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ACCREDITATION ORDINANCE 2026

Webinar

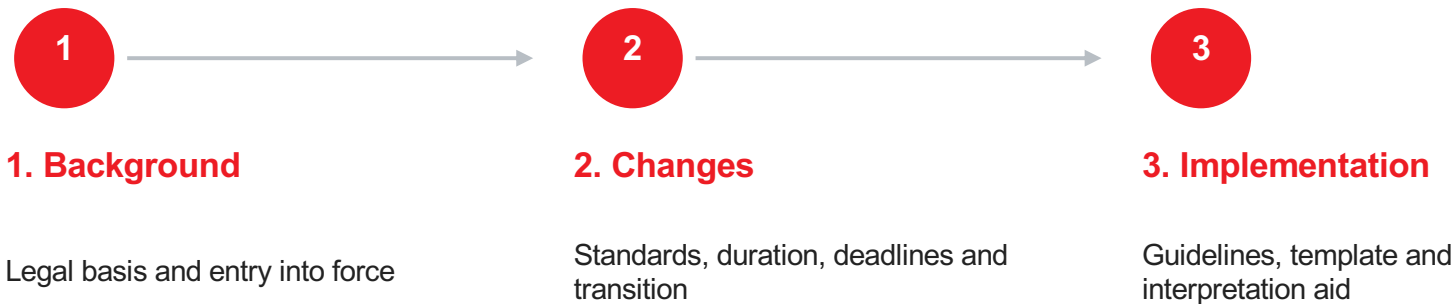
Petra Lauk Kwasnitza, Head of Accreditation & Quality Assurance
Sonia Barbosa, Office of the Swiss Accreditation Council

August 2026

What is new? What remains? What does this mean for procedures?

Accreditation Ordinance 2026

Objective of the webinar: provide information on the revised Ordinance and clarify the implementation



Key message

The Ordinance and the standards have been revised; the basic logic of institutional accreditation and the established procedural practice remain unchanged.

Revised HEdA Accreditation Ordinance

Decision, entry into force and focus of the amendment

**15 July
2026**

- The Higher Education Council adopted the amendment on 22 May 2026.
- Entry into force was set for 15 July 2026.
- The main changes concern the standards, the accreditation duration, the deadlines and the transitional provisions.

What changes?

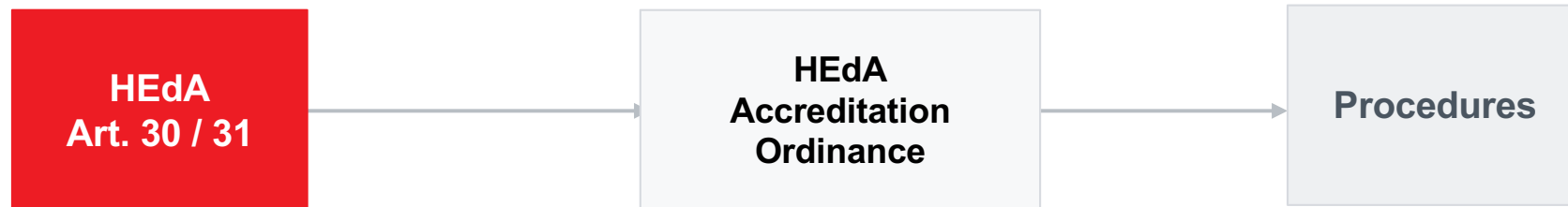
What remains unchanged?

What applies from when?

What does this imply for the procedures?

The HEdA remains the basis

The Accreditation Ordinance specifies the legal requirements



Key message

The Accreditation Ordinance has been revised; the HEdA remains unchanged. Institutional accreditation continues to focus on the quality assurance system of the higher education institution or institution within the higher education sector.

New structure: 3 review areas, 23 standards

Greater precision, clarity and visibility for core activities

I. Organisation & QM

I. Organisation and management, governance and quality management

II. Core activities

II. Teaching, research and services

III. Resources

III. Staff, finances and infrastructure

18

previous standards



23

revised standards

- Communication integrated
- QA strategy and governance merged
- unspecific wording removed
- No major content changes!

New: differentiated period of validity

Initial accreditation and reaccreditation are treated differently in terms of duration

Initial
accreditation

5 years

Verification of fulfilment of conditions
6–18 months

Reaccreditation

8 years

Verification of fulfilment of conditions
12–24 months

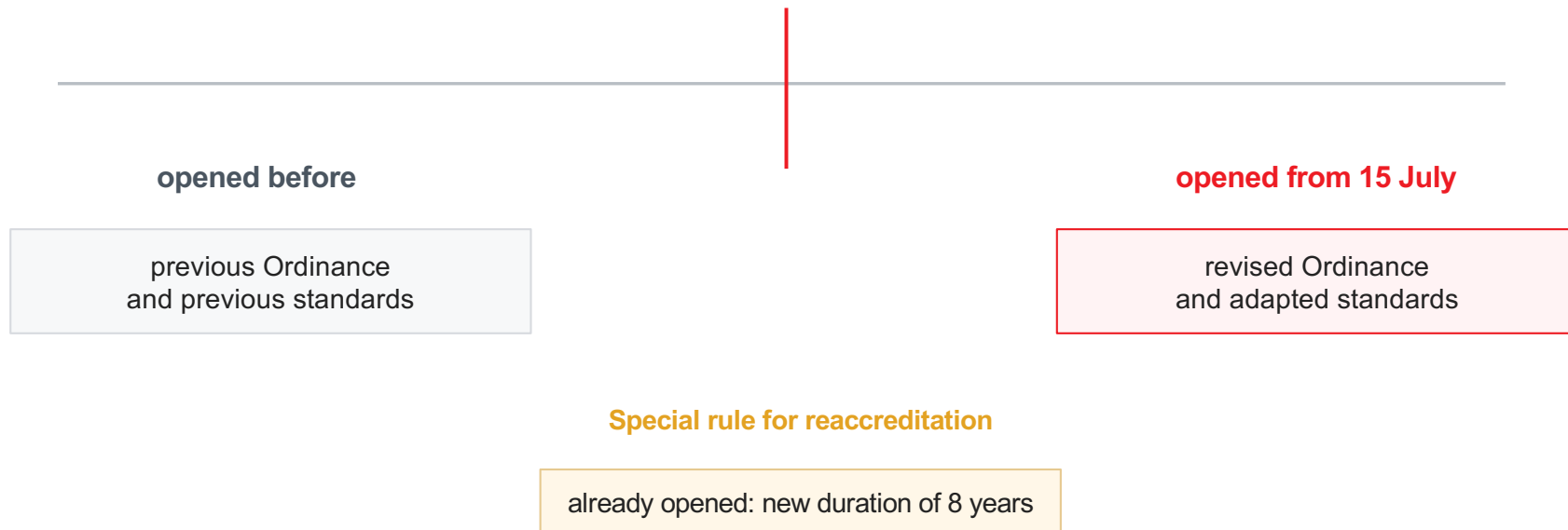
As before

The Swiss Accreditation Council determines the deadline and modality for the verification of fulfilment of conditions in its accreditation decision.

The opening of the procedure is decisive

Not the Swiss Accreditation Council's decision to admit the application

15 July 2026



The revised Accreditation Ordinance applies to all procedures opened from now on.

Implementation by AAQ

What remains? What has been adapted?

Principles
remain

Tools
updated

The basic principles of the procedure remain unchanged

The procedural steps, the planning, the implementation and the costs do not change fundamentally.

- Peer-review approach: experts as “critical friends”.
- Proportionality and profile reference remain guiding principles.
- The revised standards make the assessment more precise, but do not replace dialogue.
- Assessment of the standards based on four levels of fulfilment remains in place.

 The expert panel assesses each standard on a four-level scale: fully fulfilled, largely fulfilled, partially fulfilled, not fulfilled. This is based on the following concept:			
LEVEL	ASSESSMENT	MEANING	CONSEQUENCE
1 	Fully fulfilled	A quality standard is fully fulfilled if concepts and mechanisms for quality assurance exist and these are fully and coherently implemented and allow the higher education institution to ensure the quality of its activities.	 No action required
2 	Largely fulfilled	A quality standard is largely fulfilled if the concepts and mechanisms for quality assurance and their implementation show only minor deficiencies .	 No action required
3 	Partially fulfilled	A quality standard is partially fulfilled if concepts and mechanisms for quality assurance exist, but significant deficiencies or considerable weaknesses are identified in their implementation, or if concepts and mechanisms for quality assurance only exist for certain sub-areas. A quality standard is also considered partially fulfilled if the concepts and/or mechanisms have not yet been implemented .	 Action(s) required
4 	Not fulfilled	A quality standard is not fulfilled if there is a lack of central concepts and mechanisms in relation to the quality assurance system and/or if the higher education institution is unable to ensure the quality of its activities by implementing them.	 Action(s) required
 Recommendations Recommendations can be made irrespective of the degree to which a quality standard is fulfilled and serve to further develop quality. Recommendations possible in all cases			

Updated tools for the implementation

AAQ and SAC provide tools to guide procedures under the revised Ordinance

AAQ guide



Institutionelle Akkreditierung

Leitfaden | 01.07.2015 (Stand am 15.07.2026)

Genehmigt durch den Schweizerischen Akkreditierungsrat am 15.08.2026

Procedure template



Inst. Akkreditierung / Reakkreditierung, Name HS

Akkreditierungsbericht (Selbstbeurteilung, Bericht der Gutachtergruppe, Stellungnahme, Antrag AAQ) | 15.07.2026

SAC interpretation aid

Guidance on the quality standards

Primarily intended for agencies;
can also support higher
education institutions in their
preparation.

Reaccreditation: same level of expectation, leaner implementation

Minor adjustments to the concept (guide) based on experience and feedback



Reaccreditation starts from a “basis of trust”, i.e. the QA system has in principle already been accredited – nevertheless, conditions and recommendations remain possible in reaccreditation.

The focus topic is addressed in the ordinary procedure and does not generate additional costs.

Integrated procedural report as the final product now also for first-time accreditation



The higher education institution writes its self-assessment directly in the AAQ template

Standard 2.2:

Die Hochschule sichert die Mitwirkungsrechte aller repräsentativen Gruppen auf allen Stufen und ermöglicht deren unabhängiges Funktionieren.

Auszug aus der Auslegungshilfe SAR:

Folgende Dokumente können als Nachweis für die Erfüllung dieses Standards dienen (nicht abschliessende Liste):

- Statutarische Grundlage zur Einrichtung von Mitwirkungsorganen, zu deren Funktionsweise und Kompetenzen [2.2-01];
- Verfahren zur Ernennung der Vertreterinnen und Vertretern in Mitwirkungsorganen [2.2-02];
- Rechte und Pflichten der Vertreterinnen und Vertretern der repräsentativen Gruppen in Mitwirkungsorganen [2.2-03];
- Prozesse und Instrumente, mit denen die Institution das unabhängige Funktionieren der repräsentativen Gruppen sicherstellt, inkl. der Mittel, mit denen die Hochschule dieses fördert. (Räumlichkeiten, interne und externe Kommunikationsmittel und -kanäle, administrative Unterstützung, Entlastung usw.) [2.2-04].

Beschreibung und Selbstbeurteilung

Bewertung der Gutachtergruppe

**Procedural report is published
with a link to the SAC decision**

Note: this also applies in the event of a negative accreditation decision

Four points for planning

- 1

Clarify timing

Admission by SAC,
opening of the procedure by the agency is decisive for the applicable law.
For initial accreditation: contact AAQ ("waiting list")
- 2

Opening by AAQ

AAQ project management plans the procedure with you; for reaccreditation,
opening at most 2 years before accreditation expires.
- 3

**Streamline the self-assessment
report
Focus on essential supporting
documents**

"Less is more"; use the AAQ template.
Not completeness at any cost, but relevance and traceability (especially for
reaccreditation)
- 4

**Use accreditation /
reaccreditation**

Use the procedure for quality development;
reaccreditation: purposefully choose and prepare the focus topic as a
development area.

INTERPRETATION AID FOR QUALITY STANDARDS IN INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

Sonia Barbosa

Head of the Office of the Swiss Accreditation Council

SAC INTERPRETATION AID

A new tool to support institutional accreditation

Published on the Swiss Accreditation Council website on 13 July 2026 (in German, French and Italian), ahead of the entry into force of the revised HEdA Accreditation Ordinance on 15 July 2026.

Target audience: accreditation agencies, experts involved in the procedures, and higher education institutions

Available in: German, French, Italian

The English version will be published within the next weeks.

3 areas – 9 themes

ROLE AND STATUS OF THE INTERPRETATION AID

Recommendatory: it does not aim to create legal requirements

Indicative: the proposed evidence is provided as examples; the lists are not exhaustive

Evolving: SAC may adapt it in line with practice

Objective: strengthen the readability and coherence of procedures

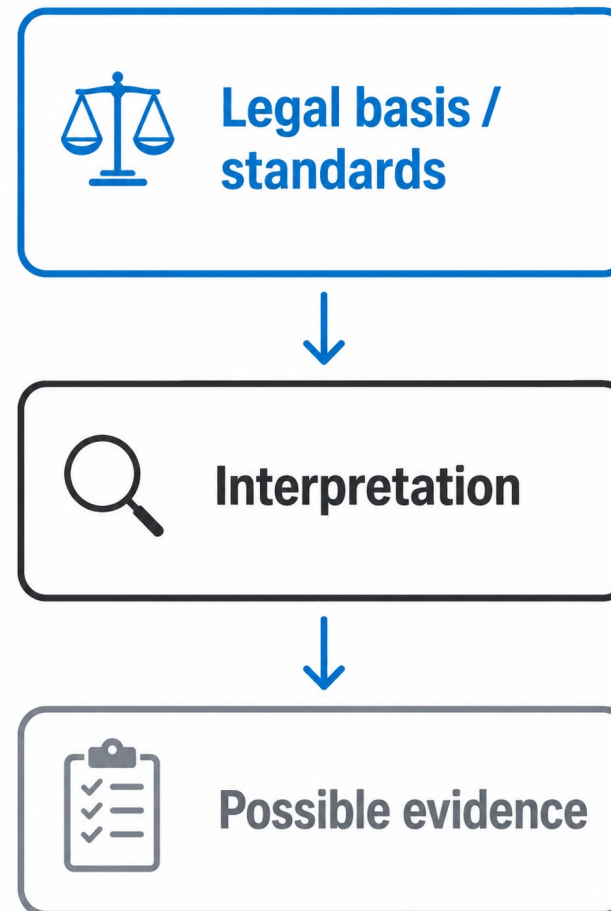
- Clarify the information needed for the SAC decision
- Foster a shared understanding of the new standards
- Strengthen transparency and predictability of procedures
- Facilitate comparability of evaluations

FROM THE STANDARD TO THE ELEMENTS ENABLING ITS ASSESSMENT

Example standard 7.2: “The higher education institution shall have transparent, non-discriminatory procedures for selecting, appointing and promoting staff. Their academic qualifications shall be appropriate to the institutional type. The higher education institution shall inform the relevant stakeholders of this procedure.”

Interpretation by a governmental body: for academic staff qualifications, the Higher Education Council refers to swissuniversities' document on qualifications of teaching staff in higher education institutions

Which evidence? The SAC aid proposes examples of elements that can document compliance with the standard.



BEYOND CONCEPTS: IMPLEMENTATION

From documentation to implementation...

Higher education institutions are expected to demonstrate the implementation of the quality management system using concrete examples.

- What is conceptualized: concepts, processes, responsibilities
- What is implemented: how it works in practice
- What results from it: results, measures, adaptations

A PREPARATION TOOL FOR THE ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE

For each standard, ask:

- How does our higher education institution meet the objective of the standard?
- How can we show that it works in practice?
- Which evidence is most relevant?
- Do the results lead, where necessary, to measures or adaptations?

Do not just ask:

“Do we have all the documents on the list?”

but rather,

“Can we demonstrate that the standard is met?”

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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Context · Application · Questions

Questions & Discussion

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Questions on the accreditation procedure: petra.lauk@aaq.ch