Accreditation of Study Programmes in Human Medicine, Dentistry and Chiropractic

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Contents

Part A:  Guide  1
Part B:  HEdA Accreditation Ordinance and excerpts from the MedPA  12
Part C:  Quality standards and explanations for the accreditation of study programmes in human medicine, dentistry and chiropractic pursuant to HEdA and MedPA  27
Part D:  Code of conduct  33

The HEdA-relevant parts of the documentation were approved by the Swiss Accreditation Council at its meeting on 9 December 2016.

The MedPA-relevant parts of the documentation were approved by the Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs in March 2017.
Part A: Guide

Contents

1. Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and MedPA ........................................... 1
   1.1 Preliminary remarks ...................................................................................................................... 1
   1.2 Provisions of the Medical Professions Act .............................................................................. 1
   1.3 Object of accreditation .............................................................................................................. 1
   1.4 External evaluation and accreditation decision ........................................................................... 2
   1.5 Sequence and duration of the procedure .................................................................................... 2
   1.6 Costs ............................................................................................................................................ 3

2. Admission to the procedure ......................................................................................................... 5
   2.1 Filing of the application ............................................................................................................. 5
   2.2 Admission .................................................................................................................................. 5

3. Accreditation of study programmes: Procedural steps ............................................................... 5
   3.1 Self-assessment .......................................................................................................................... 5
   3.2 External evaluation ..................................................................................................................... 6
   3.3 Accreditation agency’s proposal, statement by the higher education institution, hearing of the Commission for Medical Professions ................................................................................. 9
   3.4 Decision ..................................................................................................................................... 10
   3.5 Publication .................................................................................................................................. 10
   3.6 Assessment of fulfilment of conditions ..................................................................................... 10
   3.7 Obligations of the study programme accredited pursuant to HEdA and MedPA .................... 11
1. Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and MedPA

1.1 Preliminary remarks

The object of accreditation pursuant to the Higher Education Act (HEdA) and the Medical Professions Act (MedPA) are study programmes in human medicine, dentistry, chiropractic, pharmacy and veterinary medicine. This documentation describes the accreditation of study programmes in human medicine, dentistry and chiropractic.

Medical training is regulated by the MedPA: In order for a study programme to lead to a Swiss federal diploma (eidgenössisches Diplom) (Art. 24 MedPA), it must be accredited in accordance with Article 31 HEdA. When registering for the federal exam, candidates must produce evidence of accreditation for the study programme they have completed.

Accreditation in the university medical professions is carried out within the framework of programme accreditation pursuant to HEdA, whereby the HEdA quality standards are supplemented by the MedPA quality standards.

HEdA and MedPA differ in terms of the object of accreditation: The HEdA focuses on Bologna-compliant programmes of study, i.e. Bachelor and Master degrees are considered individually; the MedPA focuses on the six-year training for a medical profession pursuant to Article 2 MedPA, i.e. study programmes pursuant to MedPA. As the Medical Professions Act insists on the accreditation of university medical training courses, the term "study programme" will be used in the following sections.

Higher education institutions (HE institutions) can apply to an agency recognised by the Swiss Accreditation Council (hereinafter: Accreditation Council) to have their study programmes in human medicine, dentistry, chiropractic, pharmacy and veterinary medicine accredited pursuant to HEdA.

1.2 Provisions of the Medical Professions Act

As a prerequisite for accreditation, the MedPA stipulates that graduates of the study programme must attain all of the objectives set out in the MedPA and be qualified for postgraduate education (Art. 24 (1) MedPA).

All of the objectives, i.e. the general objectives, the objectives specific to the profession and the qualification for postgraduate education, cannot be assumed to have been attained until the six-year training course has been completed.

It is not possible within the framework of accreditation to extrapolate sub-objectives for — for example — the first three years (Bachelor programme) from the criteria for accreditation pursuant to MedPA.

1.3 Object of accreditation

Programme accreditation pursuant to HEdA and MedPA covers the entire six-year training course leading to a Swiss federal diploma (Art. 23 (1) MedPA) (study programme as defined by the MedPA).

The object of the accreditation procedure is the combination of Bachelor and Master programmes within the framework of which the training for a medical profession pursuant to
Article 2 MedPA is carried out. The starting point for the procedure is the respective Master's programme of the university awarding the title.

As part of the accreditation procedure (self-evaluation of the quality standards in the self-assessment report), the university awarding the title must explain how it ensures that students meet the criteria for admission at the beginning of a study programme (i.e. duly qualified Bachelor's degree holders) under the terms of Article 24 (1) MedPA.

The group of experts makes a statement on this as part of their assessment of the quality standards.

1.4 External evaluation and accreditation decision

The study programme is evaluated by external experts. They review each quality standard for the accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and MedPA (see Part C of this documentation) in the areas of "Educational objectives", "Conception", "Implementation" and "Quality assurance" of the study programme.

The accreditation decision is made by the Accreditation Council. The Accreditation Council consists of 15–20 independent members. They represent the various interest groups, in particular the HE institutions, the professional world, students, mid-level faculty staff and teaching staff. At least five members practise their main occupation abroad. The decision of the Accreditation Council is based on the accreditation proposal from the agency, the expert report and the statement by the HE institution.

The agency and the Accreditation Council guarantee that HE institutions will be treated fairly throughout the accreditation procedure.

1.5 Sequence and duration of the procedure

The procedural steps, procedural rules and quality standards are defined in the Accreditation Ordinance of the Swiss Higher Education Council (hereinafter referred to as Accreditation Ordinance, see Part B). The HEdA quality standards are supplemented by the general objectives of the Medical Professions Act (Art. 4, 6 and 7) as well as the relevant profession-specific objectives (Art. 8, 9 or 10).

In compliance with international practice, the accreditation procedure consists of the following procedural steps:

- Filing of the application with a recognised accreditation agency
- Review of the application by the agency and notification to the Accreditation Council
- Planning and opening of the procedure, including conclusion/signing of the contract between the agency and the HE institution
- Self-assessment of the study programme
- External evaluation by independent experts, including an on-site visit and a report by the expert group
- Accreditation proposal by the agency and statement by the HE institution
- Accreditation decision by the Accreditation Council
– Publication of the report on external evaluation
– Assessment of fulfilment of conditions, if applicable

The Commission for Medical Professions (Medizinalberufekommission) is heard before the Accreditation Council makes its decision on accreditation.

A procedure for the accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and MedPA normally lasts 12-18 months from the opening of the procedure to the decision by the Accreditation Council. A schedule is agreed between the HE institution and the agency for each procedure.

1.6 Costs

The costs associated with the accreditation procedure are defined in the fee regulations (FeeReg-SAC) approved by the University Council.¹

The costs of the self-assessment are borne by the HE institution.

Public HE institutions whose supporting organisations help to finance the commissioned agency only pay the direct costs.

The HE institution is charged an all-inclusive price of 12,000 francs (without VAT) to cover the direct costs (fees, travel expenses, accommodation etc. for the expert group) for a study programme accreditation procedure pursuant to HEdA and MedPA with four experts and a one and a half-day visit.

In case of a larger/smaller expert group and/or a longer/shorter on-site visit (see Section 3.2 in this guide), the charges are adjusted in line with the rates for services provided by the accreditation agency on behalf of third parties (Art. 5).²

If the fulfilment of conditions needs to be assessed, the accruing costs are invoiced additionally.

The experts receive a lump-sum payment for each day of the on-site visit.

The formalities of the procedure are defined in contracts concluded by the agency with the HE institution on the one hand, and with the experts on the other.

¹ see http://aaq.ch/en/the-aaq/regulations/

²
## Schematic presentation of the sequence of the procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HE institution</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Swiss Accreditation Council</th>
<th>Comm. for Medical Professions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Projectteam</td>
<td>Group of experts</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Administration
- **Filing of application**
  - **Admission**
  - **Information**
  - **Planning & opening of procedure / contract**
  - **Hearing**
    - **Proposal for an expert group**
      - **Adoption**
        - **Self-assessment report**
          - **Preparation of the expert group**
            - **On-site visit - 1.5 Tage**
              - **Expert group report**
                - **Proposal for accreditation**
                  - **Hearing**
                    - **Decision**
                      - **Publication and Information**
                        - **Information**
                          - **Application for re-examination**
                            - **Confirmation**
2. Admission to the procedure

2.1 Filing of the application

The HE institution files an application with a recognised accreditation agency.

2.2 Admission

The agency verifies the admission requirements.

If the requirements for admission to the procedure are met, the agency will inform the Accreditation Council and the HE institution.

3. Accreditation of study programmes: Procedural steps

3.1 Self-assessment

Having decided in favour of admission, the agency formally opens the accreditation procedure together with the HE institution resp. the persons responsible for the study programme. The following items are dealt with in the opening meeting and duly minuted:

- Planning of the accreditation procedure (procedural steps and schedule)
- Specification of the procedural language (German, French, Italian or English)
- Profile of the expert group
- Draft programme of the on-site visit

The representatives of the study programme then carry out a self-assessment and summarise the findings in a written report (self-assessment report). This process involves key groups in the study programme, in particular the students, mid-level faculty staff, teaching staff, administrative personnel and technical personnel, and also contains deliberations on how the study programme could be developed further.

The self-assessment report is reflective and self-critical and contains data, descriptions and analyses on the basis of which it can be assessed to what extent the quality standards are fulfilled. The following information is included in particular:

- Brief portrait of the HE institution and the study programme (special characteristics, organisation, key data)
- Description and sequence of the self-assessment process
- Presentation of the quality assurance system of the study programme
- Reports or findings from previous quality assurance procedures, if applicable
- Self-assessment of the quality standards in terms of their fulfilment

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2 This procedural step is carried out by the AAQ; other authorised agencies have their own processes for selecting experts.
– Description of the strengths, weaknesses and development opportunities for each quality standard
– Action plan for the further development of the study programme

The quality standards are explained in Part C to ensure an all-round understanding in terms of the agency, study programme and expert group.

The self-assessment report serves the experts as a basis for their on-site visit and helps them to appraise to what extent the quality standards are met by the study programme. The self-assessment report is also submitted to the Accreditation Council as part of the basis for a decision. If the report is written in a national language, the HE institution writes a summary in English, including a strengths and weaknesses profile, of around 3-4 pages (10,000 characters) as part of the self-assessment report.

The self-assessment report should comprise no more than 50 pages (without appendices) and must be submitted directly to the agency. An electronic template is provided for the HE institution.

The self-assessment stage lasts five months.

The agency is available to answer any formal questions about the self-assessment report during this period. A meeting can be arranged with the HE institution if required.

The agency also fixes up a meeting with the representatives of the study programme to prepare for the external evaluation.

3.2 External evaluation

The external evaluation comprises the following elements:
– Selection of experts
– Preparation of the expert group for the on-site visit
– On-site visit
– Report on external evaluation

3.2.1 Selection of experts

The expert group appointed by the agency consists of four people and has national and international experience as well as the knowledge required for them to carry out their duties, in particular:
– Experience of accreditation procedures in the higher education sector
– Appropriate qualifications and academic and/or professional experience in the area to be accredited
– Experience in the management of study programmes and in the quality assurance and development of the latter within HE institutions
– Sufficient knowledge of the Swiss higher education landscape, especially in relation to the study programme concerned
– Working knowledge of the procedural language

Ideally, the chairperson will be an active member of a study programme management team or active in the quality assurance and/or development of study programmes. One member of the expert group must be a student.

The composition of the expert group is balanced, has an international perspective if required and takes due account of the gender, origin and age of the experts as well as the characteristics of the HE institution and any specific forms of teaching if applicable. The experts must be independent and in a position to appraise the study programme impartially.

The profile of the expert group is discussed with the HE institution at the opening meeting. A longlist with the names of potential experts is then submitted to the HE institution. The people who have a conflict of interest in relation to the HE institution or are insufficiently independent are removed from the list.3

The agency presents the longlist to the AAQ Commission for its approval. The agency then composes the expert group and appoints the chairperson.

The expert group has the following duties:

– Prepare for the visit
– Hold discussions during the on-site visit
– Be responsible for the report on the external evaluation; the agency provides editorial support for the expert group

The agency is on hand to support the expert group throughout the entire procedure. If required, it will maintain communications between the expert group and the HE institution as they do not communicate directly apart from the discussions held during the on-site visit.

3.2.2 Preparation of the expert group for the on-site visit

The agency's aim in preparing the expert group for the on-site visit is to provide guidance for the members with regard to their role, area of responsibility and the following points:

– The specific features of the study programme
– The specific features of the Swiss higher education landscape in relation to the applying study programme
– The scope and details of its mandate, in particular the quality standards

The preparation period also serves to address the following additional points:

– Subjects and issues that need to be dealt with during the on-site visit
– Any supplementary documentation that may be required
– Programme of the on-site visit

The form of these preparations is defined with due consideration for the requirements of the individual procedure. The agency subsequently notifies the representatives of the study

3 The longlist is a system used by the AAQ; other authorised agencies have their own processes for selecting experts.
programme about any requirements for supplementary documentation and possible adjustments to the sequence of the on-site visit. The agency then works with the HE institution to complete the programme for the on-site visit, duly taking into account the characteristics of the study programme.

3.2.3 On-site visit

The on-site visit gives the expert group an opportunity to assess whether the study programme meets the quality standards and how it can be developed further if necessary. It begins with a preparatory meeting between the experts and the agency.

The expert group meets the various stakeholder groups of the study programme, in particular the people in charge of the course, the lecturers, the quality assurance staff, representatives of the student body, mid-level faculty staff and administrative and technical personnel. The programme for the on-site visit – i.e. its structure and the list of people to be met – is arranged between the HE institution and the agency. The process also provides for work meetings of the expert group.

The on-site visit ends with a debriefing session, during which the expert group describes its first impressions to the HE institution and provides an overview of its strengths and immediate challenges. However, the expert group does not make any definitive statements about compliance with quality standards at this time. There is no provision for a discussion with the HE institution during this verbal information session.

As a rule, the on-site visit lasts a day and a half; the duration can be adapted to the needs of the respective study programme and the specific characteristics of the HE institution. The all-inclusive price to be paid by the HE institution is calculated accordingly.

The people involved in discussions are to answer any questions openly and sincerely, to be constructive and cooperative, and to adhere to the agency’s code of conduct (see Part D).

3.2.4 Expert group report

The expert group has up to six weeks after its on-site visit to compile a report under the responsibility of the chairperson and with editorial support from the agency. This report by the expert group contains the following specific elements:

- An analysis about dealing with findings from previous procedures, if applicable
- An analysis of compliance with the quality standards
- An overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the study programme and an overall appraisal of the latter
- Recommendations and any requirements for the future development of the study programme
- An accreditation recommendation for the attention of the agency

Each quality standard is rated by using a scale with the following four levels: completely fulfilled, largely fulfilled, partially fulfilled, not fulfilled:

- A quality standard is deemed to be completely fulfilled if it is implemented in full and coherently, thus assuring the quality of the study programme.
– A quality standard is deemed to be largely fulfilled if no essential shortcomings are identified in its implementation.

– A quality standard is deemed to be partially fulfilled if significant shortcomings or notable weaknesses are identified in its implementation, or if it only applies to certain sections of the study programme.

– A quality standard is deemed to be not fulfilled if it is not taken into account in the study programme and/or if its implementation is unable to guarantee the quality of the study programme.

The expert group takes account of the characteristics of the HE institution in its assessment.

The expert group may put forward a reasonable number of recommendations in relation to quality development. If a quality standard is only partially fulfilled or not fulfilled, however, the expert group must stipulate one or several conditions.

A condition serves to rectify a significant shortcoming; it defines requirements, which must be met by the HE institution, before the accreditation can be confirmed.

A condition must always refer to a quality standard. The HE institution must be able to meet the condition within a stipulated period.

The expert group may apply for accreditation to be rejected if it estimates that possible shortcomings in the study programme in terms of the quality standards cannot be remedied within a reasonable period of time, or that there are too many shortcomings.

The accreditation recommendation by the expert group is based on an overall appraisal of compliance with the quality standards, whereby consensus is sought within the group.

The agency provides the expert group with a report template.

The provisions of the Swiss Federal Data Protection Act apply to the accreditation procedure, which means that the members of the expert group must treat all information confidentially.4

The external assessment lasts approximately four months.

3.3 Accreditation agency's proposal, statement by the HE institution, hearing of the Commission for Medical Professions

Once the report by the expert group has been formally reviewed, the agency draws up the accreditation proposal and includes the following elements:

– A complete overview of the procedure (composition of the expert group, schedule, appraisal of the self-assessment report, on-site visit and preparations)

– An accreditation proposal for the attention of the Accreditation Council

The agency's accreditation proposal is based on the self-assessment report of the study programme and the report by the expert group.

The agency submits its accreditation proposal and the report by the group of experts to the HE institution for its comments; the HE institution makes a written statement about the documents.

4 Federal Act of 19 June 1992 on Data Protection (DSG), SR 235.1
By making this written statement, the HE institution is exercising its right to be heard before the Accreditation Council makes a decision. If applicable, the HE institution will comment on its ability to fulfill the conditions within the stipulated period. The statement by the HE institution is short and specific; factual errors can be recorded in a separate document.

The agency reviews the statement by the HE institution and amends its accreditation proposal if necessary.

The statement is an integral component of the documentation for the procedure and is presented for a hearing to the Commission for Medical Professions (Art. 24 (2) MedPA) and then passed on to the Accreditation Council along with the self-assessment report, the expert group report and the agency's accreditation proposal.

3.4 Decision

The Accreditation Council bases its decision on the accreditation agency's proposal, the self-assessment report, the report by the expert group, the statement by the HE institution and the statement by the Commission for Medical Professions.

The Accreditation Council may:

- Grant accreditation unconditionally
- Grant accreditation subject to conditions
- Refuse accreditation

The accreditation decisions of the Accreditation Council are not appealable under Article 65 (2) HEdA. However, the HE institution may file a re-examination application with the Accreditation Council5.

The accreditation validity period is seven years.

When making its decision, the Accreditation Council stipulates how and when the fulfilment of any conditions will be assessed.

3.5 Publication

The Accreditation Council informs the HE institution of its decision and includes the study programme on its list of programmes accredited pursuant to HEdA.

The agency publishes a procedural report which contains the report by the group of experts, the accreditation agency's proposal, the statement by the HE institution and the decision of the Swiss Accreditation Council. The publication is arranged with the HE institution when the contract is drawn up.

The decision-making process — from submission of the dossier to the Accreditation Council to notification of the accreditation decision — can last three to four months.

3.6 Assessment of fulfilment of conditions

The Accreditation Council may delegate to the agency the monitoring of the fulfilment of conditions imposed by the accreditation decision. If the conditions are met, the accreditation will

5 See http://akkreditierungsrat.ch/de/akkreditierungsrat/
be confirmed and remain valid for the rest of the seven-year accreditation period. If the conditions are not met or not met within the deadline, the Accreditation Council will take the necessary administrative measures. Therein, particular consideration is given to the following measures might be taken: a reminder, the imposition of new conditions or the revocation of accreditation (Art. 64 HEdA). If accreditation is revoked or refused, the HE institution must wait at least 24 months before filing a new application.

3.7 Obligations of the study programme accredited pursuant to HEdA and MedPA

The HE institution undertakes to respect the quality standards on the basis of which the study programme has been accredited, and to do so throughout the whole accreditation period.

The Accreditation Council must be informed immediately of any changes that could affect the outcome of the evaluation of quality standards and hence the decision of the Accreditation Council. The Accreditation Council might take any necessary administrative measures, i.e. a reminder letter, the imposition of new conditions or the revocation of accreditation (Art. 64 HEdA).
Part B: HEdA Accreditation Ordinance and excerpts from the MedPA

Ordinance of the Higher Education Council on Accreditation within the Higher Education Sector (HEdA Accreditation Ordinance)
of 28 May 2015 (status on 1 January 2018)

The Higher Education Council, on the basis of Article 30 paragraph 2 of the Higher Education Act of 30 September 2011 (HEdA) and Article 2 paragraph 2 letter b number 1 of the Federal-Cantonal Agreement of 28 February 2015 on Cooperation in Higher Education ordains.

Section 1 General Provisions

Art. 1 Object
This Ordinance specifies the conditions for institutional accreditation under Article 30 HEdA and programme accreditation under Article 31 HEdA. It establishes:

a. the admission requirements for accreditation procedures;
b. the conditions for institutional accreditation and programme accreditation;
c. the procedure for first-time accreditation;
d. the quality standards to be applied in the procedures.

Art. 2 Study programmes
The following are considered study programmes under this Ordinance:

Art. 1 Object

1. Bachelor’s study programmes ranging up to 180 ECTS points;

ECTS = European Credit Transfer System
d. Master’s study programmes ranging from 90 to 120 ECTS points;
e. continuing education study programmes ranging up to at least 60 ECTS points;
f. study programmes whose accreditation under HEdA is provided for in a special act.

Art. 3 Accreditation agencies

1 An accreditation agency under this Ordinance is considered to be the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance as well as other Swiss or foreign agencies recognised by the Swiss Accreditation Council.
2 Accreditation agencies implement accreditation procedures under Article 32 HEdA.
3 The requirements and procedure for recognising other Swiss and foreign accreditation agencies is defined by the Accreditation Council in its own guidelines.

Section 2 Admission Requirements for the Accreditation Procedure

Art. 4 Institutional accreditation

1 Higher education institutions or other institutions within the higher education sector shall be admitted for institutional accreditation if they meet the following requirements:
   a. they respect the principles of freedom and the unity of teaching and research;
   b. they correspond to one of the following types of higher education institution:
      1. tier-one university;
      2. university of applied sciences or university of teacher education;
   c. they meet, if applicable, the admission requirements for the first level of studies under Articles 23-25 and 73 HEdA. Universities of applied sciences shall also fulfil the regulations on the structure of studies under Article 26 HEdA;
   d. they have a quality assurance system in place (Art. 30 para. 1 let. a HEdA);
   e. they are compatible with the European Higher Education Area;
   f. they have infrastructure and staff in Switzerland for teaching, research and services appropriate to their type and profile;
   g. a cohort of its students has completed a study programme;
   h. they have the resources to continue their operations over the long-term (Art. 30 para. 1 let. c HEdA) and have taken measures to ensure that their students can complete a study programme; and
   i. they are legal entities in Switzerland.
Higher education institutions or other institutions within the higher education sector shall be admitted for the institutional accreditation procedure without an examination under paragraph 1 if they meet one of following requirements:

a. they are already institutionally accredited under HEdA; or
b. they were created under federal law before HEdA came into force; or
c. they were recognised as authorised for contributions based on the University Funding Act of 8 October 1999 (UFundA) and the Universities of Applied Sciences Act of 6 October 1999 (UASA) before HEdA came into force (Art. 75 para. 2 HEdA); or
d. they were already a public university of teacher education under cantonal law before HEdA came into force.

Art. 5 Programme accreditation

1 A study programme shall be admitted for programme accreditation if it meets following requirements:

a. the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector running the study programme is institutionally accredited under HEdA; and
b. a cohort of its students have completed the study programme.

2 The same rules and standards apply to cooperation study programmes as for other study programmes. They are admitted for programme accreditation if the applying higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector:

a. confers the title; and
b. assumes responsibility for the quality of the study programme.
a. the quality standards under Article 23; and
b. any other standards that may be set by special acts.

Section 4 Effects of Institutional Accreditation

Art. 8
1 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall be accredited in accordance with its application as a university, an institute within a university, a university of applied sciences, an institute within a university of applied sciences or a university of teacher education.

2 The accredited higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall comply with the right to use reserved designations in accordance with Article 29 HEiD.

3 If a university of teacher education is part of a university of applied sciences, the university of applied sciences is entitled to use the reserved designation for the university of teacher education in the context of institutional accreditation of the university of applied sciences.

Section 5 Procedure for First-time Accreditation

Art. 8
1 The provisions of this Section set out the procedure for first-time accreditation.

Art. 9 General provisions
1 The object of the accreditation procedure is the quality assurance system of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

2 Taking into account their organisational characteristics, higher education institutions or other institutions within the higher education sector shall include in the accreditation procedure all representative groups of the institution, particularly students, mid-level faculty staff, professors and administrative and technical staff.

3 Results of external quality assessments may be taken into account if they are no more than three years old.

4 A Bachelor’s study programme may be accredited with the corresponding consecutive Master’s study programme in the same procedure.


HEdA Accreditation Ordinance

1 Accreditation procedures under HEdA may be carried out with the procedures of other accreditation agencies or organisations if all the quality standards of this Ordinance are thereby taken into consideration.

2 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector selects an agency from agencies recognised by the Accreditation Council to implement institutional or programme accreditation.

Art. 10 Filing of the application and decision on admission
1 For institutional accreditation, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall file a well-founded application to the Accreditation Council. If the requirements are fulfilled in accordance with Article 4, the Accreditation Council decides on admission and transmits the application to the accreditation agency for the assessment. If the requirements are not fulfilled, the Accreditation Council makes a non-admission decision.

2 For programme accreditation, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall file a well-founded application to the accreditation agency. If the requirements are fulfilled in accordance with Article 5, the accreditation agency decides on admission. If the conditions are not fulfilled, the accreditation agency makes a non-admission decision. In both cases it shall notify the Accreditation Council.

3 For accreditation and renewal of accreditation the application shall be filed in good time so that the decision can be made before the accreditation or transitional period can expire (Art. 75 HEdA).

Art. 11 Self-assessment
1 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall carry out a self-assessment and summarise the results in a written report (self-assessment report).

2 It shall send the self-assessment report to the accreditation agency.

Art. 12 External assessment
1 By means of the self-assessment and an on-site visit, the group of experts shall verify whether the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector or the study programme meets the quality standards.

2 On the occasion of the on-site visit, the group of experts shall hold discussions with all representative groups of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector affected by the procedure.

3 The group of experts shall draw up a report. This shall contain:
   a. an assessment of the quality assurance system of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector, on the basis of the quality standards;
b. if required, suggestions for recommendations and conditions for further development of the quality assurance system;

   c. an accreditation proposal made to the accreditation agency.

Art. 13  Composition of the group of experts

1 The accreditation agency shall set up a group of experts to carry out the external assessment.

2 It shall set up the group of experts in such a way that the group has the required national and international experience and expertise to assess the accreditation application. The type, profile, size and other specific features of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector are thereby taken into account.

3 Gender, age and origins shall be taken into account in the composition of the group of experts. Experts must be independent and impartial.

4 The following apply to the composition of the group of experts:
   a. In the case of institutional accreditation, the group of experts shall consist of at least five experts. The group shall have current and international experience in managing or running a higher education institution or another institution within the higher education sector, internal quality assurance, teaching and research as well as, depending on the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector, professional experience or non-academic perspective.
   b. If the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector under accreditation runs an integrated university of teacher education, the corresponding expertise must be represented in the group of experts.
   c. With programme accreditation, the group of experts shall consist of at least three experts, adequately representing teaching and professional experience. With regulated professions, the additional requirements in the specific related legislation must be taken into consideration.
   d. For institutional accreditation and programme accreditation of Bachelor and Master courses, one member of the group of experts must come from the student body.

5 Before it sets up the group of experts, the accreditation agency shall listen to the views of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector regarding the composition and profile of the group of experts.

6 The rules in Article 10 of the Administrative Procedure Act of 20 December 1968 on recusal apply to members of the group of experts.

12 SR 172.021
Art. 14  
The accreditation proposal of the accreditation agency and statement of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector

1. The accreditation agency shall submit an accreditation proposal to the Accreditation Council on the basis of procedural documents, in particular the self-assessment report and report of the group of experts.

2. The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall comment on the report of the group of experts and the accreditation agency’s accreditation proposal.

3. The accreditation agency shall submit its accreditation proposal with the self-assessment report, report of the group of experts and statement of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector to the Accreditation Council for a decision.

4. The Accreditation Council shall check whether the proposal is suitable as the basis for a decision. If necessary the proposal shall be returned to the accreditation agency.

Art. 15  
Accreditation decision

1. The Accreditation Council shall base its decision on institutional accreditation or programme accreditation on the accreditation agency’s proposal, the self-assessment report, the report of the group of experts and the statement of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

2. The Accreditation Council may:
   a. grant accreditation unconditionally;
   b. grant accreditation subject to conditions;
   c. refuse accreditation.

3. It shall determine the deadline and means of verifying whether the conditions have been met.

4. It shall notify the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and accreditation agency about it.

5. The accreditation decisions are not appealable under Article 65 paragraph 2 HEdA. The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector may file a re-examination application with the Accreditation Council.

Art. 16  
Withdrawal of the application

1. The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector may withdraw the accreditation application at any time.

2. If the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector withdraws its application, it may not file another application until at least 24 months have elapsed.
Art. 17  Disclosure requirement of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector

The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall immediately notify the Accreditation Council of any changes that mean the requirements under Article 6 or 7 are no longer being met.

Art. 18  Administrative measures

If the accreditation requirements are no longer met or the requirements stated in the decision are not met within the deadline, the Accreditation Council shall take measures in accordance with Article 64 HEdA.

Art. 19  Period of validity of the accreditation

The accreditation applies for seven years from the accreditation decision.

Art. 20  Publication

The Accreditation Council shall publish a list of accredited higher education institutions or other institutions within the higher education sector which have complied with the right to use reserved designations, as well as accredited study programmes. The list of accredited higher education institutions or other institutions within the higher education sector shall also include integrated universities of teacher education.

Section 6  Quality Standards

Art. 21  Principles

1 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector is responsible for introducing and maintaining a quality assurance system.

2 The quality assurance system shall support the task and objectives of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector, taking into consideration its special features. In doing this, the resources committed for the quality assurance system must be in proportion to the objectives sought.

3 The quality assurance system provides for verification of its effect and implementation of corrective measures.

Art. 22  Quality standards for institutional accreditation

1 The quality standards for institutional accreditation include standards grouped into five areas, in accordance with Annex 1. The standards specify the requirements of Article 30 HEdA.

2 When checking the quality standards, the guidelines of the Higher Education Council regarding the characteristics of different types of higher education institution must be taken into account.
Art. 23  Quality standards for programme accreditation
The quality standards for accreditation of study programmes include standards grouped into four areas in accordance with Annex 2.

Section 7  Final Provisions

Art. 24  Transitional provision
Higher education institutions or other institutions within the higher education sector that were recognised under the UFundA13 or UASA14 as being entitled to contributions before HEdA came into force, may have the study programmes whose accreditation under HEdA is provided for in the Medical Professions Act15 or courses of universities of applied sciences in health accredited at the latest by 31 December 2022, even if they do not fulfil the requirements of Article 5 paragraph 1 letter a.

Art. 25  Commencement
This Ordinance comes into force on 1 July 2015.

15 SR 811.11
Quality standards for institutional accreditation

Area 1  Quality assurance strategy

1.1 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall define its quality assurance strategy. This strategy shall contain the essential elements of an internal quality assurance system aimed at ensuring the quality of the activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and their long-term quality development as well as promoting the development of a quality culture.

1.2 The quality assurance system shall be incorporated into the strategy of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and efficiently support its development. It includes processes verifying whether the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector fulfils its mandate while taking account of its type and specific characteristics.

1.3 At all levels, all representative groups of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall be involved in developing the quality assurance system and in its implementation, in particular students, mid-level faculty staff, professors and administrative and technical staff. Quality assurance responsibilities must be transparently and clearly assigned.

1.4 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall periodically analyse the relevance of its quality assurance system and make the necessary adjustments.

Area 2  Governance

2.1 The quality assurance system shall ensure that the organisational structure and decision-making processes enable the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector to fulfil its mission and to achieve its strategic objectives.

2.2 The quality assurance system shall systematically contribute to providing relevant and current quantitative and qualitative information on which the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector relies to make current and strategic decisions.

2.3 The quality assurance system shall ensure that the representative groups of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector have an appropriate participatory right and that basic conditions are in place allowing them to independently operate.

2.4 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall give consideration to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in the completion of its tasks. The
quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.

2.5 To carry out its tasks, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall promote equal opportunities and actual gender equality for its staff and students. The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.

Area 3 Teaching, research and services

3.1 The activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall correspond to its type, specific features and strategic objectives. They shall mainly relate to teaching, research and services and be carried out in accordance with the principle of freedom and independence within the limits of the mandate of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

3.2 The quality assurance system shall provide for a periodic evaluation of teaching and research activities, of services and of results achieved in these areas.

3.3 The quality assurance system shall ensure that principles and objectives linked to the European Higher Education Area are taken into consideration.

3.4 The quality assurance system shall ensure compliance with the criteria for admission, for the assessment of the student performance and for issuing final diplomas according to the mission of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector. These criteria shall be defined, communicated and applied systematically, transparently and consistently.

Area 4 Resources

4.1 With its competent authorities, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall assure that its personnel resources, infrastructure and financial means allow for operating on a going concern basis and for achieving its strategic objectives. The origin and allocation of financial resources and financing conditions shall be transparent.

4.2 The quality assurance system shall ensure that the entire staff is qualified according to the type and specific characteristics of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector. To this end, it shall also provide for its periodic assessment.

4.3 The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector supports the career development of its entire staff, particularly the new generation of scientists.
Area 5  Internal and external communication

5.1 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall make public its quality assurance strategy and ensure that the provisions corresponding to quality assurance processes and their results are known to employees, students and if necessary external stakeholders.

5.2 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall regularly publish objective information about its activities, its study programmes and the qualifications awarded.
Quality standards for programme accreditation

Area 1  Educational objectives
1.1 The study programme shall show clear objectives, clarifying its special features and complying with national and international requirements.
1.2 The study programme shall pursue educational objectives corresponding to the mission and strategic planning of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

Area 2  Conception
2.1 The content of the study programme and the methods applied shall allow students to attain their learning objectives.
2.2 The content of the study programme shall include academic knowledge and development of the professional field.
2.3 The methods of assessing the performance of students shall be adapted to the learning objectives. The admission requirements and requirements for being awarded a qualification shall be regulated and published.

Area 3  Implementation
3.1 The study programme shall be regularly carried out.
3.2 The available resources (supervision and material resources) shall enable students to attain their learning objectives.
3.3 The teaching staff shall have the competence appropriate to the special features of the study programme and its objectives.

Area 4  Quality assurance
4.1 Managing the study programme shall take into consideration the interests of the relevant interest groups and allow for the necessary developments to be achieved.
4.2 The study programme shall be an integral component of the quality assurance system of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.
The Medical Professions Act (SR 811.11) is available in German, French and Italian only:

- [https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20040265/index.html](https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20040265/index.html)
- [https://www.admin.ch/opc/it/classified-compilation/20040265/index.html](https://www.admin.ch/opc/it/classified-compilation/20040265/index.html)

The relevant articles are 1–7, 8, 22–24.
Part C: Quality standards and explanations for the accreditation of study programmes in human medicine, dentistry and chiropractic pursuant to HEdA

1. Area: Educational objectives

1.01 The study programme has clear objectives, clarifying its special features and complying with national and international requirements.

Explanation
This quality standard assesses the following aspects: educational objectives of the study programme (including the way in which they are defined and communicated), special features of the study programme (e.g. theoretical and/or practical orientation, distance learning and/or classroom teaching, ties to the professional world, etc.) and how the educational objectives conform with the National Qualifications Framework, the requirements related to the European Higher Education Area and the national and/or international reference systems of the university medical professions.

1.02 The study programme pursues educational objectives in line with the mission and strategic planning of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

Explanation
Each higher education institution has a clear mission, mandated to it by the (public or private) competent authorities. This mission defines the tasks of the institution according to its type and special features. This quality standard assesses the connection and coherence between the study programme and the strategy of the university according to its mission.

1.03 The tertiary-level type A institution, if applicable the institutions, regulate the study programme for earning a federal diploma in accordance with the objectives set out in the Medical Professions Act. The responsibility for the quality as well as the accreditation of the study programme lies with the institution that awards the master diploma.

The study programme enables the graduates – at the appropriate level over the course of their university medical education – to:

a) provide comprehensive, individual and high-quality treatment to patients;
b) address questions with scientifically recognised methods and in consideration of ethical and economic aspects, and make appropriate decisions on that basis;
c) communicate with patients and other involved parties in a professional and direct manner;
d) assume responsibility in the healthcare system, in particular in the field of primary medical care, and in their chosen profession in society;
e) perform organisational and management tasks within the context of their profession;
f) respect the competences of other recognised healthcare professions;
g) remain competitive on an international level.

Explanation
The education enables practitioners to prevent, identify and heal health problems in humans or animals, to alleviate suffering and promote the health of humans, or produce, dispense or distribute medicaments for the prevention or treatment of disease.

In combination with Standard 2.05 this standard allows to assess how the study programme prepares the foundation for the required postgraduate training and how it assures the coordination with the organisations responsible for postgraduate training pursuant to the Medical Professions Act.

2. Area: Conception, architecture and structure of the study programme

2.01 The study programme implements the respective learning objectives in a manner that allows the graduates to attain their educational objectives in accordance with MedPA.

Explanation
This quality standard assesses the coherence between the study programme and the teaching methods used, as well as their relevance to the learning objectives.

2.02 Graduates of the study programme must demonstrate the following knowledge, skills and capabilities (adjusted in accordance with MedPA Art. 6):

a) possession of the scientific foundations required to perform preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, palliative and rehabilitative care;

b) an understanding of the principles and methods of scientific research;

c) a recognition of the factors needed to maintain good health, the ability to evaluate and consider them in a professional capacity;

d) the ability to advise, assist and support patients in cooperation with members of other professions;

e) the ability to analyse medical information and research results and make a critical assessment and application in the professional capacity;

f) the capacity to learn how to work in inter-professional collaboration with members of other professions;

g) a knowledge of the legal framework of the Swiss social insurance and healthcare systems and ability to apply that knowledge in a professional capacity;

h) the ability to assess the effectiveness, appropriateness and economic efficiency of their services and conduct themselves accordingly;

i) an understanding of the relationship between the national economy and the healthcare system and its various care provision structures;

j) an ability to apply their knowledge, skills and capabilities in a professional capacity and continuously build upon them.
2.03 The study programme supports the development of social competence and students’ character with a view to enabling them to meet the requirements of their future profession.

In particular, the study programme prepares students to:

   a) recognise and respect the limits of the medical profession as well as their own strengths and weaknesses;
   b) understand the ethical dimension of their professional conduct and appreciate their responsibility towards individuals, society and the environment;
   c) uphold patients’ rights of self-determination in the course of their treatment.

2.04 The study programme sets the following educational objectives:

Graduates will

   a) have knowledge of the fundamental structures and functional mechanisms of the human body as are relevant to the practice of the profession, from the molecular level to the organism as a whole, in all its developmental phases and covering the entire spectrum from healthy to diseased;
   b) be able to diagnose and treat common and urgent health problems and diseases that are treated in their professional field;
   c) be able to handle medication in a professional, environmentally sound and economical manner;
   d) recognise diseases patterns relevant to related professional fields and adapt their approach to the overriding problems;
   e) be able to summarise and communicate findings and their interpretation;
   f) understand health problems holistically and grasp in particular the physical, psychological, social, legal, economic, cultural and environmental factors and impacts, and incorporate these in solving health problems at the individual and community level;
   g) understand patients as individuals and within their social environment, and address their concerns as well as those of their relatives;
   h) show a commitment to human health by providing advice and taking the necessary preventative and health-promoting measures in their professional field;
   i) respect the dignity and autonomy of each person, possess knowledge of ethical reasoning methods, be familiar with the ethical problems in their professional field, and be guided in their professional and scientific activities by ethical principles that serve the common good;
   j) have an appropriate level of knowledge of complementary medicine methods and therapeutic approaches;
   k) be familiar with the role of the various experts in the primary care setting and know the central importance and function of general practice medicine.
Explanations

Pursuant to Articles 3 and 14 of MedPA, the university education provides the necessary foundation to practise in the chosen medical profession. Essentially, the university education of a future medical practitioner should provide the knowledge base, skills and capabilities of the specialist areas that are of importance to their work, and it should develop and encourage the scientific, professional and interpersonal qualities needed to meet this task.

The university education is completed with a federal examination that assesses whether the requirements for the necessary training have been met. Pursuant to Article 3 of the Examination Regulations MedPA, the content of the federal examination is based on the learning objectives for medicine or dentistry or chiropractic.

2.05 The study programme is reviewed regularly to determine how the general objectives of MedPA are being implemented in light of new challenges and conditions in the professional field and how the requirements for the necessary training are being fulfilled.

2.06 It is documented that all applicable regulations in Switzerland for the professional qualifications of graduates are taken into consideration in the study programme.

Explanation

Pursuant to MedPA, the education enables them to remain competitive on an international level. According to Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and the European Council dated 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, medical training is to include at a minimum the subjects listed in Article 24, Article 25(1) and Article 28 (1) and (2) of the Directive, and dentistry training is to include at a minimum the subjects specified in Articles 34 and 35 and in Annex V, point 5.3.2 in the Directive.

2.07 The methods of assessing the performance of students is adapted to the learning objectives.

Explanation

Assessments of students’ performance include all forms of assessment (theoretical and practical examinations, tests, work, reports, projects, etc.). This quality standard provides an opportunity to assess the coherence and consistency between the methods of assessing the performance of students and the learning objectives.

2.08 The admission requirements and requirements for earning a qualification are regulated and published.

Explanation

The quality standard refers to the question of whether the requirements for admission and earning a qualification are proper and transparent.
3. Area: Implementation

3.01 The study programme is offered regularly.

Explanation
This quality standard can be used to assess whether the programme is being offered on a regular basis. This is done in particular to guarantee the sustainability needed to protect and ensure the credibility of the title conferred as well as to continually modify and/or improve it.

3.02 The available resources (supervision and material resources) enable students to attain their learning objectives. The higher education institution describes how the number of students is determined in all phases of the curriculum and to what extent it is adjusted to meet the capacity of the training institution.

Explanation
This quality standard assesses the resources available for the study programme and their relationship with the learning and educational objectives, taking into consideration any special features of the study programme. Resources include staff, services and infrastructure, as well as financial resources and resources used for documentation.

3.03 The teaching staff possesses the competences appropriate to the special features of the study programme and its objectives.

Explanation
This quality standard can be used to assess the consistency between the (scientific, technical, didactic etc.) competences of the teaching staff and the requirements of the study programme. Assessing the qualifications of the staff includes in particular the methods used to recruit, select and promote them, and, in the case of academic staff, assessing their didactic and scientific competences. The respective procedures are established and known to all with a view to ensuring the greatest possible transparency.

3.04 The training institution pursues a long-term policy to promote young talent, which includes continuing education and training, development and assessment of the teaching staff. The criteria applied here takes into consideration research performance as well as teaching qualifications.

4. Area: Quality assurance

4.01 Managing the study programme takes into consideration the interests of the relevant interest groups and makes it possible to achieve the necessary developments.

Explanation
This standard makes it possible to assess the extent to which the persons concerned are involved in developing the study programme. Persons concerned include the students in particular. However, depending on the special features of the study programme, they can also include non-professorial teaching staff, professors, administrative and technical staff as well as external partners such as the competent authorities, alumni and representatives from the professional world, professional associations, politics, civil society and all other interest groups.
The feedback of these people may relate to the following aspects: educational and learning objectives, content of the study programme, teaching methods, methods for assessing students’ performance, admission requirements and requirements for earning a qualification, resources, teacher qualifications, relevance to scientific knowledge and the professional field.

4.02 The study programme is an integral component of the quality assurance system of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

Explanation
This quality standard establishes a link to the quality assurance system of the higher education institution. A periodic assessment of teaching activities as well as implementation of the principles and objectives related to the establishment of a European Higher Education Area must be provided for within the framework of this system.

The special features of the higher education institution are taken into account when assessing teaching activity. This covers the internal and external assessment procedures based on quantitative and qualitative indicators. The quality assurance system is designed such that it uses an analysis of the results achieved to develop and improve the teaching activities. External persons are meant to be included in the evaluation of the study programme in the course of the assessment process. These people possess the required expertise and the necessary competences to contribute to an external assessment of the quality of the study programme without a conflict of interest. When assessing teaching activity, the services that support the teaching activity must also be evaluated. The assessment of the teaching activity reflects the active participation of the students in the structure of the learning process – “student-centred learning, teaching and assessment” (ESG 1.3). The assessment refers not only to the activities undertaken but also to the impact and results achieved in the course of the quality assurance activities.

The quality assurance system is based on the first part of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG Part I). In addition, it should be mentioned that the European Higher Education Area serve in particular to facilitate mobility (students, researchers, teachers, administrative and technical staff), recognition of qualifications at the European level, an international dimension in the development of study programmes, cooperation between institutions, and cooperation in the area of quality assurance.

4.03 The training institution reviews regularly the results of the students (including the federal examination) and documents the consequent implications for the study programme.

Explanation
Accreditation includes evaluation of the quality of structures, processes and results. In addition, completion of an accredited study programme is a prerequisite for admission to the federal examination, which completes the university education. In this sense, the results from the federal examination are among the quality indicators.
Part D: Code of conduct

The accreditation procedures are to be carried out as part of a comprehensive partnership and they are based on principles of trust, autonomy, responsibility, subsidiarity and participation. The agency and HE institutions together are to take responsibility for instilling trust during the preparation, completion and monitoring of accreditations. Jointly, they are to ensure that the experts can work independently. All interest groups from a HE institution, particularly students, are to be involved in the procedure.

The members of the expert panel, the HE institution representatives and the agency therefore undertake to abide by the following code of conduct, particularly during the on-site visit.

Members of the expert panel

The members of the expert panel shall abide by the contractual principles of independence and confidentiality. In their assessment, they shall confine themselves to an objective, impartial and factual report.

The experts:

– shall take account of the type and specific characteristics of HE institutions;
– shall be constructive, benevolent and critical when necessary;
– shall be respectful, encouraging a diversity of opinions through open discussion and shall ensure that all partners can express themselves during meetings;
– shall be prepared and shall play an active part in interview and work sessions, while keeping to the schedule;
– shall seek a consensus when taking decisions.

Outside interviews, members of the expert panel shall never communicate directly with the HE institution.

Representatives of the HE institution

Through their attitude, the representatives of the HE institution shall contribute to the success and to the constructive atmosphere of on-site visits.

Participants in interviews:

– shall be frank, courteous, cooperative and scrupulously transparent;
– shall respond clearly and constructively;
– shall allow other interview participants to express themselves.

Outside interviews, HE institution representatives shall never communicate directly with members of the expert panel.

The agency

Agency representatives shall contribute to the success of the accreditation by supporting the HE institution during preparations for the procedure and by lending their support to members of the expert panel during the on-site visit.
Agency representatives:

- shall ensure the integrity of the procedure by protecting it against any external influences;
- shall, if necessary, provide information about formal requirements of the procedure;
- shall participate to the entire on-site visit;
- shall lend support to the peer leader and to members of the expert panel;
- shall ensure that all important information is collected and that all compulsory requirements of the accreditation are taken into consideration;
- shall not influence opinions of the expert panel;
- shall provide communication between the expert panel and the HE institution.