

Accreditation Standards

Programme accreditation at higher education institutions

This document outlines the accreditation standards that EQAA uses for the accreditation of study programmes at higher education institutions. The standards are the terms of reference for judging whether a study programme offered at a higher education institution qualifies for accreditation by EQAA. Standard 8 is only applicable for study programmes in higher education institutions that actively undertake (applied) research by themselves or in co-operation with other universities or higher education institutions.

Standard 1

Objectives of the study programme

- (1) The study programme objective suits with the mission and strategy of the higher education institution.
- (2) The objective of the study programme should be used as a guide for the planning of the study programme.
- (3) It is ensured that the objective of the study programme is suitably profession-related and is based on an assessment of the needs and requirements of the labour market.
- (4) The programme objective is periodically reviewed and adjusted.
- (5) The overall learning outcomes for the study programme are well defined and publicly available. The learning outcomes conform to general academic requirements, national regulations and any applicable national qualifications framework.

Standard 2

Quality Assurance

- (1) The quality assurance arrangements for the study programme are embedded in the higher education institution's system of quality assurance.
- (2) The focus of the quality assurance activities for the study programme lies on the enhancement of quality.
- (3) The quality assurance processes for the study programme are managed with clear responsibilities and implemented through an appropriate structure.

- (4) The involvement of management, academic and other staff and students in the operational processes of the quality assurance system is ensured. External stakeholders also have a role in the quality assurance system.
- (5) The quality assurance system covers all aspects relevant to the study programme, including teaching and learning, research, engagement with the community, management, administration and support services. The quality assurance activities provide relevant analytical information and data to support the management and development of the study programme and are continuously used for improving the quality of the study programme, its administration and the learning environment.
- (6) The study programme periodically undergoes external quality assurance by an appropriate body.

Standard 3

Management of the study programme

- (1) The study programme is effectively managed in terms of its design, approval, monitoring and review.
- (2) The study programme is designed in line with the level of qualification that students entering the study programme possess. It is ensured that students can achieve the learning outcomes in the foreseen timeframe.
- (3) The study programme is structured in a coherent manner, allowing for (an) adequate learning path(s).
- (4) Academic and other staff as well as students are adequately involved in the management of the study programme.
- (5) The management of the study programme ensures an appropriate division and distribution of responsibilities and accountabilities.
- (6) Information about the study programme is made public, including provisions about credits, learning outcomes, methodology and admission, progression and completion.

Standard 4

Learning and Teaching

- (1) The learning outcomes of the study programme are adequate and relevant.
- (2) The learning and teaching activities are appropriately designed to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved. The activities encourage the active participation of students in their learning process.
- (3) The study programme effectively integrates theory and practice, places a focus on employability and is profession related.
- (4) The admission to the study programme is based on clear and consistently applied regulations.

- (5) The study programme allows for the recognition of periods of studies unless substantial differences exist in a fair and timely manner.
- (6) The recognition of prior learning is adequately regulated.
- (7) Students of the study programme are provided with sufficient learning resources, including facilities, libraries, IT infrastructure and support, and academic guidance. The study programme is offered in an appropriate learning environment, including in particular counselling and other support services.
- (8) The assessments within the study programme are adequate to judge the achievement of the learning outcomes. They are designed so that students are fairly assessed on the basis of consistently applied and transparent regulations. A policy against plagiarism and other forms of malpractice is enforced. The study programme has clear mechanisms for student appeal and dispute resolution are regulated and fairly administered.
- (9) The award of a qualification is accompanied by appropriate explanatory documents.

Standard 5

Community Engagement

- (1) The study programme is designed in line with the higher education institution's policy to contribute to the community or communities. The needs and requirements are assessed and taken into consideration for the design of the study programme.
- (2) The study programme impacts and benefits the relevant community/ies.
- (3) Adequate public information about the study programme is provided.

Standard 6

Staff

- (1) It is ensured that staff involved in the study programme are adequately qualified and experienced for their roles. An appropriate proportion of the teaching staff has practical professional experience.
- (2) Staff involved in the study programme are regularly evaluated and should be committed to improving their performance and the quality of the study programme.
- (3) Staff involved in the study programme are offered and encouraged to take part in professional development activities based on appropriate needs assessment.
- (4) The student-staff-ratio for the study programme is sufficient to appropriately carry out the study programme, both in academic and administrative terms.

Standard 7

Resources

- (1) There are sufficient financial resources to deliver the study programme effectively.
- (2) The financial resources for the study programme are efficiently managed and are part of the planning process for the study programme. Financial requirements should be appropriately articulated for budgeting.

Standard 8

Research

- (1) The aims and objectives of the research components of the study programme are consistent with the higher education institution's research policy and strategy. The aims and objectives of the research components ensure the applicability and/or relatedness to professions as an intrinsic part.
- (2) The study programme ensures that its research components conform to internationally accepted methodological standards.
- (3) The study programme contains research components that are appropriate for the type and level of the study programme. It is ensured that the teaching is adequately informed by research and that new research outcomes are integrated into the study programme.
- (4) Adequate and sufficient facilities and equipment for the research components of the study programme are available for staff and students.
- (5) It is ensured that there are mechanisms to ensure compliance with ethical standards for the research carried out within the study programme.