

VOCATIONAL AQUALABS PROJECTS

GUIDANCE FOR ACCREDITATION

1 Introduction

The main purpose of this document is to provide an answer to the challenge of defining routes for accreditation in the framework of the Vocational Aqualabs courses.

Since the word accreditation in an educational/training-related context can have different meanings, this issue can be addressed from two different angles:

1. A route towards the accreditation of the courses (and units), possibly as part of broader scheme.
2. Guidance to students/graduates of the courses on their way to the accreditation / validation of their learning experience.

In this document these two “routes” will be described and background will be provided to each one as well as concrete proposals on how to proceed. An extensive annex has been added to this document with an overview of the (higher) education structure, the national qualifications framework and information on accreditation procedures and agencies (where applicable) in Europe. This has been done because in order to make a fair judgement on the potential benefits of accreditation, it is necessary to be able to situate the courses in question in the broader (higher) educational context.

2 A route towards the accreditation of the courses

2.1 Preliminary remark

"Accreditation" in (higher) education is not (yet) an established approach in many European countries. In the Berlin communiqué of 19 September 2003 the Ministers of the Bologna Process signatory states invited the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) 'through its members, in cooperation with the EUA, EURASHE, and ESIB', to develop 'an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance' and to 'explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Bologna Follow-Up Group to Ministers in 2005'. Accreditation is mentioned in this assignment, but is put on an equal basis with other approaches for "external quality assurance".

Nevertheless, this invitation led to the production of the so-called "*Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*" by ENQA, in co-operation and consultation with its member agencies and the E4 Group (ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and ESIB). This important report was submitted to the European Ministers of Education meeting in Bergen in May 2005. The report was also presented to the Bologna Follow-Up Group on 1 March 2005. It forms the basis for quality assurance *and* accreditation in European higher education.

In what follows, however, the focus will be on accreditation in the strict sense of the word. The reason for this is that this is by far the best guarantee for mutual recognition of institutions, programmes, courses.

2.2 Accreditation of the Vocational Aqualab courses

In the document "*Vocational Aqualabs - Identification of (qualification) levels and numbers of credits of the Courses and Units*", an analysis is offered of the level of the courses and units. It is concluded that this level is equivalent to level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and hence to the second cycle level of the Framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (the so-called "Bologna Framework"). This means that these courses could be situated in a higher education setting ("universities" or comparable institutions), at what is generally referred to as the Master's level.

As a result of this, two logical conclusions can be drawn:

1. For courses organised by officially recognised higher education institutions, the easiest way towards accreditation is to embed the courses into an accredited programme.
2. Or, in other cases where accreditation of institutions rather than accreditation at the programme level is the standard, make sure that the courses are organised by accredited institutions and are part of the official offer of courses by that institution.

Hence, depending on the state of affairs in different countries involved, either one of these routes can be explored. In most cases higher education institutions will have central offices in place specialised in quality assurance that can help to sort out which system is possible, feasible and achievable.

There might however be cases where such a supporting structure is lacking. In that case, a good basis to start is the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA). ECA aims for the mutual recognition of accreditation and quality assurance decisions. Mutual recognition contributes to the recognition of qualifications in higher education and prevents the necessity of multiple accreditations for joint programmes and institutions operating across borders.

In order to achieve this goal, ECA has developed a Code of Good Practice. The elements of this code can also serve as guiding principles for contexts in which formal accreditation organisations are not (yet) (fully) active.

ECA Code of Good Practice: the Standards

The accreditation organisation:

1. Has an explicit mission statement.
2. Is recognised as a national accreditation body by the competent public authorities.
3. Must be sufficiently independent from government, from higher education institutions as well as from business, industry and professional associations.
4. Must be rigorous, fair and consistent in decision-making.
5. Has adequate and credible resources, both human and financial.
6. Has its own internal quality assurance system that emphasises its quality improvement.
7. Has to be evaluated externally on a cyclical basis.
8. Can demonstrate public accountability, has public and officially available policies, procedures, guidelines and criteria.
9. Informs the public in an appropriate way about accreditation decisions.
10. A method for appeal against its decisions is provided.
11. Collaborates with other national, international and/or professional accreditation organisations.

The accreditation procedures:

12. Accreditation procedures and methods must be defined by the accreditation organisation itself.
13. Must be undertaken at institutional and/or programme level on a regular basis.
14. Must include self-documentation/-evaluation by the higher education institution and external review (as a rule on site).
15. Must guarantee the independence and competence of the external panels or teams.
16. Must be geared at enhancement of quality.

The accreditation standards:

17. Must be made public and be compatible with European practices taking into account the development of agreed sets of quality standards.

There are however in the European Free Trade Organisation-countries a number of accreditation organisations active that can immediately support individual institutions or programmes. Some of these serve the whole higher education sectors; others are restricted to a certain region in the country or focused on specific disciplines.

Below follows an overview of these accreditation organisation recognised by ECA.

Country	Name of accreditation organisation	Website
Austria	Austrian Accreditation Council (ÖAR)	www.akkreditierungsrat.at
	Fachhochschulrat	www.fhr.ac.at
Belgium (Flanders)	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO)	www.nvao.net
Denmark	Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut (EVA)	www.eva.dk
	The Accreditation Institution	www.acedenmark.dk
France	Commission des Titres d'Ingénieurs (CTI)	www.cti-commission.fr
Germany	Akkreditierungsrat	www.akkreditierungsrat.de
	Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA)	www.fibaa.org
	Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales e.V. (AHPGS)	www.ahpgs.de
	Agentur für Qualitätssicherung durch Akkreditierung von Studiengängen e.V. (AQAS)	www.aqas.de
	Zentrale Evaluations- und Akkreditierungsagentur (ZEVA)	www.zeva.org
The Netherlands	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO)	www.nvao.net
Poland	The Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA)	www.pka.edu.pl
Slovenia	Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA)	www.nakvis.si
Spain	Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA)	www.aneca.es
	AQU Catalunya	www.aqu.cat
Switzerland	Organ für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung der Schweizerischen Hochschulen (OAQ)	www.oaq.ch

All these accreditation organisations offer a good entry to the accreditation system and procedure in their respective countries.

But because, in order to make a fair judgement on the potential benefits of accreditation, it is necessary to be able to situate the courses in question in the broader (higher) educational context an extensive annex has been added to this document. It offers an overview of the (higher) education structure, the national qualifications framework and more information on accreditation procedures and agencies (where applicable) in Europe.

3 Guidance to students/graduates of the courses on their way to the accreditation/validation of their learning experience

3.1 Introduction

According to the outcomes of the ALLUME-project (“A lifelong Learning University Model for Europe”, a project coordinated by EUCEN, the European Association for University Lifelong Learning), a Lifelong Learning University is a university where (amongst other things):

- *Learning is shared: the distinction between teaching and learning is more blurred, students and staff learn together, from each other, and from people and activities outside the university as well as inside it.*
- *Learning is valued wherever and whenever it takes place: it includes the validation of prior, non-formal and informal learning – for entry, for part of a diploma, may be for whole diploma; the curriculum takes account of prior and other learning.*

This means that initiatives such as the Vocational Aqualabs (with courses offered at level 7 of the EQF-LLL), should be embedded as much as possible in regular university’s activities. Or, alternative, when this is not the case: that this kind of learning is validated as much as possible. Both are however not yet taken for granted in European higher education. In the following chapter we will propose some routes that cope with this.

Furthermore, even when a kind of “qualification” has been issued at the successful completion of a course (whether or not delivered by an accredited institution), this is not automatically recognised across borders. Hence, we give some advice on how this barrier can be overcome.

3.2 Accreditation / validation of students VA-learning experience

Alternatively, if embedding in a formal context is difficult or if in some cases graduates want to have their learning outcomes from Vocational Aqualabs-courses recognised in another setting, it might be necessary to go along another route. A route which is by far not as well established as quality assurance or accreditation, but which is gaining ground more and more. It’s a practice that is referred to with a variety of acronyms:

- APL: Accreditation of Prior Learning
- RPL: Recognising/ Recognition of Prior Learning
- VPL: Validation of Prior Learning

All of these refer to some kind of “Validation of non-formal and informal Learning”. In this context this is all kinds of learning that is not formally recognised (because delivered by non-accredited institutions, not belonging to an officially recognised degree programme etc.) of which however the result can be described in terms of learning outcomes.

If graduates from Vocational Aqualab-courses want to go along this route, this will involve different choices to be made at different stages in the process. These are described below.

Choices for individual learners along the VPL-route

<i>Stage of validation</i>	Choice to be made	Notes
Access and motivation	Whether or not to begin the process of reflection on prior learning in the light of potential benefits and the availability of suitable opportunities.	Although this decision is located at the individual level, peer, family, community and workplace can also be important factors.
Initiation	To identify in outline the knowledge, skills and competencies that have been learned.	The starting point for identification is the Standards, Qualifications and Unit requirements.
Pre-documentation	Identifying the range of methods and support available.	Information, Advice and Guidance is of vital importance in deciding whether to proceed with claiming Credit. A user-friendly approach to self-assessment against the requirements of Units identified for possible claim for Credit.
Documentation	Identifying the most appropriate methods of gathering evidence. Deciding when the evidence is of sufficient quality and quantity.	If RPLO is to be learner-friendly, the quality of the documentation, its clarity and transparency is a critical success factor. Continuing access to supportive advice and the reinforcement provided by successful assessment is also important.
Supplementary learning	Identifying appropriate learning opportunities and gaining access.	This may involve different work experience, for example taking temporary greater responsibility. Supported self-study may also be relevant.
Certification	Selection of appropriate assessment centre and completing the necessary documentation.	A successful outcome will be award of Credit. The individual should be given clear and constructive feedback on their claim.

3.3 Recognition of foreign qualifications

As stated above, even when a kind of "qualification" has been issued at the successful completion of a course (whether or not delivered by an accredited institution), this is not automatically recognised across borders.

Every country in Europe can be considered a qualifications area. This means that qualifications (also referred to as diplomas or degrees) from institutions and/or programmes recognised by the competent (national) authorities are automatically nationally recognised. In contrast, foreign qualifications, i.e. qualifications from outside, are not automatically accepted. These foreign qualifications have to be recognised. (*Note: an exception to this is explained below.*)

Recognition might for example be required when you have studied in country X and want to work in country Y. This procedure is called the credential evaluation in order to recognise a foreign qualification. It is used to check if a foreign qualification can be accepted into the national qualifications area.

The recognition of foreign qualifications is the responsibility of the recognition bodies. Every European country has at least one these bodies. Most commonly we refer to these bodies as ENIC/NARICs: a combination of an ENIC and a NARIC.

3.3.1 Academic versus professional recognition

There are two types of "international" recognition of qualifications: academic recognition and professional recognition.

Academic recognition refers to recognition decisions that either

- allow a person to pursue or continue higher education; or
- confer the right to use a national title or degree (e.g. PhD) from the host country on the basis of a title or degree acquired in the country of origin.

Professional recognition relates to the methodologies and procedures for evaluating credentials for work purposes and is a more intricate matter.

The system of professional qualifications reflects both the national system of education and the organisation of professions, industries and professionals themselves. In some countries, such as Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, most academic qualifications also serve as professional qualifications without additional requirements.

In other countries, like the UK, professional qualifications are usually acquired upon completion of specific professional training that takes place outside and after university. Professional requirements can be set under national law, or by professional organisations.

Academic recognition and professional recognition have different objectives and require different approaches and instruments. They do however share a methodology for evaluating the educational component of the credential or qualification.

3.3.2 Credential evaluation methodology

From the early 1950s to the mid-1970s the purpose of credential evaluation was to establish *equivalence*. Qualifications were evaluated on a course-by-course basis and every component of the foreign programme had to be matched with every component in the receiving country's programme.

In the 1980s many countries replaced the concept of equivalence by that of *recognition*: the recognition of a qualification or a diploma for a specific purpose. In this sense, recognition means that a qualification which is not completely equivalent is recognised for a certain purpose (e.g. entry to a doctoral programme) if it fits that purpose. The idea was that a foreign qualification did not have to be identical or even alike in order to be recognised. The foreign degree just needed to have a comparable level and a comparable function and status.

In the 1990s, the concept of *acceptance* has gained ground among most ENIC/NARICs that have long been familiar with recognition. Acceptance means that a foreign qualification of which the level, content and/or function are not recognisably similar to the nearest comparable degree in the receiving country, will be accepted at that level even if there are slight differences. The principle is acceptance with respect for the differences. Only when the differences are too substantial recognition is denied. And although the debate concerning the precise meaning of the term 'substantial differences' will always be a lively one, this was a big leap forward.

3.3.3 European 'legal' framework

In Europe two documents are regarded as the main regulatory framework:

- The Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention, 1997)
- European Union's Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications (EU's Directive on recognition of professional qualifications, 2005/36/EC)

Lisbon Recognition Convention

The *Lisbon Recognition Convention* adopts the idea of acceptance. The core of this Convention is to emphasize the principle of fair and transparent recognition procedures, and the acknowledgement of differences which should be accepted unless they are found to be substantial. The burden of proof has been laid upon the host country. Transparency regarding the criteria used and procedures followed are the backbone of the Convention. Each party must provide appropriate information on their education system, qualifications and institutions. In this latter respect the networks of international recognition play an important role.

Although some signatory countries specifically underlined that this legal instrument should be seen purely in the framework of academic recognition, the Convention is also very useful for professional recognition. The reason, as pointed out already, is that in principle the methodology in academic recognition is no different from professional recognition as regards the evaluation of the educational component of the professional qualification. What is decisive in the end is the objective of the evaluation: further study or work. In the latter case, the employer might have specific questions for the credential evaluator. The principle of acceptance is also reflected in the European Union's Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications.

EU's Directive on recognition of professional qualifications

The European Union's Directive covers the professions of doctor, nurse, dental practitioner, veterinary surgeon, midwife, pharmacist and architect. If you are regarded as qualified in one of these professions in one country of the European Union (home country) then you are allowed to practice that profession in another European Union country (host country). This practice then falls under the same conditions as nationals of the country (host country) where these professions are regulated.

3.3.4 Quality assurance, accreditation and recognition

It is important to realise that in both cases the recognition process is a case-by-case evaluation of foreign credentials. Although the 'legal' framework hugely facilitates recognition, it still does not entail automatic or generic recognition. However, the Lisbon Recognition Convention explicitly promotes all possible bilateral (national or institutional) agreements that could further facilitate recognition.

An ENIC/NARIC deals with questions such as: What is the quality or status of the programme and the institution? Is the institution involved recognised by any competent authority (e.g. ministry of education)? What is the level of the programme and is this programme up to that level? And how do we know that? What are the learning outcomes? If these questions can not be answered in a satisfactory manner this could be regarded as a substantial difference.

Quality assurance and accreditation can play a role in taking away doubts. It should provide ENIC/NARICs with the necessary answers concerning the quality, the learning outcomes and the level of a programme.

Even if a quality assurance or accreditation agency states that a certain programme meets the predefined quality standards at for example master's level, it should also be clear that this master's level is compatible with the European level of a master's degree. An ENIC/NARIC would otherwise still be able to invoke a substantial difference. The development of a European and subsequent national qualifications frameworks provides the necessary links between the national levels. In this way comparability or similarity of the level of a qualification are guaranteed.

4 Useful Literature

- John Konrad, *Methodology of RPL*, December 2009 (to be found at http://www.viauc.dk/projekter/NVR/Documents/Viden%20om%20realkompetencer/Methodology_of_RPL1209.pdf)
- EUCEN, the European Association for University Lifelong Learning, *A lifelong Learning University Model for Europe*, see <http://allume.eucen.eu>
- www.enqa.eu
- www.eaconsortium.net/index.php
- www.qrsossroads.eu
- European Commission and CEDEFOP (2009), *European Guidelines for the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning*

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ANNEX:

Overview of the (higher) education structure, the national qualifications frameworks and information on accreditation procedures and agencies (where applicable) in Europe

1 Introduction

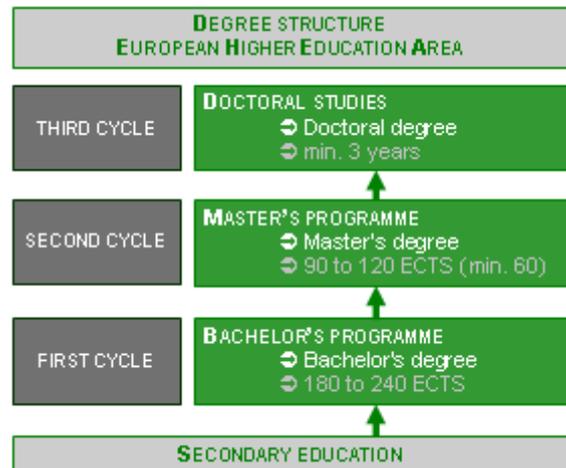
As a general introduction to this annex, in overview of the Degree structure in the European Higher Education Area is given as well as some background on the different Qualifications frameworks in Europe.

1.1 Degree structure in Europe

The European national higher education systems have or are introducing a three-cycle degree structure. This means that students first complete a Bachelor's programme, the first cycle, and with that Bachelor's degree they can be admitted to a Master's programme, the second cycle. The third cycle is the Doctoral programme.

This degree structure is the result of the "Bologna Process", in which 46 European countries

participate in order to create the European Higher Education Area by 2010.



1.2 Qualifications frameworks

The identification of the first and second cycle programmes, as put forward by the Bologna Declaration (1999), was the first step towards developing an overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area. By creating this initial division between cycles the first elements of a qualifications framework were established.

All European countries necessarily have a system of higher education that includes an understanding of the roles of higher education, of higher education institutions, and of various stakeholders, such as learners, staff in higher education institutions, and social partners. The elements of such national higher education systems are often formally defined, however there may be many aspects of higher education systems that are not precisely defined but are understood within the society in which they operate. Within higher education systems, higher education qualifications themselves are a key element and are often not clearly separated in their definition from the programmes of study leading to them.

In recent years, there has been an increasing national and international debate on higher education qualifications, and in particular how they are organised, recognised and related to each other on national and trans-national bases. In particular, the emerging developments within the Bologna Process have been key factors in stimulating such debates.

Emerging from this debate has been recognition of the need to have a specific policy focus on the higher education qualifications attained by learners who have successfully participated in programmes of various types. the single description, at national level or level of an education system, which is internationally understood and through which all qualifications and other learning achievements in higher education may be described and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between higher education qualifications.

In simple terms a national framework of higher education qualifications is defined here as:
the single description, at national level or level of an education system, which is internationally understood and through which all qualifications and other learning achievements in higher education may be described and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between higher education qualifications.

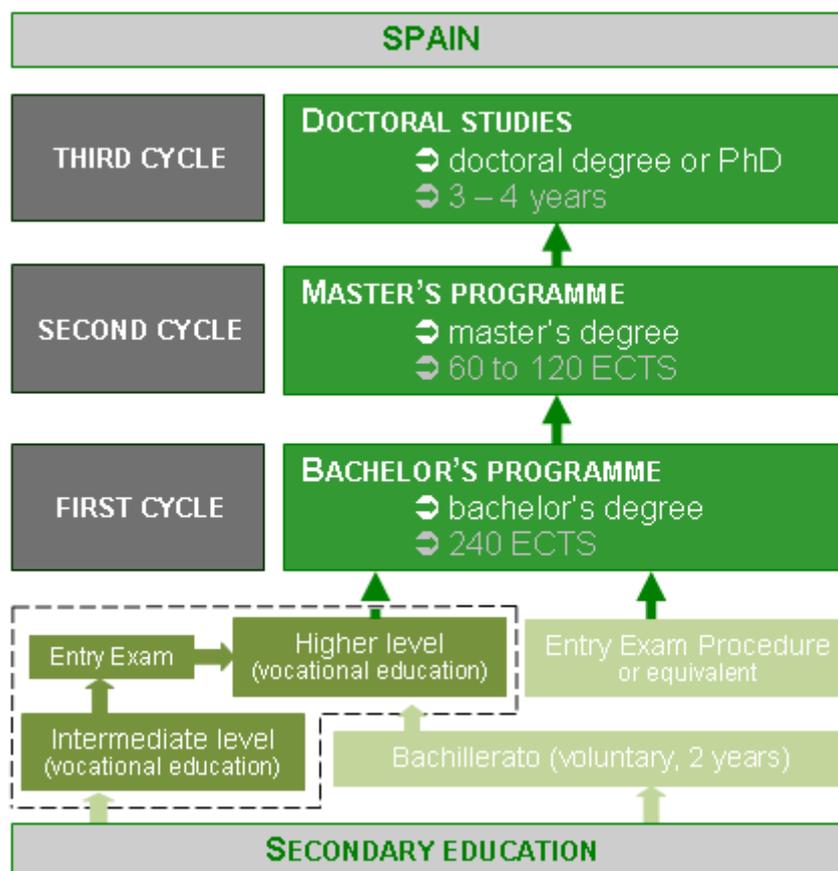
II Overview of different European countries

In the second part of this annex, the (higher) education structure, the national qualifications framework and information on accreditation procedures and agencies (where applicable) in different countries in Europe is given.

For some countries this information was not readily available (in English) and hence they are lacking.

1 Spain

1.1 Higher education in Spain



1.1.1 Short overview

A decentralized model regarding authority over education is currently in place for Spanish Higher Education. It distributes authority over education between the State, the Autonomous Communities and the Universities.

Jurisdiction over higher education is designated almost totally to the universities, with isolated exceptions in certain military, artistic and music degree programmes that are given in non-university institutions.

The State however regulates the conditions for obtaining, issuing and recognising academic and professional degrees.

1.1.2 Types of institutions

Spanish universities may be either public or private, and they can be set up under either State or Autonomous law. There are at the moment 75 universities of which 50 are established on a public basis and 25 on a private basis.

Of the 75 public universities, 48 fall under the authority of the Autonomous Communities while 2 fall under the Ministry of Education and Science. Of the 25 private universities, 7 belong to the Catholic Church.

Institutions that offer programmes and degrees in accordance with a foreign educational system that is not officially recognised in Spain must be regulated by the Government, subject to a report by the Coordinating Council of Spanish Universities (article 86 of the Spanish Universities Act).

1.1.3 Types of programmes

Spanish higher education is currently adapting to the three cycle degree system of the European Higher Education Area. Therefore, two structures currently coexist in university education:

The new structure (in line with the European Higher Education Area)

In this structure, programmes are situated in one of the following three cycles:

- Bachelor's programmes: basic degree programmes and/or general education-oriented;
- Master's programmes: specialized or multidisciplinary advanced training; academic or professional oriented; and
- Doctorate programmes: advanced training in research techniques).

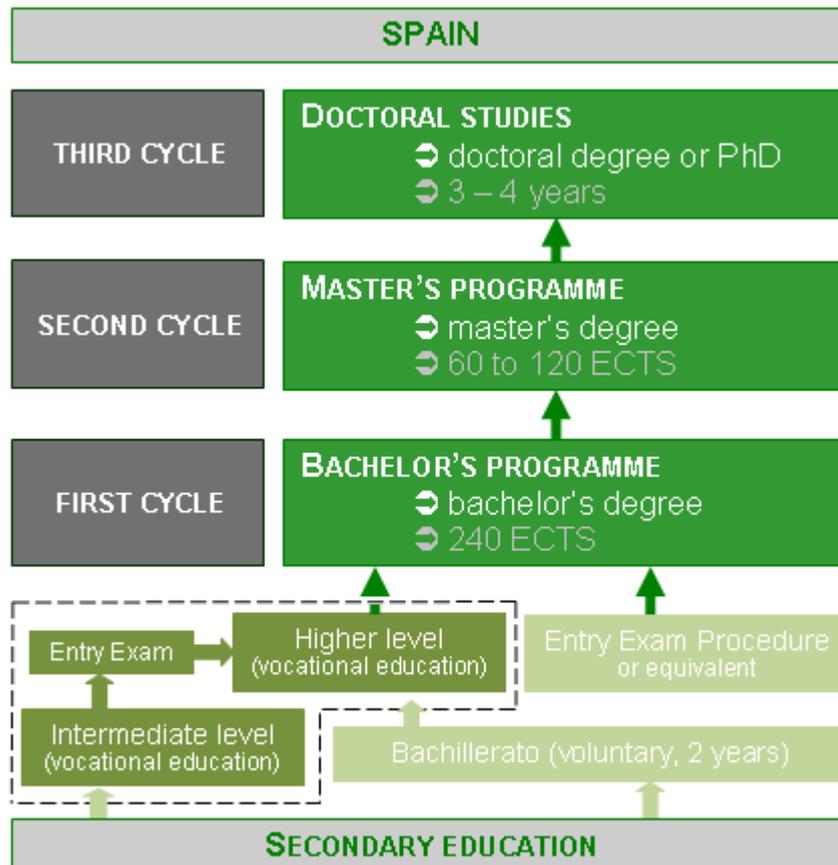
The old structure (pre-European Higher Education Area)

There are still four types of programmes which will be adapted to the above-mentioned structure before 2010. These are:

- First cycle (short cycle) degree programmes: orientated towards professional qualifications and award either a Diploma or a General Degree, and, in Engineering and Architecture, an equivalent qualification (official duration of three years).
- First and second cycle degree programmes (long cycle): according to the type of studies, they have an official duration of either four or five years.

- Second cycle only degree programmes (generally two years), lead to the award of the equivalent of an Honours Degree, and, in Engineering and Architecture, an equivalent qualification, entry to which requires certain first cycle qualifications or a long cycle first degree.

1.2 National qualifications framework



The Spanish Qualifications Framework is at the moment being developed. The committee in charge of defining the NQF has been already created in order to accomplish Royal Order 900/2007 of 6th July. ANECA is member of this committee for those issues related to quality assurance and accreditation.

1.3 Accreditation

The main Spanish accreditation agency is



1.3.1 Evaluation of officially recognised programmes

The Organic Law 4/2007, dated 12 April, which amended Organic Law 6/2001, 21 December, on Universities (Spanish Universities Act), established a new structure for university degree programmes in Spain in line with the aims set for building the European Higher Education Area.

Royal Decree 1393/2007, dated 29 October, and Royal Decree 861/2010 which amended the previous have led autonomy to the universities to design new degree programmes at Bachelor, Master and Doctorate levels. These Royal Decrees also establish three stages in the introduction of official university degree.

- **Ex-ante accreditation**
- **Follow-up procedure**
- **Ex-post accreditation**

Ex-ante accreditation:

Once a university has decided to offer a degree before admitting students, the university must present a degree project for verification by the Universities Council which requests an assessment report from the Quality Assurance Agency in charge. (ANECA or one of the regional Quality Assurance Agencies with such a competence).

The VERIFICA program was created by ANECA in order to perform this report.

What does a positive report mean?

The project must also be authorized by the Regional Authorities who provide founding to the programme.

Once this process has concluded, the degrees are included in the Register of Universities, Centres and Degrees (RUCT), which contains information concerning the Spanish University System and the degree is considered as Accredited.

Follow-up procedure:

ANECA (and other regional agencies) are developing the so-called follow-up procedures where to check, by non-intrusive means, that the institution is implementing the study

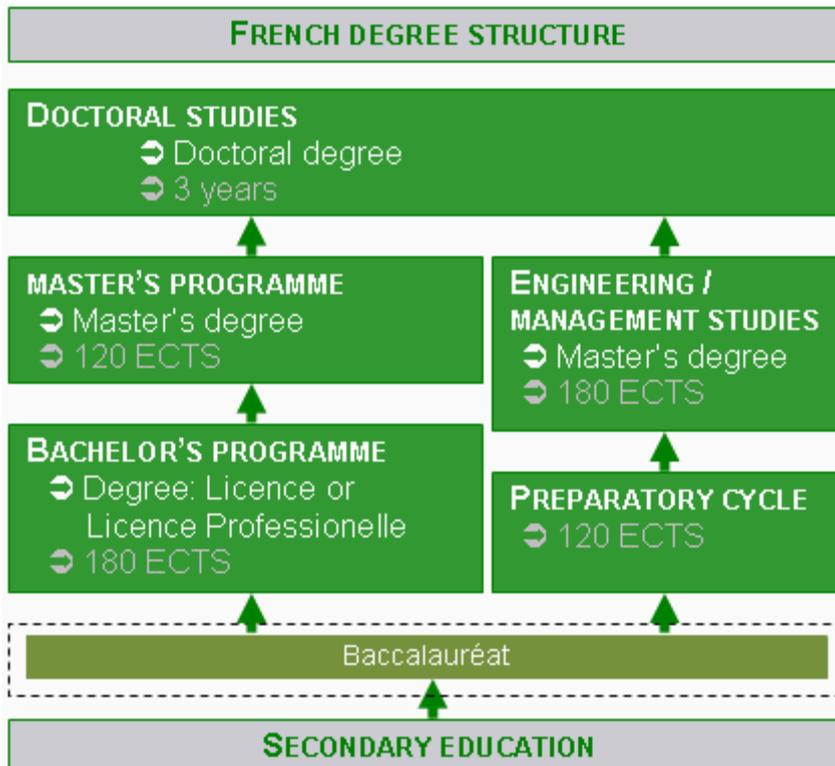
programme according to the approved design. The MONITOR program was created by ANECA in order to perform this follow-up.

Ex-post accreditation:

ANECA is currently creating the ACREDITA program which will check that the degree has been carried out according with the initial project. This review will include a site visit to the institution.

2 France

2.1 Degree structure in France



2.1.1 Short overview

In France, the higher education system is regulated by the Ministry in charge of the Higher Education. Other ministries (the Technical Ministries) such as the ministries of Industry, Defence, Agriculture, ... are often responsible of institutions in their technical domain. The provinces (« Régions ») have no direct competencies in higher education, although they support the institutions and laboratories in their area.

Higher education covers all studies after the baccalauréat ('A' level equivalent). Two systems exist side by side:

- **An open system in the universities.**
Most students study under this system. All baccalauréat holders have the right to enter this system without any prior selection procedure. The universities offer an extremely wide range of studies;
- **A selective system with a limited number of places.**
Admission is based on a competitive examination. This is the system in use in the grandes écoles (top graduate schools such as the Ecole Nationale d'Administration –

French Senior Civil Service School – Ecole Nationale Supérieure – national post-graduate school – the « Ecoles d'ingénieurs » and top business schools), the instituts universitaires de technologie (IUTs – university institutes of technology). These establishments train mainly public-sector and private-sector senior and middle managers.

2.1.2 Types of institutions

In France, there is by law the freedom to set up and run higher education institutions. However, the « student status » (access to grants, special social security regime, student visa, ...) is given only to the students of the higher education institutions that are recognised as such by the French authorities (i.e a special visa from the State).

There are two main categories of 'recognised' institutions:

- institutions (private or mainly public) which are allowed by law to deliver national degrees (such as Bachelor, Master, «Titre d'ingénieur », Doctorate, ... These institutions receive public funding for their education and scientific research.
- institutions which can only deliver their own degrees.

Higher education is offered by a variety of institutions : universities, colleges, « grandes écoles », university institutes of technology, ...

Tuition and fees are usually low in public institutions (a few hundreds euros including social security) and are much higher in private schools (ranging from € 4 000 to € 15 000)

2.1.3 Types of programmes

France has a three cycle degree structure which is in line with the European Higher Education Area.

France uses the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). One credit corresponding to the student workload required to successfully complete a course module. These credits can be accumulated and transferred. The curriculum of a programme is organised into six-month periods and teaching units (modules).

- **Licence degree (Bachelor's degree)**

A Bachelor's programme takes 180 ECTS.

- « Licence » :

Bachelor's degree with academic orientation gives access to master's programmes.

- « Licence professionnelle » :
Bachelor's degree with a professional orientation gives access to the labour market.
- **Master degree (Master's degree)**
A Master's programme takes in total 300 ECTS: 180 ECTS at Bachelor's level and 120 ECTS at Master's level.
 - « Master » : master's degree
The master's programme has either a professional or an academic orientation. Access is open to the holders of a Bachelor's degree or equivalent. This master's programme takes 120 ECTS.
 - « Titre d'ingénieur » qualified master's degree in science and engineering.
This is a fully integrated curriculum of 300 ECTS, delivered by institutions accredited by the Commission des Titres d'ingénieurs (CTI).
- **PhD degrees**
 - Doctorate programme
 -

2.2 National qualifications framework

France has a national qualifications framework encompassing all levels of education (RNCP, « Répertoire National des Compétences professionnelles »).

Bachelor's degree

Level in EHEA	
Qualifications Framework:	First cycle
Level in EQF:	Level 6
Level in the RNCP:	Level 3
Credit range:	180 ECTS
Learning outcomes:	To be added...
General admission requirements:	The general admission requirement is the secondary school-leaving diploma (« Baccalauréat », average rate success 80%). Some institutions are allowed by law to have special admission requirements (IUT « Instituts de Technologie », CPGE « Classes préparatoires aux Grandes Ecoles », ...). By individual assessment, admission may be granted to persons who cannot meet the general requirements : foreign students from exchange programs, validation of professional experience, ...)

Master's degree

Level in EHEA	
Qualifications Framework:	Second cycle
Level in EQF:	Level 7

Level in the RNCP: Level 2
 Credit range: 120 ECTS (integrated: 300 ECTS)
 Learning outcomes: To be added...
 For the general master programmes, the Bachelor diploma («Licence»):
 By individual assessment, admission may be granted to persons who cannot meet the general requirements : foreign students from exchange programs, validation of professional experience, ...)
 General admission requirements:
 For the « Titre d'ingénieur », qualified master's degree in science and engineering:
 the selective admission is mandatory from the « Baccalauréat » or from the preparatory cycles (2 years).

PhD degree

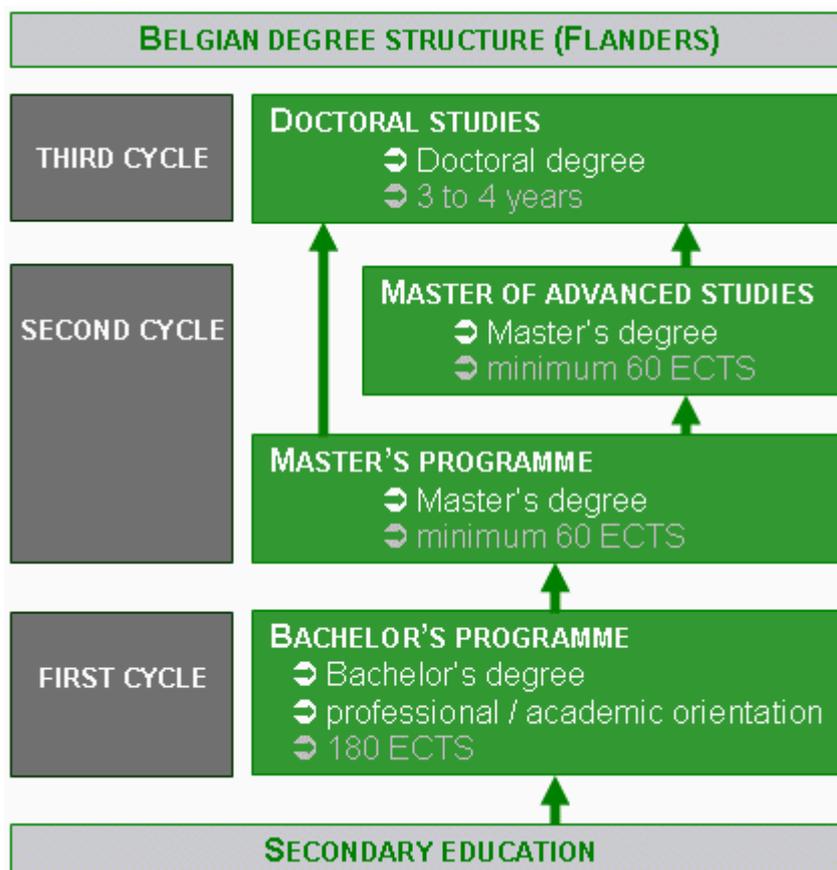
Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework:	Third cycle
Level in EQF:	Level 8
Level in the RNCP:	Level 1
Credit range:	No credit range specified
Learning outcomes:	To be added...

2.3 Accreditation Agency:

The only French recognized Accreditation Agency is Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur (CTI)
 – see <http://www.cti-commission.fr/>.

3 Belgium (Flanders)

3.1 Degree structure in Flanders



3.1.1 Short overview

Belgium is a federal country with three official languages (Dutch, French and German). Flanders is one of the federal entities with full competence over higher education. Brussels, the capital of Flanders and Belgium, also functions as the multilingual and multicultural capital of the European Union and is the seat of many international governmental (e.g. NATO) and non-governmental organisations (e.g. Human Rights Watch).

Higher education in Flanders is therefore internationally oriented and Flemish higher education offers a wide range of programmes in English and other languages. The reputation of Flemish higher education is ensured by its exemplary regulatory framework and its obligatory accreditation. The quality of Flemish higher education is reflected in the fact that its universities (offering doctoral studies) are listed in the well-known university rankings.

3.1.2 Types of institutions

There are two main categories of higher education institutions in Flanders: the statutory registered institutions and the (non-statutory) registered institutions. Only these institutions are allowed to offer Bachelor and Master's degrees.

- **Statutory registered institutions**

These institutions are the traditional higher education institutions and were already recognised by the Flemish education authority before the higher education reforms of 2003. All these institutions receive public funding for their education and scientific research.

There are three main types of statutory registered institutions:

- Universities;
- University Colleges;
- Postgraduate institutions.

- **Registered institutions**

Registered institutions are institutions that have gone through a formal registration procedure and are officially registered by the Flemish government.

The registration procedure includes proving financial solvency and setting up cooperation agreements with a recognised institution (national/international) to guarantee students finishing their studies in cases where an institution halts its activities (e.g. bankruptcy).

Higher education is mainly offered by university colleges and universities. Universities offer programmes with an academic orientation. University colleges offer programmes with a professional orientation. However, they can also offer programmes with an academic orientation if they do so in an 'Association' with a university.

Such an association is an official body in which the cooperation between a university and one or more university colleges is officially established. They are for example responsible for the link with research in academic programmes offered by university colleges.

The degrees are awarded by the universities and university colleges themselves.

3.1.3 Types of programmes

Flanders has a three cycle degree structure: Bachelor - Master - Ph.D

- **Bachelor's degrees**

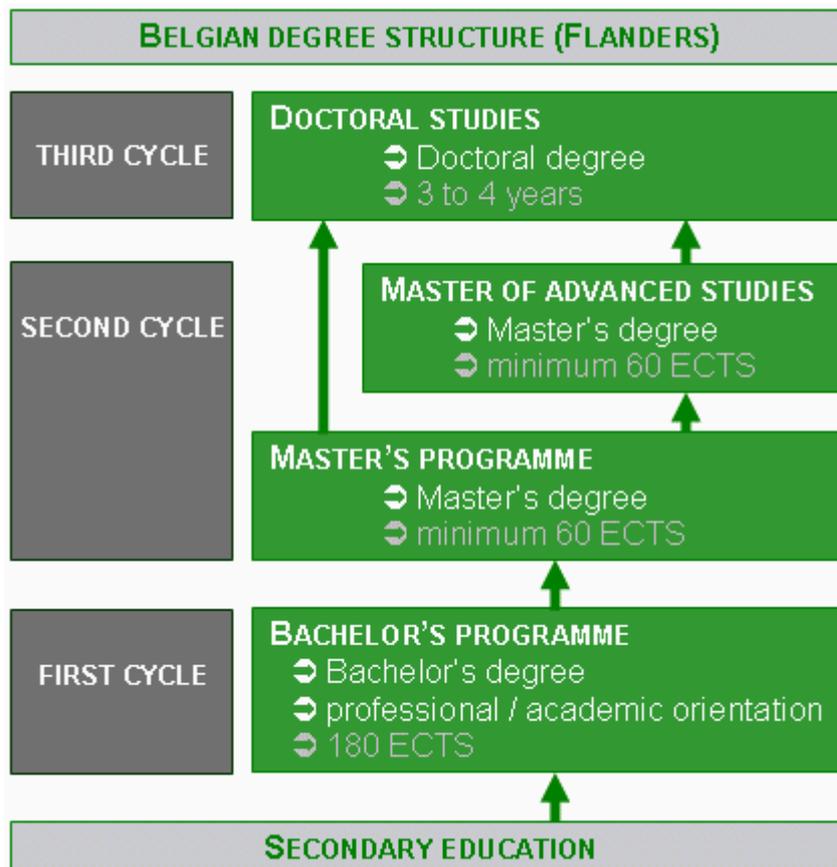
- Bachelor's programme (professional orientation)
- Bachelor of Advanced Studies (professional orientation)
- Bachelor's programme (academic orientation)

- **Master's degrees**

- Master's programme
- Master of Advanced Studies
- **PhD degrees**
 - Doctorate programme

3.1.4 Overview degree structure

3.2 National qualifications framework



The Dublin Descriptors as laid down in the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area have been incorporated in the legislation regulating higher education in Flanders.

A national qualifications framework encompassing all levels of education is in development.

Bachelor's degree

- Bachelor's programme (professional orientation)
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: first cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 6

- Credit range: minimum 180 ECTS
- Learning outcomes:
 - general competences such as the capacity for logical thought and reasoning, the ability to acquire and process information, the ability for critical reflection and project-based work, creativity, the ability to perform simple supervision tasks, the ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialists as well as laymen, and a positive attitude towards life-long learning
 - general professional competences like the ability to work together as part of a team, a solution-oriented attitude in the sense of being able to define and analyse independently complex problematic situations in professional practice, and the ability to develop and apply effective strategies to solve them, and to develop a sense of social responsibility in connection with the professional practice
 - specific professional competences at the level of a newly-qualified professional
- General admission requirements:

The general admission requirement is the Flemish secondary school-leaving diploma. If a foreign qualification is recognised on the basis of a Flemish decree, Belgian Law, a European Directive or an international convention, the holder will have direct access to Bachelor's programmes.

Admission may also be granted, after individual assessment of your foreign qualification(s), if it gives access to higher education in your country.

Higher education institutions may adopt special admission requirements allowing to admit persons who cannot meet the general admission requirement.
- Bachelor's programme (academic orientation)
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: first cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 6
 - Credit range: minimum 180 ECTS
 - Learning outcomes:
 - general competences such as the capacity for logical thought and reasoning, the ability to acquire and process information, the capacity for critical reflection, creativity, being able to perform simple management tasks, the ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialists as well as laymen and a positive attitude towards life-long learning
 - general academic competences such as a research attitude, knowledge of research methodologies and techniques and the ability to apply them adequately, the ability to collect the relevant data that can

influence the formation of an opinion about social, scientific and ethical issues, appreciation of uncertainty, ambiguity and the limits of knowledge, and the ability to initiate problem-driven research

- an understanding of basic academic, discipline-related knowledge inherent to a certain domain of the sciences or the arts, systematic understanding of the key elements of a discipline which includes acquiring coherent and detailed knowledge that is inspired partly by the most recent developments in the discipline, and an understanding of the structure of the specialisation and its inter-relatedness with other specialities

- General admission requirements:

The general admission requirement is the Flemish secondary school-leaving diploma. If a foreign qualification is recognised on the basis of a Flemish decree, Belgian Law, a European Directive or an international convention, the holder will have direct access to Bachelor's programmes.

Admission may also be granted, after individual assessment of your foreign qualification(s), if it gives access to higher education in your country.

Higher education institutions may adopt special admission requirements allowing to admit persons who cannot meet the general admission requirement.

- Bachelor of Advanced Studies (professional orientation)

- Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: first cycle

- Level in EQF: level 6

- Credit range: minimum 60 ECTS

- Learning outcomes:

- general competences such as the capacity for logical thought and reasoning, the ability to acquire and process information, the ability for critical reflection and project-based work, creativity, the ability to perform simple supervision tasks, the ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialists as well as laymen, and a positive attitude towards life-long learning
- general professional competences like the ability to work together as part of a team, a solution-oriented attitude in the sense of being able to define and analyse independently complex problematic situations in professional practice, and the ability to develop and apply effective strategies to solve them, and to develop a sense of social responsibility in connection with the professional practice
- specific professional competences at the level of a newly-qualified professional

- General admission requirements:
A bachelor's degree, with a qualification or qualifications specified in more detail by the management of the institution, possibly supplemented with an assessment concerning the fitness or capacity of the individual, or with a preparatory programme.

Master's degree

- Master's programme
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: second cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 7
 - Credit range: minimum 60 ECTS
 - Learning outcomes:
 - general competences at an advanced level such as the ability to reason and act in an academic manner, the ability to handle complex problems, the ability to reflect on one's own thoughts and work, and the ability to convert this reflection into the development of more effective solutions, the ability to communicate one's own research and solutions to professional colleagues and laymen, and the ability to develop an opinion in an uncertain context
 - general academic competences at an advanced level such as the ability to apply research methods and techniques, the ability to design research, the ability to apply paradigms in the domain of the sciences or the arts and the ability to indicate the limits of paradigms, originality and creativity regarding the continuously expanding body of knowledge and insight, and the ability to collaborate in a multi-disciplinary environment
 - advanced understanding and insight in scientific, discipline- specific knowledge inherent to a certain domain of the sciences or the arts, insight in the most recent knowledge in the subject/discipline or parts of it, the ability to follow and interpret the direction in which theory formation is developing, the ability to make an original contribution towards the body of knowledge of one or several parts of the subject/discipline, and display specific competences characteristic for the subject/discipline such as designing, researching, analysing and diagnosing
 - the competences needed for either independent research or the independent practice of the arts at the level of a newly-qualified researcher (in the arts), or the general and specific professional

competences needed for independent application of academic or artistic knowledge at the level of a newly-qualified professional

- General admission requirements:
A bachelor's degree, with a qualification or qualifications specified in more detail by the management of the institution, possibly supplemented with an individualised curriculum, a preparatory programme or a bridging programme
- Master of Advances Studies
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: second cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 7
 - Credit range: minimum 60 ECTS
 - Learning outcomes:
 - general competences at an advanced level such as the ability to reason and act in an academic manner, the ability to handle complex problems, the ability to reflect on one's own thoughts and work, and the ability to convert this reflection into the development of more effective solutions, the ability to communicate one's own research and solutions to professional colleagues and laymen, and the ability to develop an opinion in an uncertain context
 - general academic competences at an advanced level such as the ability to apply research methods and techniques, the ability to design research, the ability to apply paradigms in the domain of the sciences or the arts and the ability to indicate the limits of paradigms, originality and creativity regarding the continuously expanding body of knowledge and insight, and the ability to collaborate in a multi-disciplinary environment
 - advanced understanding and insight in scientific, discipline- specific knowledge inherent to a certain domain of the sciences or the arts, insight in the most recent knowledge in the subject/discipline or parts of it, the ability to follow and interpret the direction in which theory formation is developing, the ability to make an original contribution towards the body of knowledge of one or several parts of the subject/discipline, and display specific competences characteristic for the subject/discipline such as designing, researching, analysing and diagnosing
 - the competences needed for either independent research or the independent practice of the arts at the level of a newly-qualified researcher (in the arts), or the general and specific professional competences needed for independent application of academic or artistic knowledge at the level of a newly-qualified professional

- General admission requirements:
A master's degree, with a qualification or qualifications specified in more detail by the management of the institution, possibly supplemented with an assessment concerning the fitness or capacity of the individual, or with a preparatory programme

PhD degree

- Doctorate programme
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: third cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 8
 - Credit range: no credit range specified (+/- 4 years)
 - Content:
The degree of ' doctor ' is awarded by a university jury after a public presentation of a doctorate thesis which confirms the capability of the creation of new scientific knowledge based upon independent scientific research. The doctorate thesis should have the potential to lead to publications in scientific journals.

3.3 Accreditation

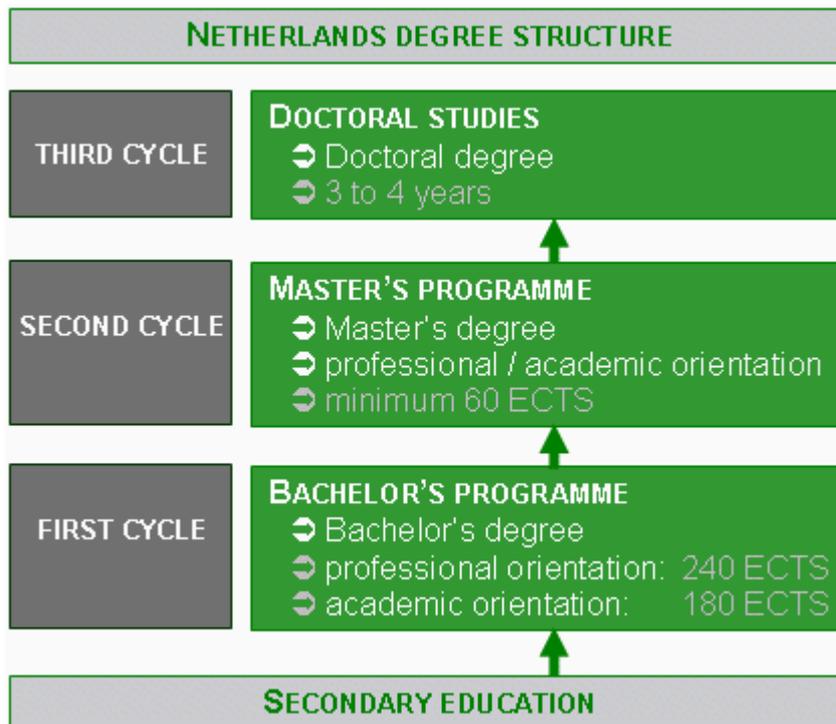
The Flemish accreditation agency is Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO) – see <http://www.nvao.net/>

NVAO's scope of work includes the following activities:

1. Recognition of new higher education institutions in which NVAO looks at the potential quality of higher education provision alongside national authorities appraisal of legal and organisational issues of the new provider;
2. Institutional audits in which NVAO assesses the institutional quality assurance system;
3. Initial accreditation of new programmes (i.e. programmes that want to offer a recognised degree);
4. Accreditation of programmes that already offer a recognised degree;
5. Assessment of distinctive (quality) features of programmes and institutions at the request of the relevant institution;
6. Publication of decisions (and officially recognised degrees) in the NVAO database;
7. Internationalisation activities related to quality assurance in higher education.

4 The Netherlands

4.1 Degree structure in The Netherlands



4.1.1 Short overview

The Netherlands is also known as Holland. The country's formal name is the 'low country' while Holland means 'hollow country'. This refers to the fact that much of the land is at or below sea level.

Higher education in The Netherlands is internationally oriented. Almost one fourth of all programmes are offered in English and these programmes attract a lot of students from all over the world. The reputation of Dutch higher education is ensured by its national regulatory framework, its commitment to quality assurance and its obligatory accreditation.

4.1.2 Types of institutions

There are three categories of higher education institutions in The Netherlands:

- **Recognised public institutions**

There are two types of recognised public institutions: universities of applied science ("hogescholen") and universities.

Both universities and universities of applied science can offer programmes with an academic as well as a professional orientation.

- **Recognised private institutions**

These institutions do not receive public funding. However, after having completed a special institutional procedure and initial accreditation of their programmes, these institutions are allowed to offer bachelor and master's programmes.

- **Privately funded institutions that are not recognised**

These institutions are not recognised are only allowed to offer postgraduate programmes. These programmes have to get (initial) accreditation.

4.1.3 Types of programmes

The Netherlands has a three cycle degree structure in line with the European Higher Education Area.

- **Bachelor's degrees**

- Bachelor's programme (professional orientation)
- Bachelor's programme (academic orientation)

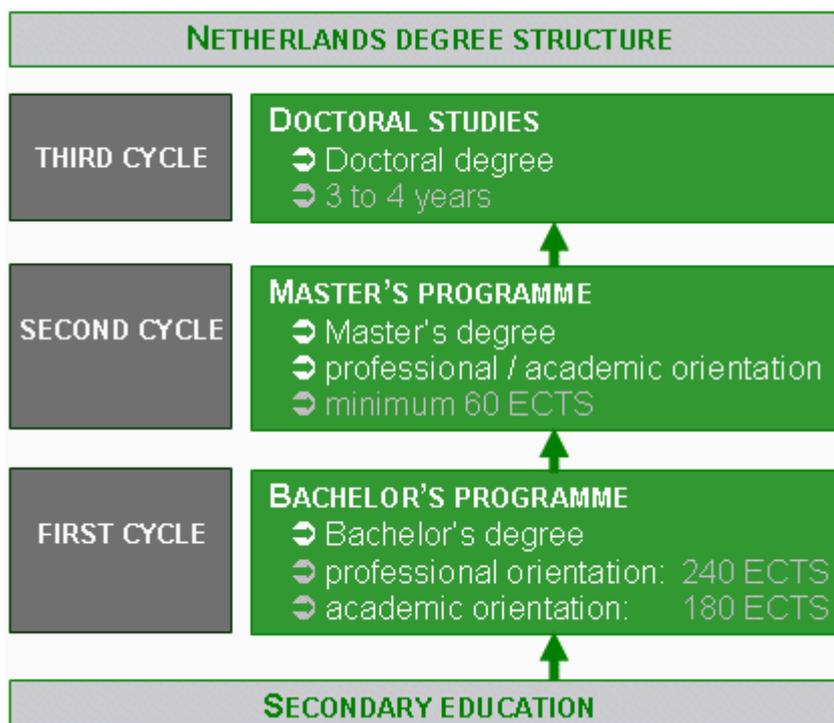
- **Master's degrees**

- Master's programme (professional orientation)
- Master's programme (academic orientation)

- **Doctoral degrees**

- Doctoral studies

4.2 National qualifications framework



A national qualifications framework encompassing all levels of education is in development. It will formalise the current structure of higher education.

Bachelor's degree

- Bachelor's programme (professional orientation)
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: first cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 6
 - Credit range: 240 ECTS
- Bachelor's programme (academic orientation)
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: first cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 6
 - Credit range: 180 ECTS

Master's degree

- Master's programme (professional/academic orientation)
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: second cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 7
 - Credit range: minimum 60 ECTS

Doctoral degree

- Doctoral studies
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: third cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 8
 - Credit range: no credit range specified (+/- 4 years)

4.3 Accreditation

The Dutch accreditation agency is Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO) – see <http://www.nvao.net/>

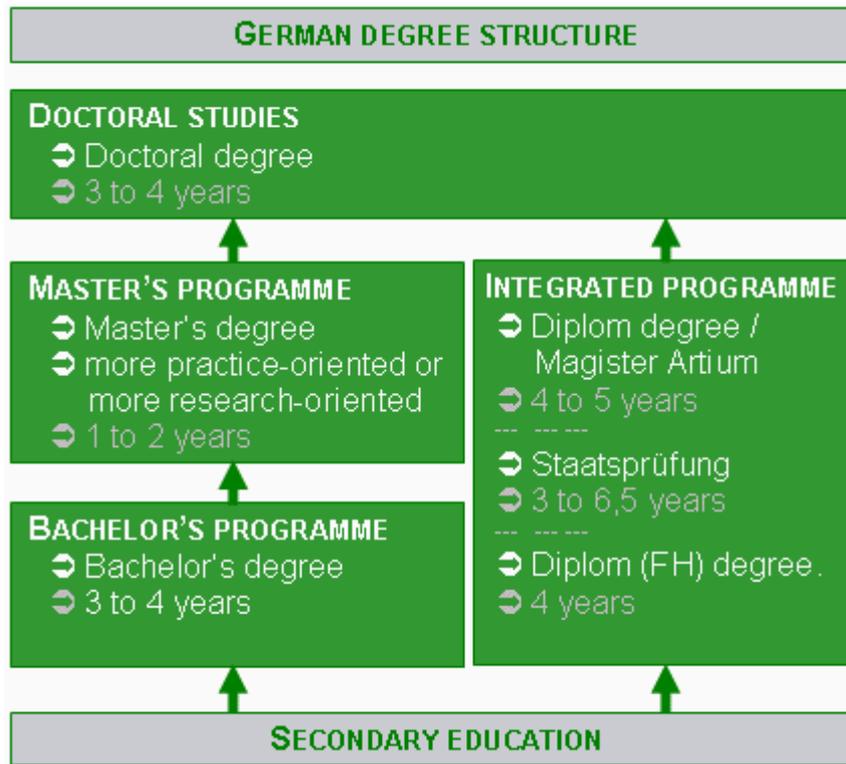
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2. Institutional audits in which NVAO assesses the institutional quality assurance system;

3. Initial accreditation of new programmes (i.e. programmes that want to offer a recognised degree);
4. Accreditation of programmes that already offer a recognised degree;
5. Assessment of distinctive (quality) features of programmes and institutions at the request of the relevant institution;
6. Publication of decisions (and officially recognised degrees) in the NVAO database;
7. Internationalisation activities related to quality assurance in higher education.

5 Germany

5.1 Degree structure in Germany



5.1.1 Short overview

Germany is a federal country. German higher education sector is regulated partly at federal and partly at state level.

5.1.2 Types of institutions

In Germany, higher education are offered at three types of Higher Education Institutions.

- **Universitäten (Universities) including various specialised institutions**

These institutions offer the whole range of academic disciplines. In the German tradition, universities focus in particular on basic research so that advanced stages of study have mainly theoretical orientation and research-oriented components.

- **Fachhochschulen (Universities of Applied Sciences)**

These institutions concentrate their study programmes in engineering and other technical disciplines, business-related studies, social work, and design areas. The common mission of applied research and development implies a distinct application-oriented focus and professional character of studies, which include integrated and supervised work assignments in industry, enterprises or other relevant institutions.

- **Kunst- und Musikhochschulen (Universities of Art/Music)**

These institutions offer studies for artistic careers in fine arts, performing arts and music; in such fields as directing, production, writing in theatre, film, and other media; and in a variety of design areas, architecture, media and communication.

Higher Education Institutions are either state or state-recognised institutions. In their operations, including the organisation of studies and the designation and award of degrees, they are both subject to higher education legislation.

5.1.3 Types of programmes

German higher education used to be offered in integrated "long" (one-tier) programmes leading to Diplom- or Magister Artium degrees or completed by a Staatsprüfung (State Examination).

German higher education is currently adapting to the three cycle degree system of the European Higher Education Area. Therefore, the old one-tier programmes are successively being replaced by a the new system.

Bachelor and Master's programmes are offered parallel to or instead of the integrated "long" programmes. The Bachelor and Master's programmes are designed to provide an enlarged variety and flexibility to students in planning and pursuing educational objectives, they also enhance international compatibility of studies.

5.2 Accreditation

The following recognised accreditation agencies are active in Germany:

- Akkreditierungsrat

www.akkreditierungsrat.de

- Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA)

www.fibaa.org

- Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales e.V. (AHPGS)

www.ahpgs.de

- Agentur für Qualitätssicherung durch Akkreditierung von Studiengängen e.V. (AQAS)

www.aqas.de

- Zentrale Evaluations- und Akkreditierungsagentur (ZEVA)

www.zeva.org

6 Norway

6.1 National qualifications framework

Norway's national qualifications framework encompassing all levels of education is currently in development.

Bachelor's degree

- Bachelor's programme (professional orientation)
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: first cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 6
 - Credit range: minimum 180 ECTS
 - Learning outcomes:
 - Not specified
 - General admission requirements:
 - Not specified
- Bachelor's programme (academic orientation)
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: first cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 6
 - Credit range: minimum 180 ECTS
 - Learning outcomes:
 - Not specified
 - General admission requirements:
 - Not specified

Master's degree

- Master's programme
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: second cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 7
 - Credit range: minimum xx ECTS
 - Learning outcomes:
 - Not specified
 - General admission requirements:
 - Not specified

PhD degree

- Doctorate programme
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: third cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 8
 - Credit range: no credit range specified (+/- 4 years)
 - Content:

The degree of ' doctor ' is awarded by a university jury after a public presentation of a doctorate thesis which confirms the capability of the creation of new scientific knowledge based upon independent scientific research. The doctorate thesis should have the potential to lead to publications in scientific journals.

6.2 Accreditation organisation

NOKUT – the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education – is a professionally independent government agency that contributes towards quality assurance and enhancement in higher education and tertiary vocational education. NOKUT's tasks include foreign higher education qualifications as well as Norwegian higher education.

- NOKUT conducts quality controls and stimulates the quality development of educational provision at Norwegian universities, higher education colleges and colleges of tertiary vocational education.
- NOKUT recognises foreign higher education qualifications in response to applications by individuals and provides information to holders of foreign qualifications about Norway's various mechanisms for the recognition and authorisation of foreign qualifications.

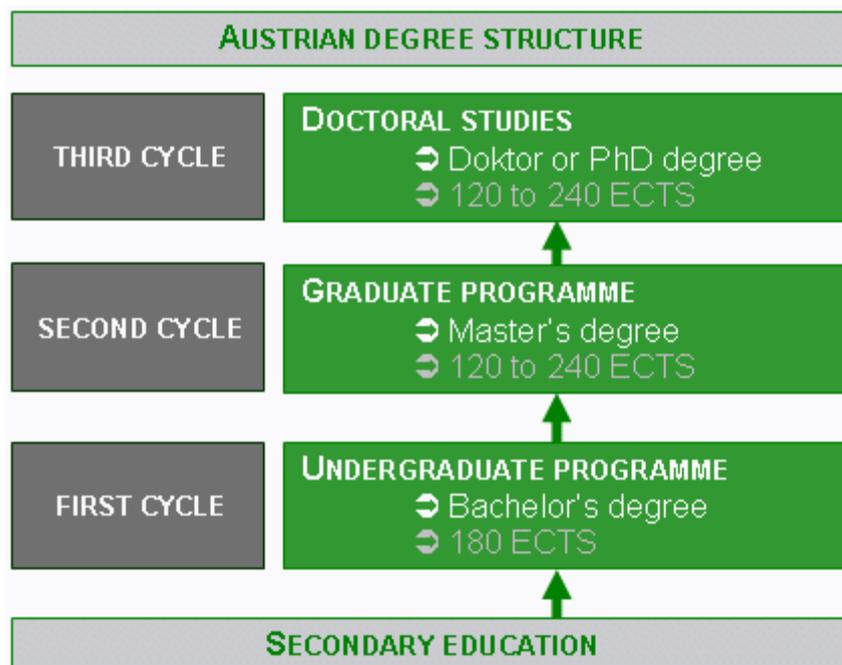
Through its activities, NOKUT works to maintain society's trust in the quality of Norwegian higher education, tertiary vocational education and recognised foreign higher education qualifications.

NOKUT was established in 2003 as part of the Quality Reform legislation on higher education. NOKUT's areas of responsibility and operational mechanisms are regulated by the Act Relating to Universities and Colleges, the Act Relating to Tertiary Vocational Education and the associated Regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Research. NOKUT's professional independence means that its accreditation and recognition decisions cannot be overruled by the Ministry.

More information: see <http://www.nokut.no/>

7 Austria

7.1 Short overview



In Austria, the higher education sector is regulated by the Federal Minister of Science and Research and the Federal Minister for Education, the Arts and Culture. The federal provinces have no direct competencies for higher education matters.

7.2 Types of institutions

The higher education sector in Austria consists of different types of institutions: public universities and university colleges of education, universities of applied sciences and private universities

- **Public universities and university colleges of education**

The public universities fall under the supervision of the Federal Minister of Science and Research and the university councils. These councils are self-administration bodies, bound by no instructions. Their main function is planning and supervision. The university colleges of education fall under the supervision of the Federal Minister of Education, Arts and Culture and the college of councils. These councils are self-administration bodies, bound by no instructions. Their main function is planning and supervision.

- **Universities of applied sciences**

The universities of applied sciences fall under the authority of the Fachhochschule Council (FH Council). This council in turn is subject to the supervision of the Federal

Minister of Science and Research, with, however, the members of the FH Council being vested with constitutional independence. The universities of applied sciences and their degree programmes are administered by the UAS providers pursuant to the statutory overall conditions and the regulations provided by the FH Council.

- **Private universities**

The private universities fall under the authority of the Accreditation Council (ÖAR). This council works under the supervision of the Federal Minister of Science and Research. All legal provisions are regulated by the University Accreditation Act.

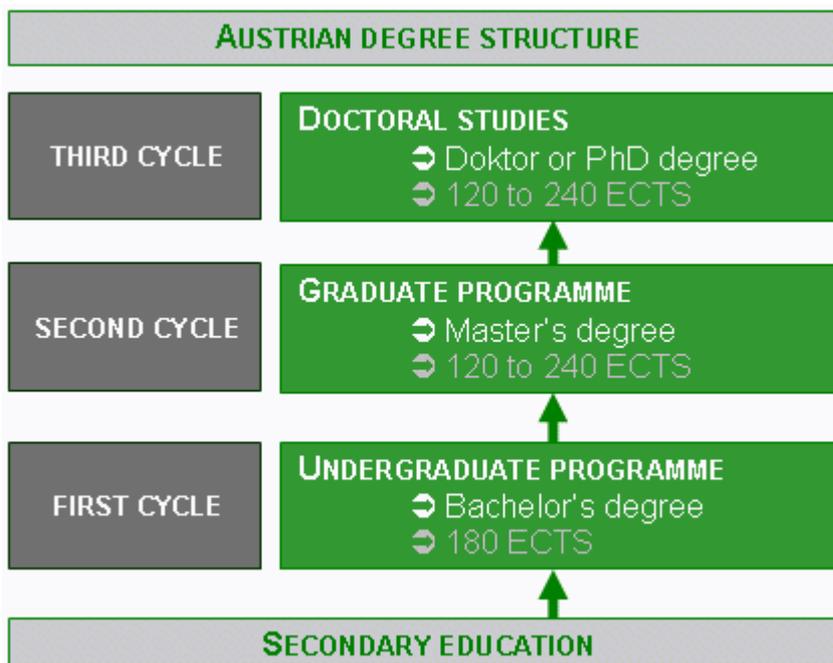
7.3 Types of programmes

Austria has a three cycle degree structure in line with the European Higher Education Area.

- **Bachelor's degree**
 - Undergraduate programme
- **Master's degrees**
 - Graduate programme
- **Degrees of Doktor or PhD degree**
 - Doctoral programme

Some programmes are still offered in line with the old degree structure. This mainly concerns Diploma programmes leading to the degree of "Magistra" or "Magister", or "Diplom-Ingenieur/in".

7.4 National qualifications framework



A national qualifications framework encompassing all levels of education is currently in development and shall be in place by 2010. The Austrian government has decided to develop and adopt a national qualifications framework and to link it to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF).

Bachelor's degree

- Undergraduate programme (professional orientation)
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: first cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 6
 - Credit range: minimum 180 ECTS
 - Learning outcomes:
 - to be added
 - General admission requirements:

An Austrian higher secondary school leaving certificate or its equivalent is the general qualification necessary for enrolling in an undergraduate programme.

Master's degree

- Graduate programme
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: second cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 7
 - Credit range: minimum 120 ECTS

Doktor degree (expiring)

- Doctoral programme
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: third cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 8
 - Credit range: 120 ECTS

PhD degree

- Doctoral programme
 - Level in EHEA Qualifications Framework: third cycle
 - Level in EQF: level 8
 - Credit range: 180 (new) - 240 (expiring) ECTS

7.5 Accreditation organisation

The Austrian Accreditation organisation is Österreichischer Akkreditierungsrat (<http://www.akkreditierungsrat.at/cont/en/index.aspx>)

The Österreichischer Akkreditierungsrat (Accreditation Council) has four basic tasks:

- Accreditation of private universities
- Accreditation of academic programmes of already accredited private universities
- Re-accreditation
- Supervision of accredited private universities

8 United Kingdom - Scotland

8.1 Accreditation

SQA Accreditation is a distinct, autonomous arm of the Scottish Qualifications Authority with a statutory role to approve and accredit all types of qualifications (other than degrees) that are offered across Scotland.

SQA Accreditation also regulates and approves awarding bodies to deliver these qualifications through centres of learning — these include colleges, employers and private training providers. To do this SQA Accreditation is given grant-in-aid funding from the Scottish Government.

SQA Accreditation has approved 30 awarding bodies to offer qualifications that are accredited by us. These awarding bodies are audited annually to ensure that they are delivering the qualifications in accordance with the Awarding Body Criteria. SQA Accreditation also conducts monitoring visits to a sample of the awarding body's centres to ensure that they are meeting the criteria 2007.

SQA Accreditation will publish all awarding body audit reports and centre monitoring visit reports. SQA Accreditation will also publish the awarding body's response to reports, and will update individual awarding body action plans as and when the awarding body addresses any identified and agreed actions.

SQA Accreditation can accredit all types of qualifications, other than degrees, that are offered across Scotland. At the moment, SQA Accreditation accredits all Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), qualifications that are required by a regulatory body, qualifications based on National Occupational Standards (NOS), and qualifications which are delivered online. SQA Accreditation approves associated qualification products such as qualification structures, assessment strategies, core skills signposting and SCQF credit rating.

9 Denmark

9.1 Accreditation

9.1.1 ACE "Accreditation Institution"

The accreditation process

ACE Denmark prepares accreditation reports for the higher education study programmes at the eight Danish universities. An accreditation report is a systematic review of a study programme aiming to assess whether the programme meets the predefined criteria. Study programmes are assessed on the basis of five predefined relevance and quality criteria laid down by the Higher Education Minister in the Accreditation Order:

1. Demand for the study programme
2. The study programme is research-based and is associated with an active, high-quality research environment
3. Academic profile of the study programme and learning outcome targets
4. Structure and organisation of the study programme
5. Continuous internal quality assurance of the study programme

On the basis of the criteria ACE has prepared a guide for both existing and new study programmes. The guide describes the documentation requirements laid down for the individual study programmes.

The accreditation panel

ACE Denmark sets up an accreditation panel to conduct an academic assessment of whether the study programme meets the individual criteria.

- A panel consists of one or more relevant academic experts, an employer and a student.
- The panel members are elected on the basis of their knowledge of the field, and they must fulfil the requirement for independence.
- The panel's assessment is based on a documentation report prepared by university staff involved in the study programme. When accrediting existing study programmes there are in-depth meetings between the accreditation panel and the staff, management and students of the study programme in question. When accrediting and approving new study programmes there are no in-depth meetings between the panel and the study programme.
- The documentation report is prepared on the basis of the guidelines provided in ACE Denmark's guide for existing and new study programmes.
- The panel's assessment process is facilitated by ACE Denmark which also acts as the chairman of the in-depth meeting at the university.

Existing study programmes

Based on the accreditation reports review of the individual study programme, a concluding recommendation for the Accreditation Council is drafted.

- The accreditation report contains both the accreditation panels assessments of the individual criteria and ACE Denmark's concluding recommendation.
- The recommendation takes account of the consistency of assessments across accreditation panels, study programmes and universities.
- Before the Accreditation Council makes its decision at a meeting, the accreditation report is made subject to consultation at the university, and the response is included in the final accreditation report.
- The accreditation report forms the basis of the Accreditation Council's decisions.

The Accreditation Council's decisions are overall academic assessments. The decision categories for existing study programmes are:

- **Positive accreditation:** In its overall academic assessment, the Accreditation Council has concluded that the criteria for the relevance and quality of the study programme have been adequately fulfilled.
- **Conditional positive accreditation:** The Accreditation Council indicates which criteria the study programme does not fulfil and draws up a schedule for follow-up.
- **Refusal of accreditation:** The Accreditation Council indicates why the study programme cannot be credited. A refusal means that the study programme can no longer be offered.

The organisation of the accreditation processes for existing study programmes has been laid down in a rotation plan. According to the rotation plan, approximately 1.000 existing university study programmes are to be accredited over the course of six years.

New study programmes

When new university study programmes are created, the individual university will apply to the Accreditation Council for accreditation and approval of the study programme.

- ACE Denmark will prepare an accreditation report on that basis.
- When accrediting new university study programmes, accreditation panels are also used.
- As is the case with existing study programmes, the accreditation report will also be made subject to consultation at the universities before it is presented to the Accreditation Council.
- There are only two decision categories for new study programmes: **positive accreditation** or **refusal of accreditation**.

Legality issues and final approval

Once the Accreditation Council has made its decision, the educational institution will be informed in writing of the result of the accreditation process. If the study programme is regulated by the Higher Education Ministry, and it receives a positive accreditation, the Accreditation Council will recommend the following conditions to the Ministry:

- The study programmes categorisation in terms of grants (subsidy rating),
- title/designation,
- admission requirements (applies to undergraduate programmes),
- prescribed study period,
- and any limit on the number of students that may be admitted.

Once the Higher Education Ministry has made its decision on the above legality issues, the Accreditation Council can finally approve the study programme.

9.1.2 EVA

There is also another accreditation organisation active in Denmark:



See <http://www.eva.dk> for more information.

10 Turkey

10.1 Short description of the higher education system

- Turkey currently has 94 state universities and 44 private universities. The language of education is usually Turkish. At some universities, such as the Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, the Orta Dogu Teknik Üniversitesi and the Bilkent Üniversitesi, English is the language of instruction. There are also universities that offer certain programmes in English or as bilingual programmes. Very occasionally, programmes are offered in German or French. The academic year consists of two semesters, and runs from September until June.
- The Ministry of National Education is responsible for all types of education except higher education, which falls under the Yükseköğretim Kurulu (the Council for Higher Education, YÖK), the body responsible for planning, coordinating and setting policy for higher education. The YÖK is authorized to perform a number of important tasks, including negotiating university budgets with the Ministry of Finance, fixing the number of students that may be admitted to higher education in consultation with the universities, setting basic curricular requirements for bachelor's programmes and appointing faculty heads. The YÖK is also responsible for the supervision of private universities and accreditation of their programmes. Private institutions are permitted in Turkey but only on a non-profit basis. Even so, the tuition costs at these institutions are very high compared to those at state universities.
- The higher education system is under enormous pressure. Capacity has increased somewhat thanks to the establishment of 44 private universities since 1984, yet the majority of students still attend state universities. Because there are many more candidates than available places, admission is very selective, with the number of successful candidates at around 33%.

Types of degrees

- Candidates applying for admission to a Turkish university must take a competitive, national, written entrance examination, the *Öğrenci Seçme Sınavı* (Student Selection Examination, ÖSS). Students need a *Lise Diploması* from a technical or general secondary *lyceum* in order to take the examination. Their score on this exam and their average secondary school grade determine whether they are selected for university admission.
- Higher education in Turkey is a unified system, with no distinction between higher professional education and academic education. For this reason, some university programmes are more comparable to higher professional education in the Netherlands. However, there are also institutions that provide short professional programmes. Graduates of nominal four-year university programmes (with a maximum length of seven years) are awarded the *Lisans Diploması*. Graduates may also be awarded the *Lisans*

Geçici Mezuniyet Belgesi, or “provisional *Lisans* certificate”. Universities where English is the language of instruction award bachelor’s degrees.

- *Ön Lisans Diploması* (associate degree): conferred on completion of a two-year technical or professional programme at a *Meslek Yüksek Okulu* (School for Higher Professional Education). After completing the *Dikey Geçiş Sınavı* (Vertical Transfer Examination) students are admitted to the third year of a nominal four-year *Lisans Diploması* university programme. An *Ön Lisans Diploması* (associate degree) is comparable to two years of Dutch higher professional education in a similar specialization.
- *Lisans Diploması*: conferred following a nominal four-year programme and comparable to a university or professional bachelor's degree in the Netherlands, depending on the type of study.
- *Lise Diploması*: conferred following a nominal five-year programme and comparable to at least a university bachelor’s degree in the Netherlands in a similar specialization.
- *Ihtisas Sertifikası* (certificate of specialization): conferred following a one-year programme after the *Lisans Diploması*. This programme does not fall under the jurisdiction of the YÖK and therefore it does not award an academic title, yet it is accepted by Turkish industry as an advanced qualification. An *Ihtisas Sertifikası* is at least comparable to a university bachelor’s degree in the Netherlands.
- *Yüksek Lisans Diploması* (Higher Licentiate Diploma) follows a *Lisans Diploması* and includes two types of programmes: those with a final paper, and those without. The programmes with a final paper take two years; those without take one and a half years. A *Yüksek Lisans Diploması* is comparable to a university or professional master’s degree in the Netherlands, depending on the type of study.
- *Bilim Uzmanlığı Diploması*: a specific equivalent to the *Yüksek Lisans Diploması*. This is a specialist diploma in the natural sciences that is also awarded after a nominal two-year postgraduate course in the sciences.
- *Doktora Diploması*: programmes that take between two and five years to complete, and consist of coursework, completion of a qualification exam and writing and publicly defending a doctoral thesis. In general, the *Yüksek Lisans Diploması* is the admission requirement for PhD programmes. Students who perform exceptionally well in *Lisans Diploması* programmes may be admitted directly to a PhD programme, with the extra requirement of additional preparatory classes.

10.2 Quality assurance and accreditation

- In 2002, the Inter-university Commission started drafting regulations for academic assessment and quality control. All higher education degree programmes will be subject to assessment. A committee set up for this purpose is laying down the basic guidelines for self-assessment by these programmes, which will ultimately lead to a national

accreditation system. Universities are established by law, and all state and private universities as well as all degree programmes must be recognized centrally by the YÖK.

Recent reforms

- Since 2002, graduates from a vocational high school (*Meslek Lise*) have been able to enrol in a two-year *Meslek Yüksek Okulu* (Higher Vocational School) programme without completing the ÖSS. This programme awards the *Önlisans Diploması*, which grants admission to the third year of a *Lisans* programme following completion of the Vertical Transfer Examination (*Dikey Geçiş Sınavı*).
- Turkey is in the process of implementing the Bologna structure. Information on the current situation can be found on the [official website of the Bologna Secretariat](#). In 2004 Turkey signed the Lisbon Convention , which it ratified in 2007. Turkey also joined the Erasmus programme of the European Commission in 2003 by virtue of its candidacy status for EU membership.

11 Hungary

11.1 The Hungarian Accreditation Committee

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee was established with the country's first higher education law in 1993. It is, according to the 2005 Higher Education Act, "an independent national body of experts assessing quality in education, research and artistic activities in higher education, and examining the operation of the institutional quality development scheme."

The HAC conducts ex ante and ex post accreditation of both programs and institutions. Ex ante accreditation of programs comprises the national-level institution and outcome requirements, which appear on the website of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and new programs to be launched at institutions. Ex post accreditation is conducted in five-year cycles. There are separate procedures for institutional and program accreditation. The latter is conducted for entire disciplines, with all programs taught in Hungary in that discipline undergoing a single procedure with external evaluators from a common pool.

With the 2005 Higher Education Act, bachelor and master programmes replaced the traditional, single stream college or university programmes. The majority of new bachelor programs began in 2006 and master programs in 2009. All of them have undergone the accreditation process.

The new Higher Education Act, passed by Parliament 29 November 2005, lists seventy higher education institutions operating in Hungary to date.

(<http://www.okm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=1126&articleID=4265&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>).

In order to receive state recognition and to issue degrees, all higher education institutions, including private ones, must undergo accreditation. Denominational higher education institutions receive state financing similar to state institutions and are accredited but the HAC's mandate pertains only to secular programmes. Foreign higher education institutions are not required to get accreditation but receive license to operate from the Education Authority of the Ministry of Culture and Education if they are legally recognized and/or accredited in their home country.

The former distinction between universities, providing research-based and -oriented education, and colleges, offering applied training, has diminished with the introduction of the bachelor/master system, although only universities may provide doctoral education. An ECTS compatible credit system was introduced at all institutions by law in September 2003. The Diploma Supplement is issued to graduated students in both Hungarian and English.

The HAC has 19 full members, delegated by higher education institutions, research institutes and professional organisations. They receive their letters of appointment from the Prime Minister. Membership includes one student delegated by the National Union of Students. There are eight standing disciplinary committees of experts, chaired by HAC members.

The HAC's bodies extend to an independent Board of Appeals, a Financial Supervisory Board, an International and a Hungarian Advisory Board.

The Secretariat has a staff of twenty, including the Secretary General, his deputy, and a Financial Director, eleven programme officers, six administrative staff and an IT technician. The programme officers are assigned expert committees whose work they prepare and guide from inception to completion of the report. In addition they are responsible for several institutions, prepare and participate in site-visits and assist in writing the accreditation report.

In compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines, the HAC was evaluated by an external team of experts in 2008/09 and consequently has renewed its membership in ENQA, the European Association of Quality Assurance for another five-year term (see *Internal Quality*).

12 Switzerland

12.1 Short overview of higher education in Switzerland

The Swiss education system is a reflection of its federal system. Confederation, cantons and communes (municipalities) share responsibility for various parts of the system. This educational system can be divided into four levels. Higher education is part of the tertiary level of the education system.

At the tertiary A level there are two types of higher education institutions:

- *The traditional universities, including cantonal universities and federal institutions of technology*

Here, education is centred on basic research. These types of higher education institutions are regulated by the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA).

- *The universities of applied sciences*

Here, education is based on applied research. They are regulated by the Federal Department of Finance (FDF). In addition there is the field of higher vocational education and training (Tertiary B level).

12.1.1 Types of institutions

Currently, Switzerland has 12 recognised traditional universities (10 cantonal universities and 2 federal institutions of technology), 8 universities of applied sciences, 15 universities for teacher education, and further university-level institutions funded by the Swiss Confederation.

In addition to these institutions, there are also a number of private universities and educational institutions in Switzerland.

12.1.2 Types of programmes

The Swiss degree structure is in line with the three cycle degree system of the European Higher Education Area.

Bachelor's degree

The Bachelor's degree is the first degree. A bachelor's programme takes 180 ECTS credits or approximately three years of full-time study. A Bachelor's degree is the pre-requisite for admittance to Master's level.

Master's degree

The second degree is the Master's degree. A master's programme takes 90 or 120 ECTS credits. This equals one year or a year and a half of full-time study. A Master's degree and good grades are the pre-requisite for undertaking a doctorate.

Furthermore, the universities can confer Master's degrees in further education, the so-called Masters of Advanced Studies, with a minimum of 60 ECTS credits. This degree does not give access to doctoral studies.

Doctorate degree

The third degree is the Doctorate degree.

Since the implementation of the above outlined degree system has not been completed yet, degrees in line with the former degree system are still being awarded.

The first degree awarded is the Lizentiat/Licence or Diploma with a total length of full-time studies of 4 to 5 years and 6 years for medical studies (no ECTS credits). The Lizentiat/Licence and Diploma correspond to a Masters' degree level in the United States. At most Swiss universities, they are the pre-requisite for undertaking a doctorate.

It is expected that by 2011 only degrees according to the new two-tiered system will be awarded.

12.2 National qualifications framework

A national qualifications framework encompassing all levels of education is in development. When it is finalised, it will be published here.

The elaboration of a NQF for higher education is a mandate of the State Secretariat for Education and Research to the three Rectors' Conferences (Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities of Teacher Education). In September 2005, a steering committee was set up including representatives of the Rectors' Conferences, the State Secretariat, the Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ), the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education, the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology, student bodies and the body of the non-professorial teaching staff. The steering group has close links to all national bodies involved in the Bologna Process.

A small working group including an expert in the field of education is in the process of developing the first draft. The final draft will be presented to the responsible political bodies for approval.

The working group proposes to follow the structure of the overarching EQF for EHEA (3 qualification levels) using the Dublin descriptors as national outcomes-based descriptors. At the same time, a close watch will be kept on the development of the EQF for LLL of the European Union.

At the present early stage, the ownership, control and maintenance of the future NQF have not yet been established. The decisions will be made by the appropriate political bodies. The continual involvement of all concerned institutions and stakeholders is assured. A first informal survey on the possible functions of a NQF was undertaken in August 2006. A national conference was held in January 2008.

12.3 Accreditation

The Swiss Centre of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (OAQ) is responsible for accreditation in Switzerland.

12.3.1 Mandate and functions

The OAQ began its work on 1 October 2001. The basis for its mandate is formed by the Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities (UFG, SR 414.20) and Cooperation in Matters Relating to Universities of 8 October 1999 (UFG), the Intercantonal Convention on Coordinating University Policy of 9 December 1999 and the Cooperation Agreement between the Federal Government and University Cantons on Matters Relating to Universities (SR 414.205) of 14 December 2000.

In accordance with the relevant legal provisions, the OAQ has been charged with assuring and promoting the quality of teaching and research at Swiss academic institutions. To this end the OAQ carries out quality evaluations, establishes guidelines for internal quality assurance at academic institutions and provides the relevant services.

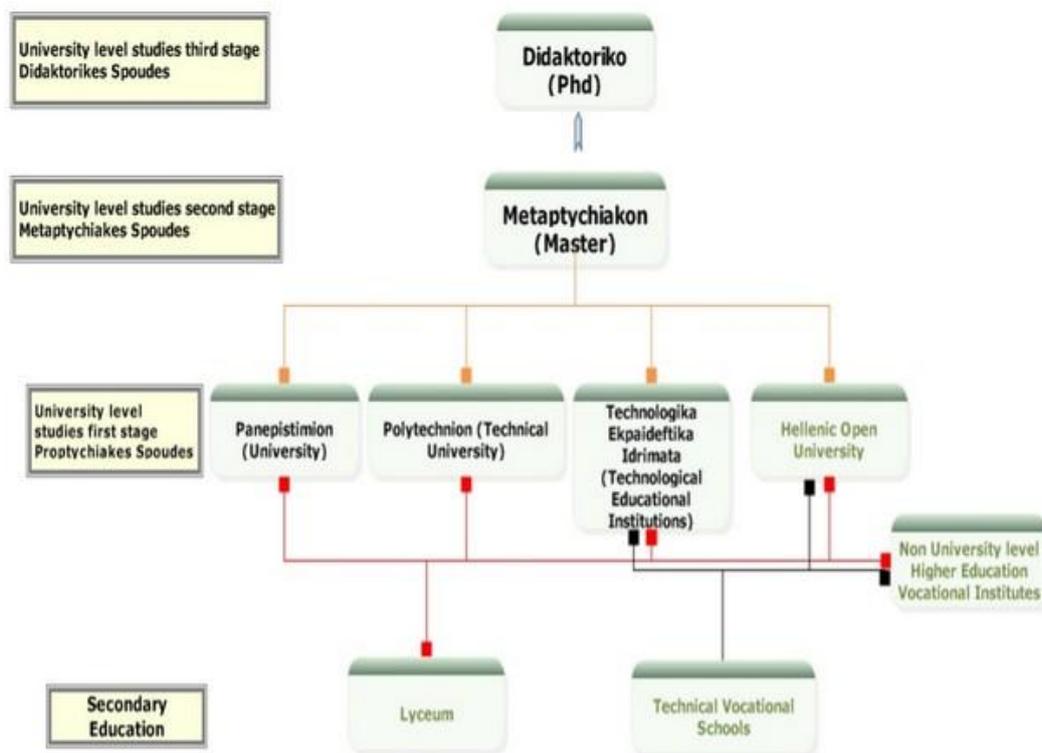
The OAQ fulfils a number of tasks relating to quality assurance and accreditation at the behest of the Swiss University Conference (SUK/CUS), the body responsible for coordinating university-related activities of the federal government and cantons throughout Switzerland. It develops guidelines and quality standards for academic accreditation in Switzerland and carries out accreditation procedures on the basis of Guidelines introduced by the SUK/CUS. It participates in international collaboration in the field of accreditation and quality assurance. It may participate in an advisory function in evaluations carried out by the universities on their own responsibility and organize evaluations of specific disciplines in consultation with the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS).

The OAQ carries out quality evaluations on behalf of the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER) under the qualifying procedure for financial support stipulated by the Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities and Cooperation in Matters Relating to Universities. The qualifying procedure stipulated by the UFG requires quality audits at all cantonal universities to be carried out every four years which focus on the quality assurance systems operated by the universities.

13 Greece

13.1 Structure and objective of Greek Tertiary Education

Pursuant to Act 2916/2001, Tertiary Education is divided into University Education, which is provided by the Universities, and Higher Technological Education, which is provided by the Technological Educational Institutes (TEIs). Besides, the Hellenic Open University was established in 1997/98. Pursuant to the Constitution, vocational and special education is also provided at the Higher Education Institutes. More specifically, the structure of Greek Tertiary Education is as follows:



13.1.1 University Education

The mission of University Education is to ensure a high level of theoretical and all-round training for the future scientific workforce of the nation. The University Education system includes the Universities, the Polytechnics, the Higher Fine Arts Institute and the Hellenic Open University. There are 20 universities in Greece located in various towns; the Universities consist of Faculties, which in turn are subdivided into Departments and individual Units.

University courses last four years except for certain Faculties where courses last five or six years. The academic year consists of two semesters with 13 full weeks of tuition and three weeks of examinations. The students complete their studies after four years provided they have passed the examinations both in the compulsory and optional subjects. They receive a Degree or Diploma depending on the Faculty in question. The Universities award certificates in the following fields:

- Humanities, law and social sciences
- Sciences
- Health Sciences
- Technological Sciences
- Economic and Management Sciences.

13.1.2 Higher Technological Education

The role of Higher Technological Education is to contribute to the country's development and to progress in the fields of science and applied research. The focus is on the absorption and transfer of scientific data into the production process. The courses are more practically oriented than in the Universities. In Greece there are 14 TEIs composed of at least two Faculties; each Faculty comprises two or more Departments. The TEIs are located in various towns in Greece. Some have independent branches, i.e. separate Departments, in other towns. Higher Technological Education also includes ASPAITE, the Higher School of Pedagogical and Technical Education. ASPAITE includes the General Department of Educational Subjects which covers a wide range of the pedagogic education of the candidate T.E.E. educators.

Studies last four years for a total of eight semesters, which include both tuition periods and a final semester devoted to preparation of the dissertation. During this final semester students may also practice their profession on a trial basis, with assessment. On completion students are awarded a Degree. The TEIs cover a total of 81 specialisations in the following fields:

- Graphic Arts and Art Studies
- Management and Economics
- Health and Caring Professions
- Applied Technology
- Food Technology and Nutrition
- Agricultural Technology
- Music Technology.

13.1.3 The Hellenic Open University

The Hellenic Open University provides an opportunity for open and distance learning. The HOU's basic mission is to provide greater educational opportunities to a wide spectrum of interested parties and age groups, on the assumption that education is a lifelong entitlement. The H.O.U. was opened in 1998 and is located in Patra.

The curriculum is based on the distance-learning method. The students have to organise their time so as to meet the requirements imposed by this teaching method. The Hellenic Open University awards a degree equivalent to that of the "traditional" Universities.

It offers under-graduate and post-graduate courses as well as vocational training and continuing education programmes, which lead to certificate of attendance or training.

13.1.4 Other types of Higher Education

The Higher Education System also includes various institutes which provide vocational training in the field of religion, art, tourism, the navy, the army and public order. More specifically, these include the Higher Ecclesiastical Institutes, the Merchant Marine Academy, the Higher Institute of Dance and Dramatic Art, the Higher Tourist Training Institutes, the Higher NCO Institutes of the Ministry of National Defence, and the Police Academy.

In accordance with the Greek Constitution, institutes of Tertiary Education are legal persons under public law, which are fully self-governing under the supervision of the State, and they are financed by the State.

The educational programs are mainly offered in Greek language. However, specialised study programmes at under-graduate and post-graduate level are offered in foreign languages. In parallel, knowledge of one or more foreign languages is an essential prerequisite for participation in the post-graduate programmes. Tuition is generally free of charge but there are some exceptions, mainly in the case of certain post-graduate programmes and studies at the Hellenic Open University.

13.1.5 Post-graduate education

In Greece post-graduate studies lead to the award of a **Post-graduate Diploma of Specialisation**.

The general goal of post-graduate studies is to allow students to specialise in certain fields. Greek Universities offer a total of 213 post-graduate courses; the Hellenic Open University offers 12 post-graduate courses. On completion the students are awarded a Post-graduate Diploma of Specialisation. The post-graduate courses are open to University and TEI graduates. The candidates are chosen on the basis of a selection process or their (oral and/or written) examination results. Besides, candidates must know at least one foreign language. Courses last at least one calendar year.

13.1.6 Doctoral studies

Doctoral studies lead to the award of a Doctorate. The general goal of doctoral studies is high-level specialisation in strategic areas of knowledge and the promotion of fundamental research in various scientific fields with a view to strengthening the country's scientific base.

In the case of Universities that offer post-graduate courses it is essential to have a Post-graduate Diploma in order to obtain a Doctorate. Permission to prepare a doctoral dissertation at Universities which do not offer regular post-graduate courses is granted to applicants who meet certain prerequisites. Certain University departments (e.g. the Polytechnic) award only a Doctoral Degree. The Departments themselves lay down the admission requirements.

13.2 Entry Requirements

The basic requirement for admission to Tertiary Education is possession of the Unified Lyceum leaving certificate, the number of students allocated to each University and TEI department being laid down annually by the Ministry of Education. Selection is based on the students' performance during the second and third class in nine general and orientation lessons, on the basis of nationwide examinations which include oral and written grading (30% and 70% respectively). More details about the entry requirements are offered by the website of the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. A certain number of places at the TEIs are also reserved for TEE graduates. Persons over 23 years of age may be admitted to the Tertiary Education system without exams via the alternative of the Hellenic Open University. Some Higher Education Institutes have their own selection system and participation in the general examinations is not required. Finally, students who have received their secondary education abroad may be admitted on the basis of foreign leaving certificate grades. Naturally, this depends on the number of places reserved for foreign students by the Greek Universities and on the students' proficiency in Greek as certified via special examinations organised by the Universities of Athens and Thessaloniki. E.U. citizens can study at the TEIs free of charge but they must meet certain financial requirements if they wish to study at the Greek Universities.

More details about the entry requirements of the Greeks who leave abroad are offered by the website of the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs.

Tertiary level graduates may participate in the selection tests for other Tertiary Education Institutions.