

Thematic Analysis on ASIIN Accreditation Experiences in Tunisia (23.01.2026)

Scope and Analytical Approach

This thematic analysis synthesizes recurrent observations from approximately 35 ASIIN accreditation procedures conducted in Tunisia since 2016, focusing on systemic patterns across institutions and disciplines. It aggregates findings at system level and does not attribute statements to individual programmes or providers. In line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the analysis focuses on systemic characteristics and trends rather than individual accreditation decisions.

A complete list of ASIIN-accredited programs in Tunisia can be found on the official website: <http://www.asiin-ev.de/pages/de/asiin/akkreditierung-studiengaenge/akkreditierte-studiengaenge.php>

For contextualization purposes, the analysis begins with an outline of the education system in Tunisia.

Overview of the Higher Education System in Tunisia

Tunisia's education and higher education system is originally organized along the French model. The Tunisian baccalaureate is the university entrance qualification and is recognized in Germany as the equivalent to the German Abitur. In Tunisia, Higher education institutions can be public or private; there are 13 public universities and more than 70 private institutions. The state guarantees tuition-free access to higher education at public institutions for all secondary school graduates. Almost all public universities are state-funded, whereas private institutions rely entirely on tuition fees and third-party funding, backed by legally required specified contributions from private donors. Institutions are structured into faculties, institutes or écoles, with the école model primarily relevant for engineering and economics.

The Bologna framework has been introduced with a Licence/Bachelor (180 ECTS), Master (120 ECTS) and Doctorate. However, there are exceptions regarding study programmes in the field of medicine (eight years of study), dentistry, pharmacy and architecture (six years of study), and engineering (five years of study). As ASIIN has mainly reviewed programmes in the field of engineering, this thematical analysis will focus on these kinds of programmes.

For engineering programmes, the two mentioned study models are possible pathways to an engineering degree:

- A common path comprises two preparatory years (cycle préparatoire) followed by the “national engineering entrance examination” as the gateway to a three-year Master's

programme. The degree obtained should correspond to a Master's level/EQF level 7 and is called **National Diploma in Engineering**.

- Alternatively, students can complete a three-year Bachelor's degree programme (license), which then qualifies for admission to a Master's degree programme. Depending on the recognition of the Bachelor's degree programme, students must complete the “full” three-year Master's programme or can be admitted to the second year of the Master's programme, meaning that the total duration of study can vary between five and six years.

Thematic Analysis following the ASIIN accreditation criteria

The analysis is based on the assessment of academic structures and facilities in both types of higher education institutions (HEI), public and private institutions. It highlights discrepancies between them identifying weaknesses and deficiencies which are characteristic of many (even though not all) private institutions or programmes delivered by such institutions.

ASIIN Criterion 1: Degree Programme Concept, Content and Implementation

Observations

Across Master's programmes nominally aligned to EQF level 7, the intended level is often not fully or only barely achieved. Typical indicators include many small-scale modules with low credit weight and insufficient academic depth; inadequate provision of modules on scientific work and research; and intended learning outcomes that are unspecific or set at too low a level. In several cases, the subject level and scientific quality of examinations and final theses are below expectations, which comparatively often leads to the suspension of procedures, particularly at private higher education institutions. Soft skills and the practical relevance of programmes frequently require improvement, even at such institutions which present themselves as practice-oriented. Student mobility is often at a relatively low level. This applies to the number of outgoing and incoming students as well as to the international mobility of the teaching staff. Furthermore, there is often uncertainty as to whether the stated workload corresponds to students' actual workload, thus raising questions concerning the reasonability of the related credit point distribution.

Analysis

These recurrent patterns suggest a coherence gap at Master's level: fragmented curricula, underspecified outcomes and limited research orientation weaken progression and the demonstration of EQF-7 competences. Low mobility and unclear workload estimation reduce transparency and hamper international comparability.

ASIIN Criterion 2: Examination System, Concept and Organisation

Observations

Assessments and final exams are predominantly in written form. Over time, the proportion of alternative forms of examination has certainly increased, but written examinations still account for a clear majority. Final theses do not consistently reach the intended learning level which is consistent with the general observation, that a relatively high amount of Master's or Diploma programmes do not reach EQF level 7.

Analysis

A strong reliance on written examinations may limit competence-oriented assessment where alternative formats (project-, practice- or research-based) are underused. Particularly with regard to identifying students' soft skills, some of which still have room for improvement, adapting examination formats and placing greater emphasis on relevant competencies for each course and its intended learning outcomes is therefore a decisive factor in the further development of degree programmes within the framework of accreditation.

The variable quality of theses supports the general observation that a relatively high amount of programmes do not reach the intended EQF level 7.

ASIIN Criterion 3: Resources

Observations

The equipment at universities varies greatly from subject to subject; in some degree programmes, the equipment is not state-of-the-art and/or international safety standards are not or only insufficiently implemented in laboratories. Access to scientific literature can also vary greatly between institutions. Computer workstations and student study spaces are often limited. Furthermore, teaching staff workloads can be very high, and opportunities for staff to go abroad for research projects or conferences are frequently limited due to lack of sufficient resources.

Analysis

Heterogeneous infrastructure and safety provisions constrain practice- and research-based learning. High teaching loads and limited international exposure reduce capacity for up-to-date research and further development and quality enhancement of the programmes.

ASIIN Criterion 4: Transparency and Documentation

Observations

Diploma Supplements are often not implemented before the first accreditation or do not always contain all necessary information (e.g., intended learning outcomes, grading system, ECTS). Module descriptions often need improvement regarding their scope, consistency and provided

information and are not always accessible to all stakeholders. In many cases, programme-related information is not fully published and accessible on institutional websites.

Analysis

Gaps in graduate and programme documentation limit transparency, recognition, and comparability for internal and external stakeholders.

ASIIN Criterion 5: Quality Management and Quality Development

Observations

Internal quality assurance systems are generally established at Tunisian higher education institutions even though their scope and depth highly vary between different institutions. In this area, contrary to most others, private institutions, which are often younger than public institutions, are frequently more advanced, as they have been set up from the beginning based on a university-wide QM system. Still, the use of quality management measures as instruments for systematic quality development remains generally uneven. While formal procedures exist, feedback mechanisms such as student and alumni surveys are not applied consistently across institutions and programmes. In many cases, evaluation results are not yet systematically linked to programme development and strategic decision-making and are not shared with the relevant stakeholders, meaning that the feedback loop is not always systematically closed.

Analysis

Fragmented or nascent QA structures weaken evidence-based development. Open feedback loops reduce the effectiveness and credibility of evaluation processes.

Conclusion

Taken together, the recurrent observations indicate structural challenges that affect coherence, transparency and implementation depth, specifically, although not exclusively, in many private HEIs. Strengthening EQF-7 alignment at Master's level (clearer outcomes, consolidated modules, explicit research components), diversifying assessment formats, prioritizing safety-compliant and up-to-date laboratory resources alongside access to literature and study spaces, completing graduate and programme documentation, and embedding QA with closed feedback loops would support sustainable quality development across providers.