French: http://extranet.cti-commission.fr/frontend.php/fond_documentaire/document/7

English: www.cti-commission.fr/Outline-of-the-self-evaluation

Principle 4: Accreditation organisations should assess whether learning outcomes and their assessment by higher education institutions are understandable and public.

Recommendation 4.A:

Accreditation organisations evaluate whether the LO and the methods by which they are assessed are published conveniently and easily accessible to the relevant stakeholders.

Agency:

The Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya), Spain

Context:

Focus assessment: Programme level and ex-ante accreditation

Type of learning outcomes: Intended Learning Outcomes

Practice:

From 2008 to 2010 AQU Catalunya carried out an Evaluation Programme for Affiliated Institutions, which aimed to help all affiliated institutions in the Catalan higher education system to achieve a level of quality that enabled them to successfully deal with the preparation and delivery of Bachelor and Master's degrees and to stimulate certain affiliated institutions so that they attained or demonstrate they have attained advanced levels of quality in one or more areas of their activities. Hence, the model envisaged two levels of evaluation, a **basic level** and an **advanced level**. The basic level quality requirements were set out as specific criteria that the institution must comply with. The **advanced level** had the aim to encourage institutions to enhance their quality to a level of excellence either within one or more areas of their spheres of activity.

The standard for Programmes of study in the basic level stated: The institution must keep information that is clear, publicly and easily accessible on the programmes of study that it offers, and it must have mechanisms that enable it to monitor the delivery of degree programmes and set up continuous enhancement processes. Table 1 shows some of the quality criteria established in the basic level regarding the LO and the methods by which they

are assessed, and examples of Examples of evidence whereby the institution could demonstrate that it complied with the criterion:

Specific criteria for Standard for Programs of study	Examples of evidence
1.1. The institution keeps clear, publicly available and easily accessible information on the programmes of study that it offers, which at least includes the entry requirements, general aims, graduate profile and course duration/timetables.	<i>The external review panel can gain unaided access to the section on the website where the programmes of study are described and can check that the information is clear and that it contains the minimum elements that are required.</i>
1.2. The syllabi of all courses and modules are publicly available to the institution community; they are easily accessible and updated with information that at least includes the learning outcomes, the topics, student activities, student workload in quantifiable terms, and the method of evaluation.	<i>The external review panel can gain unaided access to the section on the website where the course syllabi are described. It can check (with a sample of courses) that the syllabi contain all of the information stated in this criterion</i>
1.3. The organisation of curricula is consistent with the learning outcomes and the envisaged graduate profile.	<i>The academic coordinators can state what courses and/or activities in the curricula contribute to each learning outcome and the elements that characterise the graduate profile.</i>
1.5. The management team periodically gathers and analyses data on the functioning of the curriculum (academic performance; satisfaction of students, teaching staff, employers; etc.) and informs the community about the result of this analysis	<i>There are documents produced by the management team that show that an assessment is made of the data gathered.</i>
1.7. The management team periodically establishes enhancement measures, based on the data gathered on the functioning of the curricula.	<i>The external review panel can consult the information on all current enhancement plans and the records of their monitoring, development and closure on attainment of the goals.</i>

References:

- [Evaluation programme for university colleges and member institutes. A guide to self-evaluation \(second edition\) http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_97141573_1.pdf](http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_97141573_1.pdf) (in English)
- [Evaluation programme for university colleges and member institutes. A guide to the external review \(second edition\) http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_46825928_1.pdf](http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_46825928_1.pdf) (in English)

Recommendation 4.B:

Accreditation organisations evaluate whether the LO and the methods of assessing them are described in a comprehensible way. Thus, they could pay particular attention to aspects such as:

- Whether LO are defined in clear and concrete terms (short and simple sentences),
- Whether LO focus on what students are expected to be able to demonstrate and describe observable abilities which can be assessed,
- Whether methods of assessing LO are results-oriented and clearly described.

Agency:

National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA), Spain

Context:

Focus of assessment: *Programme level*

Type of learning outcomes: *Intended learning outcomes*

Practice:

The evaluation systems used by accreditation organisations for evaluating the learning outcomes achieved in the modules/topics/subjects must be detailed. In that sense, the evaluation system must be designed taking into account the nature of the various modules/topics or subjects and it must be consistent with the competences students are expected to achieve, the training activities and the teaching method used. A brief description

must also be provided of the contents, which have to be the appropriate in accordance with the LO of the discipline.

To formulate LO, an active verb must be used to indicate an action that leads to an observable outcome, which will help to identify possible learning activities and the assessment tests adapted to it. Some examples are: define, describe, identify, interpret, relate to, discuss, apply, show, solve, differentiate, analyse, plan, organise, propose, assess, review, compare, justify, comment... Also, it is required the description of the object of the action and the context in which it is applied.

References:

- Guide to Preparing Degree Proposals for the Accreditation Ex-Ante of Official University Degrees (Bachelor and Master's Degrees):
- http://www.aneca.es/eng/content/download/12483/154855/file/UJEEI_VER_Bachelor%20and%20Master%20Degree_Support%20Guide%20_v02_110906.pdf
- Support Guide: Assessment for Accreditation Ex-Ante of Official Doctoral Courses: http://www.aneca.es/eng/content/download/12481/154835/file/UJEEI_VER_Doctoral%20Degree_Support%20Guide_v01_120426.pdf
- ENQA Workshop Report 17: Quality Assurance and Learning Outcomes <http://www.enqa.eu/files/WSR%2017%20-%20Final.pdf> (Chapter 2: Learning Outcomes in External Quality Assurance)
- European Commission: 'ECTS Users' Guide': http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf

Principle 5: Accreditation organisations should assess whether curriculum design and content enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes and whether higher education institutions apply proper procedures to assess it.

Recommendation 5.A:

Accreditation organisations assess whether the educational aims and objectives are adequately transformed into intended LO.

Agency:

Fachhochschulrat (FH Council) **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Context:

Focus of assessment: *Programme level*

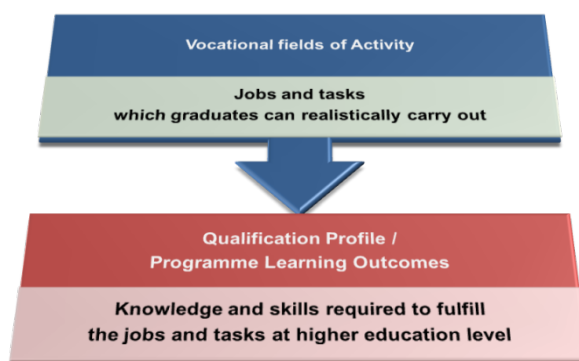
Type of assessment: *Ex ante (initial accreditation) and Ex post (re-accreditation)*

Type of learning outcomes: *Intended learning outcomes*

Practice:

The educational mandate of the Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences is to provide a scientifically sound and practice-oriented professional education at a higher-education level. The aims and objectives of a specific programme are to be specified in terms of “jobs and tasks which graduates can realistically carry out” within the respective professional field. These intended jobs and tasks have to be taken into consideration when designing the learning outcomes at the programme level, named “qualification profile”. The programme learning outcomes have to specify “the knowledge and skills required to fulfil the jobs and tasks at higher education level”. Metaphorically speaking, “jobs and tasks” and “programme learning outcomes” can be seen as two faces of the same coin:

Relation of
„Vocational Fields of Activity“ and „Qualification Profile / Programme LOs“



References:

Guidelines of the Fachhochschule Council for the Accreditation of Bachelor’ s, Master’ s and Diploma Degree Programmes (Accreditation Guidelines, AR 2010, Version 1.1)

http://www.fhr.ac.at/fhr_inhalt_en/01_about_us/publications.htm

- Chapter III.E.2.c:
“c. Jobs and tasks which graduates can realistically carry out shall be specified.”
- Chapter III.E.3.a:
“a. The knowledge and skills required to fulfil the jobs and tasks at higher-education level shall be specified.”

Recommendation 5.B:

Accreditation organisations analyse whether the teaching and learning activities together with the content of the programme enable students to reach the intended LO.

Agency:

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA)⁹

⁹ This document has been written in the period during which EVA undertook accreditation as described. However please note, that from 1 July 2013 EVA will no longer be conducting accreditation, but only thematic evaluations. From this point the accreditation tasks will be conducted by the Danish Accreditation Institution (a merger of ACE Denmark and (a smaller part of) EVA). At the same time the Danish external quality assurance system will change from programme accreditation to institutional accreditation.

Though the examples therefore no longer describe current practices, it is hoped that they may still be of interest to the reader

Context:

Focus of assessment: *Programme level*

Type of learning outcomes: *Intended and achieved learning outcomes*

Practice:**Regarding recommendation 5.B:**

The expert panel assesses the complex relationship between learning outcomes, content and teaching and learning activities in steps:

- First they look at the relationship between the overall learning outcomes of the programme and the objectives of the modules: the panel must assess whether a student who obtains the module objectives also may be expected to obtain the overall learning outcomes of the programme.
- Next the panel look at short descriptions of the content of the modules, and they must assess whether it is appropriate in order to obtain the module objectives
- Then the panel goes into details with four core subjects of the programme. The four subjects must be elaborated with descriptions of curriculum and literature etc. and the panel analyses and assess if it will be possible to achieve the subject objectives
- The institution must also describe the methods of teaching and learning that are used in the four core subjects and these methods must appropriately support that the students can achieve the intended learning outcomes. The teaching and study methods must not only be theoretically appropriate and well planned, but also be appropriately put into practise. I.e. they must be used and function well.
- At the site visit it is an important topic how the methods of teaching and learning are used and function in practice. We ask a group of randomly selected students from the programme which methods of teaching and learning they have experienced and what their assessments of the methods are. Then we ask a group of teachers the same questions.
- In the end the panel analyses and considers all the information altogether.

Regarding recommendation 5.C:

The expert panel assesses whether the tests and methods of examination give a sufficiently clear picture of whether a student has achieved the learning outcomes. Therefore it is examined if the tests and examinations are suitable for illustrating if a student achieves the learning outcomes that are to be assessed in the test/examination. And also, if the tests and examinations altogether provide a sufficiently complete picture of whether a student has gained the knowledge, skills and competences, which correspond to the learning outcomes. A “sufficiently complete picture” is to be understood in the sense that tests and examinations must not leave out testing important learning outcomes or e.g. only test knowledge and not competences.

References:

Guidelines for accreditation (in Danish only):

- For new programs:
<http://www.eva.dk/projekter/akkreditering-af-nye-uddannelser-og-udbud/vejledning-til-akkreditering/vejledning-og-ansogningsskema-forar-2012>
- For existing programs:
<http://www.eva.dk/projekter/akkreditering-af-eksisterende-uddannelser/vejledning-til-akkreditering/vejledning-eksisterende-uddannelser-november-2011>

Recommendation 5.C:

Accreditation organisations evaluate whether the assessment methods applied by the HEI are appropriate to measure the achievement of the intended LO. They determine the degree of alignment between LO, teaching and learning activities and assessment methods.

Agency:

Fachhochschulrat (FH-Council)

Context:

Focus of assessment:	<i>Programme level</i>
Type of assessment:	<i>Ex ante (initial accreditation)</i> <i>Ex post (re-accreditation)</i>

Type of learning outcomes: *Intended learning outcomes*

Practice:

In order to assess whether the teaching and learning activities enable students to reach the intended learning outcomes two aspects are taken into account: firstly, the correlation between programme learning outcomes (qualification profile) and modules; secondly, the particular modules as such.

- For illustrating the contribution of the modules in implementing the knowledge and skills defined in the qualification profile an example-template is contained in the Accreditation Guidelines. Additionally Universities of Applied Sciences can use their own templates in order to illustrate the correlation of qualification profile and modules. Below two examples designed by Universities of Applied Sciences in schematic manner are given:

Example A:

Qualification Profile /	module	module	module	module	...
Learning Outcome 1		X		X	...
Learning Outcome 2			X		...
Learning Outcome 3				X	...
Learning Outcome 4			X		
...					

Example B:

Qualification Profile / Programme LOs	1. Semester	2. Semester	3. Semester	4. Semester	5. Semester	6. Semester
Learning Outcome 1	module A	module C		module D		
	module B					
Learning Outcome 2		module E	module G	module H		
		module F				
Learning Outcome 3		module I		module J		module K
						module L
...			

The curriculum shall be structured in modules. According to the Accreditation Guidelines the particular modules are to be described on the basis of an example-template. Depending on whether a module consists of one or more didactic units or courses, whether only one or more exams are stipulated the module description can be varied. However, the module description - aside from formal information - always includes the intended acquisition of knowledge and skills (learning outcomes) on the one hand, and the teaching contents and a reading list on the other hand (inputs).

Module number:	Module title:	Extent / Credits:
...
Degree programme	...	
Curricular semester	...	
Allocation to branches	...	
Level	...	
Prior knowledge	...	
Blocked	...	
Group of participants	...	
Contribution to subsequent modules	...	
Recommended reading list	Books: ...	
	Periodicals: ...	
Acquisition of knowledge and skills	...	
Forms of teaching and studying	...	
Examination modalities	...	
Contents of the course	...	

References:

Guidelines of the Fachhochschule Council for the Accreditation of Bachelor' s, Master' s and Diploma Degree Programmes (Accreditation Guidelines, AR 2010, Version 1.1)

http://www.fhr.ac.at/fhr_inhalt_en/01_about_us/publications.htm

- Chapter III.F.1.c:
“c. The curriculum shall be structured in modules pursuant to Appendix 8, and the modules shall be graphically presented.”
- Chapter III.F.3.d:
“d. The contribution of the modules in implementing the knowledge and skills defined in the qualification profile pursuant to Appendix 9 shall be specified.”

Recommendation 5.D

Accreditation organisations assess whether the internal quality assurance measures of the programme include mechanisms to ascertain the achievement of the intended LO.

Agency:

Commission des Titres d'Ingénieurs (CTI), France

Context:

Focus of assessment:	<i>Programme level</i>
	Accreditation of engineering degree programmes
Type of learning outcomes:	<i>Intended & achieved learning outcomes</i>

Practice:

CTI checks whether an evaluation by the students of the teaching contents & methods is in place and whether the results are taken into account for the evolution/reforms of the programme; whether the students may express themselves (in appropriate boards/meetings or with clearly identified staff members); whether the performance of the students during an internship is evaluated by the hosting companies; whether an employment survey is regularly carried out by the HEI.

CTI experts meet alumni in order to analyse short, medium and long-term professional career opportunities of the graduates. In the self-evaluation document provided by the institution and during the site visit, CTI experts check the structure & contents of the programme [number of contact hours and global workload, type of contact hours (theoretical lectures, exercises, field work, workshop,...) and type of evaluation (written/oral exams, reports, projects, ...)]. They also examine whether this organisation corresponds to the expectations described in the CTI guidelines « Références et orientations ».

HEI must also provide information regarding the academic results of the students (rate of re-sit sessions, of failure, of exclusion, etc.).

Proficiency in the English language must be testified by an official test each student has to pass (recommended level: C1, tolerated level: B2 in the « Common European Framework of Reference »).

CTI itself imposes a compulsory indicator regarding international mobility of the students. Percentage of students having studied or carried out an internship abroad for at least 3 months: less than 60% of students = weak / 60-80% of students = satisfying / more than 80% of students = good.

At least one of the experts on the panel is a specialist in the evaluated engineering field (ex: a civil engineer for a civil engineering programme etc.) capable to analyse the course contents and having a good knowledge of the professional field & expectations.

During the site visit, the experts must have access to a range of documents including course descriptions (including intended LO and type of evaluation); internship reports; evaluation of the trainees by the companies, etc.

Experts have confidential meetings with students, faculty, alumni and professionals.

References:

« Références et Orientations » :

French : <http://extranet.cti-commission.fr/frontend.php>

English : www.cti-commission.fr/IMG/pdf/20100422_References_and_guidelines_2009-2.pdf

« **Guide d’auto-évaluation** » :

French : http://extranet.cti-commission.fr/frontend.php/fond_documentaire/document/7

English : www.cti-commission.fr/Outline-of-the-self-evaluation

Recommendation 5.E

Accreditation organisations assess whether higher education institutions assure that students achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Agency:

Polska Komisja Akredytacyjna (PKA), Poland

Context:

Focus assessment:	Programme and institution levels
Type of assessment:	Ex post (PKA: “programme evaluation” and “institutional evaluation” ¹⁰)
Type of learning outcomes:	Achieved learning outcomes

Practice:

Since PKA predominantly assesses the HEIs’ internal system of evaluating the achievement of the intended learning outcomes (standard 2). The HEIs’ are expected to provide conclusive evidence proving the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Programme evaluation involves verifying said system at I and II education cycle. Besides the learning outcomes verification system, the experts also directly analyse to what extent partial and final learning outcomes have been achieved. The programme, its modules (e.g. specialisations) and individual courses are subject to scrutiny. Diploma thesis and final examination results are checked to know how the learning outcomes are demonstrated in an integrated way at the end of studies. Experts take a closer look on samples of 15, randomly chosen thesis, their reviews and examination questions. Furthermore, examination papers, tests, projects, recorded presentations and wherever possible - personal development portfolio of students

¹⁰ In Poland institutional evaluation focuses only on HEI’s units (e.g. faculties) that have a right to grant habilitation degree.

are also examined. As part of analysed ECTS system, the self-learning and e-learning outcomes are examined. Evaluation panels also turn their attention to system of verification of internship outcomes and dropout rates.

When assessing learning outcomes achieved by law and medicine students, PKA can access results of the state licensing examination. In addition, all tertiary education institutions are required to monitor the professional careers of graduates and the results of this monitoring can be taken into account by the experts (Standard 2 criterion 4).

In addition PKA is obliged - when conducting its institutional evaluation - to assess learning outcomes achieved by Ph.D. students and post-diploma students (standard 3, criterion 1, 2, 5). During the process of assessing learning outcomes achieved over the doctoral studies dissertations are not scrutinised, however, opinions given by reviewers are taken into account.

Reference:

Annex to the Statute of PKA passed on 10 November 2011 (www.pka.edu.pl), in Polish

Assessment standards

Programme evaluation

Standard 2: The HEI's unit has developed and implemented a coherent specification of intended aims and learning outcomes of the field of study and a system for confirming achievement of aims and outcomes.

Criterion

3) The HEI's unit applies a transparent and publicly available system of assessment of learning outcomes, enabling verification of assumed aims and evaluation of learning outcomes at every stage of education process.

4) The HEI's unit monitors graduate's professional careers in the labour market, and uses obtained results to improve quality of education process.

Institutional evaluation

Standard 3. The HEI's unit uses a consistent description of intended aims and learning outcomes at provided doctoral and postgraduate studies and applies an efficient and credible system for verifying and confirming their achievement.

Criterion

- 1) Doctoral students have assured by the HEI to achieve learning outcomes relevant to particular field of research, and to graduate with academic degree of Ph.D.
- 2) Post-graduate students have assured by the institution to achieve learning outcomes consistent with requirements specified by professional associations and employers, which enable acquiring licence for occupational practice or new skills in the labour market,
- 5) The HEI's unit has a credible, transparent and publicly available – especially for students, doctoral students and non-enrolled students – system allowing evaluation to what extent the intended aims and learning outcomes were achieved.

Principle 6: In the case of programme accreditation, accreditation organisations should make explicit reference to the programmes learning outcomes in their reports.

Recommendation 6:

Accreditation organisations include the assessed programme’s LO in their reports. Reference is made to the LO that are valid for the programme at the time of the accreditation.

Agency:

Commission des Titres d’Ingénieurs (CTI), France

Context:

Focus of assessment:	<i>Programme level</i>
	Accreditation of engineering degree programmes
Type of learning outcomes:	<i>Intended & achieved learning outcomes</i>

Practice:

In its main reference text, « Références et Orientations», CTI specifies the general intended LO of all French engineering degrees. After the assessment of a specific programme, CTI publishes a report which analyses whether the institution has conveniently taken into account the above-mentioned general competences and also the specific LO linked to the specialisation of the particular degree.

The CTI evaluation report also states whether the intended LO are achieved (for instance through placement rate & level; professional evolution of the alumni).

Programme related learning outcomes are published in the « Registre National des Certifications Professionnelles (RNCP) », accessible to the general public. The registration to this register is controlled by CTI.

References:

« Références et Orientations » :

French : <http://extranet.cti-commission.fr/frontend.php>

English : www.cti-commission.fr/IMG/pdf/20100422_References_and_guidelines_2009-2.pdf

« Registre National des Certifications Professionnelles (RNCP) », www.cncp.gouv.fr

Principle 7. In the case of institutional accreditation, accreditation organisations should evaluate the institution’s provisions regarding the implementation and assessment of learning outcomes.

Recommendation 7.A

Accreditation organisations assess whether the implementation and assessment of LO are based on a carefully tailored strategy at the institutional level.

Agency:

The Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya), Spain

Context:

Focus assessment:	Institutional and programme level. Virtual institution.
Type of assessment:	Ex post
Type of learning outcomes:	Intended Learning Outcomes

Practice:

A methodology adapted for an e-learning institution (Catalan Open University, UOC) was designed by AQU Catalunya. In addition to a distinction in the assessment methodology between institutional evaluation and programme evaluation, the specific aspects of e-learning also called for adaptations of the evaluation process to be made. The relationship between the institutional evaluation and the degree programme evaluation is given in Table 1 regarding the assessment of LO, both at institutional and at degree programme level:

<p>Guide to the external review of e-learning degree programmes. Guide to institutional evaluation</p>	<p>Guide to the external review of e-learning degree programmes. Guide to the evaluation of degree programmes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Assessment methodologies are reviewed periodically</u> to check their adequacy in relation to the type and nature of studies and any changes, and also to technological innovations incorporated into the system • The institution has established procedures to ensure the <u>periodic updating of assessment tests and strategies</u>. • The institution has established efficient mechanisms to check student satisfaction with the assessment system as well as the opinion of teaching staff regarding the assessment system. • The institution has specified appeal systems applicable to the results of assessment and ensures that they are disseminated. • The institution has established systems to validate non-classroom-based assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The obtaining of a degree or other qualification requires the student to have completed a series of <u>specified assessments that cover the learning skills</u> identified as being important. • The assessment methods and instruments applied to verify the performance of the students <u>are valid</u> and clearly refer to the type and kind of learning activity to be covered and are appropriate to the distance learning education system. • The assessment criteria are clearly established; they are given in the institution's publications and, in general, are well known and understood by the students and teaching staff. • Systems to appeal assessment results are known by the teaching staff and students.

References:

Institutions

- [Guide to the self-evaluation of e-learning degree programmes. Guide to institutional evaluation](http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_34091552_1.pdf) http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_34091552_1.pdf
- [Guide to the external review of e-learning degree programmes. Guide to institutional evaluation](http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_29737323_1.pdf) http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_29737323_1.pdf

Degrees

- Guide to the self-evaluation of e-learning degree programmes. Guide to the evaluation of degree programmes http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_47270945_1.pdf
- Guide to the external review of e-learning degree programmes. Guide to the evaluation of degree programmes http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_34046349_1.pdf

Recommendation 7.B

Accreditation organisations assess whether the internal quality assurance system of HEI includes provisions for the implementation and assessment of LO as well as mechanisms of ascertaining the achievement of the intended LO.

Agency:

Swiss Centre of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (OAQ)

Context:

Focus of assessment:	<i>Institutional level</i>
	Q-audit of the institutional internal
	QA system of universities
Type of learning outcomes:	<i>Achieved learning outcomes</i>

Practice:

On 7 December 2006 the Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Swiss Universities were issued by the Swiss University Conference and served as basis for the Quality Audit cycles, linked with the renewal of the recognition of the right for financial aid for public universities. Therein seven criteria define the requirements for an institutional internal quality assurance system. In order to guarantee a shared and consistent understanding of the requirements, explanatory comments were developed and published together with the legal text.

The commentary to article 3.4 (“Evaluations - The university performs periodic internal evaluations of teaching, study programmes and curricula: procedures to assess student performance, results of teaching, research and services, as well as resources, gender equality and learning infrastructure. An external evaluation is performed whenever necessary.”) states the following:

Programme evaluations allow a periodic assessment of the effective achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They also allow examining if the curricula structure answers to both students' and professors' expectations. The pertinence of the supporting measures for students has to be checked for each programme. Surveys among alumni and employers must be taken into account.

The evaluation of examination procedures has to check if the performance assessment follows clearly defined published criteria and if learning outcomes are effectively achieved. [...]”

References:

Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Swiss Universities, SUC, 7 December 2006:

<http://www.oaq.ch/pub/fr/documents/F-443-06A-Quali-RL-VO.pdf>

e c a

5. QA Agencies profiles, ECA members providers of the information

5.1. National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA) - The Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya)

Full original name: **Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y la Acreditación**

Full original name: **L'Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya**

CONTEXT

Programme level external quality assurance

The purpose of this section is to explain the process of evaluation of a hypothetical new university programme (Bachelor or Master) in the Spanish context, with special attention to learning outcomes in accreditation procedure.

Ex ante procedure

ANECA/AQU carries out ex ante procedures. In ANECA/AQU assessment system, these are called initial accreditation procedures. Such a procedure is initiated by an institution when it wants to offer a new programme and/or wants to start offering a recognised degree.

Follow-up procedure

ANECA/AQU carries out monitoring of study plans that previously are accepted. It is the period within ex-ante and ex-post accreditation. ANECA/AQU - and other regional agencies - are beginning the so-called follow-up procedures where to check, by non-

intrusive means, that the institution is implementing the Degree according to the approved design.

Ex post procedure

ANECA/AQU will carry out ex post procedures (not available yet: model of evaluation in design phase). This means all accredited programmes need to receive a new positive accreditation decision before the end of that period to ensure that they can continue to award recognised degrees.

Additionally, ANECA/AQU carries out others similar procedures of evaluation, not mandatory, and other specific activities of evaluation in relation to study programmes (e.g. publications, events) paying special attention to Learning Outcomes.

Institutional level external quality assurance













ANECA/AQU, on the other hand, carries out institutional level external quality assurance procedures through the AUDIT programme.




Such a procedure is not mandatory and is carried out on request by an institution. The institutional QA audit tries to find out whether a HE institution is in control of its quality of teaching and learning.

Accreditation profile:

- ANECA: <http://www.ecaconsortium.net/member/6>
- AQU: <http://www.ecaconsortium.net/member/11>

OVERVIEW

Programme level	Intended LOs	Teaching & learning / process	Achieved LOs
- Ex ante			
- Follow-up			
- Ex post			
Institutional level			

- **Not relevant**, the agency does not undertake this kind of procedure.
-  Yes, learning outcomes are **always** taken into account.
-  Learning outcomes **can be** taken into account.
-  No, learning outcomes are **never** taken into account.

INCLUSION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The evaluation for accreditation of programs of the HEIs in ANECA/AQU takes into account the learning outcomes, when suggesting several documents, such as: (1) their guides to support the elaboration of study plans, (2) other support documents (FAQ), (3) evaluation protocols, (4) reports making for the Council of Universities, Autonomous Regions and Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. And, it considers in line with the **General Principles**, proposed by European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).

It is important to remind that LOs have been defined as what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a period of learning (the Bologna working group on qualifications) and that evaluation, made by ANECA/AQU, also includes a series of phases that are summarised in the previous diagram.

Intended learning outcomes

The initial evaluation of a programme takes into account Learning Outcomes principally in three criteria of evaluation protocol, according to RD 1393/2007, modified by RD 861/2010.

The commissions of evaluations analyse on document the following:

COMPETENCES. In the first of these three criteria the level of adjustment is reviewed taking into account both international parameters (European Framework for Higher Education Dublin descriptors, ECTS users guide, between others) and national parameters (for example: Spanish Qualification Framework for Higher Education (MECES) and professions with specific rules). On the other hand, it is valued its correct formulation (in terms of Learning Outcomes).

CURRICULA. In the second, it is reviewed the alignment competences together with activities and contents, student's workload, and its evaluation system.

EXPECTED RESULTS. The study plans include which are expected results in order to inform on rates and procedures, which are going to be used for value the progress of intended learning outcomes in other periods.

Teaching & Learning / process

When verifying a study plan, this Degree gets the grade of "official". Thus, it begins its implementation and a new phase of evaluation. This is named follow – up procedure, which also aims to help and advice because it realises with proximity to the university.

First, in the **self – evaluation** made by each University, it gathers evidences on how programs are put in practice, since a future student consults the web of his probably university until the valuation of satisfaction with different stakeholders. These evidences must be part of currently task of the institution. Internal quality assurance of system (IQAS) provided this kind of information that then is analysed by ANECA/AQU in an **external evaluation**.

In this phase, it is valued how it is been carried out in relation to the commitments acquired in accreditation ex – ante and how are achieving the intended learning outcomes. A comparative analysis is done between expected and achieved (in a specific moment), obtaining this information of quantitative results, guides of teaching, and a selection of coursework.

This part of process is critical because it serves to avoid undesirable effects on the learning process (on time) and to ensure that training is allowing the achievement of learning outcomes. If effects are not coincided with the intended, changes can be introduced during the process by mean of a modification of this programme.

Achieved learning outcomes

The whole evaluation process should permit a deep understanding of a concrete title and to know which the added value is (or debilities, strengths, etc.).

This process facilitates accountability to society, in a non-intrusive way, and enables a decision making on a university programme since data have been systematically collected for it. If university programme is doing each previous phases a conveniently way, consequently will be more easily achieved its re-accreditation. If not, the result is to begin a process of extinction of programmes. In this phase of the evaluation, working with learning outcomes focus on their achievement and, therefore, some questions of interest are: have intended learning outcomes been achieved? and if not so, why?, in the case of university level, it can obtain some values very appropriate in some titles, but also not in others, this situation may also permit a new kinds of analysis.

Learning outcomes webpage: (pending)

5.2. Accreditation body for engineering education in France (CTI)

Full original name: Commission des Titres d'Ingénieurs

CONTEXT

Programme level external quality assurance

Ex ante procedure (1st accreditation)

In France no engineering degree may be awarded without prior accreditation of the programme. In the case of state owned institutions, CTI evaluates the programme and forwards its accreditation report with a recommendation to the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, which legally habilitates the institution to award the degree. In the case of private institutions CTI evaluates the programme and forwards the report with its decision to the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, which notifies the institution of the result of the evaluation procedure (in this case the Ministry cannot go against CTI's decision).

CTI also accredits engineering programmes abroad, organised by foreign institutions. In the case of an accreditation decision by CTI, the foreign institution may apply to the French government for a "State admission" of its degree programme.

The accreditation procedure for new programmes is the same as for existing programmes and includes the taking into account of intended Learning Outcomes, the teaching process and the evaluation methods.

Normally, the maximum accreditation duration for new programmes is 3 years. In the case of shorter accreditation periods or of ascertained shortfalls, a follow-up procedure is compulsory.

Ex post procedure (re-accreditation)

Existing programmes are reviewed periodically by CTI and have to obtain a new accreditation in order to continue to award the degree. The evaluation procedure for existing programmes is the same as for new programmes and includes the taking into account of intended Learning Outcomes, the teaching process and the evaluation

methods. In the case of an Ex post procedure achieved Learning outcomes are an important issue.

The maximum accreditation duration is 6 years for existing programmes. CTI awards the European EUR-ACE label (European Accreditation of Engineering Programmes) to programmes accredited for the maximum duration of six years.

In the case of shorter accreditation periods or of ascertained shortfalls, a follow-up procedure is compulsory.

Follow-up procedure

A follow-up procedure for an accredited programme is not automatic and becomes compulsory only in the case of ascertained shortfalls. In that case, only the identified problematic aspects are reviewed. Intended and/or achieved Learning Outcomes and teaching and assessment methods may be taken into account during a follow-up procedure according to the identified inadequacies.

Institutional level external quality assurance

CTI deals with accreditation at programme level. But an important part of the evaluation procedure takes into account whether the institution guarantees a certain amount of requirements that enable the programme to be carried out in a satisfactory way. A “general policy statement” is a compulsory component of the documents that the HEI must submit to CTI. Among other aspects, in this policy statement, the institution must respond to certain questions, which refer to Learning Outcomes. For instance, does the institution’s management have a policy regarding Learning Outcomes and does it provide sufficient means to carry out satisfying teaching and assessment methods?

Accreditation profile: <http://www.eacaconsortium.net/member/6>

OVERVIEW

	Intended LOs	Teaching & learning / process	Achieved LOs
Programme level			
- Ex ante (1 st accreditation)			Not applicable
- Ex post (re-accreditation)			
- Follow-up			
Institutional level			

–**Not relevant**, the agency does not undertake this kind of procedure.



Yes, learning outcomes are **always** taken into account.



Learning outcomes **can be** taken into account.



No, learning outcomes are **never** taken into account.

INCLUSION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Intended learning outcomes

CTI itself describes the general intended Learning Outcomes of all engineering degree programmes in its published guidelines: « Références et Orientations ». CTI also provides institutions with a self-evaluation guide, which includes a chapter dedicated to programme specific Learning Outcomes that institutions have to describe. During an evaluation procedure, CTI checks whether the institution's general and programme specific intended Learning Outcomes are in adequacy with the requirements.

CTI awards the European EUR-ACE label (European Accreditation of Engineering Programmes). EUR-ACE clearly defines common Learning Outcomes for all engineering degrees at two levels: bachelor and master, in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework and the European Standards and Guidelines. CTI verifies that each training programme's intended Learning Outcomes are at the required level.

Teaching & learning / process

During an evaluation procedure, CTI checks whether the institution has at its disposal the necessary human and material means to carry out the teaching and learning activities and verifies the coherence between the specific identity of a programme and its Learning Outcomes.

CTI itself defines the global workload and fields of expertise that it deems necessary for the achievement of the intended Learning Outcomes in any engineering degree programme (general science, engineering science, techniques, language proficiency, personal, human and social dimension, professional & international experience).

In the self-evaluation document provided by the HEI and during the site visits, CTI experts check the structure & contents of the programme: number of contact hours and global workload, type of teaching and learning (theoretical lectures, exercises, field work, workshop, internships, site visits, ...), course contents, pedagogical methods, type of evaluation (written/oral exams, reports, projects, internship assessment, ...) and information on academic results of the students (rate of re-sit sessions, of failure, of exclusion).

Proficiency in the English language must be testified by an official test each student has to pass (recommended level: C1, tolerated level: B2 in the « Common European Framework of Reference »). Supervised practical training periods in a company are a compulsory component of the learning process.

At least one of the experts on the evaluation panel is a specialist in the evaluated engineering field (ex: a civil engineer for a civil engineering programme etc.) capable to analyse the course contents and having a good knowledge of the professional field & expected Learning Outcomes by industry.

Achieved learning outcomes

CTI checks whether the intended Learning Outcomes have been achieved, both at module level and at programme level, at short, medium and long term.

During the site visits, experts have a close look at the evaluation methods and results and go through documents that the HEI must put at their disposal such as examination subjects, internship reports, project reports, ...

The site visits always include confidential (which do not include the management team of the institution and the programme) meetings with students, alumni and representatives of the industry who employ the graduates. Experts read some examples of final overall projects to check whether the graduates have the expected profile of an engineer.

The CTI evaluation procedure includes an analysis of the adequacy between the training programme and short and long term employment situation of the graduates: time spent to find 1st employment, positions held and salary at short, medium and long term.

5.3. The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA)¹¹

Full original name: **Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut**

CONTEXT

Programme level

Ex ante procedure

EVA conducts two ex ante procedures: accreditation of new programs and accreditation of new provisions of existing programs. The institutions apply for accreditation on their own initiative, but positive accreditation is a precondition for attaining public funding and for awarding recognised degrees. EVA does the accreditation assessments and the Accreditation Council makes the accreditation decision.

Ex post procedure

EVA conducts ex post procedures referred to as accreditation of existing programs. The accreditations are conducted according to a plan laid down by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education. A positive accreditation is a precondition for maintaining public funding and the right to award recognised degrees. EVA does the accreditation assessments and the Accreditation Council makes the accreditation decision. The procedures are to be repeated app. every six years.

Follow-up procedure

EVA conducts re-accreditation of existing programs one year after they have had a conditional accreditation. EVA does not undertake any other kind of formal follow-up procedures.

Institutional level

¹¹ This document has been written in the period during which EVA undertook accreditation as described. However please note, that from 1 July 2013 EVA will no longer be conducting accreditation, but only thematic evaluations. From this point the accreditation tasks will be conducted by the Danish Accreditation Institution (a merger of ACE Denmark and (a smaller part of) EVA). At the same time the Danish external quality assurance system will change from programme accreditation to institutional accreditation.

Though the examples therefore no longer describe current practices, it is hoped that they may still be of interest to the reader

Institutional assessment is not part of the formal Danish external quality assurance system at present. However the present system is most likely to be changed, and in this context mandatory institutional accreditation is being considered from 2013. It can be noted that EVA has developed a concept for voluntary institutional audit and conducted a pilot together with an institution in 2011.

Accreditation profile: <http://www.eaconsortium.net/member/4>

OVERVIEW

	Intended learning outcomes	Teaching & learning / process	Achieved learning outcomes
Programme level			
- Ex ante			-
- Ex post			
- Follow-up			
Institutional level ¹²		-	

- **Not relevant**, the agency does not undertake this kind of procedure.

Yes, learning outcomes are **always** taken into account.

Learning outcomes **can be** taken into account.

No, learning outcomes are **never** taken into account.

INCLUSION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Intended learning outcomes

¹² Learning outcomes are not considered directly, but indirectly, as it is checked if the institution has procedures to ensure that they work with learning outcomes in a satisfactory way

An expert panel assesses whether the intended learning outcomes of a programme are in line with the description of the degree in question in the national qualification framework. They also look at whether the descriptions of learning outcomes at module level correspond with the descriptions of learning outcome at programme level. Apart from this direct assessment of the intended learning outcomes, the intended learning outcomes also serve as reference point for assessing other features of a programme. For instance the panel will assess if a programme's facilities and resources are sufficient for the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Teaching & learning / process

An expert panel assesses if the organisation of the programme, the applied methods of teaching and learning and the content of the modules all together support that the students may be able to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The panel also checks whether the qualifications and competences of the teachers are adequate compared to the degree level and the intended learning outcomes.

Achieved learning outcomes

An expert panel assesses if a programme's tests and examinations ensure an adequate illustration of whether a student has achieved the intended learning outcomes. This means that no important part of the intended learning outcomes must be left untested, and that it is not sufficient to test e.g. only knowledge and not competencies.

Furthermore the panel must look at the actual grades given to the graduates. If too many low grades are given at a programme, the panel investigate if this indicates that the students at this programme in general have problems achieving the intended learning outcomes.

Finally it should be mentioned that Denmark has a tradition for extensive use of external examiners at all levels of the educational system. The external examiners must report their assessment of the tests and examinations they have participated in back to the institution, including their assessment of e.g. the examination questions, the teacher, the academic level and the examination administration. The expert panel will look at how the institution uses these external examiners' evaluation reports for quality improvements.

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Learning outcomes webpage: Not yet available

5.4. Fachhochschul – Council (FH-Council), Austria

Full original name: **Fachhochschulrat (until 31.8.2012)**

Annotation:

As of 1 March 2012 external quality assurance in Austria is regulated by a new legislation (Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education – HS-QSG), which defines the types of external quality assurance for the different sectors of higher education (Public Universities – Private Universities – Universities of Applied Sciences). Through this act the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) has been established as the single body for external quality assurance. This new agency includes the competences and activities of the three existing organisations, namely the Österreichischer Akkreditierungsrat (Austrian Accreditation Council - ÖAR) the Fachhochschulrat (FH Council - FHR) and the Österreichische Agentur für Qualitätssicherung (Austrian Agency for Quality assurance - AQA). According to the law AQ Austria is the legal successor of the ÖAR and the FHR.

AQ Austria is on its way to develop new procedures for institutional and programme accreditation according to the new legislative framework. In case of accreditation procedures for the sector of Universities of Applied Sciences, former FH Council regulations are nevertheless, along with the comprehensively amended University of Applied Sciences Studies Act (FHStG), the basis for those developments.

All FH Council - Examples of Good practice refer to the FH Council regulations, which were valid until 29 February 2012. Further information can be found on www.fhr.ac.at. Please note that this webpage will be deactivated in the foreseeable future. The new website for the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) - www.aq.ac.at - will from then on replace the old websites of the predecessor organisation.

CONTEXT

Programme level external quality assurance

Ex ante procedure

The FH Council was responsible for the accreditation of degree programmes offered by the Universities of Applied Sciences. The FH Council carried out ex ante procedures (initial accreditation procedures). Initial accreditation was compulsory in order to start operation of a new Bachelor, Master or Diploma degree programme. Initial accreditation was granted for a limited period of time not exceeding five years. The consequence of non-accreditation was that the programme could not be started.

Ex post procedure

The FH Council carried out ex post procedures (re-accreditation procedures). Re-accreditation required an application for extension of the accreditation including an evaluation report. Re-accreditation resulted in the extension of accreditation for a maximum of five years. The consequence of non-re-accreditation was that the programme could not be continued.

Follow-up procedure

Formally, the FH Council did not undertake follow-up procedures at programme level.










Institutional level external quality assurance

The FH Council carried out institutional level external quality assurance procedures (institutional evaluation). As a rule, the mandatory institutional evaluations took place in 6-year intervals. The objective of the evaluation was to promote quality improvement and to demonstrate to the public how the institution meets the responsibility for assuring and enhancing quality. On the basis of both the self-evaluation report and the on-site visit, the external evaluation by the review team aimed at assessing whether the set requirements have been met in a coherent, appropriate and transparent way.


Accreditation profile: <http://www.eaconsortium.net/member/3>

Annotation: Please note that the information in the published accreditation profile refer to the FH Council. Within foreseeable future this profile will be replaced by a new one of the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria).


OVERVIEW

	Intended learning outcomes	Teaching & learning / process	Achieved learning outcomes
Programme level			
- Ex ante			
- Ex post			
- Follow-up	-	-	-
Institutional level			

- **Not relevant**, the agency does not undertake this kind of procedure.

 Yes, learning outcomes are **always** taken into account.

 Learning outcomes **can be** taken into account.

 No, learning outcomes are **never** taken into account.

INCLUSION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Intended learning outcomes

Programme level

The educational mandate of the Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences is to provide a scientifically sound and practice-oriented professional education at a higher education level. Therefore institutions are expected to explicitly define the intended learning outcomes at the programme level, named “qualification profile”. The FH Council assessed whether the qualification profile specified the knowledge and skills required to fulfil the jobs and tasks of the intended vocational field at higher-education level.

Teaching & learning / process

Programme level

In order to assess whether the teaching and learning activities enable students to reach the intended learning outcomes, on the one hand, the correlation between programme learning outcomes (qualification profile) and modules and, on the other hand, the particular modules were taken into account. For illustrating the contribution of the modules to the qualification profile a template was enclosed in the Guidelines of the Fachhochschule Council for the Accreditation of Bachelor's, Master's and Diploma Degree Programmes (Accreditation Guidelines, AR 2010, Version 1.1 valid until 29 February 2012; http://www.fhr.ac.at/fhr_inhalt_en/01_about_us/publications.htm). Additionally Universities of Applied Sciences used their own templates for illustrating the correlation of programme learning outcomes and modules. Furthermore the particular modules were described on the basis of a template. This module description - aside from formal information - included the intended learning outcomes on the one hand, and the teaching contents and a reading list on the other hand (inputs).

Institutional level

The institutional evaluation in the Austrian University of Applied Science sector focused on the strategies and procedures for quality assurance and quality enhancement of the core functions of universities of applied sciences. The evaluation topic "study programmes and teaching" dealt with the HEI's provisions for the implementation and assessment of learning outcomes. Accordingly the procedure for developing or advancing degree programmes had to take into consideration the connection between the vocational field, the intended learning outcomes ("qualification profile") and the curriculum and teaching concept.

Achieved learning outcomes

The achieved learning outcomes were not an explicit part of the FH Council's assessment procedure.

Learning outcomes webpage: Not yet available

5.5. Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)

Full original name: **Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie**

CONTEXT

Programme level external quality assurance

Ex ante procedure

NVAO carries out ex ante procedures. In NVAO's assessment system, these are called initial accreditation procedures. Such a procedure is initiated by an institution when it wants to offer a new programme and/or wants to start offering a recognised degree. Both in The Netherlands and Flanders new Bachelor and Master programmes need to receive a positive initial accreditation decision before they can award recognised degrees.

Ex post procedure

NVAO carries out ex post procedures. In NVAO's assessment system, these are called accreditation procedures. An institution initiates such a procedure when a programmes' period of accreditation is near its end. Both in The Netherlands and Flanders accreditation is valid for a predetermined period. If that period ends the programme is no longer recognised and cannot award recognised degrees anymore. This means all accredited programmes need to receive a new positive accreditation decision before the end of that period to ensure that they can continue to award recognised degrees.

Follow-up procedure

Formally, NVAO does not undertake follow-up procedures.

Institutional level external quality assurance

NVAO carries out institutional level external quality assurance procedures. In NVAO's assessment system, these are called institutional QA audits (The Netherlands) or

institutional reviews (Flanders). Both procedures focus on ascertaining whether a HE institution is in control of its quality of teaching and learning. NVAO uses audit trails to assess relevant aspects of (teaching and learning) activities taking place within the institution.

Accreditation profile: www.eacaconsortium.net/member/1
<http://www.eacaconsortium.net/ecapedia/NVAO>

OVERVIEW

	Intended learning outcomes	Teaching & learning / process	Achieved learning outcomes
Programme level			
- Ex ante			
- Ex post			
- Follow-up	-	-	-
Institutional level			

- **Not relevant**, the agency does not undertake this kind of procedure.

Yes, learning outcomes are **always** taken into account.

Learning outcomes **can be** taken into account.

No, learning outcomes are **never** taken into account.

INCLUSION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Intended learning outcomes

Institutions are fully autonomous over their programmes but programmes are expected to explicitly define its intended learning outcomes. These express what a graduate should acquire during his/her studies. An assessment panel judges whether a programme's intended learning outcomes are in line with the required level and the subject of the programme. The level is evaluated by matching the intended learning outcomes to the corresponding descriptors in the national qualification framework (which in turn is referenced to the Dublin

descriptors). Additionally, the assessment panel assesses whether these intended learning outcomes are in line with what is (inter)nationally expected of a programme in that subject.

Teaching & learning / process

NVAO assesses the teaching and learning environment and its potentiality to contribute to achieving the intended learning outcomes. This refers to what a student can achieve in the programme as it is offered. This is mainly done by checking whether the content of the curriculum allows the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. An example probably clarifies this better. If a programme defines certain laboratory skills as an intended learning outcome, the curriculum of the programme should explicitly cover this and give students the possibility to do laboratory work. If this isn't the case, there is of course no correspondence between the content of the curriculum and the intended learning outcomes. Certain input elements such as the facilities and the quantity and quality of the staff also contribute to the possible achievement of learning outcomes. These are therefore additionally assessed but in the perspective of achieving the intended learning outcomes.

Achieved learning outcomes

NVAO explicitly assesses the programme's achieved learning outcomes. These are what a graduate has actually acquired during his or her studies. An assessment panel needs to scrutinise students' work (such as essays, works of art, end of term papers and theses) to be able to judge the achieved learning outcomes and then match those with the intended learning outcomes. NVAO has issued a specific guideline outlining how panels assess final projects.

Learning outcomes webpage: www.nvao.com/learning-outcomes

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5.6. Swiss Centre of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (OAQ)

Full original name: **Organ für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung der Schweizerischen Hochschulen (OAQ) /**
Organe d'accréditation et d'assurance qualité des hautes écoles suisses (OAQ) /
Organo di accreditamento e di garanzia della qualità delle istituzioni universitarie svizzere (OAQ)

CONTEXT

Programme level external quality assurance

Programme assessments		
UAS programmes	Bachelor, Master	Obligatory accreditation
Medical programmes	Graduate (Ba+Ma), Postgraduate	Obligatory accreditation
University programmes (public and private HEI)	Bachelor, Master, PhD	Voluntary accreditation
Continuing education programmes (UAS & Uni)	MAS, MBA, EMBA	Voluntary accreditation (Uni) Voluntary evaluation (UAS)

Ex ante / ex post procedures

OAQ does not distinguish between ex-ante and ex-post procedures in its assessment system. All procedures at programme level foresee the same processes (with minor differences due to different contexts), involving a self-evaluation, an external review including an on-site visit, a decision with publication of results. However, it is worth mentioning that in the UAS sector (Universities of Applied Sciences) programme accreditation is pre-condition for the right to deliver degrees. De facto, all accreditations in the UAS can be seen as ex-ante procedures in so far as they have for object running programmes where a full cycle has not been delivered yet. In the medical sector programme accreditation is pre-condition to degree admission to the

Federal exam for medical professions, which is an obligation for accessing the medical professions in Switzerland. By consequence, all programmes ask for accreditation before the first diplomas are delivered, which can be seen as ex-ante. In the remaining contexts (namely university institutions), programme accreditation is not obligatory. The period of validity of accreditation procedures in Switzerland is 7 years. When a programmes' period of accreditation is about to elapse, a "re-accreditation" can/must be asked, depending on the sectors. Re-accreditations can be seen as ex-post procedures. However, they do not differ from accreditation procedures besides the focus given on the developments from the previous accreditation cycle and the measures put in place to implement the recommendations for improvement given. The achievement of LO and the curriculum/process changes to ensure such achievement represent as well aspects which are more evident in re-accreditations.

Follow-up procedure

Formal follow-up procedures are carried out when a procedure ends with conditions to be fulfilled in a give period of time. They focus on the fulfilment of these conditions. Re-accreditation procedures do also represent a follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations given in the previous accreditation procedure.

Institutional level external quality assurance

Institutional assessments		
Public HEI	Internal QA system	Obligatory Quality Audit
UAS	11 areas of examination	Obligatory accreditation
Public and private HEI	8 areas of examination	Voluntary accreditation

As far as the institutional procedures are concerned, LO are not directly taken into account but the internal institutional mechanisms to deal with LO are assessed.










Quality audits are cyclical assessments of the internal QA system at public institutions, required every 4 years for the renewal of the right to financial aid. All Swiss UAS are federally accredited and must be first authorised by the Federal Council. In addition to reviewing their managerial and organisational structures, the content of teaching,

research, continuing education and training and services are assessed. As for the university sector, authorisation is ruled at cantonal level for the time being, therefore institutional accreditation remains voluntary.


The current system will change with the entry into force of the new framework law on higher education in Switzerland, according to which obligatory institutional accreditation is foreseen for the whole academic tertiary sector, whereas programme accreditation would remain voluntary.

Agency profile: <http://www.eacaconsortium.net/member/12>


OVERVIEW

	Intended learning outcomes	Teaching & learning / process	Achieved learning outcomes
Programme level			
- Ex ante			
- Ex post			
- Follow-up			
Institutional level			

– **Not relevant**, the agency does not undertake this kind of procedure.

 Yes, learning outcomes are **always** taken into account.

 Learning outcomes **can be** taken into account.

 No, learning outcomes are **never** taken into account.

INCLUSION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Programme assessments

Institutions are fully autonomous over their programmes and the definition of the programmes' learning outcomes (what a graduate should acquire at completion of the

studies). An assessment panel judges whether the programme's intended learning outcomes are coherent and in line with the required level (national and international frameworks).

The assessment of the curriculum, of the examination methods and of the teaching and learning environment helps evaluating how these elements contribute to achieving the intended learning outcomes. This includes input elements such as the facilities, the quantity and quality of the staff.

A final match with what a graduate has actually acquired during the studies helps the assessment of the programme's achieved learning outcomes. The elements taken into account are namely students' works (such as essays, works of art, end of term papers, theses and final projects) and interviews with alumni, professional organisations and employers.

All programme assessments evaluate the extent to which the organisation, structure, duration and content of the programme enable students to achieving the intended LO.

For the medical programmes a Swiss catalogue of learning objectives has been defined at Federal level. The achievement of these objectives is comprehensively assessed in the Federal exam, which gives access to the medical professions.

Institutional assessments

As far as the institutional procedures are concerned, LO are not directly taken into account. However, the assessment includes the internal institutional mechanisms to deal with the definition of the programme's objectives and learning outcomes, the implementation of the programme, its QA system. The assessment evaluates as well how the institution observes the development of students' achievements and how it monitors adherence with the specified conditions for measuring and certifying students' performance and conferring academic degrees. Q-audits also take into account periodic internal evaluations of teaching, study programmes and curricula, with a focus on the achievement of the intended LO.

5.7. Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA)

Full original name: **Polska Komisja Akredytacyjna (PKA)**

CONTEXT

Programme level external quality assurance

Ex ante procedure

PKA evaluates ex-ante the quality of all programs - the so called programme assessment - delivered by state and private higher education institutions ineligible to award the scientific degree of habilitation. Ex-ante programme assessment is compulsory.

Ex post procedure

Every programme is subject to compulsory ex-post evaluation done by PKA. First assessment takes place after the entire education cycle is complete and then - provided the review was positive - past next 6 years.

Follow-up procedure

PKA initiates the follow-up procedure in each of the following two cases: Firstly, once the programme is granted a conditional approval and if deficiencies identified are repairable within one year. Secondly, when PKA passes a resolution certifying positive assessment, which features recommendations for the higher education institution and deadlines for fulfilling them. In both cases, the higher education institution concerned is obliged to report upon doing so to PKA, which then evaluates to what extent the identified deficiencies were rectified.

Institutional level external quality assurance

PKA carries out an institutional assessment of higher education units, which comply with two criteria: are authorised to award habilitation degrees and at least half of offered programs was approved. Institutional assessment can be initiated both by PKA and the university. The assessment predominantly focuses on internal quality assurance systems. Moreover, PKA is obliged to assess the quality of doctoral and postgraduate programmes delivered by the evaluated unit, including assessment of

intended and achieved learning outcomes. Furthermore, it is evaluated whether the unit holds sufficient staff, material and financial resources to reach strategic goals and guarantee the achievement of intended learning outcomes, offers support to students and Ph.D. students, links scientific research with the educational process, and collaborates domestically and internationally with academic institutions.

Accreditation profile: www.eaconsortium.net/member/5
<http://www.eaconsortium.net/ecapedia/PKA>

OVERVIEW

	Intended learning outcomes	Teaching & learning / process	Achieved learning outcomes
Programme level			
- Ex ante			
- Ex post			
- Follow-up			
Institutional level	*	*	*

– **Not relevant**, the agency does not undertake this kind of procedure.

Yes, learning outcomes are **always** taken into account.

Learning outcomes **can be** taken into account.

No, learning outcomes are **never** taken into account.

* Those elements are taken into account during assessment of third cycle education (doctoral studies) and post-diploma programmes.

INCLUSION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Intended learning outcomes

Universities are autonomous to design their programmes within the framework set by the Minister of Science and Higher Education. Learning outcomes intended by given programme have to be consistent with qualification descriptors specified by NQF for particular area of study and encompass knowledge, skills and social competencies. Higher education institutions can use so called example (standard) descriptors drawn up by Ministry of Science and Higher Education to design its own intended learning outcomes. PKA experts can also verify whether intended learning outcomes comply with requirements of professional associations, and thus qualify for licence to practice (for practical oriented studies) and requirements formulated for specific discipline of science from which the major derives (for general academic studies). Intended learning outcomes should be published by HEI.

Teaching & learning / process

Higher education institutions should unequivocally state, which elements of delivered curriculum should provide intended learning outcomes. It is assessed, whether given curriculum enables achieving every intended learning outcome and whether intended learning outcomes, curriculum, modules, courses and didactic methods are coherent.

PKA also scrutinises the conditions in which intended learning outcomes are being delivered. Quantity and quality of Staff, and teachers/students ratio in particular: The second analysed element is the quality of didactic and scientific infrastructure (e.g. library, IT system, laboratories) required to achieve intended learning outcomes. The third element is the system of supporting students in their learning processes.

Achieved learning outcomes

PKA expects universities to present a system confirming the intended learning outcomes have been achieved at each stage of education. At the same time it assesses directly a randomly chosen sample for achieved learning outcomes. It involves reviewing exam papers (final, mid-term), outcomes of internships, student projects, recorded presentations etc., and wherever possible - the student portfolio. Each team of expert reviews 15 diploma theses. However experts do not evaluate quality of doctoral thesis, as it is already done by independent

reviewers. Assessment of learning outcomes in relation to employability and labour markets needs is based a. o. on outcomes of monitoring professional careers of alumni (monitoring is mandatory for all HEIs).

Learning outcomes webpage: Not yet available

6. Other QA Agencies contributing to this document

6.1. Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES)

Full original name: **Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior (A3ES)**

CONTEXT

Following the recent development of quality assurance systems, namely those in the European space, the Portuguese state has decided to create the “Agência de Avaliação e Acreditação do Ensino Superior” (Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education - A3ES), by means of Decree-Law no. 369/2007, of 5th November, aiming at promoting and ensuring the quality of higher education. The Agency is a private law foundation, established for an indeterminate period of time, with legal status and recognised as being of public utility. The Agency is independent in its decisions, without prejudice of the guidelines fixed by the State. The assessment and accreditation regime to be developed by the Agency is defined in Law no. 38/2007, of 16th August.

The Agency has initiated its activities in 2009, this year being almost fully dedicated to the implementation of structures and procedures, appointment of its different governance bodies and hiring and training staff. Years 2010 and 2011 were focused mainly in complying with the goals set by the relevant legislation for this period, including the preliminary accreditation of all study cycles in operation when the Agency was created, the previous accreditation of new study cycles and the preparation of the audit process for the internal quality assurance systems. From 2012 the first regular five years cycle of accreditation of study cycles has been initiated. In 2012 the first experimental exercises of audits of the institutional internal quality assurance systems took place. Therefore, the Agency aims to perform a systematic and strict accreditation of every study cycle in operation, aiming at improving the system’s global quality

and its educational offer. At the same time the Agency promotes the implementation and certification of the institutional internal quality assurance systems aiming at a new phase of the quality system grounded on the principle that the main responsibility for the quality of education lies first of all with every institution.

Ex ante procedure

A3ES carries out ex ante procedures; In A3ES system they correspond to the previous accreditation of new study cycles. In Portugal, all programs need to receive a positive initial accreditation decision before they can award recognised degrees.

Ex post procedure

A3ES carries out ex post procedures. The first regular five years cycle of accreditation of all study cycles has been initiated in 2012 and will end by the end of 2017. In A3ES system they correspond to the Assessment/Accreditation of Study Cycles Already in Operation. All accredited programs need to receive a new positive accreditation decision before the end of that period to ensure that they can continue to award recognised degrees.

Follow-up procedure

A3ES carries out follow-up procedures for programs with conditional accreditations.

Institutional level external quality assurance:

A3ES carries out institutional level external quality assurance procedures in what concerns the Internal Quality Assurance Systems. A3ES started in 2012 with an experimental exercise those accreditations.

Accreditation profile:

<http://www.a3es.pt/en/accreditation-and-audit/guidelines/previous-acreditation-new-study-cycles>

<http://www.a3es.pt/en/accreditation-and-audit/guidelines/assessment/accreditation-study-cycles-already-operation>

<http://www.a3es.pt/en/accreditation-and-audit/guidelines/audit-internal-systems-quality-assurance>

Agency profile:

<http://www.a3es.pt/en>

OVERVIEW

	Intended learning outcomes	Teaching & learning / process	Achieved learning outcomes
Programme level			
- Ex ante		-	-
- Ex post			
- Follow-up	-	-	-
Institutional level			

- **Not relevant**, the agency does not undertake this kind of procedure.

Yes, learning outcomes are **always** taken into account.

Learning outcomes **can be** taken into account.

No, learning outcomes are **never** taken into account.

INCLUSION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Programme assessments

The guidelines for programme accreditation include the assessment of the learning outcomes. Institutions are responsible for the definition of the programmes' learning outcomes (what a

graduate should acquire at completion of the studies). The external evaluation commission (CAE) analyses whether the programme's intended learning outcomes are coherent and in line with the required level of the national qualification framework.

During the site visit the external panel considers learning outcomes assessment.

Institutional assessments

A3ES has just started with institutional accreditations for the Internal Quality Assurance Systems. The procedures have a strong focus on learning outcomes.

6.2. Quality Assessment Division (QAD) of the Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE)

Full original name: **HaAgaf L'Haarachat Eichut V'Havtachata shel Hamoetza L'haskala
Gvohaa B'yisrael**

CONTEXT

Programme level external quality assurance

Ex ante procedure

Ex ante accreditation procedures are conducted by the Israeli Council for Higher Education. Generally, new programs awarding academic degrees in Israel must receive accreditation by the CHE. All institutions must submit a specific, detailed request for each programme that they want to open and for which an academic degree will be granted. The Council for Higher Education discusses and grants accreditation to each programme individually.

Ex post procedure

Programs are evaluated across the board according to discipline based on the multi-year plan developed by the CHE, which lists the disciplines that will be evaluated every year. Approximately 5-7 fields are evaluated every year. The quality assessment process is composed of 4 stages and executed by the Quality Assessment Division (QAD):

1. A self-evaluation process at the institutions being examined, accompanied by the preparation of a self-study report.
2. Quality assessment of the study programme at the institutions being examined, carried out by an international evaluation committee appointed by the CHE, whose work will be based on the self-evaluation reports and visits to the institutions. At the conclusion of the evaluation process, the committees present a summary report to the CHE.
3. Discussion and decision-making by the CHE.
4. Publication of the CHE's decisions and committee reports.

Follow-up procedure










The QAD executes the follow-up procedure to assure the implementation of the evaluation committees' recommendations (in line with CHE resolutions). In general, institutions are requested to submit action plans regarding the implementation approximately 6 months following the CHE decision and implementation reports approximately a year after CHE decisions. Implementation reports are examined by external reviewers (in most cases by a member of the initial evaluation committee) to assess the extent to which the institutions implemented the evaluation committees' recommendations.

Institutional level external quality assurance


Each Institution in Israel must receive accreditation from the CHE in order to receive the authority to be recognised as a Higher Education Institution. Unlike accreditation, Quality Assessment conducted by the QAD of the CHE, is not carried out on the institutional level at this time.


QAD website: http://che.org.il/template/default_e.aspx?PagelId=297


OVERVIEW

	Intended learning outcomes	Teaching & learning / process	Achieved learning outcomes
Programme level			
- Ex ante			
- Ex post			
- Follow-up			
Institutional level	-	-	-

- **Not relevant**, the agency does not undertake this kind of procedure.

 Yes, learning outcomes are **always** taken into account.

 Learning outcomes **can be** taken into account.

 No, learning outcomes are **never** taken into account.

INCLUSION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Intended learning outcomes

Institutions are autonomous to design the mission and intended learning outcomes of their programme. Within the guidelines for self-evaluation developed by the QAD, institutions are requested to describe the intended learning outcomes in their study programs, the way in which the learning outcomes were developed and where they appear. Syllabi that are submitted are also supposed to list learning outcomes. International evaluation committees review the intended learning outcomes in the programs, which they evaluate to assure their existence and coherence.

Teaching & learning / process

QA evaluation committees review all study programs curriculum, including syllabi, course requirements and intended learning outcomes. In addition, quantity and quality of faculty members and faculty/students ratio are examined. Methods used to mentor and supervise faculty and mechanisms used to bolster excellence in teaching (e.g. a centre for excellence in teaching, structured system for evaluating teaching) are described in the self-evaluation reports. The quality of didactic and scientific infrastructure (e.g. library, IT systems, laboratories) required to achieve intended learning outcomes is also examined as well as the study program/institution's system of supporting students in their learning processes.

Achieved learning outcomes

The QAD's guidelines for self-evaluation include a section on methods applied to measure Learning Outcomes. The study programs are requested to include data on examinations and written assignments including histograms illustrating grade distribution, how exams are composed, who grades exams and papers and methods used to ascertain validity. The

institutions are requested to answer the questions: "To what extent have the methods applied to measure the teaching and learning outcomes achieved their goals? Do you think that the intended LO were achieved by the students?"

In addition to their assessment of the above data, QA committees review student projects, theses and doctoral dissertations. Furthermore, information regarding alumni placement and continuation to advanced degrees is considered by committees as part of their evaluation of graduate performance.

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