

## Peer-review experts

External quality assurance procedures are carried out by the honorary members of the audit teams - i.e. the auditors – who are appointed on a case-by-case basis according to professional aspects from the ASIIN pool of assessors and with participation of international peers in all procedures outside of Germany. The selection process for external experts differs, albeit only slightly, depending on whether it is for programme-/module- or QM system accreditation / certification / evaluation. The peer group is always composed of representatives from higher education institutions (full-time professors), student bodies and industry.

As a rule, proposals of persons from our member organisations and from third organisations in Germany and Europe - e.g. from universities, professional organisations and umbrella organisations of the social partners - are processed for inclusion in the ASIIN pool of experts and for membership in the technical committees. For filling positions for student representatives, proposals from student associations (i.e. in Germany the Student Accreditation Pool or federal student council conferences) are requested.

When selecting the experts, ASIIN follows the principle of access to an existing pool of experts in the area of programme accreditation, system accreditation or certification, i.e. potential experts are included in a list on the basis of certain criteria, independent of a concrete procedure, so that they can be accessed directly if necessary. This has the advantage that the reviewers can be trained and informed about current developments (e.g. by invitation to information events, newsletters) via central distribution lists even independently of a procedure. The principles for the nomination of reviewers are published in the respective requirements and procedural principles. For *programme accreditations* and *certifications of courses/modules or for evaluations*, ASIIN's Accreditation Commission or the Certification Commission respectively decide who will be nominated for a given procedure (in programme accreditations based on the recommendation of the responsible Technical Committee), and appoint the peers. For *system accreditations* the peers are selected by the Accreditation Commission primarily based on their expertise / experience in quality management and accreditation.

For QA activities taking place in German-speaking countries, the peer group is generally composed of German speakers. For QA procedures outside D–A–CH, peer groups are generally composed of HEI representatives as well as local students and industry representatives. A typical composition of a peer group for a programme accreditation procedure in Indonesia for instance may involve 2-3 professors from Germany (or Europe), and one student- and one industry representative from Indonesia. This principle of peer group composition balances the local industry- and student perspective with expertise in European QA standards.

External experts which are linked in any way to the institution to be assessed are excluded from participating in the assessment proceedings. Also excluded are HEI representatives and students from HEIs in the same region as the institution being audited, as these may be rival organizations. Before participating in an audit, every peer must sign a confidentiality and impartiality declaration. The applicants are informed of the composition of the auditing team. If bias is suspected, the higher education institution may request the substitution of peers

In concrete procedures, the experts are selected as follows:

The Accreditation or Certification Commission (in programme accreditation the participating Technical Committees) determine how many experts from which subject area are to be involved in the procedure when preparing the proposal. From a technical point of view, this is particularly important in interdisciplinary or cluster procedures in order to have all necessary competencies represented in the team of experts during the subsequent evaluation. In addition to the technical fit, the following criteria must also be taken into account in the selection:

The expert groups in programme accreditation and certification or evaluation procedures should:

- due to its composition, be able to overview the concerns of the stakeholders affected by a specific training offer and include them in its evaluation,
- if possible, be composed of experts already experienced in accreditation and new experts.

The final expert team must be appointed by the Appointment Committee of the Accreditation Commission or the Certification Commission and thus finally confirmed. The Appointment Committee is a permanent working group that has been set up by the commission. It is composed of the chairpersons of the accreditation and certification commissions as well as of the persons in charge of the expert committees involved in an accreditation procedure.

The 'Requirements and Procedural Principles for System Accreditation' formulate the expectations of the expert groups in system accreditation. This expert group should:

- due to its composition, be able to oversee questions of higher education management, quality assurance of studies and teaching as well as methods and design of learning processes (study programmes);
- due to its composition, be in a position to oversee the concerns of the stakeholders affected by a specific training provision and to include them in its evaluation;
- be able, due to its composition, to include experience from foreign systems and with international or European standards in the evaluation. Suitable assessors from abroad may also be used for this purpose.

Each audit team consists of at least two professors from HEIs, one representative of the labour market and one student representative. In case of need the audit teams are enlarged by additional experts out of the named groups. This depends mainly on the number of programmes, courses or modules which should be accredited, certified or evaluated.

To prepare the persons involved in the procedures, ASIIN has developed a concept for the preparation of reviewers and committee members. The concept is based on an applied double procedure and includes

- the provision of specific, periodically recurring training courses for the persons stored in the pool of experts, and
- 'learning on the job', in which experts are trained in the concrete procedure by means of assistance for targeted preparation and by accompanying persons who are experienced in comparable quality assurance procedures. Special emphasis is placed on this element in concrete appointment procedures.

In order to ensure a sufficient supply of external experts for its QA activities, ASIIN continuously recruits new volunteers. Before they are admitted to ASIIN's volunteer pool, candidates must submit an overview of their expertise and experience. The Accreditation or Certification Commission (in programme accreditation the technical Committees) review the profile submissions to ensure a subject-specific fit. Finally, before any QA activity involving external experts takes place, their profiles must be approved by the responsible executive committee for each single procedure.

If, during a procedure, a peer acts in an unprofessional manner or manner unbefitting ASIIN's principles, this is earmarked (taking into account applicable data protection rules) so that he or she will be no longer asked to participate in further ASIIN activities. The processes and procedures for the management of external experts are formally documented in dedicated criteria for programme and institutional accreditation as well as in the certification criteria and in the internal process data sheets. The experts of ASIIN are also regularly trained in workshops.