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**Model Regulation pursuant to Article 4, paragraphs 1–4, of the State Treaty on the
Accreditation of Study Programs**

**(Resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural
Affairs of November 21, 2024)**

Part 1 General Provisions

Section 1 Scope

(1) This Regulation governs, pursuant to Article 4 of the State Treaty on the Organization of a Joint Accreditation System for Quality Assurance in Studies and Teaching at German Universities (State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation; GVBl.) the details regarding the formal criteria under Article 2(2), the subject-specific and content-related criteria under Article 2(3), and the procedure under Article 3 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation.

(2) ¹ Unless otherwise provided in this regulation, the following provisions on program accreditation also apply to degree programs at state-run and state-recognized vocational academies leading to the degree of Bachelor. ² A Bachelor's degree accredited on the basis of this (model) regulation is equivalent under higher education law to a Bachelor's degree from a university.

§ 2 Forms of Accreditation

Forms of accreditation include the procedures under Article 3(1)(1) of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation (system accreditation), under Article 3(1)(2) (program accreditation), or alternative accreditation procedures under Article 3(1)(3).

Part 2 Formal Criteria for Degree Programs

§ 3 Program Structure and Duration, Recognition, and Credit Transfer

(1) ¹In the tiered degree program system, the bachelor's degree is the first standard degree conferring professional qualifications; the master's degree constitutes a further degree conferring professional qualifications. ²Undergraduate degree programs that lead directly to a master's degree are excluded, with the exception of the programs specified in paragraph 3.

(2) ¹ The standard duration of study for full-time programs is six, seven, or eight semesters for bachelor's programs and four, three, or two semesters for master's programs. ² For bachelor's programs, the standard duration of study for full-time study is at least three years. ³ For consecutive degree programs, the total standard period of study for full-time study is five years (ten semesters). ⁴ If state law so provides, shorter or longer standard periods of study are exceptionally possible, subject to appropriate organizational arrangements, in order to enable students to pursue an individualized academic path, particularly through part-time, distance, work-integrated, or dual study

as well as practical work-integrated semesters.⁵ Notwithstanding sentence 3, in the core artistic disciplines at universities of the arts and music colleges, consecutive bachelor's and master's degree programs may also be established with a standard duration of study of six years, subject to further provisions of state law.

(3) Theological degree programs that qualify students for the office of pastor, the priesthood, or the profession of pastoral assistant ("full theological degree program") do not need to be structured in stages and may have a standard duration of ten semesters.

(4) The university implements national and state regulations regarding the recognition of competencies, qualifications, and academic achievements earned at a university, as well as the transfer of competencies and qualifications acquired outside of universities.

§ 4 Program Profiles

(1)¹ Master's degree programs may be distinguished by an "application-oriented" or "research-oriented" profile.² Master's degree programs at colleges of art and music may have a special artistic profile.³ Master's degree programs that provide the educational prerequisites for a teaching position have a special teaching-related profile.⁴ If the institution defines a profile, this must be specified in the accreditation.

(2)¹ When establishing a master's program, it must be specified whether it is a consecutive or a professional master's program.² Professional master's programs correspond to consecutive master's programs in terms of the standard duration of study and the thesis requirements, and lead to the same level of qualification and the same entitlements.

(3) Bachelor's and Master's degree programs require a thesis that demonstrates the ability to independently address a problem within the respective field using scientific or artistic methods within a specified timeframe.

§ 5 Admission Requirements and Transfers Between Programs

(1)¹ The admission requirement for a master's program is a first professional university degree.² For continuing education and artistic master's programs, the professional university degree may be replaced by an entrance examination, provided that state law so provides.³ Continuing education master's programs require at least one year of qualified professional experience;

of at least one year; exceptions may be granted to individual students in justified cases.

(2) ¹ To be admitted to a Master's program in the arts, applicants must demonstrate the specific artistic aptitude required for such a program. ² For admission to advanced Master's programs in the arts, professional work experience gained during the course of study may also be taken into account, provided that state law permits this. ³ The requirement for professional practical experience does not apply at art colleges for programs designed to deepen independent artistic skills, provided that state law so provides.

(3) Additional requirements for admission to master's degree programs may be established in accordance with state law.

§ 6 Degrees and Degree Titles

(1) ¹ Upon successful completion of a Bachelor's or Master's program, only one degree—the Bachelor's or Master's degree—shall be conferred, unless it is a multiple-degree program. ² In this context, degrees shall not be differentiated based on the standard duration of study.

(2) ¹ The following titles shall be used for Bachelor's and consecutive Master's degrees:

1. Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Master of Arts (M.A.) in the subject groups of Language and Cultural Studies, Sports, Sports Science, Social Sciences, Art History, Performing Arts, and, where the content is appropriate, in the subject group of Economics as well as in applied arts programs,
2. Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) and Master of Science (M.Sc.) in the subject areas of mathematics, natural sciences, medicine, agricultural, forestry, and nutritional sciences; in the subject areas of engineering and economics, provided the program focuses on relevant content;
3. Bachelor of Engineering (B.Eng.) and Master of Engineering (M.Eng.) in the field of engineering, provided the program content is appropriate,
4. Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) in the field of law,

5. Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) and Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in the Fine Arts subject group,
6. Bachelor of Music (B.Mus.) and Master of Music (M.Mus.) in the subject group of Music,
7. ¹ Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Master of Education (M.Ed.) for degree programs that provide the educational requirements for a teaching position. ² For a multidisciplinary degree program, a designation in accordance with numbers 1 through 7 may be assigned based on the program's content focus.

² Subject-specific additions to degree titles and bilingual degree titles are not permitted. ³ Bachelor's degrees with the designation "honors" ("B.A. hon.") are not permitted. ⁴ For interdisciplinary and combined degree programs, the degree title is determined by the subject area that predominates in the program. ⁵ For continuing education programs, master's degrees that differ from the aforementioned titles may also be used. ⁶ For theological programs that qualify students for the office of pastor, the priesthood, or the profession of pastoral assistant ("full theological program"), different titles may also be used.

(3) The degree documents may clarify, in an appropriate place, that the qualification level of the bachelor's degree corresponds to a diploma degree from universities of applied sciences, or that the qualification level of a master's degree corresponds to a diploma degree from universities or equivalent institutions of higher education.

(4) Detailed information about the degree program underlying the degree is provided in the Diploma Supplement, which is included with every degree certificate.

§ 7 Modularization

(1) ¹ Degree programs shall be structured into study units (modules) that are defined thematically and temporally by the combination of intended learning outcomes and course content. ² The intended learning outcomes and course content of a module shall be designed such that they can generally be taught within a maximum of two consecutive semesters; in particularly justified exceptional cases, a module may also extend over more than two semesters. ³ For the core artistic subject in the Bachelor's program, at least two modules are mandatory, which may account for approximately two-thirds of the total study time.

(2) The description of a module should include at least the following:

1. the intended learning outcomes and course content of the module,
2. teaching and learning methods,
3. prerequisites for participation,
4. requirements for the awarding of ECTS credits in accordance with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS credits),
5. ECTS credits and grading,
6. Frequency of the module's offering,
7. Workload and
8. Duration of the module.

(3) ¹ The prerequisites for participation must specify the knowledge, abilities, and skills required for successful participation, as well as guidelines for appropriate preparation by students. ² The prerequisites for the awarding of ECTS credits must specify how a module can be successfully completed (type, scope, and duration of the examination).

§ 8 Credit Point System

(1) ¹ Each module shall be assigned a specific number of ECTS credits based on the workload required of the students. ² As a rule, 30 credits shall be allocated per semester. ³ One credit corresponds to a total student workload of 25 to a maximum of 30 hours of class and independent study. ⁴ ECTS credits are awarded for a module if the requirements specified in the examination regulations are met. ⁵ The awarding of ECTS credits does not necessarily require an examination, but rather the successful completion of the respective module.

(2) ¹ A minimum of 180 ECTS credits must be earned for a Bachelor's degree. ² A total of 300 ECTS credits are required for a Master's degree, taking into account prior studies up to the first professionally qualifying degree. ³ In individual cases, deviations from this requirement may be permitted if the student possesses the appropriate qualifications, even if 300 ECTS credits are not attained upon completion of a master's program. ⁴ For consecutive bachelor's and master's programs in the core subjects of the arts — —at art and conservatories with a

total standard period of study of six years, the master's level is achieved with 360 ECTS credits.

(3) ¹ The scope of work for the bachelor's thesis is 6 to 12 ECTS credits, and for the master's thesis, 15 to 30 ECTS credits. ² In Fine Arts degree programs, the scope of work for the bachelor's thesis may, in justified exceptional cases, amount to up to 20 ECTS credits, and for the master's thesis, up to 40 ECTS credits.

(4) ¹ In justified exceptional cases, up to 75 ECTS credits per academic year may be applied for degree programs with special academic organizational measures. ² In this context, the workload for one ECTS credit is calculated at 30 hours. ³ Special organizational measures may relate in particular to the learning environment and supervision, the structure of the program, academic planning, and measures to ensure the student's livelihood.

(5) For teacher education programs for elementary or primary school teaching, for cross-disciplinary teaching at the primary level and for all or specific types of secondary schools, for teaching positions covering all or specific types of lower secondary schools, as well as for special education teaching positions, a master's degree may be awarded if a total of 300 ECTS credits have been earned, including at least 240 ECTS credits acquired at the university and taking into account the preparatory service.

(6) ¹ At vocational academies, 180 ECTS credits must generally be demonstrated for a three-year Bachelor's degree program. ² The scope of the theory-based training components may not be less than 120 ECTS credits, and the scope of the practice-based training components may not be less than 30 ECTS credits.

§ 9 Special Criteria for Collaborations with Non-Higher Education Institutions

(1) ¹The scope and nature of existing collaborations with companies and other institutions, including non-higher-education learning venues and course components as well as the language(s) of instruction, are contractually regulated and described on the university's website. ² When applying credit transfer models within the framework of program-related collaborations, the substantive equivalence of non-higher-education qualifications to be transferred and their equivalence to the intended qualification level must be clearly demonstrated.

(2) In the case of program-specific collaborations with non-higher education institutions, the added value for future students and the degree-granting institution must be clearly demonstrated.

§ 10 Special Provisions for Joint Programs

(1) ⁽¹⁾A joint program is a multi-level degree program coordinated and offered by a domestic institution of higher education in collaboration with one or more institutions of higher education from foreign countries within the European Higher Education Area; it leads to a joint degree or a double or multiple degree and has the following additional characteristics:

1. Integrated curriculum,
2. a study component at one or more foreign higher education institutions of generally at least 25 percent,
3. contractually regulated cooperation,
4. coordinated admission and examination procedures, and
5. joint quality assurance.

² Sections 10, 16, and 33 apply to these degree programs. ³ Compliance with the criteria set forth in paragraph 1, items 1 through 5, shall be reviewed.

(2) ¹ Qualifications and periods of study are recognized in accordance with the Act of May 16, 2007, implementing the Convention of April 11, 1997, on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in the European Region (Federal Law Gazette 2007 II, pp. 712, 713) (Lisbon Convention). ² The ECTS is applied in accordance with Sections 7 and 8(1), and the distribution of credit points is regulated. ³ For a bachelor's degree, 180 to 240 credit points must be earned, and for a master's degree, no fewer than 60 credit points. ⁴ Essential program information is published and accessible to students at all times. ⁵ In all other respects, the provisions of Part 2 do not apply.

(3) If a joint program is coordinated and offered by a domestic institution of higher education together with one or more institutions of higher education from foreign countries that do not belong to the European Higher Education Area (non-European cooperation partners), then, upon application by the domestic institution, paragraphs 1 and 2 shall apply mutatis mutandis if the non-European cooperation partners have agreed in the cooperation agreement with the domestic institution to undergo accreditation in accordance with the

the criteria and procedural rules set forth in paragraphs 1 and 2, as well as in sections 16(1) and 33(1).

Part 3 Academic and Content-Related Criteria for Degree Programs and Quality Management Systems

Section 11 Qualification Objectives and Degree Level

(1) ¹ The qualification objectives and the intended learning outcomes shall be clearly formulated, publicly accessible, and shall demonstrably take into account the objectives of higher education set forth in Article 2, paragraph 3, item 1 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation. ² The dimension of personal development also encompasses the future civic, political, and cultural roles of graduates. ³ Upon graduation, students should be able to play a decisive role in shaping social processes in a critical and reflective manner, with a sense of responsibility and democratic civic spirit.

(2) The professional and scientific/artistic requirements encompass the aspects of knowledge and understanding (broadening, deepening, and comprehending knowledge), the application, use, and generation of knowledge/art (utilization and transfer, scientific innovation), communication and cooperation, as well as scientific/artistic self-awareness and professionalism, and are consistent with the level of the degree awarded.

(3) ¹ Bachelor's degree programs serve to impart scientific foundations, methodological competence, and profession-specific qualifications, and ensure a broad scientific or artistic qualification. ² Consecutive Master's degree programs are designed as programs that deepen, broaden, or are interdisciplinary or in other fields. ³ Professional Master's programs require qualified professional experience of generally no less than one year. ⁴ The program design of professional Master's programs takes professional experience into account and builds upon it to achieve the qualification objectives. ⁵ In designing the program, the institution outlines the relationship between professional qualifications and the program offerings, as well as the equivalence of requirements for consecutive master's programs. ⁶ Artistic programs foster and develop the ability for artistic creation.

§ 12 Coherent Program Design and Adequate Implementation

(1) ¹ The curriculum is structured appropriately, taking into account the specified entry requirements and with a view to achieving the program objectives

.² The qualification objectives, the program name, the degree and its designation, and the module concept are consistent with one another.³ The program concept includes diverse forms of teaching, learning, and assessment adapted to the respective academic culture and the program format, as well as practical components where applicable.⁴ It creates suitable framework conditions to promote student mobility, enabling students to spend time at other universities without losing academic credit.⁵ It actively involves students in the design of teaching and learning processes (student-centered teaching and learning) and provides opportunities for self-directed study.⁶ The degree program, course of study, examination requirements, module descriptions, and admission requirements—including provisions for compensating for disadvantages for students with disabilities or chronic illnesses—are documented and published.

(2)¹ The curriculum is implemented by teaching staff with sufficient subject-matter and pedagogical expertise.² The integration of research and teaching is ensured, in accordance with the institution's profile, particularly through full-time professors in both undergraduate and graduate programs.³ The institution takes appropriate measures for staff selection and qualification.

(3) The program also has adequate resources (in particular non-academic staff, facilities, and equipment, including IT infrastructure, teaching and learning materials).

(4)¹ Exams and types of assessment enable a meaningful evaluation of the learning outcomes achieved.² They are module-based and competency-oriented.

(5)¹ The program can be completed within the standard period of study.² This includes, in particular

1. a predictable and reliable academic schedule,
2. minimal overlap between courses and exams,
3. a reasonable average workload commensurate with the examination load, whereby the learning outcomes of a module must be designed so that they can generally be achieved within one semester or one year, as validated by regular surveys, and

4. an examination density that is adequate for the program's structure (), appropriate for the workload (), and proportionate to the workload ()(), as well as -organization that is coherently justified in an examination concept and whose appropriateness in relation to the workload is regularly assessed with the involvement of students as part of the program's further development in accordance with
§ 14; modules shall have a scope of at least five ECTS credits.

(6) Degree programs with a specific profile requirement must demonstrate a coherent program concept that appropriately reflects the specific characteristics of the profile.

(7) A degree program may be designated and advertised as "dual" if the learning locations (at least a university or vocational academy and a company) are systematically integrated with one another in terms of content, organization, and contractual arrangements.

§ 13 Academic and Content-Related Design of Degree Programs

(1) ¹ The currency and adequacy of the academic and scientific requirements are ensured. ² The academic content and the methodological and didactic approaches of the curriculum are continuously reviewed and adapted to academic and didactic developments. ³ To this end, academic discourse at the national and, where applicable, international level is systematically taken into account.

(2) In degree programs that provide the educational prerequisites for a teaching career, accreditation is based both on the evaluation of educational sciences and subject-specific disciplines, as well as their didactics, in accordance with state-wide and state-specific subject requirements, and on the state-wide and state-specific structural guidelines for teacher education.

(3) ¹ In the context of the accreditation of teacher education programs, it must be examined in particular whether

1. an interdisciplinary program at universities or equivalent institutions comprising at least two academic disciplines and educational sciences during both the bachelor's and master's phases (exceptions are permitted for the subjects of art and music),
2. practical school training already during the bachelor's program, and
3. a differentiation of the program and degrees according to teaching positions

have been implemented. ² Exceptions to sentence 1, items 1 and 2, are permitted for teaching positions at vocational schools and for master's programs for career changers.

§ 14 Academic Success

¹ The program is subject to continuous monitoring with the participation of students and graduates. ² Measures to ensure academic success are derived on this basis. ³ These are continuously reviewed, and the results are used for the further development of the program. ⁴ The parties involved are informed of the results and the measures taken, in compliance with data protection regulations.

§ 15 Diversity, Gender Equality, and Equal Opportunity

The university has policies in place to promote diversity, gender equality, and equal opportunities for students in special circumstances, which are implemented at the program level.

§ 16 Special Provisions for Joint Programs

(1) ¹ For joint programs, the provisions of § 11, paragraphs 1 and 2, as well as § 12, paragraph 1, sentences 1 through 3, paragraph 2, sentence 1, paragraphs 3 and 4, and § 14 apply accordingly. ² In all other respects, the provisions of Part 3 do not apply. ³ In addition, the following applies:

1. The admission requirements and selection procedures shall be appropriate to the level and the academic discipline in which the program is situated.
2. It can be demonstrated that the program achieves the intended learning outcomes.
3. Where applicable, the provisions of Directive 2005/36/EC of September 7, 2005 ([OJ L 255, September 30, 2005, pp. 22–142](#)) on the recognition of professional qualifications, as last amended by Directive 2013/55/EU of January 17, 2014 ([OJ L 354, December 28, 2013, pp. 132–170](#)), shall be
4. In the supervision, design of the degree program, and the teaching and learning methods applied, the diversity of the students and their needs are respected, and the specific requirements of mobile students are taken into account.
5. The university's quality management system ensures the implementation of the above provisions and those specified in § 17.

(2) If a joint program is coordinated and offered by a domestic institution of higher education together with one or more institutions of higher education from foreign countries that do not belong to the European Higher Education Area (non-European cooperation partners), paragraph 1 shall apply mutatis mutandis upon application by the domestic institution if the non-European cooperation partners commit in the cooperation agreement with the domestic institution to accreditation in accordance with the criteria and procedural rules set forth in paragraph 1, as well as in §§ 10(1) and (2) and 33(1).

§ 17 Concept of the Quality Management System of System-Accredited Higher Education Institutions (Objectives, Processes, Instruments)

(1)¹ The university has established central educational objectives for teaching, which are reflected in the university's mission statement and in the curricula of its degree programs. ² The quality management system adheres to the values and standards of the mission statement for teaching and aims to continuously improve the quality of education. ³ It ensures the systematic implementation of the requirements specified in Parts 2 and 3. ⁴ The university has established and published university-wide the decision-making processes, competencies, and responsibilities for the establishment, review, further development, and discontinuation of degree programs, as well as the university's own procedures for the accreditation of degree programs within the framework of its quality management system. ⁵ The institution shall establish provisions regarding validity periods and deadlines in accordance with §§ 26 and 27. ⁶ The institution may establish shorter periods of validity and deadlines. ⁷ If a quality management system provides for the formation of clusters, § 30(1) shall apply mutatis mutandis with respect to cluster sizes.

(2) ¹ The quality management system was developed with the participation of the university's constituent groups and with the involvement of external experts. ² It ensures the independence of quality assessments and includes procedures for handling internal conflicts as well as an internal grievance system. ³ It is based on closed-loop control systems, covers all areas of the university's operations that are directly relevant to study and teaching, and is equipped with adequate and sustainable resources. ⁴ Functionality and effectiveness with regard to the quality of study programs are regularly reviewed by the university and continuously improved.

§ 18 Measures for Implementing the Quality Management Concept of System-Accredited Institutions of Higher Education

(1)¹ The quality management system includes regular evaluations of degree programs and the areas of activity relevant to teaching and studies by students from within and outside the institution, external academic experts, representatives from the professional field, and graduates; the institution may conduct the evaluation of formal criteria independently. ² If a need for action is identified, the necessary measures shall be taken and implemented.

(2) If, on the basis of the university's quality management system, evaluations are also conducted of teacher education programs, teacher education programs with the combined subject of Protestant or Catholic Theology/Religion, Protestant theological programs that qualify students for the ministry, and other bachelor's and master's degree programs with the combined subject of Protestant or Catholic Theology, the requirements for participation and approval pursuant to § 25(1), sentences 3 through 5, shall apply accordingly.

(3) The data required for the implementation of the quality management system shall be collected university-wide and on a regular basis.

(4)¹ The university documents the evaluation of the degree programs by the university's internal quality management system, including the opinions of external stakeholders, as well as the measures taken, and informs university members, the sponsoring body, and the state in which the university is located of this. ² For the information of the public, it shall make the accreditation decisions and a brief summary of the quality assessment available to the Accreditation Council for publication. ³ Section 29, sentence 2, applies accordingly.

§ 19 Cooperation with Non-Higher Education Institutions

¹If a higher education institution offers a degree program in cooperation with a non-higher-education institution, the higher education institution is responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements set forth in Parts 2 and 3. ² The degree-granting institution may not delegate decisions regarding the content and organization of the curriculum, admission, recognition, and credit transfer, the assignment and evaluation of examination performance, the administration of examination and student data, quality assurance procedures, or the criteria and procedures for selecting teaching staff.

§ 20 University Cooperation

(1) ¹ If a university enters into a program-specific cooperation with another university, the degree-granting university or universities shall ensure the implementation and quality of the program concept. ² The nature and scope of the cooperation shall be described, and the agreements underlying the cooperation shall be documented.

(2) ¹ If a system-accredited institution of higher education enters into a program-specific cooperation with another institution of higher education, the system-accredited institution may award the program the seal of the Accreditation Council pursuant to § 22(4), sentence 2, provided that it is itself authorized to confer degrees and ensures the implementation and quality of the program concept. ² Paragraph 1, sentence 2, applies mutatis mutandis.

(3) ¹ In the case of cooperation between higher education institutions at the level of their quality management systems, system accreditation of each of the participating higher education institutions is required. ² Upon application by the cooperating higher education institutions, a joint system accreditation procedure is permissible.

§ 21 Special Criteria for Bachelor's Degree Programs at Vocational Academies

(1) ⁽¹⁾ Full-time faculty members at vocational academies must meet the hiring requirements for professors at universities of applied sciences pursuant to § 44 of the Higher Education Framework Act, as published on January 19, 1999 (Federal Law Gazette I, p. 18), last amended by Article 1 of the Act of November 15, 2019 (Federal Law Gazette I, p. 1622). ² Insofar as courses are primarily intended to impart practical skills and knowledge for which the appointment requirements for professors at universities of applied sciences are not necessary, these may be assigned to full-time instructors for special tasks in accordance with § 56 of the Higher Education Framework Act and relevant state law. ³ The proportion of instruction provided by full-time faculty members shall not be less than 40 percent. ⁴ In exceptional cases, this also includes professors at universities of applied sciences or universities who teach at a vocational academy as a secondary activity, provided that they ensure continuity in the curriculum and the consistency of the overall education, as well as the mandatory supervision and advising of students; the fulfillment of these requirements must be separately verified as part of the accreditation of the individual degree program.

(2) ¹ The first sentence of paragraph 1 applies mutatis mutandis to part-time faculty members who offer theory-based courses leading to ECTS credits or who serve as examiners in the preparation and evaluation of bachelor's theses. ² Courses as described in the first sentence may, in exceptional cases, also be offered by part-time faculty members who hold a relevant university degree or an equivalent qualification, as well as subject-specific and pedagogical competence and several years of relevant professional experience in accordance with the requirements of the course.

(3) As part of the accreditation process, the following must also be reviewed:

1. the interaction between the different learning locations (study academy and company),
2. the assurance of quality and continuity in the curriculum and in the supervision and advising of students against the backdrop of the specific personnel structure at vocational academies, and
3. the existence of a sustainable quality management system that encompasses the various learning locations.

Part 4 Procedural Rules for Program and System Accreditation

§ 22 Decision of the Accreditation Council; Awarding of the Seal

(1) ¹ Upon application by the institution of higher education, the Accreditation Council shall decide on accreditation by determining compliance with the formal criteria and the academic and content-related criteria in accordance with Article 3(5), first sentence, of the State Treaty on the Accreditation of Higher Education Programs, in conjunction with Parts 2 and 3 of this regulation. ² The basis for the decision regarding the formal criteria is an audit report pursuant to Article 4(3), sentence 1, item 2(b) of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation. ³ The basis for the decision regarding the academic and content-related criteria is an expert opinion pursuant to Article 3(2), sentence 1, item 4 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation.

(2) ¹ The decision shall be issued by electronic notice. ² It must be substantiated.

(3) ¹ The institution shall be given the opportunity to comment prior to the Accreditation Council's decision if the Council intends to deviate significantly from the experts' recommendation. ² The deadline for submitting comments is one month.

(4) ¹ Upon accreditation, the Accreditation Council awards its seal to the degree program or the quality management system. ² In the case of system accreditation, the institution of higher education is granted the right to award the Accreditation Council's seal itself for the degree programs it has reviewed.

(5) ¹ The accreditation of Catholic theological degree programs that qualify students for the priesthood or the profession of pastoral assistant ("full theological degree program") shall take place exclusively in the form of program accreditation. ² The decision of the Accreditation Council requires the approval of the competent ecclesiastical authorities for full theological and partial theological degree programs.

§ 23 Documents to be Submitted

(1) The following documents must be attached to the application:

1. a self-evaluation report from the institution,
2. an accreditation report from an agency accredited by the Accreditation Council, consisting of an audit report and an expert opinion; in the case of system accreditation, the audit report refers to the evidence specified in items 3 and 4,
3. in the case of an application for system accreditation, additional evidence that at least one program has undergone the quality management system,
4. in the case of an application for system reaccreditation, evidence that, in principle, all bachelor's and master's degree programs have undergone the quality management system at least once.

(2) If the documents referred to in paragraph 1, item 2 are not written in German, translations into German must be submitted.

(3) As soon as the Accreditation Council makes an electronic data processing system available, it must be used.

§ 24 Appointment of an Agency; Accreditation Report; Site Visit

(1) ¹ The institution shall commission an agency accredited by the Accreditation Council pursuant to Article 5, paragraph 3, sentence 1, item 5 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation to evaluate the formal and subject-specific criteria and to prepare an accreditation report. ² For Catholic theological degree programs that qualify students for the priesthood and the profession of pastoral assistant ("full theological degree program"), the

evaluation is conducted by the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Degree Programs in Germany, which is approved by the Accreditation Council.

(2) ¹ The institution shall provide the agency with a self-evaluation report that contains, at a minimum, information on the institution's quality objectives and on the formal and subject-specific criteria set forth in Parts 2 and 3. ² The university's self-evaluation report, in the preparation of which the student council must be involved, shall not exceed 20 pages for program accreditation and 50 pages for system and cluster accreditation.

(3) ¹ The review report is prepared by the Agency; for degree programs under § 25(1), sentences 3 and 4, the review report must be approved by the persons designated therein before it is forwarded to the Accreditation Council. ² The relevant standards for the review report are the formal criteria set forth in Part 2. ³ It shall contain a recommendation regarding compliance with the formal criteria. ⁴ The review report shall be drafted using the template to be provided by the Accreditation Council. ⁵ The institution of higher education shall be informed immediately of any failure to meet a formal criterion.

(4) ¹ The expert opinion is issued by the expert panel pursuant to § 25. ² The expert panel receives the review report pursuant to paragraph 3. ³ The relevant standards for the expert opinion are the subject-matter criteria set forth in Part 3. ⁴ It shall contain a recommendation regarding compliance with the subject-matter and content criteria. ⁵ The report shall be drafted using the template to be provided by the Accreditation Council and shall not exceed 20 pages for program accreditation and 100 pages for system and cluster accreditation.

(5) ¹ As part of the evaluation of the academic and content-related criteria, the evaluation committee generally conducts an on-site visit. ² In the case of the accreditation of a degree program that is not yet offered at the time the agency is commissioned (concept accreditation), the review committee may, by mutual agreement, waive the on-site visit. ³ The same applies to the reaccreditation of a degree program.

(6) If the report contains recommendations regarding conditions, the institution and the Agency may agree on an additional procedural step to address the issues prior to submitting the application to the Accreditation Council.

§ 25 Composition of the Review Panel; Requirements for Reviewers

(1) ¹ The agencies' review panel for program accreditation shall consist of at least four members. ² It shall be composed as follows:

1. at least two university faculty members with expertise in the relevant field,
2. one representative from professional practice with expertise in the relevant field,
3. one student with expertise in the relevant field.

(³) In the accreditation of degree programs that qualify students for admission to the preparatory service for a teaching career, a representative of the highest state authority responsible for the school system shall take the place of the person referred to in paragraph 2; for teacher training programs with the combined subject of Protestant or Catholic Theology/Religion, a representative of the locally competent diocese or regional church shall also be included. ⁴ In the accreditation of theological degree programs that qualify students for the office of pastor, the priesthood, and the profession of pastoral assistant (“full theological degree”) and in all other bachelor’s and master’s degree programs with the combined subject of Protestant or Catholic Theology/Religion, the person referred to in paragraph 2 shall be replaced by a representative of the competent church authority. ⁵ For the degree programs mentioned in sentences 3 and 4, the submission of the expert opinion pursuant to § 24(4), sentence 1, requires the consent of the persons named in each case; without this consent, the expert opinion shall not be submitted to the Accreditation Council.

(2) ¹ In the case of a system accreditation, the agencies’ expert panel shall consist of at least five persons. ² It shall be composed as follows:

1. at least three university faculty members with relevant experience in quality assurance in the area of teaching,
2. a representative from the professional field,
3. a student.

(3) ¹ University faculty members hold the majority of votes. ² In the respective review panel, the majority of reviewers must have experience with accreditation. ³ In the case of a system accreditation, the majority of reviewers must have experience with system accreditations.

(4) ¹ The evaluators are appointed by the agency commissioned to prepare the accreditation report. ² The agency is bound by

appointment, the agency is bound by the procedure to be developed by the German Rectors' Conference in accordance with Article 3, Paragraph 3, Sentence 3 of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation.

(5) Any person who

1. is employed by or enrolled at the institution submitting the application for accreditation,
2. is employed by or enrolled at one of the institutions participating in cooperative degree programs or joint programs, or
3. is considered biased according to the rules customary in academia.

(6) ¹ The Agency shall inform the institution of higher education of the composition of the review panel prior to the appointment of the reviewers. ² The institution of higher education has the right to submit comments within a period of two weeks.

§ 26 Validity Period of Accreditation; Extension

(1) ¹ The initial accreditation is valid for a period of eight years from the start of the semester or trimester in which the accreditation decision is announced. ² If, in the case of program accreditation, the degree program has not yet been launched, the accreditation takes effect from the start of the semester or trimester in which the degree program is first offered, but no later than the start of the second semester or trimester following the announcement of the accreditation decision.

(2) ¹ Before the expiration of the accreditation period, an application for reaccreditation must be submitted; if approved, the reaccreditation shall take effect immediately following the previous accreditation. ² If the application is submitted in a timely manner as defined herein, the accreditation shall be extended for the duration of the administrative proceedings. ³ Reaccreditation takes effect no later than the start of the second semester or trimester following the announcement of the accreditation decision. ⁴ Reaccreditations are valid for a period of eight years.

(3) ¹ The validity period of the accreditation may be extended for a total period of up to two years if

1. in the case of program accreditation, the institution is preparing an application for a cluster or system accreditation that includes the respective degree program, or

2. the institution applies for an extension of the deadline in justified exceptional cases that are wholly or partly beyond the institution's control; the extraordinary extension of the deadline in individual cases shall be credited toward the next accreditation period.

² If an application for system accreditation has been submitted, the accreditation of degree programs whose accreditation expires during the proceedings may be extended for the duration of the proceedings plus one year. ³ If an accredited degree program is discontinued, the accreditation may be extended for students still enrolled at the time the accreditation period expires.

§ 27 Conditions

- (1) A deadline of twelve months shall generally be set for the fulfillment of a condition.
- (2) In justified exceptional cases, the deadline may be extended upon request by the institution.
- (3) Proof of compliance with the requirement must be provided to the Accreditation Council.

§ 28 Obligation to Report Changes

- (1) The institution is required to immediately notify the Accreditation Council of any significant change to the subject of accreditation during the accreditation's validity period.
- (2) The Accreditation Council shall decide whether the significant change is covered by the existing accreditation.

§ 29 Publication

¹ The Accreditation Council's decision and the accreditation report shall be published by the Accreditation Council on its website. ² Personal data may not be disclosed in the publication unless the data subject has consented or obtaining the data subject's consent is not possible or would require disproportionate effort, and it is evident that the disclosure is in the data subject's interest.

§ 30 Bundle Accreditation; Sub-System Accreditation

- (1) ¹ The report of the expert panel pursuant to § 24(4) may cover multiple degree programs if these are closely related in terms of subject matter, provided that

that goes beyond mere affiliation with a disciplinary field (humanities and cultural studies, social sciences, or natural sciences) (bundle accreditation).² The academic and content-related criteria set forth in Part 3 must be assessed separately for each degree program.³ A bundle shall consist of no more than ten degree programs.

(2)¹ Bundles containing more than four degree programs must be approved by the Accreditation Council prior to submission of the application.² This applies to combined degree programs regardless of the size of the bundle.

(3)¹ In exceptional cases, a subunit of the institution responsible for organizing studies may be the subject of system accreditation.² This may be the case in particular if

1. accreditation of the quality management system for the entire institution is not yet appropriate or feasible,
2. the subunit's quality management system is integrated into the institution, and
3. at least one degree program of the subunit has already undergone this system.

§ 31 Random Sampling

(1)¹ In the case of system accreditation and partial system accreditation, the accreditation committee shall conduct a sample review in accordance with § 25(2).² The sample review shall verify whether the intended effects of the quality management system under review are achieved at the program level.

(2)¹ The subject of the random sample is

1. the consideration of all criteria in accordance with Parts 2 and 3 within a degree program that has undergone the institution's quality management system, and
2. the consideration of formal and subject-specific criteria in accordance with Parts 2 and 3, as determined by the review panel.

² When selecting the sample, the review panel takes into account the university's range of disciplines in its teaching.

(3)¹ If the institution offers degree programs that also prepare students for a regulated profession, one such program must be included in the sample, taking into account the criteria set forth in Parts 2 and 3 that apply to degree programs; the same applies to teacher education programs for

one program for each type of teaching qualification offered, as well as for programs in Protestant or Catholic theology/religion.² The sample shall include one representative designated by the authority responsible for the respective regulated profession, or one representative designated by the authority responsible for the respective regulated profession, or a representative of the highest state authority responsible for the school system, or of the respective church authority.

Part 5 Procedural Rules for Special Types of Degree Programs

§ 32 Combined degree programs

(1) If students select individual courses from a larger number of eligible courses for their program of study, each of these courses constitutes a sub-program as part of a combined degree program.

(2)¹ The subject of accreditation is the combined degree program.² Higher education institutions shall ensure, through their respective quality management systems, that the feasibility of study pursuant to § 12(5) is guaranteed for all possible subject combinations.

(3)¹ The accreditation of a combined degree program may be supplemented by the inclusion of additional elective sub-programs or subjects.² This does not alter the accreditation period for the combined degree program.

(4)¹ The accreditation certificate shall list all sub-programs or subjects included in the accreditation.² In the event of an amendment to the accreditation pursuant to paragraph 3, a new accreditation certificate shall be issued.

(5) The provisions of Part 4 remain unaffected in all other respects.

§ 33 Joint Programs

(1)¹ For joint programs involving a domestic institution of higher education and other institutions from the European Higher Education Area, the accreditation decision may, notwithstanding § 22(1), be made by recognizing the evaluation conducted by an agency listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).² The Accreditation Council shall recognize this evaluation upon application by the institution and grant its seal if compliance with the formal and academic criteria for joint programs pursuant to Sections 10 and 16 of this Regulation has been demonstrated and the evaluation process has met the following requirements:

1. the conduct of the procedure was notified to the Accreditation Council prior to the start of the procedure,
2. the accreditation decision is based on a self-report by the cooperating institutions of higher education, which in particular contains information on the respective national framework conditions and highlights the specific characteristics of the joint program,
3. an on-site visit has taken place at at least one location of the program with the participation of representatives from all cooperating institutions of higher education as well as other stakeholders,
4. the evaluation is based on an expert report that complies with the requirements for joint programs in Parts 2 and 3,
5. The evaluation was conducted by a panel of at least four experts, composed as follows:
 - a. Members from at least two of the countries participating in the Joint Programme,
 - b. at least one student representative,
 - c. the review panel represents expertise in the relevant subjects and disciplines, including the labor market/working world in the relevant fields, as well as expertise in the area of quality assurance in higher education, and possesses knowledge of the higher education systems of the participating institutions as well as the languages of instruction used, and
 - d. the requirements pursuant to Section 25(3), first sentence, and Sections 5 and 6 have been met,
6. the evaluation identifies the following characteristics: justification, finality, and, where applicable, demonstrated fulfillment of conditions, and
7. the agency has published at least a summary of the report, including the evaluation and justification, on its website in English.

³ Section 22-paragraphs 2, 3, and 4, sentence 1, Section 26, paragraph 1, sentence 1, and paragraph 2, sentence 1,

Sections 28 and 29 apply mutatis mutandis. ⁴ If the accreditation decision is not made in accordance with the first sentence, in deviation from Section 22, the provisions of Sections 10 and 16 for joint programs within the meaning of Section 10(1) nevertheless

apply mutatis mutandis. ⁵ Notwithstanding § 26(1), first sentence, and § 26(2), second sentence, the accreditation period shall be six years. ⁶ Upon publication, the decision shall be identified as an accreditation decision based on the separate procedure for joint programs. ⁷ The institution must clearly indicate this in the degree certificates.

(2) If a joint program is coordinated and offered by a domestic institution of higher education together with one or more institutions of higher education from foreign countries that do not belong to the European Higher Education Area (non-European cooperation partners), Paragraph 1 shall apply mutatis mutandis upon application by the domestic institution if the non-European cooperation partners commit in the cooperation agreement with the domestic institution to accreditation in accordance with the criteria set forth in Paragraph 1, as well as in Sections 10(1) and (2) and 16(1).

Part 6 Alternative Accreditation Procedures Pursuant to Article 3(1)(3) of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation

§ 34 Alternative Accreditation Procedures

(1) In addition to the two procedures set forth in Part 4, alternative procedures for ensuring and developing the quality of study and teaching may be implemented in accordance with Article 3(1)(3) of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation.

(2) ¹ Alternative procedures must comply with the criteria set forth in Part 2 and Part 3 of this Regulation. ² The provisions of Article 3(2), first sentence, of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, as well as the principles governing the appropriate involvement of the academic community set forth in the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation and in this Regulation, shall apply mutatis mutandis; likewise, the requirements for participation and consent pursuant to § 18(2) shall apply mutatis mutandis.

(3) ¹ The implementation of alternative procedures requires the prior approval of the Accreditation Council and the competent state science authority of the respective state; the Accreditation Council may commission an external review. ² The application must be submitted to the Accreditation Council via the competent state science authority. ³ The Accreditation Council may, in consultation with the state, refuse its approval only if the alternative procedure does not comply with the requirements of Article 2 and the provisions of Article 3(2), first sentence, of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, as well as the principles for the appropriate participation of the academic community set forth in the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation and in this Regulation. ⁴ The alternative procedure shall be suitable for gaining fundamental insights into

alternative approaches to external quality assurance beyond the procedures specified in Article 3, paragraph 1, items 1 and 2 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation.

(4) The Accreditation Council shall develop rules of procedure that, in particular, govern the requirements for applications.

(5) ¹ The alternative procedure shall be limited to a maximum of eight years. ² Section 22, paragraph 4, sentence 2, and Section 26, paragraph 3, sentence 2, shall apply mutatis mutandis. ³ It shall be monitored by the Accreditation Council and, as a rule, evaluated by an independent, research-oriented institution two years prior to the expiration of the project period.

Part 7 Miscellaneous

Section 35 Relationship to Procedures Concerning the Professional Licensing Eligibility of a Degree Program

(1) Accreditation procedures pursuant to Article 3, paragraph 1, item 1, and Article 3, paragraph 1, item 2, of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation may, upon application by the institution of higher education, be organizationally linked to procedures that determine the suitability of a study program under professional licensing law.

(2) The participation of external experts with an advisory role—to be appointed in addition to the other representatives or representatives from the professional field—in the expert committees pursuant to § 25, paragraphs 1 and 2, shall be effected through nomination by the state authority responsible for the respective regulated profession.

Section 36 Evaluation

This Regulation shall be reviewed regularly and within a reasonable period of time.

Section 37 Entry into Force

Explanatory Memorandum to the Model Regulation

pursuant to Article 4, paragraphs 1 through 4, of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation

Preliminary Remarks

On December 8, 2016, the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs reached agreement on the draft of an inter-state treaty on the organization of a joint accreditation system for quality assurance in studies and teaching at German universities (Inter-State Treaty on Study Accreditation), which was signed by the heads of government of all the federal states. With this State Treaty, the states have implemented the requirements of the Federal Constitutional Court, which, in its decision of February 17, 2016, defined the legal requirements for the accreditation system as a quality assurance instrument in the higher education sector. The State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation establishes the legal framework for accreditation as a binding, academically guided external procedure for quality assurance and development in teaching.

In addition to standardizing substantive, procedural, and organizational requirements—which are to be established by the legislature itself—the Federal Constitutional Court also identified a need for formal regulations, particularly regarding the scientifically appropriate composition of the stakeholders and the procedures for establishing and revising the evaluation criteria. Decisions by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Accreditation Council have been deemed insufficient as executive agreements.

Article 4 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation therefore contains an authorization for state regulations to specify the details regarding

- the formal criteria
- the subject-specific and content-related criteria
- the procedures and processes
- the composition of the committees.

On this basis, this model regulation sets forth the common requirements of the federal states requirements for the essential structural and qualitative standards for the accreditation of bachelor's and master's degree programs, which are necessary to ensure the states' obligation under Article 1, Paragraph 2 of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation to guarantee the equivalence of corresponding coursework, examinations, and degrees, as well as the possibility of transferring between institutions of higher education.

The development of these regulations was based on the relevant resolutions of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs regarding the bachelor's and master's degree system¹ and quality assurance through accreditation, in particular the joint state structural requirements, the existing

¹ In particular, the Joint State Structural Guidelines for the Accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs (Resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of October 10, 2003, as amended on February 4, 2010), see https://www.Kul-tusministerkonferenz.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2003/2003_10_10-Laenderge-meinsame-Strukturvorgaben.pdf

Rules for the accreditation of the Accreditation Council, proposals from its working group “Rule Revision” as well as the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). However, the opportunity was also taken to further streamline and optimize the procedures based on previous experience with accreditation, thereby contributing to cost reduction and the reduction of bureaucracy. In addition, the results of consultations with representatives of the German Rectors’ Conference, the Accreditation Council, the agencies, the Association of Private Universities, students, and the school sector have been incorporated.

Provisions regarding the fees to be charged by the agencies, for which the State Treaty on Higher Education Accreditation also provides a legal basis (Article 4, paragraph 5), are not covered by this model regulation but are reserved—where necessary—for separate regulations based on a further model regulation issued by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs. It is planned to evaluate cost trends after two years in order to decide, on this basis, whether cost caps are necessary.

In drafting the model regulation, the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs was guided by the principle enshrined in the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation that ensuring and developing the quality of study and teaching is primarily the responsibility of the universities. The Conference of Ministers of Education assumes that higher education institutions will take responsibility for ensuring the quality of studies across the board by making it a central focus in the design of their degree programs.

The following explanatory notes are intended to provide clarifications and guidance on the implementation of the state regulations to be enacted on the basis of the Model Statutory Ordinance, in order to ensure that uniformity of application is guaranteed within the framework of accreditation and that the objective of the State Treaty pursuant to Article 1(2) is not jeopardized by divergent practices. In this context, the principle—which has been strongly advocated to date—continues to apply that existing scope for flexibility, as expressed in the Model Statute through a multitude of discretionary or mandatory provisions and restrictive formulations, must be utilized flexibly and productively. However, the exercise of this discretion requires a transparent justification by the universities, which must be presented and verified within the framework of program accreditation or in the corresponding internal quality assurance processes.

The State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, which forms the basis of the Model Statute, entered into force on January 1, 2018. Section 36 of the Model Statute, in the version adopted by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs on December 7, 2017, provided for a review

the implementation and effects of the regulation three years after its entry into force (January 1, 2018). The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs therefore initiated a comprehensive evaluation process of the Model Regulation in 2021. This process involved the federal states as well as relevant stakeholders in the accreditation system, such as the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, the German Trade Union Federation, the German Rectors' Conference, the churches, the Accreditation Council Foundation, the Student Accreditation Pool in cooperation with the "Free Association of Student Bodies," the Association of Private Universities, and the Association of Agencies. The results of this multi-stage participatory process have been incorporated into the present revised version of the Model Statute and its explanatory memorandum.

II. On the Individual Provisions Part 1

– General Provisions

§ 1 – Scope of Application

Paragraph 1 defines the scope of the model regulation, which, pursuant to Article 2, paragraphs 2 and 3, and Article 3, pertains to formal criteria, subject-specific and content-related criteria, and the procedure.

Paragraph 2 takes into account the resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs on the “Classification of Bachelor’s Degree Programs at Vocational Academies within the Consecutive Study Structure” dated October 15, 2004², which stipulates that degree programs at vocational academies leading to the degree designation “Bachelor” must be accredited. In this context, the regulations for program accreditation apply, unless specific provisions set forth in § 8(6) and § 21—which are based on the dual structure of the training—apply. The degree title

“Bachelor” is not a higher education degree, but a state-recognized degree designation.

Accreditation in accordance with the provisions of the (model) statutory ordinance serves as the basis for the legal equivalence under higher education law of bachelor’s degrees from vocational academies with those from universities, which in particular opens the door to master’s degree programs and thereby increases the permeability of the education systems. It is expected that this equivalence under higher education law will also be accompanied by equivalence under professional law.

Section 2 – Forms of Accreditation

Section 2 defines, in implementation of Article 3(1) of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, the possible subjects of accreditation to which the subsequent provisions of this Statutory Ordinance apply.

Part 2 – Formal Criteria for Degree Programs

Part 2 primarily addresses the joint structural requirements agreed upon by the federal states, through which the states have agreed on the core elements of the tiered degree system as the basis for mobility during studies and mutual recognition of degrees within Germany and the European Higher Education Area.

Section 3 – Program Structure and Duration, Recognition, and Credit Transfer

Paragraph 1 establishes the principle that, in a tiered degree system, the bachelor’s degree constitutes the standard degree. It must be characterized by an independent

² http://www.Kultusministerkonferenz.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2004/2004_10_15-Bachelor-Berufsakademie-Studienstruktur.pdf

demonstrate a professionally qualifying profile that enables graduates to enter the workforce in their respective fields. This does not preclude the possibility that, for certain activities, the requirements prescribed by professional regulations are only met at the master's level.

The Master's degree is defined as a further professionally qualifying higher education degree.

Paragraph 2 provides the framework for the planning and design of bachelor's and master's degree programs at universities; it does not regulate individual study patterns.

The flexibility of 3-, 3.5-, and 4-year Bachelor's programs and 1-, 1.5-, or 2-year Master's programs in full-time study allows for a program structure that meets the requirements of the respective discipline and academic culture. Excluded are Bachelor's programs with a standard period of study of less than three years in full-time study. The total standard period of study until the completion of a master's degree in consecutive programs is 10 semesters.

Exceptions are possible in the core artistic disciplines at art and music colleges. Subject to further provisions of state law, consecutive bachelor's and master's degree programs with a total duration of 6 years may also be established in these disciplines³. Furthermore, state law may also provide for the adjustment of standard periods of study, provided the program is organized accordingly.

Paragraph 3: The exemption for the "full theological degree program" is based on Article 17, Paragraph 2 of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation and takes into account the agreement between the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, the Evangelical Church in Germany, and the German Catholic Bishops' Conference titled "Key Points for the Study Structure in Degree Programs in Catholic or Protestant Theology/Religion" - Resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education dated December December 2007 "as amended on September 8, 2022"⁽⁴⁾. In this agreement, the churches have agreed to follow the structural guidelines pertaining to the degree programs. However, different regulations may apply in specific cases regarding degree programs that qualify for church office. The division into bachelor's and master's degrees is therefore not mandatory. Full-time theological degree programs with a standard duration of ten semesters are, however, otherwise subject to this, with the exception of the degree (see § 6, paragraph 2, sentence 6

³ Note: The core artistic subjects are not defined in detail here. The decision regarding the inclusion of fine arts programs in the tiered degree structure and the classification of a subject as a core artistic subject is made by the respective state and university.

⁴ http://www.Kultusministerkonferenz.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschlu-esse/2007/2007_12_13-Eckpunkte-Studienstruktur-Theologie.pdf

and justification) fully meet the formal and substantive criteria for accreditation.

Paragraph 4: In accordance with the provisions of state higher education laws, higher education institutions are required, in implementation of the Lisbon Convention, to recognize competencies, qualifications, and academic achievements acquired at higher education institutions, as well as to grant credit for competencies and qualifications acquired outside of higher education. Paragraph 4 clarifies that regulations regarding recognition and credit transfer are examined as formal criteria in accreditation procedures.

Section 4 – Program Profiles

Paragraph 1 establishes provisions regarding the profile of master's degree programs. Regardless of the type of institution, master's degree programs may be classified as either "application-oriented" or "research-oriented." Given the elimination of a distinction between programs at universities of applied sciences and traditional universities, this differentiation serves to enhance transparency for students and the labor market. Sentence 1 clarifies that the designation of an application-oriented or research-oriented profile is optional. If one of these profile types is designated, it must be clearly reflected in the structure of the program. Master's programs may also contain both application-oriented and research-oriented elements; in such cases, they do not have a corresponding profile.

At art and music colleges, master's programs may have a distinct artistic focus.

Master's programs that provide the educational prerequisites for a teaching career, on the other hand, must have a specific teaching-related profile. For this purpose, the inter-state subject-specific requirements for teacher training (standards in educational sciences as well as inter-state content requirements for the subjects and their didactics) and any state-specific content and structural requirements must be applied as assessment criteria.

Sentence 4 clarifies that this is to be verified in the accreditation process only if the institution has established a profile in accordance with Sentence 1 or Sentence 2. For degree programs under Sentence 3, the requirement remains that they must have a specific teacher-training profile, which is verified in the accreditation process.

Paragraph 2: For master's degree programs, a distinction is made—regardless of the type of institution—between consecutive and continuing education programs, which are defined in more detail in § 11, paragraph 3.

Continuing education master's programs lead to the same level of qualification and the same entitlements as consecutive master's programs. Therefore,

the same requirements regarding the standard period of study and the requirement for a thesis.

Paragraph 3 clarifies that the requirement for a thesis is an indispensable quality criterion for all degree programs. In artistic degree programs, the term “thesis” also be understood to mean a “final project.” The thesis serves as proof of the student’s ability to independently address a problem within the respective discipline using scientific or artistic methods within a specified timeframe. For the scope of theses, see § 8, paragraph 3.

§ 5 – Admission Requirements and Transfers Between Degree Programs

Paragraph 1: Admission to a master’s program requires a first professional degree⁵. This takes into account the nature of the master’s degree as a further professional degree (see § 3, Paragraph 1).

Under state law, an exception to the requirement of a first professional degree may be granted for professional and artistic master’s programs if the first professional degree is replaced by an entrance examination. Sentence 3 stipulates, with regard to the profile of continuing education master’s programs set forth in § 4(2), that admission requires qualified, i.e., professional practical experience relevant to the program’s qualification objective of at least one year, since the design of a continuing education master’s program takes into account and builds upon the students’ professional experience. A duration of prior professional activity of less than one year is permissible only in justified cases for individual students with an equivalent level of professional qualification, but not as a structural feature of the program’s design (see also the explanatory memorandum to Section 11(3), sentences 3 and 4).

Paragraph 2, sentence 1, takes into account the interests of art and music colleges, which primarily focus on special artistic aptitude when granting admission to master’s programs. For admission to continuing education artistic master’s programs—unlike for other continuing education master’s programs—state law may also take into account professional practical activities that are performed only during the course of study.

Paragraph 3: State law may establish additional requirements for admission to

⁵ Note: The Model Statute does not contain any specific provisions regarding the transition between degree programs under different degree systems; the general credit transfer provisions apply in such cases. Universities and the federal states are free to specify details in their examination regulations or in provisions under higher education law.

Master's degree programs.

§ 6 – Degrees and Degree Titles

Paragraph 1 establishes the principle that only one degree may be awarded for a successfully completed degree program. Exceptions are possible only within the framework of international partnerships that result in a dual or multiple degree from the participating institutions. This precludes the simultaneous awarding of degrees under both the old and new degree systems. There is no differentiation of degrees based on the standard duration of study or the type of institution at which the degree was earned.

Paragraph 2 definitively establishes the degree titles for bachelor's and consecutive master's degree programs. Instead of the degree titles "Bachelor" and "Master," the Latin terms "Baccalaureus/Baccalaurea" and "Magister/Magistra" may also be used. For degree programs that cannot be clearly assigned to one of the subject groups listed in sentence 1, numbers 1 through 7, the degree title is determined by the program's academic focus. This applies to interdisciplinary and combined degree programs, but in particular also to polyvalent degree programs in the field of teacher education, for which degree titles under numbers 1 through 7 may be awarded. For continuing education master's programs, alternative designations remain possible. Subject-specific additions to degree titles and mixed-language degree titles are excluded, as are bachelor's degrees with the addition "honors."

Exceptions to the guidelines for degree titles apply to full-time theological programs without distinct levels. These typically conclude with an academic degree. If the examination regulations provide for an academic degree, Section 3 of the "Guidelines" allows for the use of the degree title "Magister Theologiae." This refers in Latinized form to the academic degree of the "Master" is used, thereby establishing a connection to the comprehensive Bologna Framework. Theological faculties are free to award this academic degree in its feminine form as well.

Paragraph 2, item 7 regulates the designations for Bachelor's and consecutive Master's degrees for degree programs that provide the educational prerequisites for a teaching position. The degree designation "Master of Education" (Section B 2 of the "Joint Structural Guidelines of the Federal States for the Accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs," Resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of October 10, 2003, as amended) should, in the interest of transparency and to avoid false expectations regarding mobility, be reserved for those degrees that—as a rule, nationwide—provide access to a preparatory service for a teaching career in accordance with state law.

Paragraph 3 provides for the issuance of certificates of equivalence and thus serves to establish transparency regarding the qualification level of Bachelor's and Master's degrees in comparison to the Diplom degree in the single-tier system. Certificates of equivalence are already standard practice at some universities.

Paragraph 4 stipulates that the Diploma Supplement is a mandatory component of every degree certificate. The Diploma Supplement is an additional document containing standardized information describing higher education degrees and associated qualifications, intended to facilitate and improve the evaluation and classification of these degrees for both academic and professional purposes. In this context, the version of the Diploma Supplement agreed upon by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and the German Rectors' Conference, as currently in force, must be used.

§ 7 – Modularization

Paragraph 1 defines the requirements for modularization that must be demonstrated as part of the accreditation process. Modules consist of self-contained units of study—both thematically and in terms of duration—that are assigned credit hours. They may be composed of various forms of teaching and learning (e.g., lectures, seminars, internships, e-learning, educational research, etc.). A module may cover the intended learning outcomes and course content of a single semester or academic year, but in exceptional cases may also extend over several semesters. Taking learning outcomes into account beyond the scope of course content serves to guide students and foster competency development. The fundamental time limit of two consecutive semesters serves two primary purposes. On the one hand, modules serve to provide a transparent internal structure for degree programs and should therefore not be too large. On the other hand, modules that extend over a longer period of time could restrict mobility. If the institution deviates from this time limit, it must demonstrate that this has no adverse effect on the intended objectives or that such effects are offset by appropriate measures. Sentence 3 takes into account the specific characteristics of artistic degree programs.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 set forth the requirements for module descriptions. The module description should provide students with reliable information regarding the course of study, content, qualitative and quantitative requirements, and how the module fits into the overall structure of the degree program. The description should also enable an assessment of the module with regard to its transferability or recognition when changing universities. On a voluntary basis, module descriptions may also include information on the applicability of the module in other degree programs or in conjunction with modules within the same degree program.

Paragraph 2 does not contain any rigid stipulations that would prevent a flexible design of the

would hinder the provision of courses. Without prejudice to the universities' responsibility for the specific design of modules, the standards recommended in sections 1 through 8 for the description of modules assume, however, that information on the following aspects will be provided:

1. intended learning outcomes and course content
 - a) subject-specific, methodological, practical, and interdisciplinary course content,
 - b) subject-specific, methodological, and interdisciplinary competencies, key qualifications,
 - c) intended learning outcomes aligned with a to-be-defined overall qualification (intended degree);
2. Teaching and learning methods
Description of the individual teaching and learning methods (lectures, exercises, seminars, internships, project work, self-study);
3. Prerequisites for participation (in conjunction with paragraph 3)
Description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful participation, as well as opportunities for preparation (including reading assignments, references to multimedia-supported teaching and learning programs);
4. Requirements for the Awarding of ECTS Credits (in conjunction with paragraph 3)
Description of the requirements for awarding credits—in particular examinations (type of examination, e.g., oral or written examination, presentation, term paper, as well as the scope and duration of the examination), proof of attendance, and opportunities for make-up work—shall be regulated in the examination regulations;
5. ECTS credits and grading
Separate reporting of credits and grades; in addition to the grade based on the German grading scale from 1 to 5, a relative grade must also be reported for the final grade. It is recommended that this be calculated in accordance with the current version of the ECTS Users' Guide;
6. Frequency of the module's offering
Specify whether the module is offered every semester, every academic year, or only at longer intervals;
7. Workload

Specification of the total workload and the number of credits to be earned for each module;

8. Duration of the module

Determination of the duration of the modules due to their impact on the course of study, the exam load, and the frequency of offerings.

§ 8 – Credit Point System

Paragraph 1 concerns the awarding of credit points. They serve as a quantitative measure of the student's overall workload and encompass both direct instruction and the time spent on preparation and follow-up work (classroom and self-study), the effort required for examinations and exam preparation, including final theses and term papers, as well as internships where applicable.

The awarding of credit points is based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), which is applied within the European Higher Education Area as part of the Bologna Process and thus facilitates mutual recognition.

A total of 60 credit points are awarded per academic year, i.e., 30 per semester. One credit point is based on a student's workload of 25 to a maximum of 30 hours of in-class and self-study, so that the total workload for a full-time student per semester, including both the lecture period and the non-lecture period, amounts to 750 to 900 hours. This corresponds to 32 to 39 hours per week over 46 weeks per year. The specific determination of how many working hours within this range correspond to one ECTS credit is set forth in the study and examination regulations.

Credit points are assigned to individual modules. They are awarded once the requirements specified in the examination regulations have been met; this does not necessarily require an examination, but rather the successful completion of the respective module.

Paragraph 2 stipulates that a minimum of 180 ECTS credits is required to earn a bachelor's degree, and a total of 300 ECTS credits is required to reach the master's level—that is, including the preceding studies up to the first professionally qualifying degree. No exceptions to these planning requirements for higher education institutions are provided for. The deviations from the standard period of study permitted under § 3 relate exclusively to the time requirements and do not allow for any deviation from the ECTS credit requirements.

According to sentence 3, deviations from the 300 ECTS credit requirement for the master's degree may be permitted in individual cases if the student possesses the appropriate qualifications

. However, this exception applies exclusively to the individual student and not to the degree program. Accordingly, applicants may also be admitted to master's degree programs who, based on the total number of ECTS credits from their bachelor's studies, do not reach 300 ECTS credits. The prerequisite is proof of the qualifications required for admission.

In accordance with the maximum standard period of study of 6 years (§ 3, paragraph 2), the master's level may be attained with 360 credit points in consecutive bachelor's and master's programs in the core artistic disciplines at universities of the arts and music conservatories. The option of large modules in the core artistic subject during the bachelor's program (Section 7, Paragraph 1, Sentence 3) takes into account the unique characteristics of artistic education, which, due to its holistic approach, precludes a highly granular modularization.

Paragraph 3 regulates the scope of the final theses. To ensure a scope of work that is aligned with the educational objectives and level and is proportionate to the course load of the respective program, the scope of the Bachelor's thesis may not be less than 6 ECTS credits nor exceed 12 ECTS credits. For the master's thesis, a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 30 ECTS credits apply. These guidelines serve both quality assurance and the students' interest in degree programs that are not overburdened in terms of content or time. The ranges allow for flexible structuring while taking into account subject-specific characteristics.

In principle, these guidelines also apply to art and music colleges. In justified exceptional cases, the scope of the Bachelor's thesis in fine arts programs may be up to 20 ECTS credits and that of the Master's thesis up to 40 ECTS credits.

Paragraph 4 stipulates that deviations from the requirements regarding the number of credit hours per semester are generally permitted for certain types of degree programs, such as intensive programs. The upper limit is set at 75 ECTS credit hours, based on 30 hours per credit hour. In such cases, special attention must be paid to the feasibility of the program. Through measures related to program organization, universities can help ensure the feasibility of such programs.

Paragraph 5 addresses the recommendation of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and the German Rectors' Conference regarding the awarding of a master's degree in teacher education with the planned inclusion of performance during the preparatory service, dated June 12, 2007/July 8, 2008

⁶ . One option for incorporating the pre-service training period into the master's program is to grant credit for parts of the pre-service training. The "Standards for Teacher Education: Educational Sciences" (Resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of December 16, 2004)⁷ serve as the benchmark for practical school training during both the degree program and the pre-service training period. On this basis, the universities and the institutions of the second phase of training agree on state-specific qualification frameworks, on the basis of which the universities and the institutions of the second phase of training jointly and by mutual agreement develop training formats and examination procedures covering up to 60 ECTS credits for a one-year training segment as the basis for credit transfer toward the university degree program.

Paragraph 6 regulates specific features of the study structure for vocational academies. Vocational academies are institutions in the tertiary sector that provide at least three years of education that is both academically oriented and practice-oriented. The number of ECTS credits to be earned and the ratio of theory- to practice-based training components are based on the aforementioned resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs dated October 15, 2004⁸ .

Comparability with university bachelor's degree programs—a prerequisite for equivalence under higher education law—requires that the theory-based components of the training be in an appropriate balance with the practice-based components. The classification as "theory-based" and "practice-based" is not to be determined based on the institution but rather on the learning content, so that theory-based ECTS credits can also be earned during the training phases in the workplace provided the relevant prerequisites—which also apply to the teaching staff (see § 21)—are met. The establishment of a range of 120 to 150 ECTS credits for the theory-based components allows for a flexible structure that meets the requirements of the respective degree programs.

§ 9 – Special Criteria for Cooperation with Non-Higher Education Partners

Section 9 sets forth the specific formal criteria for non-university collaborations in accordance with Section 19. Paragraph 1, sentence 1, establishes—from the perspective of quality assurance and transparency—the requirement for a written cooperation agreement between the degree-granting institution and the cooperating educational provider regarding the nature, scope, and mutual obligations of the existing cooperation. Furthermore, for reasons of consumer protection, the scope and nature must be presented transparently

⁶ https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2008/2008_06_12-Empfehlung-Mas-ter-Lehrer-Vorbereitung.pdf

⁷ Standards for Teacher Education: Educational Sciences (Resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of December 16, 2004, as amended on May 16, 2019) at http://www.Kultusministerkonferenz.org/fileadmin/Files/publications_resolutions/2004/2004_12_16-Standards-Teacher-Training-Educational-Sciences.pdf

⁸ See footnote 2

of the cooperation on the university's website.

Paragraph 1, sentence 2, emphasizes that, as guarantors of the quality of the academic degrees and credentials they confer, higher education institutions are responsible for ensuring the quality of study programs as well as the procedures for recognizing competencies acquired outside of higher education. Only those competencies that are equivalent in content and level to the part of the program they are intended to replace may be recognized. Such knowledge and skills acquired outside the higher education system may replace no more than 50% of a higher education program. This ensures that a substantial part of the education underlying the higher education degree takes place under the direct responsibility of the awarding institution, i.e., through its own efforts.

Paragraph 2 makes it clear that program-specific collaborations with non-higher-education institutions can be considered of equivalent quality only if they generate verifiable additional academic and educational benefits for future students and for the degree-granting institution. This added value must be clearly demonstrated.

Section 10 – Special Provisions for Joint Programs

This provision serves to implement the decision made at the Conference of Ministers of Education and

-ministers of the European Higher Education Area⁹ adopted in May 2015 in Yerevan, the so-called European Approach to Quality Assurance of Joint Programs (EA)¹⁰. This is intended to enable the external quality assurance of degree programs jointly developed and administered by higher education institutions in different countries, particularly within the European Higher Education Area, based on uniform procedural rules and criteria aligned^{with} the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)¹¹, which also underpin the European Higher Education Area. Corresponding provisions regarding the subject-specific and content-related criteria and the procedural rules are set forth in Parts 3 and 4 of this Regulation (Sections 16 and 33). The provisions contained in Parts 2, 3, and 4 of this Regulation apply to joint programs only to the extent expressly provided.

The provisions on joint programs establish the legal framework for accreditation decisions based on deviating criteria and procedural rules. They thus open up, beyond the right of the Accreditation Council Foundation to define the

⁹ <https://www.ehea.info/>, currently 48 European states

¹⁰ https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/02_European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmes_v1_0.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.ehea.info/cid105593/esg.html>

Requirements for the Recognition of Accreditation Decisions by Foreign Institutions the possibility of making accreditation decisions that deviate from the criteria and procedural rules defined in this ordinance. Article 5, paragraph 3, sentence 2 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation grants the Accreditation Council-tierungsrat merely the mandate to regulate the requirements for conducting corresponding recognition procedures on the basis of the criteria and procedural rules set forth in the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation and in the regulations enacted pursuant to Article 4 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, without permitting any deviation from these requirements. Authorizing the Foundation to independently define criteria and procedural rules in such proceedings that deviate from these requirements is incompatible not only with the objectives set forth in Article 1, paragraphs 2 and 3, Article 4(6) of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation, but also in light of constitutional principles (in particular the principle of specificity and the theory of materiality).

Paragraph 1 defines the scope of application. In line with the full implementation of the European approach, this scope includes not only degree programs leading to a joint degree (Joint Degree Programs) but also double and multiple degrees.

The participating higher education institutions must be recognized as such by the competent authorities of their respective states. Their respective national legal frameworks must permit their participation in joint programs (see B 1.1 EA).

Paragraphs 1 through 5 set forth the requirements for the structure of the study program and for cooperation that are essential for the scope of application to take effect; compliance with these requirements is verified during the accreditation process. For degree programs that meet the requirements under Section 10(1), first sentence, Sections 10, 16, and 33 may be applied. In addition, universities may continue to offer degree programs with dual and multiple degrees based on mutual recognition of academic achievements with a lower degree of integration that do not meet the criteria of paragraph 1. In such cases, §§ 10, 16, and 33 do not apply, but rather
Section 20.

Paragraph 1 stipulates that the degree program must be based on a jointly coordinated and systematically interrelated coherent curriculum. This excludes application to models in which higher education institutions cooperate only in the recognition of competencies but do not maintain a joint curriculum (see Introduction to the EA).

Paragraph 2 stipulates that each student must complete at least 25% of the program (measured in ECTS credits) at at least one of the foreign

partner institutions. This excludes the application of the special provisions for joint programs in cases of cooperation involving optional study abroad or in cases where only foreign students are required to participate in mobility.

Paragraph 3 stipulates the requirement for a contractual cooperation agreement between the participating institutions of higher education in order to ensure the sustainability of the degree program, particularly in the interest of the students. The cooperation agreement concluded by the participating higher education institutions within the framework of their contractually regulated cooperation must, in particular, contain provisions regarding: the designation of the degree(s) awarded in the program; coordination and responsibilities of the partners with regard to management and financial organization; admission and selection procedures for students; mobility of students and faculty; examination regulations and methods for assessing students; recognition of credits and procedures for awarding degrees; and the involvement of all cooperating institutions in the design and implementation of the program (see B 1.3 EA).

Number 4 ensures, in the interest of the students, that the study program has a coordinated admissions and examination system (see B 1.3 EA).

Section 5 stipulates that participating universities must have a common quality management system. This includes the participating institutions applying common internal quality assurance processes. These encompass, in particular, the quality assurance strategy, standards for the design and approval of degree programs, adherence to the principles of student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment, transparent regulations regarding admission and the course of study, recognition, and degree conferral; ensuring the competence of faculty; the provision of adequate resources to ensure the learning environment; sound information management; and the ongoing monitoring and regular review of degree programs (see B 9 EA in conjunction with ESG 1.1 and Part 1 of the ESG).

Paragraph 2 establishes the formal criteria applicable to joint programs.

Sentence 1, with regard to the participation of foreign higher education institutions and the political agreements reached within the European Higher Education Area, explicitly stipulates as an assessment criterion the application of the recognition principles applicable to higher education institutions based in Germany by virtue of

federal or state law ¹²(see B 4.2 EA). These include:

- a right to have competencies acquired as part of a higher education program recognized as qualifications for that program, provided there are no significant differences between the competencies acquired and those required to be demonstrated. This is to be assessed, in particular, against the qualification objective of the respective program,
- a reversal of the burden of proof in favor of the applicant,
- an obligation on the part of the institution to provide reasons for negative decisions,
- the right to have the decision reviewed.

Sentence 2 clarifies that the principles regarding modularization and the credit system set forth in Sections 7 and 8(1) also apply here, and that the distribution of credits must be clearly regulated (see B 3.2 EA).

Sentence 3 stipulates, in accordance with the political agreements within the European Higher Education Area, that a bachelor's program must comprise a minimum of 180 and a maximum of 240 credit points, and a master's program a minimum of 60 credit points (see B 3.3 EA). However, a Master's degree, including the first degree, does not necessarily have to be based on 300 ECTS credits.

Sentence 4 clarifies, particularly in the interest of internationally mobile students, that relevant information about the program—such as admission requirements and procedures, the course catalog, and examination and assessment procedures—must be published and accessible to students at all times (see B 8 EA).

Sentence 5 clarifies that, for degree programs that meet the requirements of Section 10(1), first sentence, only the formal criteria for degree programs (Part 2 of the Regulation) explicitly listed in paragraph 2 apply. The remaining formal criteria for degree programs under Part 2 of the Regulation need not be met.

Paragraph 3 extends the scope of application of the criteria and procedural rules of the European approach set forth in Sections 10(1) and (2), 16(1), and § 33(1) to joint programs conducted in cooperation with higher education institutions outside the European Higher Education Area, provided that the non-European cooperation partners have committed to applying these principles in a cooperation agreement with the domestic higher education institution.

Section 12 of the Act of May 16, 2007, on the Convention of April 11, 1997, on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in the European Region, Federal Law Gazette 2007 II, p. 712 et seq., https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/pdf/ZAB/Konventionen_und_Uebereinkommen_von_Europarat_UNESCO/Lissabonkonvention.pdf

Part 3: Academic Content Criteria for Degree Programs and Quality Management Systems

This section serves to specify the academic and content-related criteria set forth in Article 2, paragraph 3, of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation.

Section 11 – Qualification Objectives and Degree Level

Section 11 sets forth the criteria to be used in the accreditation process to assess the consistency of the qualification objectives and the degree level of the respective program concept.

Paragraph 1 refers to Article 2, Paragraph 3, Item 1 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, which lists as the qualification objectives of a study program the scientific or artistic competence corresponding to the intended degree level, as well as the ability to engage in qualified gainful employment and personal development. In view of the particular importance of the social relevance of study and teaching as part of the characteristic of personal development, this is explicitly mentioned in accordance with the definition provided by the Science Council in its 2015 recommendations on the relationship between higher education and the labor market¹³. As part of the accreditation process, it must be verified whether the qualification objectives and intended learning outcomes to be specifically defined by the institution for each program reflect these goals. The qualification objectives and learning outcomes of a degree program provide a clear, concise overview of the program. They are just as relevant to prospective students when choosing a program as they are to employers when evaluating the qualifications of graduates. The institution must therefore make them publicly available (e.g., on its website).

Paragraph 2: The aspects of the academic, scientific, artistic, methodological, and personal development requirements described in paragraph 2 are based on the descriptors and competency dimensions of the Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Degrees in its current version¹⁴, which was developed in cooperation between the German Rectors' Conference and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, in consultation with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and adopted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs on February 16, 2017. This framework implements the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area¹⁵ at the national level and encompasses the imparting of current subject-specific knowledge, interdisciplinary knowledge, and the generally recognized principles of good scientific practice as well as and the acquisition of methodological,

¹³ <https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/archiv/4925-15.pdf>, p. 40f

¹⁴ https://www.Kultusministerkonferenz.org/fileadmin/Files/publications_conclusions/2017/2017_02_16-Qualification_Framework.pdf

https://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/WG_Frameworks_qualification/85/2/Framework_qualificationsforE-HEA-May2005_587852.pdf

Personal and social competencies, as well as ensuring employability and the ability to engage in lifelong learning. During the accreditation process, it must be verified whether the program concept encompasses these aspects and whether they correspond to the level of the degree awarded.

Paragraph 3 establishes, based on relevant resolutions of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs¹⁶ that have proven effective in previous accreditation practice, the requirements to be assessed in the accreditation process for the bachelor's and master's levels within the tiered system and for different program profiles.

Sentence 1 clarifies the function of the bachelor's degree as the first professionally qualifying degree; as an undergraduate degree, it must provide a broad education and thus ensure both the ability to engage in professional work and the capacity for further academic or artistic development and lifelong learning. In accordance with the differentiation of master's programs pursuant to Section 4(2), Sentence 2 defines consecutive master's programs as programs that provide in-depth, broad-based, interdisciplinary, or specialized training. Sentences 3 and 4 regulate the specific requirements for professional master's programs. Continuing education master's programs are characterized by their focus on professional qualification. Therefore, prior professional experience is a constitutive element, which must be reflected in both the duration and the nature of the work. Any duration of prior professional experience shorter than the minimum of one year therefore requires special justification. The professional experience builds upon the prior first professional qualification and therefore cannot be replaced either by mandatory internships from the bachelor's phase or by professional experience prior to the start of the bachelor's program. In accordance with the educational objective, special attention must be paid during the accreditation process to the connection between professional qualification and the program concept, as demonstrated by the institution. The same applies to the review of the requirements, which—despite the predominantly professional orientation—must correspond both structurally (see also § 4, paragraph 2) and in terms of content to the qualification level defined for the master's level (see also paragraph 2). Sentence 5 specifies the qualification objectives for artistic bachelor's and master's degree programs.

Bachelor's and master's degree programs can be pursued at various institutions of higher education, including different types of institutions, and may include periods of professional work between the first and second degrees.

§ 12 - Coherent Program Concept and Adequate Implementation

Section 12 specifies, based on the structural requirements set forth in Section 3 et seq.

¹⁶ see footnote 1

These requirements establish the criteria for evaluating the respective program concept and define the framework conditions that must be met for its proper implementation. Particular emphasis is placed on the feasibility of completing the program within the standard period of study. The regulations are based on the standards adopted by the participating states of the European Higher Education Area at their ministerial conference in May 2015 regarding internal quality assurance at higher education institutions, particularly concerning the design of degree programs (Standard 1.2), student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment (Standard 1.3), admission, course progression, recognition, and degree completion (Standard 1.4), faculty (Standard 1.5), and requirements for the learning environment (Standard 1.6).

Paragraph 1, sentence 1 requires a curriculum that is coherent with regard to the attainability of the qualification objectives, taking into account the entry qualifications (see Standard 1.2). Sentence 2 requires a correlation between qualification objectives (see also § 11, paragraphs 1 and 2), the program title, the degree level, and the degree title (see also § 6) and module concept (see also § 7). Sentence 3 calls for diverse teaching, learning, and assessment methods tailored to the respective disciplinary cultures and the chosen program format, as well as practical components where appropriate (see Standard 1.3). When evaluating the respective study program, “examination formats” are also taken into account to ensure compliance with the principle of designing examinations based on the intended learning outcomes and, consequently, the design of the course (constructive alignment). Sentence 4 stipulates that the degree program must provide suitable framework conditions to promote student mobility, enabling students to spend time at other universities without losing academic credit. This includes, in particular, the consideration of mobility windows in the program design and recognition procedures that consistently apply the principles of the Lisbon Convention¹⁷ not only during stays at universities abroad but also within the country. Admission requirements for master’s programs must also be designed to promote mobility and enable transfers between universities and types of higher education institutions. Sentence 5 ensures that students are encouraged to actively participate in shaping the teaching and learning process. This ensures student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment as defined in ESG Standard 1.3. Sentence 6 addresses the publication requirement set forth in ESG Standard 1.4. The ESG Standard mandates the publication of regulations covering all phases of the “student life cycle.”

Paragraphs 2 and 3: In addition to program-specific aspects, the institutional framework must also be taken into account in the evaluation, to the extent that it has direct relevance to the implementation of the program. This includes both the teaching staff as

¹⁷ see footnote 12

as well as the allocation of resources (see Standard 1.5 Teaching Staff and 1.6 Learning Environment). The wording allows for a degree of discretion in the assessment that should be tailored to the specific program.

Paragraph 2, sentence 1 stipulates that the teaching staff must ensure, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the adequate implementation of the curriculum. This also includes the teaching competence of the faculty. Sentence 2 requires that the integration of research and teaching be ensured by a sufficient number of full-time professors¹⁸regularly engaged in teaching. This applies to both undergraduate and graduate programs. The third sentence requires appropriate measures for staff selection and qualification as the basis for teaching that is substantively and didactically sound in the respective program. These include, for example, structured processes for appointment procedures or a systematic offering of university-level teaching qualifications.

Paragraph 3 stipulates that resource allocation must also be included in the evaluation to the extent that it is significant for the implementation of the program's design and the achievement of educational goals. The text in parentheses contains an illustrative list of possible resource characteristics, which, however, is not exhaustive and may be replaced or supplemented by others on a case-by-case basis.

Paragraph 4: The planned examinations and assessment methods must enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes. Examinations must be module-based—rather than based on individual courses—and designed to assess competencies. To ensure this, the forms of assessment used must be subject to ongoing review and refinement.

Paragraph 5 ensures that the degree program is structured in such a way that a student can typically complete it successfully within the standard period of study and, to this end, lists in sentence 2 the components that must be assessed during the evaluation. This list is not exhaustive. Depending on the specific program concept (for example, in programs with a special profile, see paragraph 6), additional factors may need to be taken into account here.

According to Section 1, one criterion for the feasibility of a degree program is predictable and reliable academic operations. This includes, in particular, providing students with timely and comprehensive information on all organizational aspects of the program, as well as transparent and reliable planning and implementation of

¹⁸ Due to differing definitions of the term "professor" under state law, different terms may be used in the regulations of the individual states.

Courses and examinations.

Furthermore, according to Section 2, courses and exams must largely avoid overlap. This applies above all to required modules and to frequently chosen subject combinations and required elective modules. To the extent that avoiding overlap cannot otherwise be guaranteed, timely and transparent information must be provided to prospective students and current students.

Furthermore, in accordance with Section 3, the program concept must plausibly define the workload and examination burden while complying with the formal requirements set forth in Sections 7 and 8, and these definitions must be continuously reviewed—in particular through regular workload surveys—and adjusted as necessary. To ensure that students can actively shape the course of their studies, provide sufficient flexibility—particularly with regard to changing universities—and enable students to plan their studies, the learning outcomes of a module must be designed such that they can generally be achieved within one semester, but no later than within one year.

With and a. an adequate and workload-appropriate examination frequency and -The organizational structure described in paragraph 4 ensures that the degree program is designed in such a way that it can be successfully completed within the standard period of study. In accordance with the didactic concept and in line with the principle of competency-based assessment enshrined in § 12(4), multiple (smaller) exams per module are also possible, provided that this ensures an adequate and workload-appropriate frequency and organization of exams. This must be justified in a coherent manner and evaluated with the involvement of students as part of the continuous monitoring within the meaning of § 14. This requires an examination concept that demonstrates that the overall examination workload, relative to the respective degree program, is appropriate. In this context, an examination refers to the legally valid proof that the qualification objective of the module has been achieved. This also includes prerequisite coursework, academic achievements, or other forms of evidence, such as the completion of an internship, the conduct of a laboratory experiment, or participation in field trips. If universities systematically schedule only one examination per module, resulting in a maximum of six examinations per semester, a description of the examination concept within the module descriptions or examination regulations is sufficient. If degree programs systematically schedule more than one examination per module, the typical examination configurations must be outlined at the degree program level as part of the degree program concept. In addition to didactics and competency orientation, the concept must make it clear to reviewers that the overall exam workload is reasonable, does not increase due to the higher number of exams, and that the exam workload is sensibly distributed

is ensured throughout the semester. This approach may be outlined in the appropriate section of the self-assessment report or in relevant documents from system-accredited higher education institutions. The explicit involvement of students in evaluating the frequency and organization of exams is intended, among other things, to prevent overly fragmented examination systems and the associated heavy exam workload. In addition, modules should generally have a minimum scope of five ECTS credits. This is a guideline, meaning that deviations are possible in justified exceptional cases. In this context, the coherence of the respective module concepts and the coherence of the examination concept in relation to the qualification objectives of the respective module must be taken into account, as must the overall examination burden in the respective degree program¹⁹.

Paragraph 6: The program profile as defined by the institution must be included in the evaluation. If the institution advertises or characterizes a program with specific features (e.g., international, dual, part-time while working, virtual, work-integrated, part-time), these features are part of the program profile and are therefore also subject to evaluation.

In such cases, the criteria listed in paragraphs 1 through 5 must be applied in light of the specific profile and from the respective specific perspective, and must be measured against the specific requirements to be defined by the institutions. These include, in particular, aspects such as the specific target group, a special program organization, different learning locations, and the involvement of industry partners—for example, in dual models—specific teaching and learning formats, or the existence of a sustainable quality management system that encompasses the various learning locations.

Paragraph 7 establishes the three-way integration of learning environments in dual study programs—at the content, organizational, and contractual levels—as a defining feature of dual study programs. This definition serves to clarify the relevant requirements both for the design of study programs by the institution of higher education and for the accreditation of dual study programs. It also creates transparency for prospective students as well as future employers of graduates of dual study programs.²⁰

§ 13 – Academic and Content-Related Design of Degree Programs

Section 13 defines the framework conditions for the academic and content-related evaluation of degree programs and specifies the special requirements for teacher education programs.

Paragraph 1: With regard to Article 5, Paragraph 3 of the Basic Law, the provision is limited to

¹⁹ Joint State Structural Requirements for the Accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs of February 4, 2010 – Interpretation Guidelines – of February 25, 2011, Number 5

²⁰ Due to differing definitions of the term “dual study program” under state law, state regulations may provide supplementary, more specific definitions in this regard.

the assessment of compliance with procedural requirements to ensure a substantively sound program concept and grants the reviewers broad discretion regarding content. According to sentence 1, this includes the existence of mechanisms/measures to determine the consistency of the substantive and academic requirements. According to sentence 2, it is also necessary to demonstrate regular monitoring and adjustment not only of the subject-specific and content-related design of the curriculum, but also of the methodological and didactic approaches, in order to ensure the transmission of the breadth and diversity of current scientific theories in the respective discipline. According to sentence 3, this can only be ensured if the disciplinary discourse at the national and, where applicable, international level is systematically taken into account. This includes the critical reflection on different subject-related reference systems as well as the continuous engagement with the latest state of research.

The use of modules from bachelor's degree programs in master's degree programs is permitted only in exceptional cases, provided that the partial learning objective achieved upon successful completion of the respective module adequately contributes to the achievement of the overall learning objective of the master's degree program. This applies to both consecutive and professional master's degree programs. However, the double use of modules in sub-areas of the program that build upon one another in terms of content must be excluded. Furthermore, it must be excluded that modules with essentially identical content can be taken in the bachelor's program and again in the master's program.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 define the subject-specific and content-related criteria for the review of degree programs that provide the educational prerequisites for a teaching career. In view of the need to ensure high-quality school instruction and thereby guarantee comparable educational opportunities (state responsibility for the school system), uniform guidelines are required here. The regulations are based on the standards adopted for this purpose by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs.²¹

Paragraph 2 establishes the requirement to verify that the curriculum complies with the standards agreed upon by the federal states in the subject-specific disciplines and didactics, as well as in educational sciences. These standards are derived from the content requirements agreed upon by the federal states and, where applicable, from state-specific requirements, based on the resolutions of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) in their currently applicable versions.²²

²¹ In particular: Key points for the mutual recognition of bachelor's and master's degrees in degree programs that provide the educational prerequisites for a teaching position, resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs dated June 2, 2005, available at http://www.Kultusministerkonferenz.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2005/2005_06_02-gegenseitige-Anerkennung-Bachelor-Master.pdf

²² See [footnote 7](#) regarding educational sciences; see the joint state requirements for subject-specific sciences and subject didactics in teacher education (Resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs dated October 16, 2008, as amended on February 8, 2024) at

Paragraph 3 specifies the structural and conceptual criteria to be assessed during the accreditation process, thereby adopting the provisions set forth in the relevant KMK resolution. The exceptions permitted therein for the respective teaching profession in the subjects of art and music must be taken into account. Sentence 2 clarifies that exceptions to Sentence 1, items 1 and 2, are also permissible for teacher training for vocational schools in accordance with the applicable resolutions of the Conference of Ministers of Education (Framework Agreement for Teacher Training 5) as well as within the framework of measures to recruit teachers in situations of special need²³. The latter applies in particular to master's programs for career changers in one or two subjects, the "additionality" of which must be documented separately in the context of the accreditation process. In this context, "additionality" means that master's programs for career changers represent an additional academic offering that the respective institution may establish alongside its undergraduate programs in the corresponding teaching professions and subjects.

§ 14 – Academic Success

To ensure that degree programs are designed efficiently and thus lead to academic success, it is essential—in the interest of both current students and graduates, as well as for the sustainable use of resources and time—to continuously monitor and adjust degree programs, taking into account the experiences of students and graduates. Section 14 specifies the criteria to be reviewed for this purpose. These include a closed-loop system with regular review (sentence 1), the implementation of measures based on the results of the review (sentence 2), and continuous assessment of success as well as the use of the results for further development (sentence 3). Suitable monitoring measures include, in particular, course evaluations, workload surveys, or graduate surveys, as well as statistical analyses of the course of study and examinations and student/graduate statistics. The measures to be implemented may be of a diverse nature and may, in particular, concern the aspects mentioned in Sections 11 and 12. To ensure efficient and sustainable implementation, clause 4 stipulates that the parties involved must be informed of the results and the measures taken, while ensuring compliance with data protection requirements.

https://www.Kultusministerkonferenz.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschlu-esse/2008/2008_10_16-Fachprofile-Lehrerbildung.pdf

Framework Agreements for Individual Teacher Training Programs

²³ Measures to recruit additional teachers and to structurally enhance teacher training, resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs dated March 14, 2024, available at

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Files/publications_resolutions/2024/2024_03_14-Recruiting-Additional-Teachers.pdf; Designing Additional Pathways to the Teaching Profession, Resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs dated June 13, 2024, available at

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2024/2024_06_13-Zusaetzliche-Wege-ins-Lehramt.pdf

Section 15 – Diversity, Gender Equality, and Compensating for Disadvantages

To ensure equal opportunity, it is essential that the university and its degree programs have sustainable and comprehensive strategies for addressing diversity, promoting gender equality, and supporting students in special circumstances, and that these strategies are also implemented within the individual degree programs. The university must specify which types of diversity are the focus of these efforts. Section 15 stipulates that these requirements must be reviewed during the evaluation.

Section 16 – Special Provisions for Joint Programs

Section 16 contains special provisions regarding the academic and content-related criteria for joint programs.

Paragraph 1, sentence 1 governs the corresponding application of the academic and content-related criteria listed there. Sentence 2 clarifies that for degree programs that meet the requirements of § 10, paragraph 1, sentence 1, only the academic and content-related criteria for degree programs (Part 3 of the Regulation) explicitly listed in § 16, paragraph 1, sentence 1 apply. The remaining subject-specific criteria for degree programs pursuant to Part 3 of the Regulation need not be met.

In accordance with Section 11, paragraphs 1 and 2, the intended learning outcomes for joint programs must be aligned with the corresponding level of the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area, as well as with the applicable national qualifications frameworks. These must include knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective discipline(s) (see B 2.1 and 2.2 EA). In accordance with Section 12(1), sentences 1 and 3, the structure and content of the curriculum must be designed in such a way that they enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes (see B 3.1 EA). The program's design and the teaching, learning, and assessment methods used must serve to achieve the intended learning outcomes (see B 5.1 EA). In accordance with § 12(2), sentence 1, and paragraph 3, it must be ensured that the staffing is sufficient in terms of both quality and quantity (qualifications, professional and international experience) to implement the degree programs (see B 7.1 EA). The material resources provided must also be sufficient and appropriate in view of the intended learning outcomes (see B 7.1 EA). In accordance with § 12(4), it must be ensured that the examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes correspond to the intended learning outcomes and that these are consistently applied by the partner universities (B 5.2 EA). In accordance with § 14, the workload and the average time required to complete the program must be monitored (B 3.3 EA).

Sentence 3 sets forth additional requirements arising from the political agreements of the

European approach.

Paragraph 1 further stipulates that the appropriateness of the admission requirements and the selection process must be assessed in light of the level and the academic discipline in which the program is situated (B 4.1 EA). The term “selection process” refers here to tests, interviews, and similar procedures customary abroad, and not to a selection process in the legal sense of admission regulations.

Paragraph 2 stipulates that the achievement of the learning outcomes intended by the program can be demonstrated (B 2.3 EA).

Paragraph 3 clarifies that relevant provisions of Directive 2005/36/EC²⁴ of the European Council and the European Parliament of September 7, 2005, on the recognition of professional qualifications, in its currently valid version, must be taken into account in the design and implementation, particularly in the area of regulated professions. This applies in particular with regard to specified minimum training requirements or common training frameworks (B 2.4 EA).

Point 4 stipulates that the program’s design, the teaching and learning methods employed, and the support provided to students must respect and take into account the diversity of the student body and their needs (particularly with regard to their potentially diverse cultural backgrounds) and must address the specific requirements of mobile students (see B 5.1 and B 6 EA).

Paragraph 5 ensures that, when applying the European approach at system-accredited institutions of higher education, the formal and academic criteria applicable to joint programs are taken into account as part of the quality management system.

Paragraph 2 extends the scope of application of the criteria and procedural rules of the European Approach set forth in §§ 10(1) and (2), 16(1), and § 33(1) to joint programs conducted in cooperation with higher education institutions outside the European Higher Education Area, provided that the non-European cooperation partners have committed to applying these principles in a cooperation agreement with the domestic higher education institution.

Section 17 – Concept of the quality management system of system-accredited higher education institutions (objectives, processes, instruments) and Section 18 – Measures for implementing the quality management concept of system-accredited higher education institutions:

Sections 17 and 18 contain special provisions for the procedures pursuant to Article 3(1)

²⁴<https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/de/pro/eu-berufsanerkennungsrichtlinie.php>

numbers 1 and 3 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, insofar as their subject matter is the review of internal quality management systems at higher education institutions. In doing so, the central requirements for a functional quality management system in teaching are defined. The specific implementation is left to the individual higher education institution, depending on the respective circumstances.

Section 17 – Concept of the Quality Management System at System-Accredited Universities (Objectives, Processes, Tools)

Paragraph 1 sets forth provisions regarding the assessment of the substantive requirements for a functioning quality management system in teaching. According to the first sentence, the existence of central educational objectives for teaching, which are reflected in the curricula, must be demonstrated. This refers to the description of binding educational objectives for teaching at the institution, on which faculty, institutional leadership, faculties, program directors, and student representatives have agreed in accordance with the institution's profile. This includes a fundamental clarification of the educational institution's self-image, interdisciplinary didactic guidelines, and, where applicable, basic qualification objectives.²⁵ A separate "teaching mission statement" is possible, as is its integration into the university's mission statement. The educational objectives must be reflected in the teaching profile of the individual degree programs, in terms of competency objectives and levels. According to sentence 2, the quality management system is an integral part of the overall strategy for implementing the mission statement; it must therefore fit seamlessly into the university's relevant measures with the aim of further improving the quality of education through a structured and sustainable development process. According to sentence 3, evidence must be provided that the quality management system is structured and implemented in such a way that it ensures, on a permanent and sustainable basis and regularly throughout the respective accreditation cycle, the implementation of the formal and subject-specific criteria for the individual degree programs as set forth in Part 2 and Part 3 (§§ 11 to 15). Sentence 4 lists the central elements of the quality management system for which decision-making processes, competences, and responsibilities must be defined and implemented within the system, namely

- Processes for establishing, reviewing, further developing, and discontinuing degree programs, and
- the procedure for the internal accreditation of degree programs in accordance with the formal and academic criteria set forth in Parts 2 and 3 (Sections 11 through 15).

All processes and procedures must be formally established and communicated university-wide. Sentence 5 clarifies that a system-accredited university, in its

²⁵ See the Science Council's position paper on "Strategies for Higher Education Teaching," April 2017, p. 16 ff., <https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/archiv/6190-17.pdf>

The quality management system must establish provisions regarding validity periods and deadlines. The periods defined in § 26 are maximum limits. In contrast, the reference to § 27 also clarifies that, in justified individual cases, a period longer than twelve months may be set or extended for the fulfillment of requirements. Sentence 6 clarifies that a system-accredited institution of higher education may establish shorter validity periods and deadlines for accreditation and for the fulfillment of requirements. Sentence 7 clarifies that if a system-accredited institution of higher education wishes to accredit study programs in bundles, it must establish internal procedures within its quality management system for the appropriate determination of the bundle size and composition.

Paragraph 2 regulates the formal requirements for the institution's quality management system and is based on the ESG²⁶. These include

- the development of the quality management system with the participation of all member groups of the institution, i.e., academic and non-academic staff and students, as well as the incorporation of external expertise, such as from professional practice, from (international) representatives of other higher education institutions, and from agencies with experience in quality management at higher education institutions in accordance with Standard 1.1 of the ESG for the development of the quality assurance strategy (sentence 1);
- Mechanisms to ensure the independence of quality assessments, particularly in the selection and appointment of reviewers and in internal university decision-making processes, in accordance with ESG Standard 2.4 on requirements for peer review experts (sentence 2, first clause);
- the definition of standard procedures for handling conflicts and the establishment of an internal grievance system, particularly for "internal" accreditation decisions, in accordance with ESG Standard 2.7 on complaints and appeals (sentence 2, second half);
- the existence of closed-loop control systems that ensure, in a structured, transparent, sustainable, and reliable manner, continuous improvement in the quality of education, in accordance with ESG Standard 1.9 on the ongoing monitoring and regular review of degree programs (sentence 3, first clause);
- the inclusion of all areas of activity directly relevant to study and teaching (including academic advising, application, admission, and enrollment procedures), examination administration, teaching (including any collaborations), examination systems, student services, human resources development, and continuing education in higher education pedagogy

²⁶ see footnote 11

(sentence 3, second clause);

- adequate and sustainable resources for implementing the measures and processes specified in the quality management system. This includes, in particular, sufficient staff for the design, implementation, and administration of the quality management system's processes, as well as adequate IT infrastructure, which is of particular importance for the necessary provision of meaningful data; see § 18(3);
- the regular review of the effectiveness of the quality management system with regard to the quality of studies and its further development, based on a continuous evaluation of the processes established within the system and a data-driven review of the results (sentence 4).

Section 18 – Measures for Implementing the Quality Management Concept of System-Accredited Universities

Paragraph 1 sets forth the key components of the quality management system. According to the first sentence, this includes regular evaluations of degree programs and the areas of performance relevant to teaching and studies (see § 17, paragraph 2, sentence 3, second clause) by students from within and outside the institution, external academic experts, representatives from the professional field, and graduates. They ensure that evaluations within the framework of the internal quality management system are implemented in such a way that continuous impetus for quality improvement is generated. For this, the regular involvement of external expertise is indispensable. In accordance with Standard 1.9 of the ESG (ongoing monitoring and regular review of degree programs), the following aspects in particular should be included in the evaluations: the relevance of the degree programs, changing societal needs, students' workload, study progress and degrees awarded, the effectiveness of examination procedures, students' expectations and needs, the learning environment, and support services. The results shall be made available to the university community in an appropriate manner, while ensuring compliance with data protection regulations, in order to establish the necessary transparency and acceptance. The second clause in sentence 1 clarifies that the institution may independently determine compliance with the formal criteria within the framework of its quality management system. In assessing the subject-specific criteria, however, the groups specified in § 18, paragraph 1, sentence 1, must be consulted.

Sentence 2 requires that, where action is needed, appropriate measures be taken and their implementation be reviewed.

Paragraph 2 clarifies that, in the internal accreditation of degree programs, the requirements for participation and consent set forth in § 25, paragraph 1, sentences 3 through 5, apply to

teacher training programs, teacher training programs with the combined subject of Protestant or Catholic Theology/Religion, Protestant theological programs leading to ordination, and other bachelor's and master's programs with the combined subject of Protestant or Catholic Theology. If the internal procedures provide for audit reports, the approval requirement pursuant to § 24(3) applies accordingly.

Paragraph 3 ensures that the data required for the development and implementation of the quality management system and for measuring the status of implementation as well as the effects of the measures introduced (see paragraph 1) are collected university-wide and on a regular basis. Depending on the institution's profile and the quality management system, the following data may be particularly relevant: performance indicators, student body profile, academic progress, success and dropout rates, student satisfaction with degree programs, available facilities and support, and career paths of graduates. When collecting data, care must be taken to ensure that the relevant stakeholders (academic and non-academic staff and students) are involved in the provision and evaluation of the data as well as in the planning of follow-up activities (see also Standard 1.7 ESG, Information Management).

Paragraph 4 consolidates the documentation and disclosure requirements for system-accredited institutions of higher education regarding internal accreditation decisions into a single regulation. Sentence 1 ensures that the institution comprehensively documents its internal accreditation procedures—as well as any measures taken in the event that action is required—and informs members of the institution, the sponsoring body, and the state in which it is located in an appropriate manner in order to ensure the necessary transparency. In doing so, data protection concerns pursuant to Section 29, Sentence 2 must be observed. Sentence 2 regulates the requirements for the duty of system-accredited higher education institutions to provide information to the public and the Accreditation Council. The aim is to satisfy the legitimate interest of the public—such as prospective students, current students, and employers—in relevant information regarding the quality assurance of the academic programs offered. As part of the amendment to the Model Statute in 2024, system-accredited higher education institutions are to be relieved of certain reporting obligations. To fulfill the publication obligation, the institution must comply with the following minimum standards: It enters the data regarding the (re)accreditation of the degree program into the Accreditation Council's database. In addition to basic information about the program, including the program profile, this includes the accreditation period and, in particular, any conditions imposed, the status of compliance with those conditions, the names of the evaluators involved in the internal accreditation process—in compliance with data protection requirements pursuant to Section 29, Sentence 2—as well as a brief summary of the quality assessment. Universities may optionally submit additional documents (e.g., expert reports,

Provide the rationale for accreditation decisions and a description of the institution's internal procedure for awarding the seal for publication in the Accreditation Council's database.

§ 19 – Cooperation with Non-Higher Education Institutions

Section 19 governs the conditions under which a higher education institution may engage in program-related cooperation with non-higher education institutions. A characteristic feature of such program-related collaborations is that degree programs or programs recognized as equivalent are conducted partially or even entirely outside the degree-granting institution, and that the collaborating educational provider is in an asymmetrical, subordinate relationship to the degree-granting institution. In the case of such a collaboration, the applicant pursuant to § 22, paragraph 1 of this regulation is always the institution. Collaborations with joint research institutions serving multiple higher education institutions are not covered by the provisions of § 19. Sentence 1 makes it clear that the formal and subject-specific criteria set forth in Parts 2 and 3 of this Regulation also apply to such degree programs. Sentence 2 lists the decisions that, subject to the university's ultimate academic responsibility for the degree program, may not be delegated by the university to a cooperating educational institution. The criterion "procedure for selecting teaching staff" refers primarily to professorial teaching staff. The definition of the standardized criteria is based on the corresponding recommendation of the German Science Council, "Assessment and Recommendations on Program-Related Collaborations: Franchise, Validation, and Credit Transfer Models," from 2017²⁷. Sentence 2 does not apply to collaborations with state-run teacher training colleges in the second phase of teacher training or to school practicum phases in teacher training programs.

§ 20 – University Collaborations

Section 20 governs program-specific cooperation between higher education institutions, unless, upon request by the participating domestic higher education institution or institutions involved in joint programs, the special provisions contained in Sections 10, 16, and 33 of this Regulation apply.

The list of reservations in § 19, sentence 2, applicable to non-university cooperation partners generally does not apply to cooperation between universities. However, the degree-granting university or universities are responsible for the implementation and quality of the degree program concept. Nature and scope

²⁷<https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/archiv/5952-17>

of the cooperation must be documented in a cooperation agreement between the higher education institutions.

The degree-granting institution or institutions are the applicants within the meaning of § 22(1) of this Regulation.

If a system-accredited institution of higher education engages in such program-specific cooperation, it may award the Accreditation Council's seal to the program, provided that it itself confers a higher education degree and ensures the implementation and quality of the program concept.

It follows from paragraph 3 that, to streamline procedures, higher education institutions may also cooperate at the level of their quality assurance systems, and that the organizational linking of multiple procedures is permissible in this context; a coordinated application by the cooperating institutions is required pursuant to paragraph 3, sentence 2. This option will be particularly relevant for smaller or, where applicable, private higher education institutions. The joint use of, for example, quality assurance service facilities is, in principle, conceivable for the purpose of optimizing the use of resources. However, a decision on system accreditation must be made by each cooperating institution of higher education. The Agency's proposed decision must be prepared accordingly.

§ 21 – Special Criteria for Bachelor's Degree Programs at Vocational Academies

Paragraph 1, sentences 1 and 2, set forth the requirements that individuals must meet in order to serve as full-time faculty members at a vocational academy. Sentences 3 and 4 list additional requirements regarding the quality assurance of teaching staff: 40 percent of the teaching at the vocational academy must be provided by full-time faculty members. Professors at universities of applied sciences or universities who teach at a vocational academy on a long-term part-time basis are counted toward the quorum for the proportion of full-time faculty in the curriculum. All requirements are based on the aforementioned resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs dated October 15, 2004²⁸ and must also be verified in the accreditation of degree programs at vocational academies.

Paragraph 2 sets forth the requirements for individuals who wish to work as part-time instructors at vocational academies, with the aim of ensuring the quality of instruction. These requirements are also based on the aforementioned resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs dated October 15, 2004. In the case of the specified courses, full-time instructors are also permitted, on an exceptional basis, to take on teaching duties.

²⁸ See footnote 2

Paragraph 3 sets forth additional requirements to be established during the accreditation process for degree programs at vocational academies, which arise from their unique staffing structure as well as the distinctive nature of the program, which takes place at various learning locations. These requirements are also based on the aforementioned resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs dated October 15, 2004.

Part 4 Procedural Rules for Program and System Accreditation

§ 22 – Decision of the Accreditation Council; Granting of the Seal

Paragraph 1 governs the essential procedural elements for program and system accreditation. In contrast to the procedure practiced prior to the entry into force of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation, whereby accreditation was carried out by the respective agency that decided on the accreditation, the State Treaty on Study Accreditation provides for a two-part accreditation process: Pursuant to Article 3, Paragraph 2, Sentence 1, Item 1 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, accreditation requires an application by the institution of higher education to the Accreditation Council, on the basis of which the Council decides on accreditation by means of an administrative act pursuant to Article 3, Paragraph 5, Sentence 4 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation. The administrative procedure thus begins at the time the institution of higher education submits its application to the Accreditation Council.

Pursuant to Article 3(5) of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, the Accreditation Council's decision includes a determination of compliance with the formal criteria under Article 2(2) of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, on the one hand, and the academic and content-related criteria under Article 2(3) of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, on the other hand. If these criteria are met, accreditation must be granted. This constitutes a binding administrative act within the meaning of Section 35 of the Administrative Procedure Act (VwVfG).

The Accreditation Council reviews compliance with the formal criteria on the basis of an audit report. The Accreditation Council reviews compliance with the substantive criteria on the basis of an expert opinion. Since these are recommendations from the Agency, the Accreditation Council is not bound by these assessments.

Paragraph 2 clarifies that the Accreditation Council's decision is made by means of an electronic notice. Pursuant to § 39 VwVfG, administrative acts must generally be substantiated. Sentence 2 is therefore declaratory. In the reasoning for the decision, pursuant to Article 3, Paragraph 4, Sentence 3 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, particular attention must be given to any deviations by the Accreditation Council from the recommendations of the expert opinion regarding the academic and content-related criteria.

Paragraph 3 incorporates Article 3(4) of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, according to which the institution of higher education is given the opportunity to comment prior to the final decision. To avoid delays in the procedure, the must be obtained from the

opinion to be obtained from the Accreditation Council in accordance with administrative procedural law is limited to those cases in which the Accreditation Council intends to deviate significantly from the recommendation of the expert report. The institution is free to attach a statement to the agency's report as part of its application. This takes into account the right to be heard, as expressed in Article 3, Paragraph 4 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation.

Sentence 2 also provides for a one-month deadline for submitting the statement. The deadline serves to expedite the procedure.

Paragraph 4 stipulates that, upon successful accreditation, the Accreditation Council shall award its seal to the accredited degree program or quality assurance system. The seal serves to promote transparency.

In the case of system accreditation, the institution is granted the right to award the Accreditation Council's seal itself for those degree programs that it has reviewed independently and that comply with the accreditation rules.

Accreditation with conditions does not result in a postponement of the awarding of the seal. This ensures that, in the case of conditions, a careful distinction is made between deficiencies that do not affect the accreditation decision itself and serious shortcomings that lead to a denial of accreditation.

The degree programs referred to in paragraph 5 are excluded by this provision from the possibility of inclusion in system accreditation and in alternative accreditation procedures. In principle, such inclusion appears conceivable while preserving the respective church participation rights; however, it would be procedurally disproportionately burdensome. This applies in particular to the detailed definition of the role of the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Degree Programs in Germany (AKAST) in such a procedure.

The requirement for approval by the competent ecclesiastical authority regarding decisions made by the Accreditation Council on fully theological and partially theological degree programs takes into account the fact that the expert opinion is of a recommendatory nature and is not binding on the Accreditation Council. This applies *mutatis mutandis* to decisions of the Accreditation Council pursuant to Sections 26, 27, and 28.

Section 23 – Documents to Be Submitted

Paragraph 1: The application for accreditation must be accompanied by a self-evaluation report from the institution and an accreditation report commissioned by the institution from an agency accredited by the Accreditation Council, consisting of an audit report and an expert opinion.

The self-report is the self-evaluation report required by Article 3, Paragraph 2, Number 2 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation.

In the case of initial system accreditation, the audit report refers to evidence that at least one degree program has undergone the quality management system (Section 3); in the case of renewal of system accreditation, it refers to evidence that all bachelor's and master's degree programs have undergone the quality assurance system at least once (Section 4).

Paragraph 2: In accordance with Article 5, Paragraph 3, Item 5 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, foreign agencies may generally be approved by the Accreditation Council. Accreditation reports commissioned from foreign agencies must be submitted to the Accreditation Council together with a German translation, unless they are written in German. This serves to streamline proceedings before the Accreditation Council.

Paragraph 3 stipulates, in the interest of a swift and smooth procedure, the obligation to submit applications electronically as soon as the Accreditation Council has established the necessary conditions.

§ 24 – Commissioning of an Agency; Accreditation Report; Site Visit

Paragraph 1: Pursuant to Article 3, Paragraph 2, Sentence 1, Number 4 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, the basis for the Accreditation Council's decision is an accreditation report that the institution of higher education has previously commissioned from an agency accredited by the Accreditation Council.

The commissioning of the agency is of a private-law nature pursuant to Article 3, Paragraph 2, Sentence 2 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation.

Sentence 2 addresses the specific provision that, for degree programs in Catholic theology, evaluation is conducted exclusively by the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Degree Programs (AKAST), in accordance with the aforementioned "guidelines"²⁹. Pursuant to Article 5, Paragraph 3, Number 5 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, the Accreditation Council approves agencies under the conditions specified therein. For agencies listed in the EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education), compliance with these conditions is "presumed unless proven otherwise." AKAST is listed in the EQAR. The Accreditation Council had already approved AKAST for the German-speaking region prior to its listing in EQAR. The agency thus effectively performs quality assurance activities in its field. For this

²⁹, see footnote 4

Accreditation Council is explicitly referenced in the text of the ordinance. However, this does not preclude re-approval after a reasonable period of time.

Paragraph 2: Program and system accreditation shall be conducted in accordance with Article 3, Paragraph 2, Sentence 1, Item 2 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation on the basis of a self-evaluation report submitted by the institution of higher education, which must include, at a minimum, information on the institution's quality objectives and on the formal and academic criteria for accreditation. The student body shall be involved in the preparation of the self-evaluation report. The report shall

– as is customary under the previous procedure – made available to the Agency and subsequently submitted to the Accreditation Council.

The formal and subject-specific criteria must be listed separately in the self-report. The report should not exceed 20 pages for program accreditation and 50 pages for system and cluster accreditation. This is intended to simplify the procedure and make it more efficient.

Paragraphs 3 and 4: Paragraph 3 stipulates that the review report is prepared by the commissioned agency. As a rule, this task is handled by the agency's administrative office. This relieves the experts on the review panel of the burden of assessing purely formal criteria. The panel of experts is responsible for preparing the expert opinion on the subject-specific and content-related criteria. To this end, it receives the review report in advance. Since the formal and subject-specific criteria may be interrelated, the review report is not binding on the panel of experts.

For teacher education programs as well as for fully theological and partially theological programs, the review report requires the approval of the respective competent authorities before being forwarded to the Accreditation Council. This takes into account the resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of June 2, 2005, "Key Points for the Mutual Recognition of Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Programs that Provide the Educational Prerequisites for a Teaching Career" (the so-called Quedlinburg Resolution)³⁰ as well as the aforementioned "Key Points."

Both the audit report and the expert opinion contain recommendations regarding the determination of compliance with the relevant criteria for the Accreditation Council; however, these are not binding. The accreditation report thus has the character of an expert opinion.

The provisions regarding the audit report and expert opinion do not contain any regulations on possible conditions, as these are to be considered only in exceptional cases in the future.

³⁰ See footnote 21

If, during the review of the formal criteria, the agency determines that these criteria have not been met, the institution must be notified immediately so that it may discontinue the accreditation process if a positive accreditation decision by the Accreditation Council is not expected. The report may contain proposals for conditions requiring changes to subject-specific criteria, limited to those deficiencies that do not justify a negative accreditation decision and can be remedied within a specified timeframe.

No further specifications regarding the content of the reports are provided. This does not preclude the report from containing, for example, recommendations for the quality development of the program or the quality management system that are designed to achieve a quality improvement exceeding the standards on which the Accreditation Council's accreditation decision is based and therefore cannot form the basis for any requirements. In addition, the report may also identify best-practice models within the degree program. Through the publication of the reports—and, where applicable, monitoring by the Accreditation Council—these models can serve as examples for other institutions of higher education. Both can thus contribute to future quality development.

A prerequisite for the Accreditation Council to process applications promptly is that the documents submitted follow a specified template. The ordinance assigns the task of developing a standardized template for expert opinions and audit reports to the Accreditation Council.

To minimize the workload for the agencies and the Accreditation Council, the scope of the expert opinion is limited, with differentiated requirements applying to program, bundle, and system accreditation.

Paragraph 5: Part of the evaluation process involves an on-site visit to the institution by the evaluation committee, which generally takes place at the institution's premises and during which the committee can form its own impression of the general conditions of the program to be accredited and engage in dialogue with the responsible faculty members, students, and the institution's administration. With regard to the mandatory spot checks required in system accreditation to verify the relevant characteristics of program design, program implementation, and quality assurance, as well as, where applicable, compliance with the criteria for the accreditation of regulated programs, two dates are generally necessary for system accreditation procedures. Digital or hybrid site visit formats and -elements are possible. However, there will be no deviation from the principle of an in-person on-site inspection. In designing the assessment procedure, the quality of the assessment is clearly the top priority. An exception to the principle of an on-site inspection may be considered, particularly in cases of force majeure,

where an on-site visit is impossible for reasons beyond our control (e.g., severe weather, strikes, pandemics).

For degree programs that are newly developed by the institution and are not yet offered, the review panel may, by mutual agreement, waive an on-site visit if such a visit would not add value to the assessment of the academic and content-related criteria based on documentation (concept accreditation). The same applies in the case of reaccreditation. In addition, there may be circumstances in which an on-site visit can be waived on a case-by-case basis due to special circumstances or characteristics related to the subject of accreditation, without compromising the quality of the evaluation. These include, for example, site visits for online or distance learning programs with a digital campus, or site visits involving experts who would otherwise be unable to participate. Hybrid site visits are also possible in these cases. Purely economic reasons, however, are not sufficient grounds for an exception. Deviations from the principle of on-site visits must be adequately justified and will be reviewed by the Accreditation Council during the application review process.

Paragraph 6 establishes the possibility of an optional “quality” or “quality improvement loop” between higher education institutions and agencies. This additional step gives higher education institutions the opportunity to address and resolve any issues related to the subject of accreditation prior to forwarding the application to the Accreditation Council. The implementation of this additional procedural step is documented in a transparent manner in the accreditation report.

§ 25 – Composition of the Panel of Experts; Requirements for Experts

Paragraph 1 specifies the minimum size of the review panel and its composition for program accreditation. This allows for larger review panels in complex procedures—such as bundled accreditations—provided that the proportional representation of the various groups is maintained.

Pursuant to Article 4, Paragraph 3, Sentence 2 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, the majority of the review panel must consist of university faculty members. This implements the requirement of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation that university faculty members must hold the majority of votes (weighted, if necessary) on the panel responsible for the evaluation. Furthermore, Article 3(2), sentence 1, item 3 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation is specified and implemented with regard to the parties to be involved in the accreditation process.

Sentence 3, first clause, stipulates, with regard to the special features of degree programs that confer eligibility for admission to teacher training, that a representative of the highest state authority responsible for the school system shall replace a representative of professional practice. This preserves the committee's expertise without further enlarging it. The regulation establishes minimum standards. The states may provide for more extensive participation requirements.

When evaluating the degree programs mentioned in the second half of the third sentence and in the fourth sentence, the participation of the relevant church authority is required. The specific implementation of this provision is based on the principle that, for both fully theological and partially theological degree programs, church ministry is the most commonly chosen field of professional practice overall. Therefore, it is natural for the churches to represent professional practice in this context. For religious education teachers, the civil service generally represents the professional career path. In this case, as with all other teacher training programs, representation for professional practice is provided by the highest state authority responsible for the school system. The church representative then joins as an additional member of the expert panel.

All evaluators must belong to a field of study closely related to the program to be accredited.

Sentence 5 stipulates that, for teacher education programs and the aforementioned theological programs, the issuance of the expert opinion requires the consent of the relevant representatives. This takes into account, on the one hand, the resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs dated June 2, 2005, "Key Points for the Mutual Recognition of Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Programs that Provide the Educational Prerequisites for a Teaching Career" (the so-called Quedlinburg Resolution)³¹. Since the accreditation decision has been transferred to the Accreditation Council by the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, the requirement for approval—without which the report cannot be submitted to the Accreditation Council—corresponds, on the other hand, to the intention of the aforementioned "Key Points ..."³², since the accreditation decision can thus only be made following a positive evaluation by AKAST and therefore not against its vote.

Paragraph 2: In the case of system accreditation, the composition of the review panel corresponds in principle to that of program accreditation. However, the minimum number of reviewers is, in view of the complexity and the

³¹ see footnote no. 21

³² see footnote no. 4

effort involved in system accreditation. The subject-specific requirements for the evaluators do not apply because system accreditation does not evaluate degree programs, but rather the institution's own quality assurance system. Therefore, evaluators are not required to have subject-specific expertise in a particular field.

The first sentence of paragraph 3 is intended to ensure that, in review panels exceeding the minimum size specified in paragraphs 1 and 2, university faculty members hold the majority of votes. This complies with Article 3, paragraph 2, item 5 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, which stipulates that accreditation procedures must be conducted with the participation of this group.

Sentences 2 and 3 stipulate that the majority of the members of the review panel must already have experience with the respective form of accreditation. This serves to enhance the efficiency of the procedure and increases the quality and acceptance of the review.

Paragraph 4: The review panel is assembled by the commissioned agency. When appointing individual reviewers, the agencies are bound by the procedure to be developed by the German Rectors' Conference in accordance with Article 3, Paragraph 3, Sentence 3 of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation.

Paragraph 5: Article 3, paragraph 2, sentence 1, item 3 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation requires the use of external and independent evaluators. According to items 1 and 2, therefore, persons who work at or study at the institution whose degree programs or quality management system are to be evaluated are excluded from participating in an evaluation panel. Furthermore, according to item 3, the conflict-of-interest regulations customary in academia, in particular those of the German Research Foundation (DFG), apply to the evaluators.

Paragraph 6: Before the evaluators are appointed, the institution is informed by the agency of the composition of the evaluation panel and is given the opportunity to comment. This significantly increases acceptance of the evaluation panel and the evaluation process within the institution and the degree program to be accredited.

§ 26 – Validity Period of Accreditation; Extension

Paragraph 1: The validity period for initial accreditation is uniformly eight years. From a legal standpoint, this constitutes a time limit within the meaning of § 36 VwVfG. This standardizes and significantly extends the accreditation periods of five years (program accreditation) and six years (system accreditation) that were customary prior to the adoption of the Model Statutory Regulation. This is intended to reduce the effort and costs associated with accreditation. In sentence 1, the start of the

The validity period is set to begin at the start of the semester or trimester in which the accreditation decision is announced, in order to avoid disadvantages for students who complete their studies in the semester or trimester in which the accreditation decision is made. In addition, this ensures that the semesters or trimesters align with the accreditation periods.

Sentence 2 governs the case of program accreditation, in which the program has not yet been launched at the time the accreditation decision is announced. In the case of program accreditation, the accreditation period begins with the start of the semester or trimester in which the program is first offered, but no later than the start of the second semester or trimester following the announcement of the accreditation decision. This ensures that the accreditation decision remains current and that a delayed launch of a degree program does not result in a disproportionately long period for reaccreditation.

In the first sentence of paragraph 2, the term “reaccreditation” is defined as a subsequent accreditation that follows immediately and without interruption after the validity period of an initial accreditation. The validity period of reaccreditation is also set uniformly at eight years, as opposed to the periods of seven years for program accreditation and eight years for system accreditation that were customary prior to the adoption of the Model Statute. The elimination of different reaccreditation periods serves to simplify the process and takes into account both the universities’ interest in legal certainty and the goal of continuous and reliable quality assurance. If an application is submitted in a timely manner, i.e., before the expiration of the accreditation period, the period is automatically extended for the duration of the administrative procedure, i.e., until the Accreditation Council issues its decision. This serves to avoid gaps in accreditation for the protection of graduates. Sentence 3 ensures that, for applications submitted well before the expiration of the accreditation period, the accreditation decision takes effect within a reasonable period of time.

Paragraph 3, sentence 1, governs the options for extending the validity period of accreditation. Item 1 contains provisions for situations in which a higher education institution seeks bundle accreditation or transitions from program accreditation to system accreditation. In these cases, the institution should be able to focus on preparing for the cluster or system accreditation and be relieved of the program accreditation of degree programs that will be covered by the planned cluster or system accreditation. Paragraph 2 introduces the possibility of deadline extensions in program and system accreditation in justified exceptional cases. This relieves the universities of the burden in an exceptional situation that lies wholly or partly outside their sphere of influence , . Reasons for a

Examples of cases requiring individual consideration include accidents and exceptional national or international situations (pandemics, floods, etc.). Planned personnel or structural changes in the degree program or in the administration do not justify an extension in individual cases. Furthermore, an extension of the accreditation period cannot be cumulative (e.g., an extension due to a bundled accreditation followed by one due to the preparation of a system accreditation), but is limited to a maximum of two years in total. In the case of a planned bundle accreditation, the number of degree programs for which the accreditation period is to be extended should be in a reasonable proportion to the number of those degree programs whose accreditation period is decisive for the new accreditation period to be set. This generally means: “the minority adapts to the majority.”

If the accreditation period for an accredited degree program expires at a time when the institution has already submitted an application for institutional accreditation to the Accreditation Council, the validity period may be extended for the duration of the administrative proceedings before the Accreditation Council plus one year (sentence 2). The option to extend the period by a further year is necessary to give the institution, in the event of a transition to institutional accreditation, the time required to evaluate the program in question according to the quality management system it has developed until the seal is awarded.

Sentence 3 addresses the special situation in which an accredited program is not to be continued by the institution beyond the accreditation period. Since reaccreditation for an expiring program would entail disproportionately high costs, the Accreditation Council may extend the validity period of the accreditation until the students have completed their studies.

Furthermore, the option available prior to the adoption of the model regulation to extend the validity period of an initial accreditation because a reaccreditation report was not completed in time no longer applies. The validity periods of accreditations have been standardized, so that if an agency is commissioned in a timely manner, there is no need for an exemption. Furthermore, compliance with deadlines should be reasonable within the framework of quality assurance measures.

§ 27 – Conditions

On the basis of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, higher education institutions are entitled to accreditation if and to the extent that the subject of accreditation meets the formal and subject-specific accreditation criteria. Accreditation is therefore a binding administrative act. It may be subject to an ancillary provision (condition,

reservation of revocation, requirement, or reservation of requirements) if this is intended to ensure that the legal requirements for accreditation are met.

Paragraph 1 stipulates that a deadline of generally twelve months shall be set for the fulfillment of a requirement. This deadline takes into account the fact that changes to degree programs or quality management systems often take considerable time to implement. In special cases, such as those requiring the conduct of an appointment procedure, an extension of the deadline may be granted upon request by the institution (paragraph 2).

Paragraph 3 clarifies that proof of compliance with the condition must be provided to the Accreditation Council that imposed the condition, and not to the agency commissioned to prepare the accreditation report. Confirmation from the agency that the condition has been met is not required; rather, this must be verified by the Accreditation Council itself. This serves to reduce costs.

§ 28 – Obligation to Report Changes

Paragraph 1: Since accreditation is a continuing administrative act and changes regarding formal or academic criteria may arise during the accreditation period, any significant changes must be reported to the Accreditation Council without delay. Significant changes may include, in particular, changes affecting the program name, standard duration of study, degrees awarded, program design, qualification objectives, profile, and content of the programs. A significant change may also occur when establishing specializations that result in substantially different competencies among graduates, or when an identical curriculum is offered in different delivery formats, at different learning locations, or by different partners.

The notification requirement enables the Accreditation Council to verify that its accreditation decision remains up to date and, in the event of significant changes, to adapt it to the new circumstances as necessary (e.g., by imposing a subsequent condition or revoking the accreditation decision).

Paragraph 2 clarifies that a notification of change submitted by the institution obligates the Accreditation Council to examine whether the material change affects the accreditation decision. The Accreditation Council's subsequent decision constitutes a declaratory administrative act that may be challenged by the institution in isolation. If the accreditation decision is revoked, it is appropriate to submit an application for re-accreditation. This clarification serves to ensure legal certainty.

§ 29 – Publication

Article 3, paragraph 6, sentence 2 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation provides that the decisions of the Accreditation Council and the expert reports shall be published in an appropriate manner. This is further specified in § 29, sentence 1, whereby, in light of the requirements of the European Standards and Guidelines, the accreditation report—and thus the expert opinions and audit report—is expressly included in the publication requirement in addition to the accreditation decision.

Publication on the Accreditation Council's website enables quick and timely access by interested students, prospective students, university members, and authorities.

Sentence 2 governs the handling of personal data. This includes, in particular, the names of the experts.

§ 30 – Bundled Accreditation; Sub-System Accreditation

Paragraph 1: The existing option to combine multiple degree programs into a single bundled accreditation during the program accreditation process remains in place. However, to ensure practicality and maintain the quality of the procedures, no more than ten degree programs should be evaluated by a single committee. If more than ten degree programs are pending program accreditation and are closely related in terms of subject matter, multiple bundles must be formed. Since this is a guideline, exceptions to larger bundles are possible only in atypical situations, provided that the quality of the evaluation is maintained. Reference is made to the possibility of adjusting the size of the review committee to the bundle accreditation in accordance with § 25(1).

Common structural features of several degree programs do not in themselves constitute a close academic relationship.

Sentence 2 clarifies that each degree program must meet the academic and content-related criteria, and that this must be assessed separately. This applies in any case to the formal criteria under Part 2 and the audit report.

With the first sentence of paragraph 2, the 2024 amendment to the Model Statute introduces a prior approval process for clusters comprising more than four degree programs—a process that was previously optional—in order to ensure legal certainty for the entire procedure. The institution must obtain this approval prior to submitting the application for accreditation, and it should be done as early as possible before the start of the accreditation process to ensure a smooth procedure. The aim is to ensure an appropriate evaluation at the level of individual degree programs even for larger bundles, and thereby to enhance the quality of the accreditation process.

ensure. This is intended to avoid any subsequent reviews that might otherwise be necessary. Pursuant to Section 30(1), third sentence, bundles should not comprise more than ten degree programs; however, exceptions remain possible.

Since combined degree programs require the evaluation of a large number of component programs, the academic proximity of which may vary significantly, sentence 2 stipulates that clusters comprising two or more combined degree programs must be approved in advance by the Accreditation Council.

Paragraph 3 allows, in exceptional cases, for the system accreditation of a subunit of a higher education institution responsible for organizing studies (e.g., continuing education institutes or individual faculties). The requirements in sentence 2 are cumulative. The option of subsystem accreditation serves primarily to facilitate higher education institutions' entry into system accreditation. Multiple, permanent partial system accreditations within a higher education institution are not the objective of this regulation. For this reason, the quality management system of the subunit must be embedded within the higher education institution (sentence 2, item 2).

Regarding Section 31 – Sampling

Paragraph 1: In system and subsystem accreditation, the review panel shall conduct a random sample.

Paragraph 2: Pursuant to paragraph 1, the spot check must demonstrate, using a degree program to be specified by the review panel, that the quality management system ensures that all formal and subject-specific criteria are taken into account during internal accreditation by the institution. In addition, the sample under paragraph 2 refers to formal and subject-specific criteria to be determined by the expert panel, compliance with which must be ensured by the quality management system under review.

Paragraph 3: The rules on participation set forth in § 25(1) apply analogously to the samples as well. See the rationale provided there.

Part 5 – Procedural Rules for Special Types of Degree Programs

§ 32 – Combined Degree Programs

Paragraph 1 defines the characteristics of a combined degree program. Such a program consists of two or more fields of study. Students or applicants may choose from several possible combinations. For the purposes of this regulation, the fields of study within a combined degree program are considered sub-programs.

Paragraph 2 clarifies that the subject of accreditation is the combined degree program. The criteria for accreditation (Parts 2 and 3 of this regulation) must be applied to the combined degree program as such, i.e., at the level of the disciplines (i.e., component degree programs as defined in § 32, paragraph 1) and not to any elective modules. This applies in particular to the requirements under § 12. The institution must have a coherent concept for the entirety of the combined program offerings that integrates the qualification objectives of the component programs. Feasibility must be ensured in principle for all possible combinations; in this regard, the criteria for assessing feasibility defined in § 12(5) must be applied. For example, the “extensive absence of overlap between courses and examinations” must be ensured.

Pursuant to paragraph 3, additional partial degree programs may be retroactively included in the accreditation of a combined degree program. The aforementioned requirements apply accordingly. The accreditation period for the combined degree program remains unchanged.

Paragraph 4 governs the format of the accreditation certificate for combined degree programs. In all other respects, the procedural rules of Part 4 apply in accordance with paragraph 5.

§ 33 – Joint Programs

The regulation contains specific procedural provisions for joint programs. It is based on the policy agreements regarding the European Approach (EA). Accordingly, the Accreditation Council’s accreditation decision in this context is structured as a decision to recognize an evaluation conducted by an agency registered with EQAR (see A 1, first indent, EA). Such a decision is required only in proceedings under Article 3(1)(2) of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation (program accreditation), since the application of the criteria relevant to joint programs at system-accredited institutions is ensured by Section 16(5) of this Regulation (see A 2. indent EA).

Since the European approach cannot be applied to fully theological and partially theological degree programs, the general regulations apply to joint programs in these degree programs.

Paragraph 1, sentence 1, stipulates that an evaluation may be conducted by an agency registered with EQAR at the request of the cooperating institutions of higher education, and that this decision may serve as the basis for an accreditation decision at the request of the participating domestic institution(s) of higher education. It is not necessary for this agency to have been approved by the Accreditation Council. To the extent that an agency approved by the Accreditation Council is involved, this takes place outside the scope of activities for which the approval

with the Accreditation Council. Furthermore, the scope of application is limited to study programs in which exclusively domestic higher education institutions and higher education institutions from participating states of the European Higher Education Area cooperate.

Sentence 2 stipulates that proof of compliance with the criteria for joint programs set forth in Sections 10 and 16 of this regulation is a prerequisite for a positive accreditation decision. The formal criteria for degree programs not explicitly mentioned in § 10(2) and the subject-specific criteria for degree programs not mentioned in § 16(1), sentence 1, need not be met. In addition, sentence 2 specifies the requirements for the evaluation procedure in detail.

Number 1 contains a requirement to notify the Accreditation Council prior to initiating a corresponding procedure. This is intended to ensure that, even before the procedure is opened, it is verified whether the scope of this regulation for accreditation decisions regarding joint programs applies.

Points 2 through 5 correspond to the requirements set forth in the European Approach regarding procedures for the external quality assurance of joint programs. This includes a self-evaluation report submitted jointly by the cooperating higher education institutions. This report must contain comprehensive information demonstrating compliance with the requirements applicable to joint programs. In addition, the report contains the necessary information on the respective national frameworks of the cooperating institutions that foreign agencies and experts may require to assess the context, particularly with regard to the program's positioning within the national higher education system. The self-evaluation report explicitly focuses on the specific characteristics of the joint program as a collaborative endeavor involving institutions from more than one national higher education system (Number 2; see C 1 EA). The site visit enables the review panel to discuss the joint program on the basis of the self-evaluation report and to assess whether the program meets the requirements for joint programs. The site visit therefore includes discussions with representatives of all cooperating institutions, in particular with institutional leadership and program coordinators and -coordinators, staff, students, and other relevant stakeholders, such as alumni and representatives from the professional field. Although the site visit is generally limited to a single location, the implementation of the program at all locations is taken into account in the evaluation (Section 3, see C 3 EA). The review panel prepares a report containing relevant evidence, analyses, and conclusions regarding the requirements for joint programs. The report also includes recommendations for the program's further development. In addition, the review panel issues a recommendation

for the decision. The conclusions and recommendations pay particular attention to the specific characteristics of the joint program. The universities are given the opportunity to comment on the draft version of the report, including to point out any factual errors (Section 4, see C.4 EA). The review panel, consisting of at least four members, combines expertise in the relevant subjects or disciplines—including the labor market and professional world in the respective fields—with expertise in the area of quality assurance in higher education. Thanks to its international expertise and experience, the review panel is able to take into account the specific characteristics of the Joint Program. The review panel as a whole possesses knowledge of the higher education systems of the participating institutions as well as the languages of instruction used. The review panel includes members from at least two countries participating in the consortium that offer the program. At least one student is represented on the review panel. The provisions in § 25, paragraph 3, sentence 1 (majority of university faculty members in the evaluation), paragraph 5 (exclusion of reviewers to avoid conflicts of interest), and paragraph 6 (right of the university to comment) apply accordingly (item 5, see C.2 EA).

Paragraph 6 stipulates that a positive accreditation decision based on a corresponding evaluation may only be made if the evaluation has been substantiated, any conditions have been met, and the decision is final. Thus, it is not the responsibility of the Accreditation Council, but rather of the agency entrusted with the evaluation, to ensure that the decision is comprehensible to the higher education institutions and that the follow-up process, including the fulfillment of any conditions, has been completed.

Pursuant to Section 7, the agency is also required to publish at least a summary of the report, including the evaluation and justification, on its website in English (see C 5, 7, and 8 EA). This is intended to facilitate international cooperation at the program level and in the area of quality assurance.

Sentence 3 clarifies that the Accreditation Council's decision on accreditation—which serves to recognize the evaluation—must also be issued in writing, must be substantiated, must give the institution an opportunity to comment within a one-month period, and, in the event of a positive decision, must be accompanied by the Accreditation Council's seal (Section 22, paragraphs 2, 3, and 4(1)). The accreditation decision takes effect at the beginning of the semester or trimester following its announcement, in accordance with § 26(1), first sentence. An application for reaccreditation must be submitted in a timely manner before the expiration of the accreditation (§ 26(2), first sentence). The same applies to accreditation decisions regarding joint programs: the institution

must notify the Accreditation Council of any significant changes (Section 28) and that the decision, together with the expert opinion, must be published by the Accreditation Council. The same applies to internal accreditation decisions by system-accredited higher education institutions regarding joint programs. Sentence 4 clarifies that the accreditation procedure under Section 33 is optional. Higher education institutions therefore have the option, even in the case of joint programs within the meaning of Sections 10(1) and 16(1), to apply for recognition of the accreditation decision by the Accreditation Council in accordance with the European approach pursuant to Section 33 or to obtain accreditation pursuant to Section 22. This is conceivable, for example, if the European approach is not implemented, or not fully implemented, in a partner country of the German higher education institution and national accreditation rules must therefore be observed. Furthermore, sentence 4 clarifies that the special rules of Sections 10 and 16 also apply if the accreditation decision is not made pursuant to Section 33. Sentence 5 stipulates that, in the case of accreditation and reaccreditation, the accreditation period is only 6 years in accordance with the European Approach, deviating from § 26(1) and (2), first sentence (see C 9 EA). Sentence 6 ensures, in the interest of transparency, that accreditation decisions issued on the basis of the recognition of an evaluation of joint programs are identifiable as such upon publication. The same applies, according to sentence 7, to the information on the study program in the degree documents (in particular the Diploma Supplement).

Paragraph 2 extends the scope of application of the criteria and procedural rules of the European approach set forth in Sections 10(1) and (2), 16(1), and § 33(1) to joint programs conducted in cooperation with higher education institutions outside the European Higher Education Area, provided that the non-European cooperation partners have committed to applying these principles in a cooperation agreement with the domestic higher education institution.

Part 6 – Alternative Accreditation Procedures pursuant to Article 3(1)(3) of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation

Section 34 – Alternative Accreditation Procedures

Paragraph 1: The provision in § 34 implements the option opened up in Article 4(4) in conjunction with Article 3(1)(3) of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation for alternative accreditation pathways to system and program accreditation, which are also subject to the criteria set forth in Article 2.

Paragraph 2 also requires that the alternative procedures comply with the formal and substantive criteria set forth in Parts 2 and 3. Furthermore, the requirements regarding appropriate academic participation, as stipulated in the State Treaty on the Accreditation of Study Programs—particularly in Article 3, Paragraph 2, Sentence 1—and in the Model Statutory Ordinance, must be observed in accordance with the ESG and the guidelines of the Federal Constitutional Court

in its decision of February 17, 2016. If teacher education programs and programs in Protestant or Catholic theology are also included in the alternative procedures, the participation and approval requirements set forth in the Model Statutory Ordinance apply. There is no obligation for higher education institutions to use an agency.

Paragraph 3: If a higher education institution intends to implement an alternative procedure, it must obtain prior approval from both the Accreditation Council and the competent state science authority of the respective state. This ensures that the state science authority is involved from the outset and that it also ensures compliance with the requirements for regulated professions. The basis for approval is a description of the proposed procedure; to assess its suitability for meeting the quality assurance requirements set forth in the State Treaty on Study Accreditation and the Model Statutory Ordinance, the Accreditation Council may consult external experts. The application to be submitted following approval must also be submitted to the Accreditation Council via the competent science authority.

In consultation with the state, the Accreditation Council may refuse to grant its approval only if the alternative procedure cannot ensure compliance with the requirements set forth in Article 2 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation and the principles governing appropriate academic participation. Furthermore, the alternative procedure should also provide additional insights into quality assurance that go beyond program and system accreditation.

Paragraph 4: The specific details of the procedure are set forth in rules of procedure.

Paragraph 5: The alternative procedure is limited to a maximum of eight years, meaning that shorter durations may also be provided for in these cases. As in the case of system accreditation, the institution of higher education is also granted the right, within the framework of the alternative procedure, to award the Accreditation Council's seal to the degree programs it has reviewed. The extension options provided for in § 26, paragraph 3, sentence 2, apply accordingly. Even within the framework of alternative procedures, care must be taken to ensure a seamless accreditation chain in the interest of the students.

The Accreditation Council oversees the alternative procedure, which must be evaluated by an independent, research-oriented institution well in advance of the project's expiration date as a prerequisite for continuing the procedure.

Part 7 – Miscellaneous

§ 35 – Link to Procedures Concerning the Eligibility of a Degree Program Under Professional Licensing Law

Paragraph 1 opens the possibility of organizationally linking accreditation procedures with procedures that determine the suitability of a degree program under professional licensing law, even within the framework of the new accreditation system. The provision is to be understood as an offer to the competent state authorities to use accreditation procedures to assess, in the interest of students, the suitability of a degree program with regard to access to regulated professions. To date, this option has been utilized particularly in the fields of auditing and social work/social pedagogy. In the future, this option could play a role within the framework of the planned academic training for health professions. The integration of these procedures requires a corresponding application from the institution of higher education.

Paragraph 2 clarifies that the external experts consulted regarding professional suitability serve solely in an advisory capacity and have no influence on the accreditation decision. The accreditation decision, on the one hand, and the decision regarding the determination of professional suitability based on professional regulations, on the other hand, are legally separate decisions. The latter is made by a separate notice issued by the relevant state authority to the institution of higher education.

This provision applies only to models that distinguish between academic study and practical phases (for example, for the purpose of obtaining state recognition). Single-phase models with integrated practical training periods remain unaffected.

§ 36 – Evaluation

The evaluation provided for in § 36(1) of the Model Statutory Ordinance (MRVO) pursuant to Article 4(1)-(4) of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation, as adopted by resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs on December 7, 2017, was conducted three years after the MRVO entered into force.

The new regulation allows for flexible structuring of future reviews and any necessary revisions to the provisions of the Model Statute. Changes may also be made on an ad hoc basis and may apply to individual provisions or a subset of them. At the same time, the amendment takes into account Article 15 of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation, which also provides for regular evaluations within a reasonable timeframe. In this respect, the amendment also serves to harmonize the two regulations as well as to simplify and synchronize future processes.