Standards for the Certification of (Further) Education and Training

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

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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.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf (Access: 04.12.2022).

European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF), available at: https://www.lifelong-learning.lu/View/Document/the-european-qualifications-framework/en (Access: 04.12.2022)

National Qualifications Framework, where applicable.

1. Introductory remarks

1.1 Scope and aims of the standards

Next to regular tertiary-level education, lifelong learning in many facets has emerged on the European education markets. While Bachelor, Master and doctoral programmes are by now routinely accredited in all countries of the European Higher Education Area, this is thus far not the case for continuous education/lifelong learning training programmes, which are as of now frequently not submitted to independent (external) quality control procedures. This is particularly problematic, as only external quality reviews can provide the necessary transparency required for recognition of these educational services and corresponding mobility agreements between individual education systems.

The present document offers information on

- the review approach which ASIIN employs to certify courses (e.g. further training, certificates, module combinations) 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 review and adapted to new developments and insights derived from certification procedures 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 (HEIs), they can be applied to other providers of (further) education and training as well.

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 EQF

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 or study 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 HEIs, it can be an additional external quality review for (lifelong) 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 while providing the necessary content, resources and internal quality assurance.

This statement on quality should reflect the qualifications profile and -level obtained by graduates after successfully concluding the respective programme. It is instrumental in fostering mobility between academic education and vocational further training while supporting the transfer of credits. Ultimately, the accreditation of an educational offering based on achieved learning outcomes will 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.

Assignment to qualification levels

Additionally, the certification process contains a comparison of the defined programme learning outcomes with external sources of reference, e.g. the European Qualifications Framework, the respective National Qualifications Framework and/or subject-specific, professional specifications. The applicable sources of reference will be agreed upon when signing the agreement between ASIIN and the applicant educational provider.

The certificate thus will state 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 be ongoing and not postponed until the date of the next external review. In the case of reaccreditation procedures, it is essential for the applicant to provide proof that continuous improvement measures have been implemented.

If a provider of (further) education and training wishes to make significant and substantial changes to a certified programme or module the provider must inform ASIIN of any changes and allow for an interim review if deemed necessary.

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[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 involvement of 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 quality of a teaching and learning process then results from the combination of its elements and the extent to which the targeted aims and expectations have been met.

Stakeholders are all groups of persons who participate in or are affected by the programme/module. Core stakeholder groups are direct participants of the learning process, foremost teachers/ trainers/lecturers as well as students/learners. External stakeholders must also be considered, amongst others 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 organizational processes, instruments and resources needed for the implementation of a course/module (input) and the achievement of the intended 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.
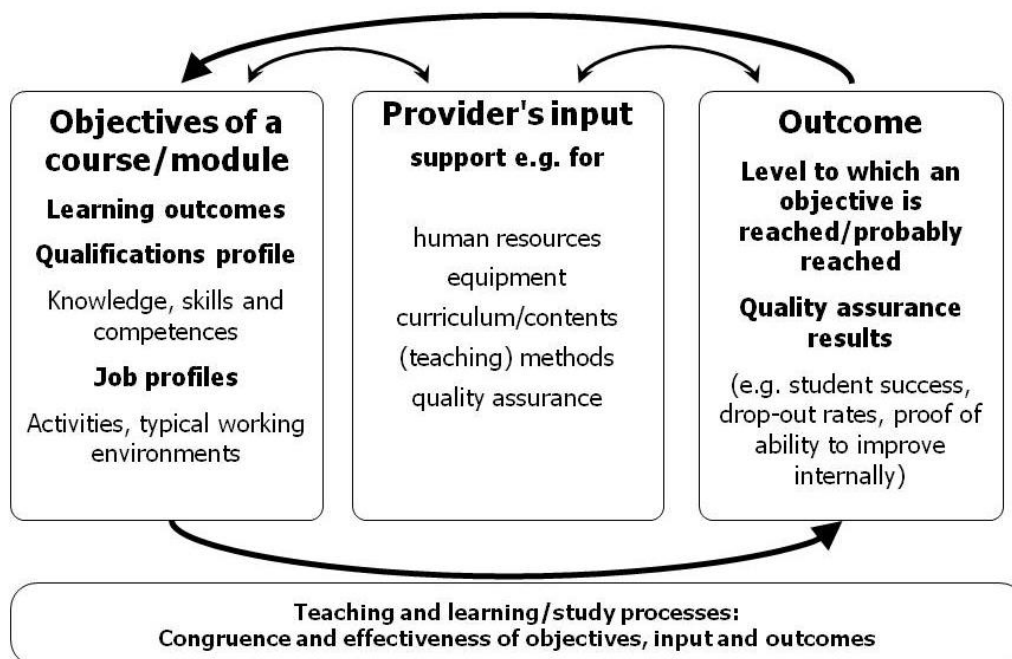
Fig. 1: The review approach employed by ASIIN: a process-orientated approach

The review process is based on an underlying understanding of quality that all responsibilities for quality and processes and, consequently, the definition of the objectives of a course/module lie with the provider.

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.

- "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.

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[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.

- "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 at the outset define the **learning outcomes** to be achieved in the course/module (knowledge, skills and competences) in a clear manner. 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 also explain the relation between the intended learning outcomes in general (knowledge, skills and competences) and the contribution of each module 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 always based on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

The table therefore lists analogies between the requirements to be met for an ASIIN certificate and the ESG. In the present document, the relevant ESG are quoted by number only.[3]

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[3] For the full text of the ESG and the guidelines related to a standard see https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf (Access: 04.12.2022).

ASIIN certificate for Courses and Modules		
ASIIN Requirements		**(Corresponding) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**
1	**CONCEPT, STRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION**	
1.1	**Learning outcomes**	
	The intended learning outcomes of the course/module are described briefly and precisely.	ESG 1.2
	The intended learning outcomes reflect the desired level of qualification and are feasible. They reflect currently foreseeable developments in technology, natural sciences, economics and adjacent disciplines.	ESG 1.8
	The intended learning outcomes are transparently anchored and accessible to the relevant stakeholders.	
	Demand for graduates with the intended learning outcomes (competences) exists on the labour market or can be predicted. If applicable (e.g. in the case of short-cycle continuing education and training offers), the added value/benefit of the course for the academic or professional education is demonstrated.	
	Quality assurance	
	The intended learning outcomes are continuously reviewed and further developed, taking into consideration the development of the labour market and involving the relevant stakeholders.	ESG 1.9
1.2	**Contents and structure**	
	Contents	
	The contents of the course/module enable learners to achieve its intended learning outcomes within the designated time.	ESG 1.2
	Overall, the course/module includes an appropriate connection to professional practice in the respective field. The name of the course/module is in line with its intended learning outcomes and contents.	
	Structure	
	The structure of the educational offer (e.g. full-time, part-time, face-to-face and distance learning) is defined, documented and suitable for achieving the intended learning outcomes.	ESG 1.2

ASIIN Requirements	(Corresponding) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)
For courses/multi-part modules: The objectives and contents of the modules/courses are coordinated; unintentional overlaps are avoided. Each module/course represents a well-matched unit of teaching and learning. The module/course descriptions show which knowledge, skills and competences the learners acquire in the respective module/course. Where applicable, compulsory and elective subjects are clearly defined. The intended learning outcomes of the course can be achieved with all offered options. If applicable, periods of practical training are appropriately integrated into the curriculum and are supervised by the education provider in terms of subject matter, content and organisation. *Quality assurance* The content and structure of the course/module are periodically reviewed with regard to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes within the designated time.	ESG 1.9
1.3 **Didactics** The teaching methods and didactic means used support the achievement of the intended learning outcomes at the desired level. The teaching methods encourage the learners to actively participate in the teaching/learning process. The ratio of classroom-based learning and independent learning contributes to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. To be checked additionally, if necessary: *Digital teaching* E-learning concepts are used in such a way that they promote the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The established digital infrastructure supports the use of e-learning concepts and the digital teaching/learning process.	ESG 1.3

ASIIN certificate for Courses and Modules	
ASIIN Requirements	**(Corresponding) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**
Teaching and learning materials for digital teaching are made available securely and reliably (electronically). *Quality assurance* It is regularly checked whether the didactic methods and the supporting infrastructure contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Teaching and learning materials are regularly updated.	ESG 1.9
1.4 Admission requirements The criteria and procedural rules for admission to the course/module are defined in a transparent and binding way. The admission requirements support the learners in achieving the learning outcomes. In particular, they ensure that admitted learners have the required prior knowledge and competences for the course/module. Rules are defined for the compensation of missing knowledge and competences. The compensation must not be made at the expense of the educational quality of the course/module. To be checked additionally, if necessary: *Digital teaching* Applicants are informed about the e-learning and digital competences required to participate in the course/module and about the necessary technical requirements. *Quality assurance* It is regularly reviewed whether the admission regulations ensure the required prior knowledge and competences to a sufficient degree.	ESG 1.4 ESG 1.4 ESG 1.9

ASIIN certificate for Courses and Modules		
ASIIN Requirements		**(Corresponding) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**
1.5	**Workload** The estimated time budgets are realistic so that the intended learning outcomes of the course/module can be achieved at the desired level and in the designated time. The workload of the learners can be estimated by interested persons even before registration. If credit points (ECTS/ECVET) are allocated, the allocation is transparent and adequately reflects the learners' workload. *Quality assurance* It is regularly checked whether the actual workload of the learners corresponds to the estimated workload and whether it allows the achievement of the intended learning outcomes in the designated time. If necessary, adjustments are made to the content or to the time budget/the allocated credits.	ESG 1.2 ESG 1.9
2	**EXAMINATIONS: SYSTEMS, POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION**	
	The achievement of the learning outcomes is assessed individually and comparably for all learners. The type, design, assessment criteria and distribution of the examinations are geared towards the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The relevant provisions for examinations are made in a regular procedure and also include rules for make-up exams, non-attendance, cases of illness as well as compensation of disadvantages in the case of students with disabilities or special needs. The forms of examination and assessment standards are made known to the learners and documented at the beginning of the module/course. The examinations are organised in such a way that the learners have sufficient time to prepare. If examinations are carried out by external service providers, it is ensured that the aforementioned requirements are met.	ESG 1.3

ASIIN certificate for Courses and Modules	
ASIIN Requirements	**(Corresponding) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**
To be checked additionally, if necessary: *Digital teaching* Forms of online examinations have been developed and established. They are suitable for determining whether and to what extent the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. The learners are informed about the technical and organisational requirements as well as the procedural rules for the online examinations. For courses/multi-part modules: The number and distribution of examinations ensure a tolerable examination load. *Quality assurance* It is regularly checked whether the forms of examination and the requirements demanded reflect the intended learning outcomes and the desired level of qualification, and to what extent they measure the achievement of the learning outcomes. For courses/multi-part modules: The number and distribution of examinations ("examination load") is part of the continuous monitoring.	ESG 1.9
3 **RESOURCES: STAFF AND INFRASTRUCTURE**	
3.1 **Staff** The composition and expertise of the teaching staff ensure that the learning outcomes are achieved at the desired level. The lecturers have appropriate didactic competences for the target group of learners. Quality standards and procedures are defined for their appointment. Lecturers are offered didactic and professional development opportunities and these are made use of.	ESG 1.5

ASIIN certificate for Courses and Modules	
ASIIN Requirements	**(Corresponding) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**
The lecturers have sufficient time for the implementation of the course/module and for offering support to the learners. Sufficient staff are available for individual counselling and support of learners.	ESG 1.6
To be checked additionally, if necessary: *Digital teaching* Teachers have the educational and technical qualifications to meet the requirements of digital teaching. There is corresponding training in didactics and technology. A code of conduct for digital teaching and learning has been developed and is communicated appropriately to learners and teachers.	ESG 1.3
Quality assurance It is regularly reviewed whether the human resources are sufficient for the implementation of the module/course and whether the professional and pedagogical qualification of the teaching staff is appropriate for the achievement of the learning outcomes.	ESG 1.9
3.2 **Institutional environment, financial and material resources** The available resources form a sustainable basis for achieving the intended learning outcomes. The funding of the course/module is secured at least for the certification period. The infrastructure (e.g. laboratories, library, IT equipment) meets the qualitative and quantitative requirements of the course/module. Any internal and external cooperations required for the course/module are sustainable and bindingly regulated. The organisation and decision-making structures are suitable for implementing the course/module.	ESG 1.6

ASIIN certificate for Courses and Modules	
ASIIN Requirements	**(Corresponding) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**
<u>To be checked additionally, if necessary:</u> *Digital teaching* The necessary technical infrastructure for digital teaching and online examinations is in place (e.g. online library and virtual laboratories). This also includes an appropriate electronic security architecture. The teaching and learning infrastructure supports digital teaching and learning as well as the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.	ESG 1.3
Quality assurance The education provider is able to respond to and resolve problems and to compensate for shortages (e.g. related to staff, finances, numbers of students) without compromising the learners' ability to complete the course/module in the designated time. The laboratory, library and IT infrastructure is maintained and further developed according to the requirements of teaching and learning.	ESG 1.9
4 **QUALITY MANAGEMENT: MONITORING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**	
Quality assurance and enhancement A quality assurance concept for the module/course is implemented as a basis for its (further) development and implementation. It is regularly revised and is geared towards the continuous improvement of the course/module. Mechanisms and responsibilities are defined for the continuous improvement of the course/module. Learners and other stakeholders are involved in quality assurance.	ESG 1.1
The module/course is periodically reviewed within the framework of an external quality assurance procedure.	ESG 1.10

ASIIN certificate for Courses and Modules		
ASIIN Requirements		**(Corresponding) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**
5	**DOCUMENTATION AND TRANSPARENCY**	
5.1	**Module descriptions** Module descriptions are published and contain information on the following points: – Module name – Person responsible for the module – Teaching methods – Credits and workload, if applicable – Intended learning outcomes – Module content – Participation and examination requirements – If applicable, types of examinations and composition of the module grade – Recommended literature – Date of last modification	ESG 1.7 ESG 1.8
	Quality assurance Module descriptions are periodically reviewed and updated.	ESG 1.9

ASIIN certificate for Courses and Modules	
ASIIN Requirements	**(Corresponding) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**
5.2 **Relevant Documents** *Regulations* The statutes, contracts etc. on which the course/module is based contain all regulations relevant for admission, study process, graduation and retention period. In particular, the legal relationship between learner and education provider is bindingly defined and documented. The mutual rights and obligations of learners and education provider are defined and known to all relevant stakeholders. The relevant regulations have been legally reviewed and, where necessary, put into effect and published. *Certificate of completion* The certificate is suitable for providing interested parties with an insight into the structure, content and level of the completed course/module and the individual performance. It provides information on how the final grade was determined, so that it is transparent which achievements are included and in what form. *Quality assurance* The document management includes the regular review and, if necessary, adjustment of the relevant regulations and documents.	ESG 1.8 ESG 1.4 ESG 1.9

3. Procedural principles

3.1 Procedure steps

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

1. Preparation (application and offer)	Applicant institution	An application is sent to the ASIIN office. A request form to apply for a certification can be accessed on ASIIN's website and sent to our office via email. We kindly ask the applicant institution to suggest areas of expertise for the experts.
	ASIIN	After receiving the request, the ASIIN office and Certification Commission will determine the necessary number of experts and fields of expertise.
		Based on this information, ASIIN will draw up a **quote** for the certification procedure (costs) which the applicant institution will have to confirm. At the same time, the applicant institution will receive a proposed schedule for the procedure, which can be adapted as required.
	ASIIN + Applicant institution	The certification procedure will be **contracted** once the applicant institution agrees in written form 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	Applicant institution	Submission of the application for certification to ASIIN, i.e. the self-evaluation and documentation proving that the requirements have been met.
	ASIIN	Formal preliminary assessment by the ASIIN office whether the application is complete and sufficiently documented. We offer a physical meeting at the ASIIN office, a conference call or online-meeting to discuss the results of the preliminary assessment. Alternatively, the results can also be communicated in writing.
	ASIIN	ASIIN appoints the **expert team**.

	ASIIN + Applicant institution	**On-site audit** (usually 1.5 days, with cluster procedures: two or more days) at the institution. One member of the expert team acts as a chair.
	ASIIN	Delivery of the **certification report (experts' draft version after the on-site audit)** for the applicant institution to check for formal mistakes and voice their opinion.
	Applicant institution	**Statement of opinion** by the applicant institution, corrections and/or additions to the experts' draft version of the certification report (where required).
3. Decision	ASIIN	Final evaluation by the **expert team**, recommendations for a decision. Decision on the certification by the ASIIN **Certification Commission**. Delivery of the decision to the applicant institution. Submission of the **certification report (final version)** to the applicant institution. Award of the certificate. Publication of the certification report and a summary on the ASIIN website as set forth by the ESG.

3.2 The application

The entire certification procedure is based on the application made by the applicant institution, 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. **pieces of evidence** to substantiate all such statements.

The self-evaluation is an opportunity for the applicant institution 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, the self-evaluation should be precise, and short, distinguishing between description and analysis. The self-evaluation should provide coherent and consistent information to each of the requirements mentioned above.

In case of submission of a cluster of programmes, which are jointly examined, an **integrated self-evaluation and documentation should be provided.** Common data can be presented only once, whereas all data specific to an individual course/module are given in a clearly attributable way (e.g. separate report sections).

3.3 Criteria for the selection of experts

The applicant institution will be asked to provide ASIIN with an assessment, which professional profile they consider best for the expert team. The ASIIN Certification Commission then decides whom to nominate for a procedure and appoints the experts.

The expert team

An expert team typically consists of

- 1 full-time teacher/trainer/lecturer (from a HEI or an organisation similar to the applying one)
- 1 representative of professional practice
- 1 representative of learners

Thanks to its composition, the expert 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 experts who already have some experience in certification processes and experts who are new to the process.

Experts from teaching/education should have

- notable professional expertise in the relevant area,
- 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.

Experts who are representing professional practice (practitioners in industry or business) should have

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

Experts 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 standard period of learning.

Criteria for the exclusion of nominees: Experts may not

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

- be heavily 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 experts

ASIIN offers regular seminars/workshops/webinars to help experts and commission 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 experts to make use of this service or equivalent services with other organisations.

Confidentiality and impartiality

Before an audit, every expert signs an "expert agreement", including a **declaration of confidentiality and impartiality**. The applicant institution will be informed of how the expert team is composed. If a member is suspected to be biased, a replacement can be requested.

3.4 Role and function of the project manager

A project manager is in charge of the overall coordination and organisation of all certification procedures. Working from the ASIIN office, 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 knowledge, they can provide information and advice to all other parties involved in the procedure. Project managers accompany the experts during the audit and take part in all commission meetings. They draft reports and resolutions and document the procedure. In addition to that, they are the applicant institution's contact person within ASIIN and guide them through the procedure.

Project managers are therefore the central link between the applicant institution, the experts and all other commissions involved in the procedure.

Any exchange of information between the applicant institution, the experts and all other commission members is only relevant and can only be taken into account if it is communicated through the project manager.

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 requirements for the full five years

- A certification with reservations, i.e. with requirements and for a shorter amount of time. This case would require certain requirements to be met by a fixed point in time. If the requirements are met within the agreed time, the certification will be extended to the full duration of five years. The expert team checks and then the Certification Commission decides whether the requirements have been fulfilled.

- The procedure is suspended ("procedure loop"): The Certification Commission may once suspend the certification procedure if during the audit it was found that significant quality requirements have not been met but the applicant institution can be expected to remedy the shortcomings within an agreed period of time.

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 Commission will define conditions for the achievement of the requested higher level.

A procedure is suspended either upon request of the applicant institution or at the initiative of the Certification Commission. If a suspended procedure requires a second audit, the applicant institution 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	Applicant institution	The applicant institution submits evidence that the requirements have been met within the time limit as specified by ASIIN.
2. Decision ➢ Recommendation by experts	ASIIN	Assessment by experts of whether the requirements are met and, where appropriate, questions to the applicant institution. Recommendation by expert team for decision on the extension of certification to the full period.
➢ Decision by the Certification Commission	ASIIN	Decision by the ASIIN Certification Commission on fulfilment of requirements and extension of the certification.
➢ Notification and publication	ASIIN and applicant institution	Notification of decision to the applicant institution. In the case of a positive decision, the documents/authorisations containing the extension to use a seal are issued to the applicant institution. Publication of the results of the procedure to fulfil 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	applicant institution	Submission of evidence that the applicant institution within the time limit as specified by ASIIN has met the conditions transmitted with the suspension decision.

2. Decision	ASIIN	Assessment by experts of whether the conditions are met and, where appropriate, questions to the applicant institution.
➢ Recommendation by experts		Recommendation of expert team for decision on resumption of the procedure and certification.
➢ Decision by the Certification Commission	ASIIN	Decision by the ASIIN Certification Commission on resumption of the procedure and certification.
➢ Notification and publication	ASIIN and applicant institution	Notification of decision to the applicant institution. Provision of the **accreditation report (final version)** to the applicant institution and, if positive, any certificates/authorisations to use a **seal.** Publication of a summary and the certification report on the website in accordance with ESG requirements.

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 objectives 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 intended 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. *for courses*: creating additional optional modules whose intended 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 requirements for the certification were imposed, but before these are fulfilled, will be evaluated by the experts and the Certification Commission together with the requirements to be met.

- All subsequent changes will require the following procedure:

    a. The provider submits a 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 Commission assesses the documents submitted and chooses one of the following options:

        (1) The change is not considered substantial.

        (2) Although the change is substantial, it has no negative effect on the certification.

        (3) The change is considered 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 Commission may ask all experts, part of the expert team or, where necessary due to the contents of a change, new experts 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 and with the aim of giving him, 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 institutions directly affected by the decision of the ASIIN Certification Commission 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 office.

4. Contractual basis

All cooperation between ASIIN and the applicant institution is based on a **contract**. The contract is closed once the applicant institution 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 applicant institution 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   Expert team final internal discussion

16.30   **Final discussion with the persons responsible for the programme**
Focus: summary of the day's impression (expert team)

17.00   End