



Standards for the Certification of (Further) Education and Training

Courses and Modules related to Computer
Sciences, Technology, Natural Sciences
and Business Economics

Version as of: 18.06.2021

Status: adopted by the Certification Committee

ASIIN Consult GmbH

Postbox 10 11 39

40002 Düsseldorf

Germany

Phone: +49 211 900977 10

Fax: +49 211 900977 99

URL: <https://www.asiin.de>

Copyright notice:

This document is protected by copyright. Any use and/or adaptation of it other than within the strict limits of copyright law, especially if for commercial purposes, is subject to the written consent of the owner.

Table of contents

Table of contents	3
Directory of relevant documents.....	4
1. Introductory remarks.....	5
1.1 Aims of the standards	5
1.2 Certificate	5
Achievement of the intended learning outcomes	6
Attribution of qualification levels	6
1.3 Focus on outcomes and a process-orientated review approach	7
2. Requirements for courses/modules.....	8
2.1 Learning outcomes	8
2.2 Standards for the certification of courses/modules	9
3. Procedural principles	17
3.1 Procedure steps	17
3.2 The application	18
3.3 Criteria for the selection of peers	19
3.4 Role and function of the project manager	20
3.5 Deadlines and possible outcomes of a procedure	20
3.6 Procedure for fulfilment of requirements	21
3.7 Procedure relating to suspension and resumption of a procedure	21
3.8 Changes during the certification period	22
3.9 Appeals	24
4. Contractual basis	24
5. Annex	25
5.1 Example of an on-site visit schedule.....	25

Directory of relevant documents

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (May 2015, current version) (ESG); available at: https://www.hrk.de/uploads/media/ESG_German_and_English_2015.pdf.

European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF), Official Journal of the European Union, 2008/C 111/01, 06.05.2008; available at: http://ecompetences.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/EQF_broch_2008_en.pdf

National Qualifications Framework, where applicable.

1. Introductory remarks

All gender-related designations within the text shall apply equally to both women and men.

1.1 Aims of the standards

Life-long learning increasingly depends on the range of opportunities available in (further) education and training, while at the same time however only few such programmes are assessed with the aid of independent (external) quality control procedures. However, only external quality reviews can provide the necessary transparency required for recognition of these services and the resulting mobility between individual education systems and their levels.

The present document offers information on

- the review approach which ASIIN employs to certify courses (e.g. further training, certificates, module series) and individual modules,
- the requirements to be fulfilled in order to obtain a certificate of quality for any such education and/or training programme and
- the principles according to which ASIIN devises its certification procedures.

The present standards are subject to reviews and adapted to current developments and insights derived from previous certifications on a regular basis. The version applicable shall be the one in force at the time an agreement for a certification procedure is signed.

The present standards incorporate the *European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)* issued by the *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)*. While the ESG explicitly refer to academic settings and higher education institutions, they can in part and mutatis mutandis be applied to other providers of (further) education and training.

1.2 Certificate

ASIIN issues certificates of quality for:

- a) a course, i.e. an education and/or training programme which consists of several teaching units/modules but does not lead to an academic degree of the level six or seven (i.e. bachelor's and master's degree programmes) as defined by the European Qualifications Framework

or

- b) individual modules. While such modules can be part of a course or any other education and/or training programme (e.g. a degree programme), they shall be subject to an external quality review each on their own.

Any provider of education and/or training (HEIs as well as non-HEIs) can apply for a certificate. For higher education institutions, it can be an additional external quality review for (life-long) education programmes which are not classified as conventional degrees.

Achievement of the intended learning outcomes

An ASIIN certificate confirms that the objectives and outcomes intended by the provider of education and/or training for an a) course or b) individual module can be achieved with the aid of the contents, resources and structural framework outlined during the certification procedure.

This quality statement should reflect the qualifications profile and -level obtained after successfully concluding the respective programme in a transparent way. It would also further increase mobility between academic education and vocational further training and make for easier credit transfer (or recognition) between academic and working experience. This would promote diversity in (further) education and training and at the same time guarantee the quality, transparency and comparability of achievements as well as of the required processes and resources.

While a certificate can confirm that the stated learning outcomes can generally be achieved, it does not guarantee the actual success of individual learners. Furthermore, the certificate does not oblige third parties to recognise the course/module.

Attribution of qualification levels

Additionally, the certification process contains a comparison with external sources of reference, e.g. professional specifications, the European Qualifications Framework or, where applicable, a National Qualifications Framework. The applicable sources of reference will be agreed when signing the agreement.

The attribution is added to the certificate. Such a note on the certificate explains to which level of the European Qualifications Framework a programme is aligned.¹ Certification can only be awarded to educational offers on level 5 or higher.

All certificates have a limited duration of five years; an extension is subject to a new application for certification and a new review.

The certification approach aims at supporting providers of (further) education and training to continuously improve their programmes. Once certified, improvement measures should never be postponed until the next certification date. On the contrary, for a renewed certification it is essential to be able to provide proof of continuous improvement measures.

If a provider of (further) education and training wishes to make significant changes to a certified course/module which exceed the boundaries of continuous improvement measures, any such change can have an impact on the certification that has already been granted. In order to uphold a certification, the provider must inform ASIIN of any changes and allow for an interim review.

¹ The Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning notes the compatibility with the qualification levels of the Qualification Framework for the European Higher Education Area as follows:

- The descriptor for the higher education short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle), developed by the Joint Quality Initiative as part of the Bologna process, corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 5.
- The descriptor for the first cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna process corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 6.
- The descriptor for the second cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna process corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 7.
- The descriptor for the third cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna process corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 8.

1.3 Focus on outcomes and a process-orientated review approach

Quality in courses/modules and relevant stakeholders

ASIIN's understanding of quality is based on the objectives and outcomes of teaching and learning processes.

Content-wise, the quality of a (further) education and training programme is determined by the provider's definition of the aims and expectations of the programme. The provider will have to take account of the legal, political and socio-economic and cultural setting in which their programme is planned and put into practice. The quality of a teaching and learning process then results from the combination of its elements and the extent to which its target have been met.

Stakeholders are all groups of people who participate in or are affected by the course/module, with differing levels of intensity. All people who are direct participants, especially teachers/trainers/lecturers and learners, are stakeholders. Stakeholders on the outside (of an organisation) must also be considered, among which labour market representatives and state institutions. The identification of the relevant stakeholders depends on the strategic position of the organisation which offers programmes as well as its respective guidelines and development targets.

The review approach employed by ASIIN

The certification procedure reviews the logic and effectiveness of the teaching and learning process of a course/module. A course/module is typically put into practice in three stages:

1. *Definition of objectives:* The learning outcomes to be achieved by learners in each course/module are the main focus. For courses, the focus will also be on the stringent and plausible relation between the overall intended learning outcomes and the objectives of its individual modules.
2. *Implementation:* The focus will be on measures, instruments and resources invested into the implementation of a course/module (input) as a result of supporting or organisational processes to achieve the planned objectives (outcome).
3. *Evaluation of the results and further development:* The focus will be on internal quality assurance which should positively feed back into the system, leading to a continued improvement of the course/module.

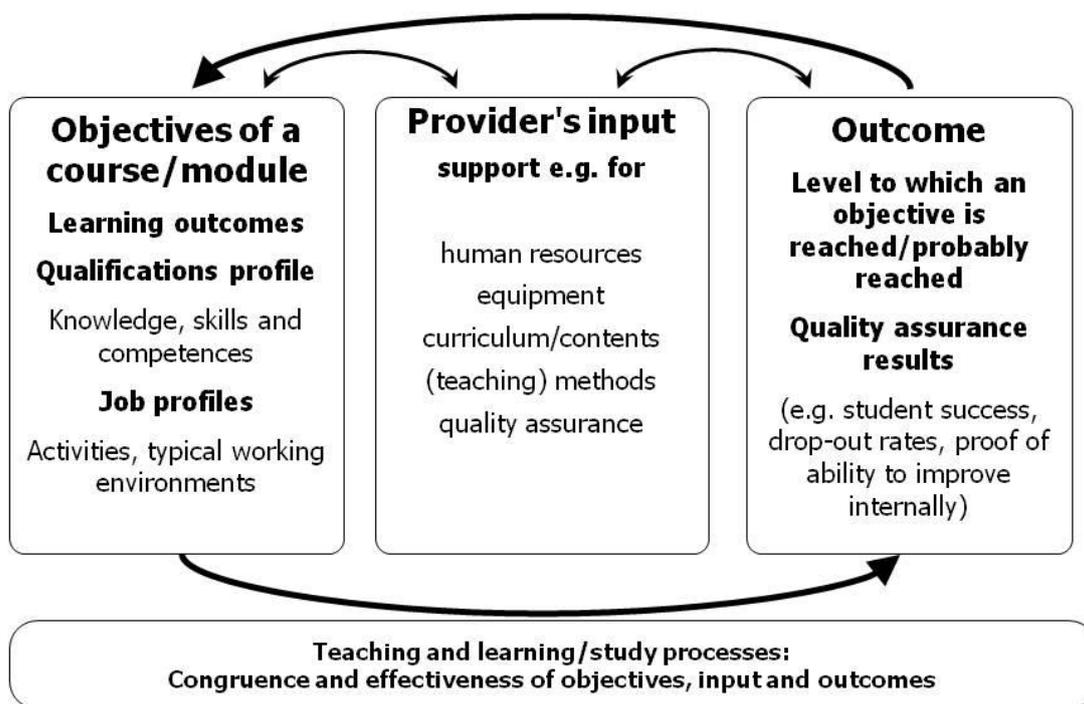


Fig. 1: The review approach employed by ASIIN: a process-orientated approach

A focus on the processes and ASIIN's understanding of quality mean that all responsibilities as to quality and processes and therefore also the definition of the objectives of a course/module lie with the provider. This allows the provider to convey their strategic orientation, profile and relation to the given social context.

2. Requirements for courses/modules

2.1 Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes, which are formulated in a comprehensible and precise way, are the starting point and central framework of reference for the structuring, implementation and certification of all courses/modules.

The review approach employed by ASIIN concentrates on the learning outcomes of a course/module.

In accordance with the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, ASIIN applies the following definitions in its requirements for courses/modules:²

- “Qualification” means the formal result of an assessment and validation process in which a competent body has found that a given person's learning outcomes are in line with the required standards.

² Cf. European Parliament legislative resolution of 24 October 2007 on the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (COM(2006)0479 – C6-0294/2006 – 2006/0163(COD)), Brussels 24/10/2007.

- “Learning outcomes” are definitions of what learners know, understand and are able to do after completing a learning process. They are defined as knowledge, skills and competences.
- “Knowledge” is the result of the processing of information by learning/studying (theory and/or factual knowledge).
- “Skills” are the ability to apply knowledge in order to carry out given tasks and solve problems (cognitive skills such as logical, intuitional and creative thinking as well as practical skills such as skilfulness and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).
- “Competence” is the ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or systematic abilities in a working or learning environment as well as for one's own professional and/or personal development.

Learning outcomes can be achieved with the aid of different forms of teaching and learning.

The provider must define the **learning outcomes** to be achieved in the course/module (knowledge, skills and competences) in a clear way. Based on the learning outcomes to be achieved, the provider must also state by which means they shall be acquired (contents, teaching and learning/study forms etc.).

If a course is to be certified, the provider's self-evaluation must explain the relation between

- the intended learning outcomes in general (knowledge, skills and competences) and
- what each module contributes to these outcomes.

2.2 Standards for the certification of courses/modules

The following table contains a list of the general standards for the certification of courses/modules.

The table shows, which requirements have to be met in order to receive the certificate. ASIIN certificates are nonetheless always also based on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). While the ESG refer to academic settings and higher education institutions, they can in part and mutatis mutandis be applied to other providers of (further) education and training. For this purpose, the table lists analogies between the requirements to be met for an ASIIN certificate and the ESG. In the present document, only the standards are fully quoted from ESG texts. The ESG guidelines inherent to a standard are quoted in parts only and meant for better understanding of the relevant standard.

ASIIN certificate for Courses and Modules	
(corresponding) ASIIN requirements	(corresponding) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)
1	FORMAL INFORMATION
<p>1.1 The following characteristics have been documented and published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) name of the course/module b) form (e.g. full-time/part-time, attendance-only/e-learning/distance learning) c) type and name of title or degree upon conclusion (where applicable) d) duration and scope of the course/module (ECTS or ECVET points, where applicable) e) number of participants f) first time offered and start of the course/module g) amount and type of fees to be paid <p>The provider must inform the relevant stakeholders about the above-mentioned characteristics in a transparent way.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.8</u> Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.</p>

2	CONTENT, STRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION	
2.1	<p>Learning outcomes of the course/module</p> <p>The intended learning outcomes of the course/module have been clearly defined. They</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are readily accessible to all relevant stakeholders, especially teachers/trainers/lecturers and learners, and are anchored in a way that allows all relevant stakeholders to refer to them; • reflect the level aimed at; • are viable, valid and based on currently predictable technical developments in computer sciences, technology, natural sciences or business economics. <p>The relevant stakeholders were included in the process of formulating the learning outcomes.</p> <p>The course/module name reflects the intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>For courses, the overall intended learning outcomes are systematically substantiated in their individual modules.</p> <p>The module descriptions clearly state which knowledge, skills and competences learners will acquire in each module.</p> <p>The intended learning outcomes and the requirements to achieve them have been made transparent to the learners.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.2:</u>³ [...]The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area..</p> <p><u>ESG 1.8:</u> Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.</p>
2.2	<p>Contents</p> <p>The contents offered in the course/module enable the learners to reach the intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>For courses, the aims and contents of the individual modules are coordinated in a way to avoid overlapping.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.2:</u> [...]The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes.</p>

³ “ESG x.y” refers to the relevant standard and corresponding guideline within the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)”, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Yerevan, 2015; available at: https://www.hrk.de/uploads/media/ESG_German_and_English_2015.pdf.

2.3	<p>Structure</p> <p>The chosen structure of the programme (e.g. full-time, part-time, attendance and distance learning) is defined, documented and suitable for achieving the desired learning outcomes.</p> <p>For training courses:</p> <p>Each learning unit (module) represents a teaching and learning package that is coordinated in terms of content.</p> <p>Where applicable, compulsory and optional areas are clearly defined. The desired learning outcomes of the course can be achieved with all the options offered.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.2:</u> The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes.</p> <p><u>ESG 1.3:</u> Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.</p>
2.4	<p>Workload</p> <p>The estimated time budgets are realistic enough to enable learners to reach the learning outcomes of the course/module within the scheduled time and at the level aimed at.</p> <p>Interested applicants can realistically predict the work load before signing up.</p> <p>Where credit points (ECTS/ECVET) are assigned, this is done in a transparent and reasonable way.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.2:</u> Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, [...].</p>
2.5	<p>Admission requirements</p> <p>All processes and quality criteria required for admission to the course/module are defined in a transparent and binding way.</p> <p>The admission requirements are structured in a way that supports the learners in reaching the learning outcomes. They ensure that all admitted learners fulfil the necessary requirements.</p> <p>There are clear rules as to how individual requirements that have not been fulfilled can be compensated. A lack of previous knowledge must, however, never be compensated at the expense of quality.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.4:</u> Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.</p>
2.6	<p>Prospects for the labour market and practical orientation</p> <p>A demand for graduates with the intended learning outcomes (competences) either already exists on the labour market or can be predicted.</p> <p>An acceptable overall relation to the practical, professional side of the programme has</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.1:</u> [...]Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.;</p> <p><u>ESG 1.9:</u> Institutions should monitor and periodically review</p>

	been integrated into the course/module.	their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. [...];
3	EXAMINATIONS: SYSTEMS, POLICY AND FORMS	
	<p>There is an individual and comparable assessment for all learners on whether the learning outcomes have been achieved.</p> <p>The form of the examination and the criteria used for evaluation have been documented and all learners are aware of them.</p> <p>The form, the evaluation criteria and the examination times are structured in a way to enable the learners to reach the intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>All examinations are subject to a strictly defined process and rules.</p> <p>All examinations are coordinated in a way to grant the learners enough preparation time.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.3:</u> Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.</p> <p><u>ESG 1.9:</u> Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. [...]</p>
4	SUPPORTING PROCESSES I: TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND SUPPORT	
4.1	<p>Teaching methodology</p> <p>The teaching methods and instruments support the learners in reaching the learning outcomes at the level aimed at.</p> <p>The teaching methods and instruments encourage students to take an active role in creating the learning process</p> <p>The ratio between attendance-based learning and self-study allows for the defined targets to be met.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.3:</u> Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.</p>
4.2	<p>Support and assistance</p> <p>There are appropriate resources to provide individual assistance, advice and support for all learners.</p> <p>The planned advice and guidance measures are suitable for assisting the learners in reaching the learning outcomes and completing the course/module within the scheduled time.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.6:</u> Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.</p>

5	SUPPORTING PROCESSES II: RESOURCES	
5.1	<p>Staff</p> <p>The composition and training of the teaching staff guarantee that the learning outcomes can be reached at the level aimed at.</p> <p>The teachers/trainers/lecturers have enough time to teach the course/module and to appropriately assist learners.</p> <p>The teachers/trainers/lecturers have appropriate teaching skills and competences for the target group of learners.</p> <p>The expectations as to quality and the processes when appointing the teachers/trainers/lecturers are clearly defined.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.5:</u> Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.</p>
5.2	<p>Institutional setting, funding and equipment</p> <p>The resources used form a solid basis from which to reach the intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>The funding for the course/module is secure at least for the period to be certified.</p> <p>The infrastructure (e.g. laboratories, libraries, IT equipment) is in line with the course/module requirements as to quality and quantity.</p> <p>Where applicable, internal and external cooperations which are required for the course/module are solid and have been defined in a binding way.</p> <p>The organisational and decision-making structures are suitable for putting the course/module into practice.</p> <p>The organisation is capable of reacting to problems, solving them and compensating shortfalls (e.g. staff, funding, actual number of learners) without any negative effect whatsoever on the possibility of completing the course/module within the scheduled time.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.6:</u> Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.</p>

6	QUALITY MANAGEMENT: MONITORING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	
6.1	<p>Quality assurance and enhancement</p> <p>The provider has documented their quality-related targets for the implementation of the course/module as well as for further development purposes.</p> <p>A quality-assurance policy has been defined. This policy is constantly enhanced and aims at continuously improving the course/module.</p> <p>Quality assurance makes it possible to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ identify any divergence from the objectives, ◦ monitor to which extent the set targets are viable and reasonable and ◦ specify relevant measures. <p>The learners and other stakeholders take part in the quality assurance process.</p> <p>Responsibilities and mechanisms for the continued development of the course/module have been defined.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.1:</u> Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.</p> <p><u>ESG 1.10:</u> Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.</p>
6.2	<p>Instruments, methods and data</p> <p>Instruments and methods suitable for upholding and enhancing the quality of the course/module are in use. They have been documented and their effect and efficiency are checked on a regular basis.</p> <p>The quality and quantity-related data⁴ collected and evaluated for the purposes of quality assurance is, among other things, expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide information on to what extent the intended learning outcomes are being reached; - give insight into the academic feasibility of the course/module; - enable the persons in charge of a course/module to identify and correct weaknesses. 	<p><u>ESG 1.7:</u> Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.</p> <p><u>ESG 1.9:</u> Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.</p>
7	DOCUMENTATION AND TRANSPARENCY	

⁴ Typical instruments and methods are e.g. the actual average work load put into each module, dynamic data (e.g. time required for the programme, drop-out rates), exam statistics, evaluations (of teaching units), survey results, feedback meetings with students, examples of exam papers and coursework/dissertations, the identification of situations where actual assistance was provided.

7.1	<p>Relevant documents</p> <p>The statutes, agreements etc. on which the course/module is based contain all provisions relevant for admission, actual study/training and conclusion of it.</p> <p>In particular, the legal relationship between the learner and the provider is bindingly clarified and documented. The mutual rights and obligations of learners and providers are defined and known to all relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>They have been examined from a legal point of view, put in force and published, where applicable.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.8:</u> Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.</p>
7.2	<p>Certificate upon conclusion</p> <p>The leaving certificate appropriately grants all interested parties insight into the structure, contents and level of the concluded course/module and the learner's individual performance.</p> <p>It provides information on how the final mark was awarded and explains in a transparent way which achievements were relevant in which way.</p>	<p><u>ESG 1.4:</u> Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. [...] certification.</p>

3. Procedural principles

3.1 Procedure steps

The certification procedure of a course/module is divided into three stages:

1. Preparation (application and offer)	Applying body	An application is sent to the ASIIN offices. A request form to apply for a certification can be accessed on www.asiin.de and sent to our offices via electronic mail. We kindly ask the applying body to e.g. suggest areas of expertise for the peers.
	ASIIN	After receiving the request, the ASIIN office and Certification Committee will determine the necessary number of peers. Based on this information, ASIIN will draw up a quote for the certification procedure (costs) which the applying body will have to confirm. At the same time, the applying body will receive a proposed schedule for the procedure which can be adapted as required.
	ASIIN + Applying body	The certification procedure will be contracted once the applying body agrees in written to the quote provided by ASIIN or, upon request, with the closing of a separate agreement signed by both parties.
2. Application for certification (self-evaluation including documentation) and examination of the documents	Applying body	Submission of the application for certification to ASIIN, i.e. the self-evaluation and documentation proving that the requirements have been met.
	ASIIN (offices)	Formal preliminary assessment by the ASIIN offices whether the application is complete and sufficiently documented. Meeting at the ASIIN offices, a conference call or online-meeting to discuss the results of the preliminary assessment. Alternatively, the results can also be communicated in writing.
	ASIIN (peers)	ASIIN appoints the audit team .
	ASIIN + Applying body	On-site audit (usually 1.5 days, with cluster procedures: two or more days) at the institution. One member of the audit team acts as a chair.

	ASIIN	Delivery of the certification report (peers' draft version after the on-site audit) for the applying body to check for formal mistakes and voice their opinion.
	Applying body	Statement of opinion by the applying body, corrections and/or additions to the peers' draft version of the certification report (where required).
3. Decision	ASIIN	<p>Final evaluation by the audit team, recommendations for a decision.</p> <p>Decision on the certification by the ASIIN Certification Committee.</p> <p>Delivery of the decision to the applying body.</p> <p>Submission of the certification report (final version) to the applying body. Award of the certificate. Publication of the certification report and a summary on the ASIIN website as set forth by the ESG.</p>

3.2 The application

The entire certification procedure is based on the application made by the applying body, i.e. the documentation provided which covers two central aspects:

1. a **self-evaluation** on the question of how and to what extent the submitted course/module meets the requirements for certification;
2. **evidence** to substantiate all such statements and proof that the requirements for certification have been met.

The self-evaluation is an opportunity for the applying body to critically analyse and explain their state of development, to what extent their own targets have been met and to what extent external requirements are being complied with.

ASIIN assumes that only documents will be used which the provider also largely uses for internal communication and quality assurance purposes. Where necessary, any such document will have to be converted into a form comprehensible to third parties and the relation to the requirements of the certification will have to be made clear for the purposes of the certification procedure.

In the interest of all parties involved, simple descriptions should be kept as short as possible, the self-evaluation should be precise and short and for all information included in the application, there should be a critical analysis of whether it is relevant for the requirements. The self-evaluation should provide coherent and consistent information to each of the requirements mentioned above.

With **cluster procedures** which jointly examine related courses/modules, ASIIN requires **integrated self-evaluation and documentation** which only once contains the data which applies to several

courses/modules but at the same time states all data specific to individual courses/modules in a clearly attributable way (e.g. a deeper report structure or separate report sections).

The application should be as compact as possible. All applications must be submitted in paper form (one print-out per peer and one for the ASIIN offices) and in an electronic version.

3.3 Criteria for the selection of peers

The applying body will be asked to provide ASIIN with an estimate which technical profile they consider best for the audit team. The ASIIN Certification Committee then decides who to nominate for a procedure and appoints the peers.

The audit team

An audit team typically consists of:

- 1 full-time teacher/trainer/lecturer (from a higher education institution or an organisation similar to the applying one)
- 1 labour market representative
- 1 representative of learners

Thanks to its composition, the audit team should on all accounts:

- have a good understanding of the technical and teaching aspects of the course/module,
- be able to identify the needs of the stakeholders concerned by a specific education and/or training programme and include this observation in the evaluation,
- ideally be made up of both peers who already have some experience in certification processes and peers who are new to the process.

Peers who work in a setting of teaching/education should have

- notable technical expertise,
- a notable amount of activity in their area of expertise and
- preferably also experience in external quality assurance, teaching skills and competences as well as international experience.

Peers who are labour market representatives should have

- notable technical expertise,
- practical experience in managing staff and
- preferably also experience in external quality assurance, teaching skills and competences as well as international experience.

Peers representing learners should

- be actively studying in a subject or participate in an educational offer in a subject relevant for the certification procedure,
- have studying/learning experiences while not having significantly exceeded the normal time taken to complete the education.

Criteria for the exclusion of nominees: Peers may not

- be involved in application procedures at the institution which is to be assessed,

- primarily be involved in publications or projects with lecturers at the institution which is to be assessed or
- be employed by the institution which is to be assessed and/or depend on it.

Preparation of the peers

ASIIN offers regular seminars/workshops/webinars to help peers and committee members prepare for an audit as well as, in between audits, reflect and keep their store of knowledge and role perception up to date. ASIIN expects its peers to make use of these service or equivalent services with other organisations.

Confidentiality and impartiality

Before an audit, every peer signs a **declaration of confidentiality and impartiality**. The applying body will be informed of how the audit team is composed. If a member is suspected to be biased, an exchange can be requested.

3.4 Role and function of the project manager

A full-time ASIIN project manager is in charge of the overall coordination and organisation of all certification procedures. Working from the ASIIN offices, project managers ensure that all procedure requirements are being adhered to, time schedules are being met and all mandatory process steps are being taken. Based on their experience and background, they can provide information and advice to all other parties involved in the procedure. Project managers accompany the peers during the audit and take part in all committee meetings. They draft reports and resolutions and document the procedure. In addition to that, they are the applying body's contact within ASIIN and accompany them through the procedure.

Project managers are therefore the central link between the applying body, the peers and all other committees involved in the procedure.

Any exchange of information between the applying body, the peers and all other committee members is only relevant and can only be taken into account if it went through the procedure coordinator.

3.5 Deadlines and possible outcomes of a procedure

All certificates are limited in time. All certificates have a duration of five years.

The following outcomes are possible within a certification procedure:

- A certification without any conditions for the full five years
- A certification with reservations, i.e. with conditions and for a shorter amount of time. This case would require certain conditions to be met by an appointed date. If the conditions are met within the agreed time, the certification will be extended to the full duration of five years. The audit team checks whether the conditions have been met and evaluates them. The Certification Committee then establishes the outcome.
- The procedure is suspended (“procedure loop”): The Certification Committee may once suspend the certification procedure if during the audit it was found that significant quality requirements have not been met but the applying body can be expected to remedy the shortcomings.

A procedure is always suspended when it is determined during the procedure that the level of the educational offer as requested (level 5 or higher of the EQF) is not yet reached. In such

a case the Certification Committee will define conditions for the achievement of the requested higher level.

A procedure is suspended either upon request of the applying body or at the initiative of the Certification Committee. If a suspended procedure requires a second audit, the applying body may incur additional costs.

- Rejection of the certification, if essential quality requirements have not been met.

3.6 Procedure for fulfilment of requirements

1. Proof that requirements are met	provider	Submission by the provider of evidence that requirements have been met within the time limit as notified by ASIIN.
2. Decision ➤ Recommendation by peers	ASIIN	Assessment by peers of whether requirements are met and, where appropriate, questions to the provider. Recommendation by review team for decision on the extension of accreditation to the full period.
➤ Decision by the Certification Committee	ASIIN	Decision by the ASIIN Certification Committee on fulfilment of requirements and extension of accreditation and, where appropriate, on the award of the seal(s) applied for.
➤ Notification and publication	ASIIN and provider	Notification of decision to the provider. In the case of a positive decision, the documents/authorisations containing the extension to use a seal are issued to the provider. Publication of the results of compliance with the requirements and/or removal of requirements from the website in accordance with ESG requirements.

3.7 Procedure relating to suspension and resumption of a procedure

1. Resumption of the procedure	provider	Submission by the provider of evidence that conditions transmitted with the suspension decision have been met by the provider within the time limit as notified by ASIIN.
---------------------------------------	----------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>2. Decision</p> <p>➤ Recommendation by peers</p>	<p>ASIIN</p>	<p>Assessment by peers of whether conditions are met and, where appropriate, questions to the provider.</p> <p>Recommendation of review team for decision on resumption of the procedure and accreditation and/or award of the seal(s) applied for.</p>
<p>➤ Decision by the Certification Committee</p>	<p>ASIIN</p>	<p>Decision by the ASIIN Certification Committee on resumption of the procedure and accreditation and/or award of the seal(s) sought.</p>
<p>➤ Notification and publication</p>	<p>ASIIN and provider</p>	<p>Notification of decision to the provider.</p> <p>Handover of the accreditation report (final version) to the provider and, if positive, any certificates/authorisations to use a seal.</p> <p>Publication of a summary and the accreditation report on the website in accordance with ESG requirements.</p>

3.8 Changes during the certification period

Definition

A significant change means a substantial alteration to the course/module compared to the version presented for certification.

Typical examples of such a change are:

1. if the targets of the course/module are redefined beyond what can be described as a complementary update on the grounds of new scientific and practical findings;
2. if there is a change to the characteristics listed on the certificate;
3. if there is a change to the duration of the course/amount of work required for the module;
4. if there is a change to the registration/enrolment dates;
5. if the provider makes changes which have the following consequences:
 - a. the elimination of a compulsory part of a course without substitution;
 - b. the complete alteration of the learning outcomes of several compulsory parts (including practical and final modules);
 - c. an alteration of the general conditions for individual modules which are not derived from quality-assurance related improvement strategies;
6. if there is a reduction in the number of staff and/or equipment;
7. if the alteration would constitute a breach of relevant legislation or any other legally binding specification.

The following are examples of non-substantial alterations:

1. quality-assurance and quality-management related improvement strategies, provided that they do not constitute a breach of relevant legislation or any other legally binding specification;

2. updating modules to the current state of scientific knowledge within the limits of the course objectives;
3. creating additional optional modules whose learning outcomes are in line with the objectives of the course;
4. updating individual module names to the current state of scientific knowledge;
5. modifications to the quality assurance system, provided that they constitute developments/improvements;
6. renewal of teachers'/trainers'/lecturers' contracts;

This list is not exhaustive and can be completed as appropriate. In case of doubt, the provider should inform ASIIN of the alterations.

Procedure

This is how to proceed if any substantial changes are made:

- All substantial changes which are announced after conditions for the certification were imposed will be evaluated by the peers and the Certification Committee together with the conditions to be met.
- All subsequent changes will require the following procedure:
 - a. The provider submits a freely-drafted request for the alteration to be assessed and the certification to be upheld. Any such request must contain a description of the relevant change.
 - b. The Certification Committee assesses the documents submitted and chooses one of the following options:
 - (1) The change is not considered to be substantial.
 - (2) Although the change is substantial, it has no negative effect on the certification.
 - (3) The change is substantial and the granted certification cannot be extended to it. If the provider decides to carry out or uphold the change, a new certification procedure will be necessary, i.e. the existing certification will be revoked in case the change has already been made and will not be undone.
 - c. In the first case (1), the provider is informed of the decision and the procedure is considered closed.
 - d. In the second case (2), the Certification Committee may ask all peers, part of the audit team or, where necessary due to the contents of a change, new peers for their opinion before it decides whether a new certification procedure is required.
 - e. In the third case (3), a new certification procedure will be required or the certificate will become void.

A procedure regarding substantial changes can also be initiated on the basis of mere plans of the provider's and with the aim of giving the provider, before the change is made, an opportunity to learn which effects the planned change would have on the certification.

Any procedure can include several plans for changes which affect the same course/module.

3.9 Appeals

Applying bodies directly affected by the decision of the ASIIN Certification Committee may file an **appeal** against any such decision. All appeals are subject to deadlines. Information about requirements, procedures and deadlines can be obtained from the ASIIN offices.

4. Contractual basis

All cooperation between ASIIN and the applying body is based on a **contract**. The contract is closed once the applying body accepts the offer made by ASIIN.

The details of the conditions for a contractual relation are listed in the offer made by ASIIN and in the applicable **terms and conditions** related to it.

It is a substantial feature of any contract between ASIIN and the applying body that the agreement is merely about carrying out the certification procedure itself but not about its outcome.

The certification procedure begins upon closing of the contract.

5. Annex

5.1 Example of an on-site visit schedule

Single-day visit

- 8.30 **Initial discussion with the persons responsible for the programme and the directors of the institution**
Focus: resources, quality management, documentation and transparency, equal opportunities
- 9.15 Break, internal discussion
- 9.30 **Discussion with the persons responsible for the programme**
Focus: Courses/modules: content, policy and implementation; Courses: structures, methods and implementation; Examinations: systems, policy and forms
- 11.00 Break, internal discussion
- 11.15 **Discussion with learners of different stage of the course**
Focus: Courses/modules: content, policy and implementation; Courses: structures, methods and implementation; Examinations: systems, policy and forms; resources, quality management, documentation and transparency, diversity and equal opportunities
- 12.15 Lunch break, internal discussion
- 13.00 **Review of exam papers (written exams, coursework and dissertations)**
Focus: Courses/modules: structures, methods and implementation; Examinations: systems, policy and forms (relating to the level and quality of the samples given)
- 13.45 **Discussion with the teachers/trainers/lecturers**
Focus: Courses/modules: content, policy and implementation; structures, methods and implementation; Examinations: systems, policy and forms; resources, quality management, documentation and transparency, diversity and equal opportunities
- 14.45 **Guided tour of the involved institutions**
Focus: resources; Course: equipment
- 15.45 Audit team final internal discussion
- 16.30 **Final discussion with the persons responsible for the programme**
Focus: summary of the day's impression (audit team)
- 17.00 End