

Quality Report of the Accreditation Council Foundation 2024 Table

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1 Introduction: Quality Management at the Accreditation Council Foundation

The Akkreditierungsrat Foundation implements its quality management system in two areas that, as core operational processes, are highly relevant to the work of the Akkreditierungsrat: The first area encompasses evaluations, including structured evaluations conducted regularly as part of accreditation procedures, as well as a recurring external evaluation in accordance with Article 15 of the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation. This includes the following:

- The implementation and evaluation of the questionnaire tool for applications for program and system accreditation, which was established in the summer of 2021 (Chapter 2).
- The completion of the strategy process (2022–2024) and the development of a [mission statement](#) following the 2021 ENQA review (Chapter 3).
- The implementation of further thematic analyses in accordance with ESG 3.4 (Chapter 4).
- The survey to prepare joint thematic analyses by agencies and the Accreditation Council (Chapter 5).

The second area encompasses various feedback formats for all stakeholders in the accreditation system, who may also initiate a review of core operational processes on an ad hoc basis.

These include the “Quality Dialogue” (held once a year) and the “Accreditation Council in Dialogue” (held several times a year). These formats, which are aimed at all stakeholders in the accreditation system, are also supplemented by regular consultations with the agencies and participation in the Forum of System-Accredited Universities (Chapter 6).

2 Evaluation of Instruments and Processes

2.1 Structured evaluation of accreditation procedures

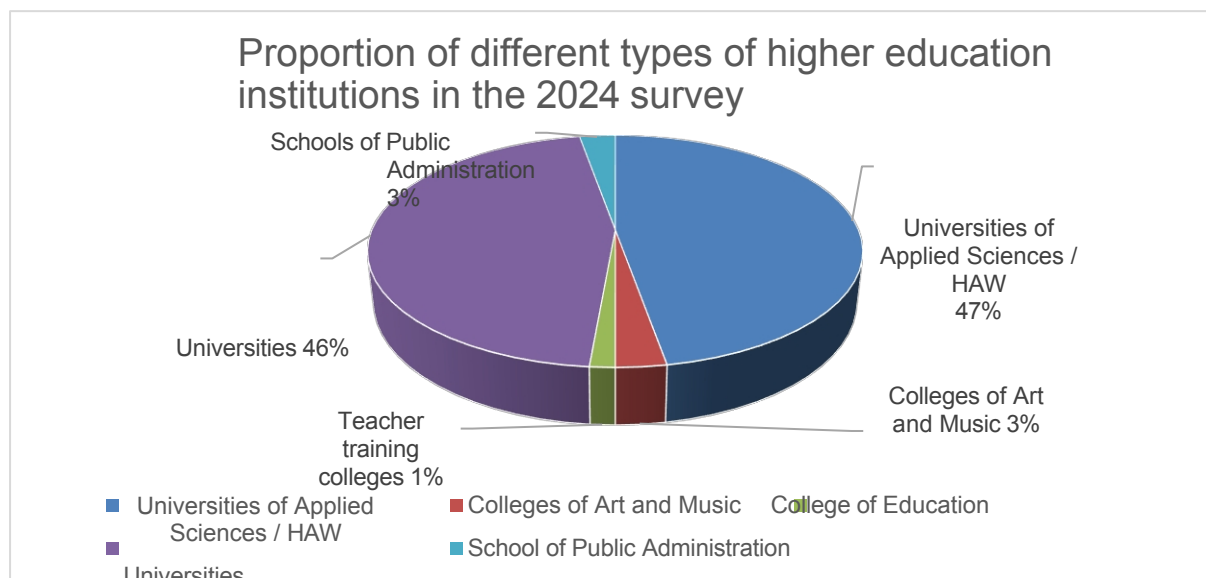
The feedback presented here was collected in anonymized form between January 15 and February 28, 2025, for procedures conducted in 2024 and is documented here by the Secretariat in aggregated form.

2.1.1 Universities surveyed and types of applications

A total of 72 institutions participated, with varying numbers of applications; therefore, some of the feedback relates to multiple application procedures.

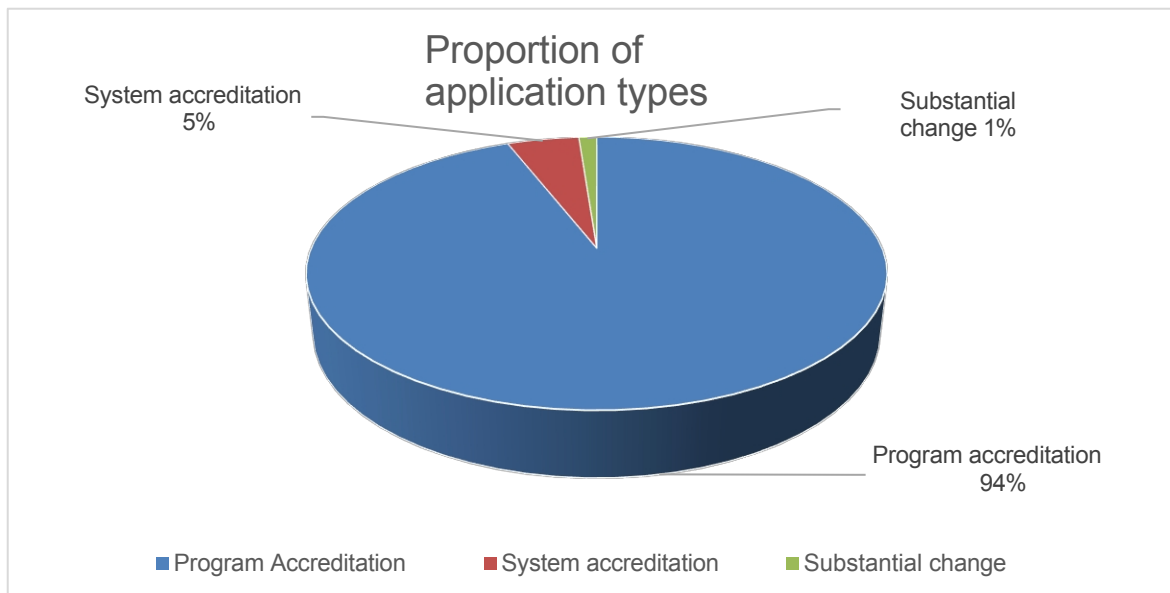
The participating institutions include 33 universities, 34 universities of applied sciences / HAWS, two colleges of music and art, two colleges of public administration, and one college of education.

Figure 1



The majority of applications processed by these institutions were for program accreditation (79 applications); in addition, there were four applications for system accreditation and one for a significant change.

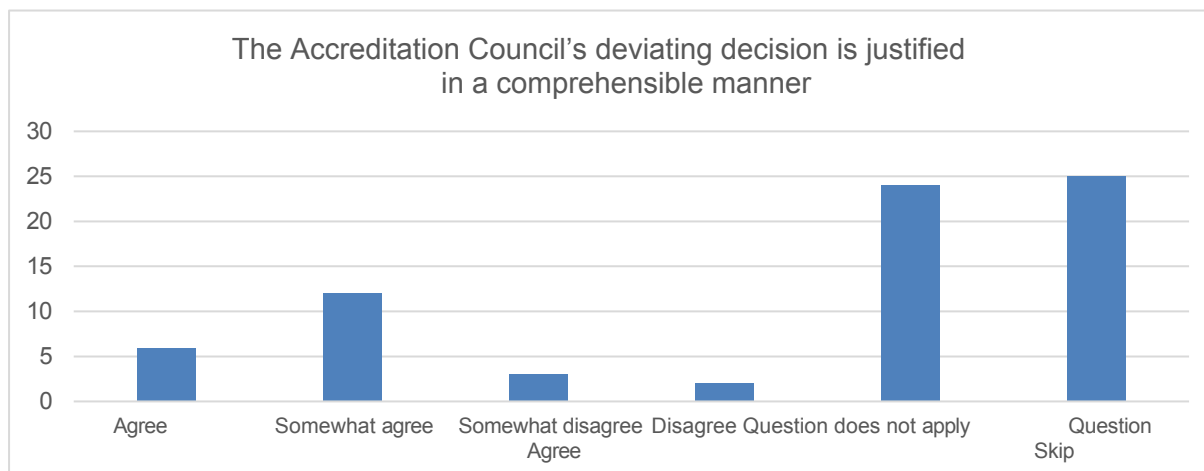
Figure 2



2.1.2 Analysis of the Surveys

The question regarding the Accreditation Council's deviating decision pertains to the imposition of one or more conditions as well as the removal of one or more conditions by the agency and/or the review panel. The background to this question is the transparency of the Accreditation Council's deviating decision relative to the original accreditation report.

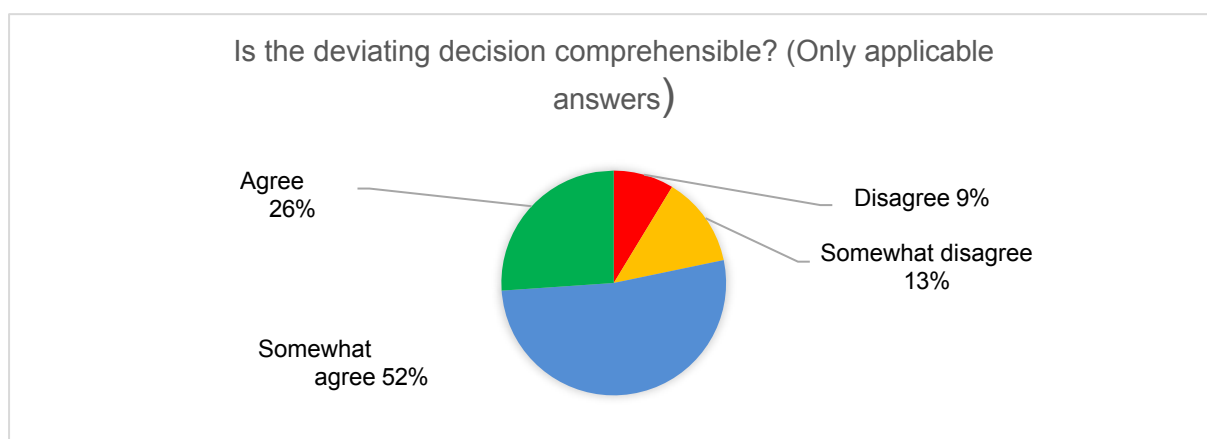
Figure 3



Here, 25% confirm the plausibility of the deviating decision (agree / somewhat agree). 7% of the surveyed universities disagree with the plausibility of the deviating decision (somewhat disagree / disagree). Approximately 68% skipped the question because it did not apply to them.

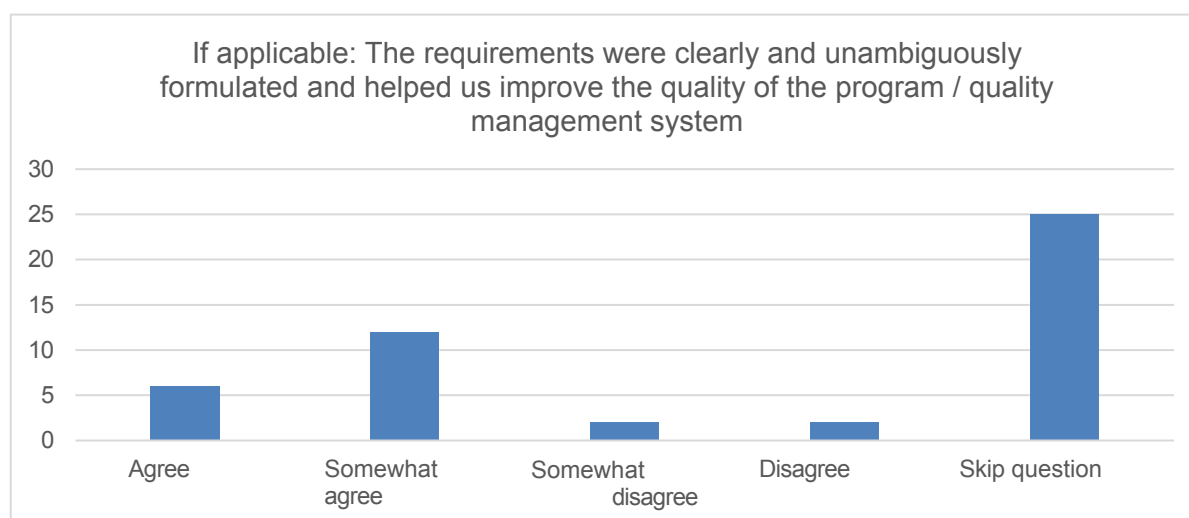
If participants for whom this question does not apply (since no deviating decision was made) are excluded, agreement on the plausibility of the Accreditation Council's deviating decision stands at 78% (

Figure 3a



This indicates predominantly positive feedback regarding the plausibility of deviating decisions made by the Accreditation Council.

Figure 4



The question regarding the clear and unambiguous wording of the requirements and their implications for the degree program or the institution's QMS is optional and delves deeper into the issue of the transparency and plausibility of the requirement for the institution.

Here, 39% of respondents rate the requirements as clearly formulated and helpful for the further development of degree programs or QM systems (agree / somewhat agree).

Only 5% of the surveyed universities disagree with the clarity and usefulness of the requirement (somewhat disagree / disagree). The vast majority—just under 53%—skipped the question because it did not apply to them.

This indicates a positive response to the formulation of conditions imposed by the Accreditation Council. For the majority of respondents, however, the optional question was not relevant.

If the participants for whom this question does not apply (since no conditions were imposed) are excluded, the agreement regarding the plausibility of the Accreditation Council's deviating decision stands at 82% (agree / somewhat agree).

Figure 4a

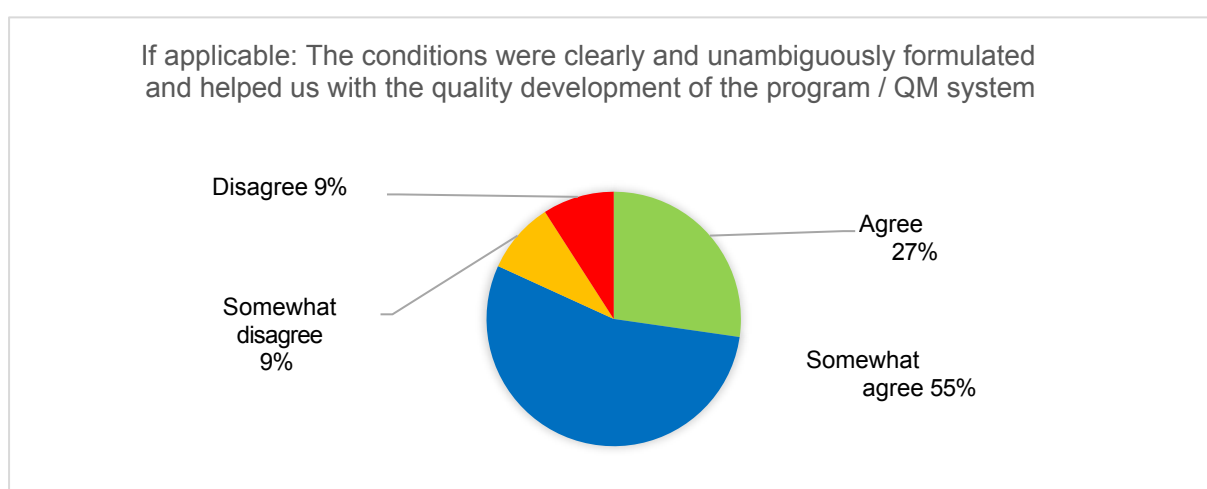
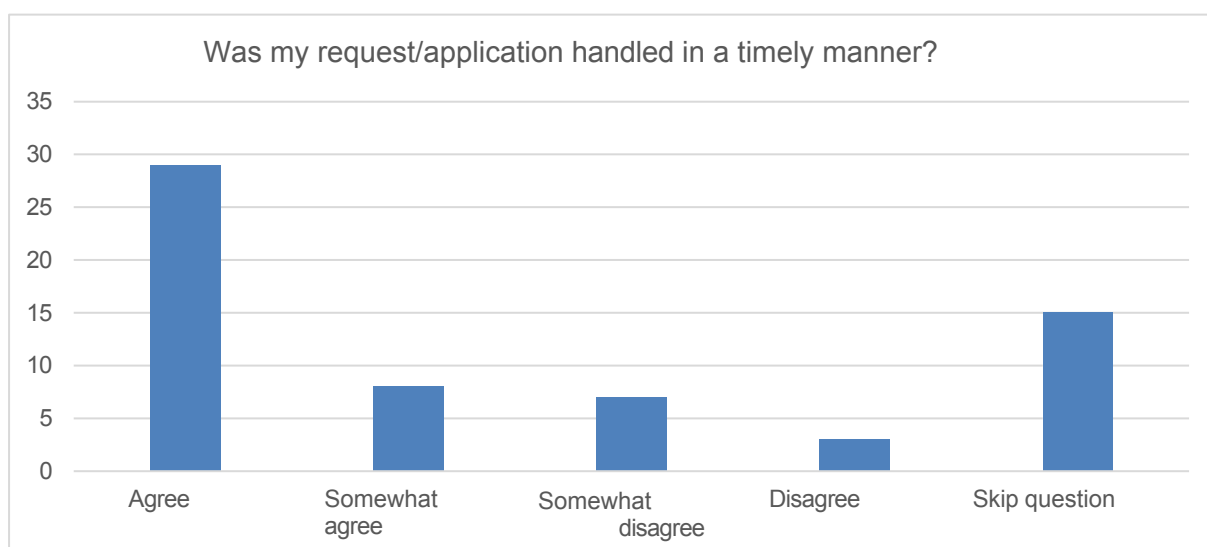


Figure 5

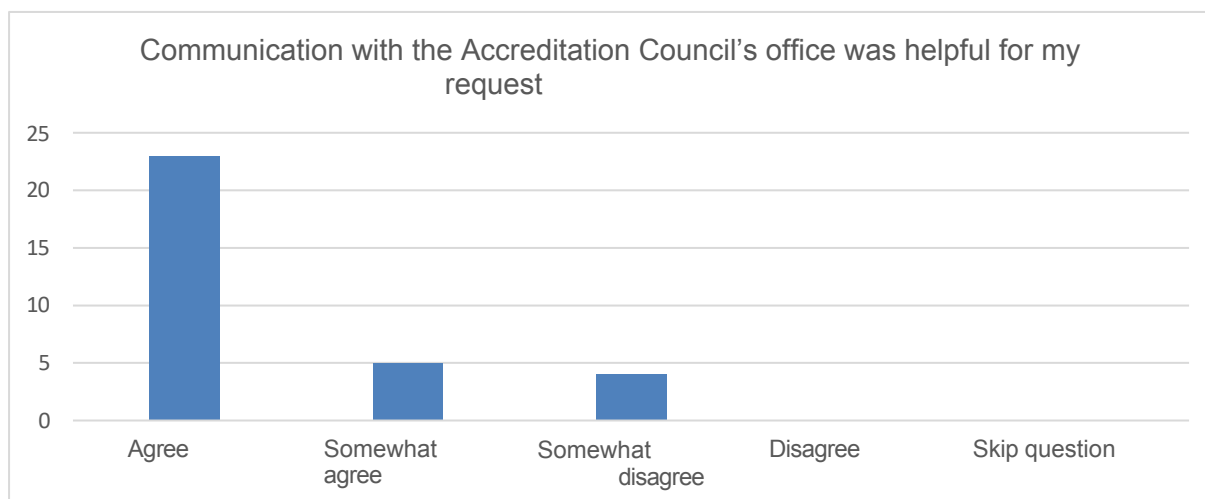


The question regarding the timely processing of the application refers to the organization of the application process by the Accreditation Council and the Secretariat.

Here, 60% of respondents confirm that their application was processed within a reasonable timeframe (agree / somewhat agree). Approximately 16% of the universities surveyed consider the time taken to process their application to be unreasonable (somewhat disagree / disagree). 24% skipped the question.

This results in overall positive feedback regarding the timely processing of applications.

Figure 6

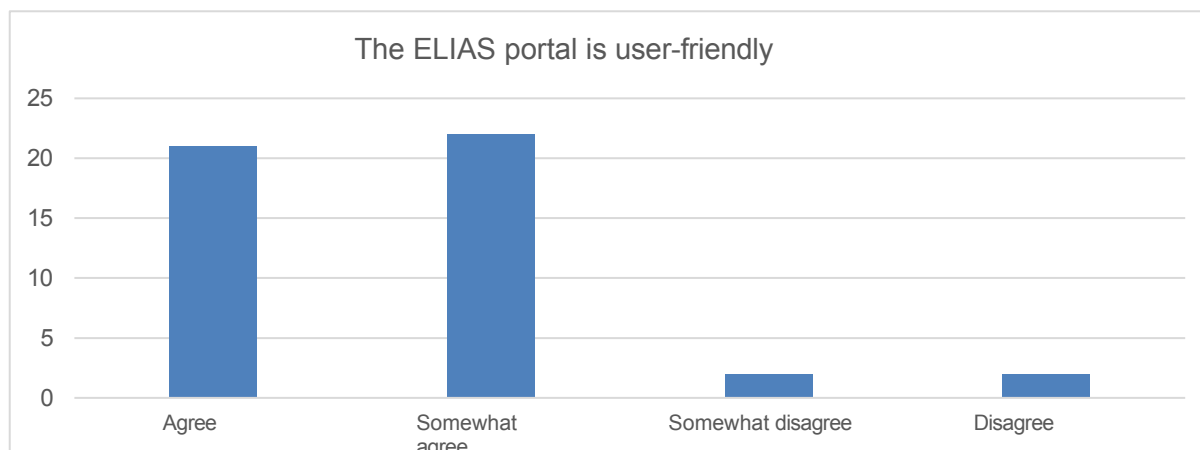


The question regarding communication with the administrative office pertains to support for the application and is an integral part of the administrative office's management of the application process. This communication encompasses the preparation, execution, and follow-up of the application.

In this regard, 88% of the surveyed universities stated that communication with the administrative office was helpful for their application (agree / somewhat agree). Only 12% of the surveyed universities considered the communication to be unhelpful (somewhat disagree / disagree). 0% skipped the question because it did not apply to them.

This indicates very positive feedback regarding the support provided by the administrative office to the applying universities.

Figure 7



The question regarding the user-friendliness of the electronic application processing system aims to assess the usability of ELIAS. This evaluates the technical implementation of a fast, reliable, and transparent application processing system.

92% of the surveyed universities rate ELIAS as user-friendly (agree / somewhat agree). In contrast, only 8% of the surveyed universities found ELIAS to be not user-friendly.

This results in very positive feedback on the user-friendliness of ELIAS from slightly more than two-thirds of the surveyed universities.

2.1.3 Classification of the results

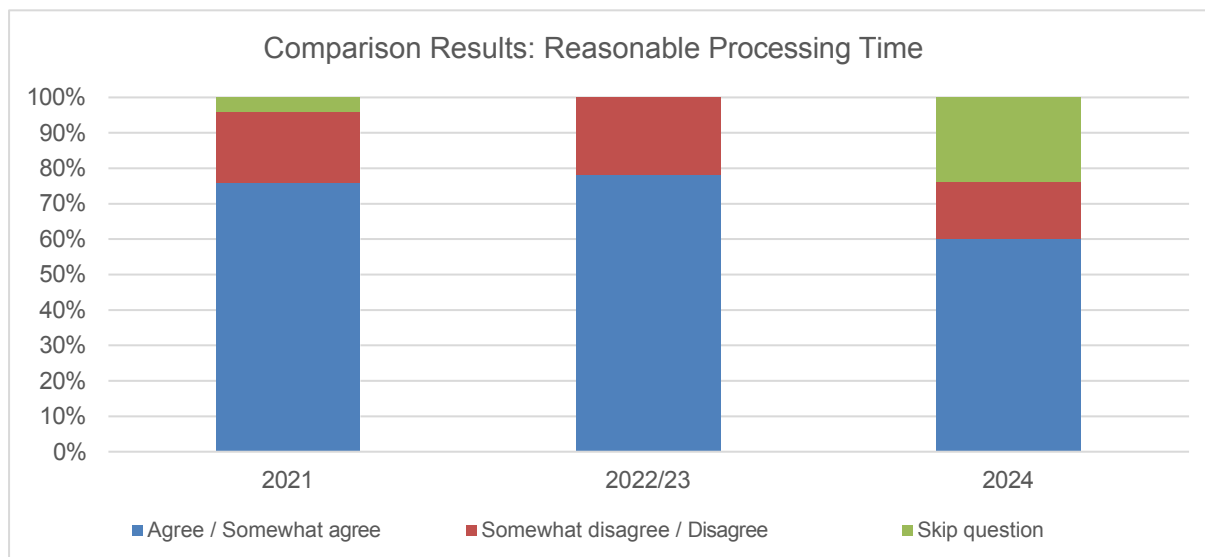
Compared to previous surveys of higher education institutions—which were presented in 2022 in the Quality Report for 2021 (Drs. 69/2022) and in 2024 for the years 2022 and 2023 (Drs. 12/2024)—an increase in participation can be observed. In 2021, 46 universities participated in the survey; in the subsequent survey for the years 2022 and 2023, the number was 49. Thus, the number of participants in the current survey has increased significantly (72, +23).

The responses from the institutions showed comparable figures. It is notable, however, that the assessment of application processing times has dropped slightly from a comparable level: in 2021, 76% of the surveyed institutions reported that their application was processed within a reasonable timeframe. About 20% of the surveyed universities rated the processing time for their application as unreasonable. 4% skipped the question because it did not apply to them.

In the survey for the years 2022/2023, 78% of the surveyed universities reported that their application was processed within a reasonable timeframe, while 22% of the surveyed universities rated the processing time as unreasonable. 0% skipped the question because it did not apply.

In the current survey for the year 2024, 60% of the surveyed universities reported that their application was processed within a reasonable timeframe, while 16% of the surveyed universities rated the processing time as unreasonable. 24% skipped the question because it did not apply.

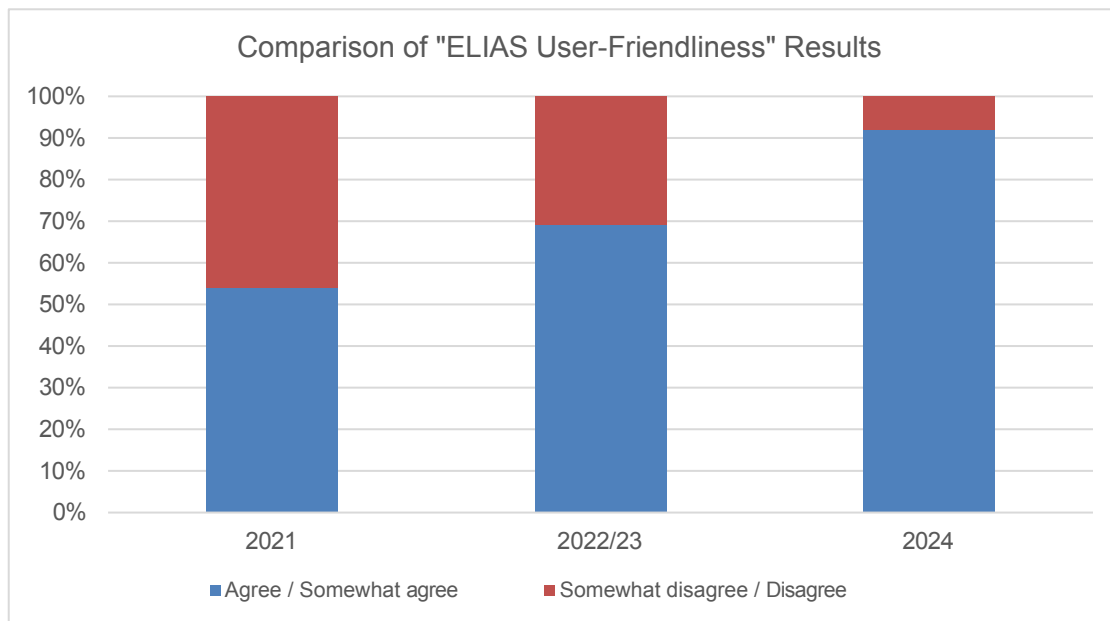
Figure 8



Given the long processing times between 2021 and 2023, it can be concluded that the assessment of processing times remains comparable and is considered appropriate by over three-quarters of respondents. For the year 2024, satisfaction has declined, while at the same time, a quarter of the surveyed universities skipped the question. It is also worth noting the improved rating of the user-friendliness of the electronic application processing system ELIAS. In 2021, 54% of the surveyed universities rated ELIAS as user-friendly. In contrast, 46% of the surveyed universities found ELIAS to be not user-friendly.

In the survey for the years 2022–2024, 69% of the surveyed universities rated ELIAS as user-friendly. In contrast, 31% of the surveyed universities rated ELIAS as not user-friendly. In the latest survey for 2024, 92% of the universities surveyed found ELIAS to be user-friendly. In contrast, only 8% of the universities surveyed found ELIAS to be not user-friendly.

Figure 9



This has resulted in a significant increase in positive ratings for ELIAS's usability.

3 Results of the 2022–2024 Strategy Process

At the December 2023 meeting (119th meeting), the Accreditation Council discussed the summary of the results of the strategy process following the 2021 ENQA review. The discussion led to a mandate for the working group to develop a *vision* and a *mission* based on the documentation during a subsequent follow-up meeting.

At its 120th meeting in March 2024, the Accreditation Council was presented with a *mission statement*—consisting of the guiding principles, vision, and mission already adopted in 2019—for deliberation.

Following an initial review of *the mission statement* at the 120th meeting, the members, alternate members, and permanent guests of the Accreditation Council were again asked via a circular in May/June 2024 to provide feedback on the revised concept.

At its 121st meeting (June 2024), the Accreditation Council approved the current version of the *mission statement*, which was published on the [Accreditation Council's website](#) in the summer of 2024.

4 Thematic Analyses and Data Analysis

In 2024, the ARDA project (AR data analysis) produced further publications and evaluations based on the Accreditation Council's database (ELIAS).

These include evaluations by federal state:

For the analysis “Accredited Higher Education Institutions by Federal State”:

<https://rpubs.com/MNE/akkhoch>

For the analysis “Current Initial Accreditations of Degree Programs by Federal State”:

https://rpubs.com/MNE/erstakk_stud

A thematic analysis on “Studyability and Academic Success in Self-Evaluation Reports” was also published in 2024.

For the analysis “Studyability and Academic Success in Self-Evaluation Reports”:

[Studyability and Academic Success in Self-Evaluation Reports](#)

5 Survey on the preparation of joint thematic analyses by agencies and the Accreditation Council

At the 116th meeting of the Accreditation Council (March 2023), the Accreditation Council discussed the preparation and implementation of joint thematic analyses together with the representatives of the agencies.

The background to this is provided by the ESG, Section 3.4, which stipulates thematic analyses as part of the standards and guidelines for quality assurance agencies. Accordingly, through their activities, agencies gain insights into degree programs and higher education institutions that are useful beyond the scope of individual procedures and can serve as a basis for structured analyses of the entire higher education system. These insights can contribute to the reflection on and improvement of quality assurance strategies and procedures in institutional, national, and international contexts.

Consequently, agencies such as the Accreditation Council, which are collectively listed as agencies in *the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)*, face the same challenge of conducting thematic analyses of the insights derived from their activities.

In preparation for a joint analysis by the agencies and the Accreditation Council—which could serve to identify needs and objectives for future thematic analyses—the Accreditation Council, together with the agencies, had decided to establish a working group.

The working group consisted of Dr. Hinsken from EVALAG and Dr. Petersen from AQ Austria, as well as Dr. Neuhaus and Dr. Grünes from the Foundation's office. Following the presentation of the working group's findings, the Accreditation Council, together with the accreditation agencies, commissioned the Accreditation Council's office at its 120th meeting on March 13–14 March 2024, the Accreditation Council, together with the accreditation agencies, commissioned the Secretariat of the Accreditation Council to conduct a survey among the committee members of the agencies and the Accreditation Council in preparation for the possible implementation of joint thematic analyses.

5.1 Implementation and Duration of the Survey

The survey was designed as an online questionnaire using LimeSurvey with free-text fields and was directed at the members of the committees of the Accreditation Council and the accreditation agencies (such as accreditation commissions and technical committees) as well as the executive boards. The goal was to generate as broad a range of opinions as possible from the stakeholders and stakeholder groups within the accreditation system, which would yield insights for joint thematic analyses.

The survey was launched on October 29, 2024, and ran through December 31, 2024. Participation in the survey was voluntary. The results will be analyzed in 2025 and presented in the upcoming quality report.

6 Feedback Formats

6.1 Quality Dialogue

The fifth edition of the Quality Dialogue took place on June 26, 2024. With the theme “Academic Feasibility, Dropout, and Academic Success,” the focus was on multifactorial constructs. Together with approximately 380 participants, these interrelated aspects were examined from various perspectives to shed light on the diverse implications of academic feasibility, dropout, and academic success.

The presentations from the keynote talks [“Academic Feasibility, Dropout Rates, and Academic Success – Findings and Blind Spots in Higher Education Research”](#) by Prof. Dr. Philipp Pohlenz, [“Academic Feasibility and Academic Success from a Student Perspective”](#) by Luft Kettenbeil, and [“What Characterizes a Successful Degree Program? The Perspective of the Business World”](#) by Julia Flasdick are available on the Foundation’s website, as are the presentations from the panels [“Challenges in Transitions of the Student Life Cycle”](#) (Panel 3), [“Competency Development and Expectation Management in All Phases of Study”](#) (Panel 4), and [“Different Subjects and Forms of Study – Different Forms of Evaluation”](#) (Panel 6).

6.2 The Accreditation Council in Dialogue

Since 2021, regular online events under the title “The Accreditation Council in Dialogue” have been held. Unlike the Quality Dialogue, these events are shorter in duration and focus on a narrower range of topics.

“Cooperation with Non-Higher Education Institutions”

On February 14, 2024, the sixth edition of the “Accreditation Council in Dialogue” series took place, with the topic of the day being “Cooperation with Non-Higher Education Institutions.”

The Model Statutory Regulation (which all state regulations follow in this regard) imposes high requirements on higher education institutions that offer a degree program in cooperation with a non-higher education institution. The requirements under Sections 9 and 19 of the MROV stipulate, in particular, that the institution of higher education must not delegate its core academic functions and that the cooperating educational provider must be in an asymmetrical, subordinate relationship to the degree-granting institution.

In practice, this raises questions of interpretation and demarcation. How can the non-delegable core responsibility of higher education institutions be structured in practice? What requirements do non-higher-education institutions face? Where do difficulties arise in the implementation of these degree programs, as well as in the accreditation procedures? And when does a cooperation fall under the provisions of Sections 9 and 19 of the MRVO, and when does it not?

Following a welcome and introduction to the topic by Prof. Dr.-Ing. Hans-Joachim Bargstädt, Chair of the Accreditation Council, the keynote speaker, Prof. Dr. Ralf Haderlein, Vice President of Koblenz University of Applied Sciences and a member of the Science Council's Franchising Working Group in 2015/16, delivered a keynote address.

In the subsequent panel discussion, Ms. Eva Pietsch, Managing Director of AHPGS; Dr. Kristin Große-Bölting from the University of Münster Professional School; Professor Ralf Haderlein; Dr. Andreas Keller, member of the Accreditation Council and Vice Chair of the Union for Education and Science (GEW); and Mr. Andreas Braun, an advisor in the Program Accreditation Division at the Accreditation Council's office, engaged with the approximately 230 participants.

"Alternative Procedures"

On November 14, 2024, the seventh edition of the "Accreditation Council in Dialogue" series took place, focusing on the "Topic of the Day: Alternative Procedures." As part of the 2018 realignment of the accreditation system, in addition to the program and system accreditation procedures, the option was created to conduct accreditation procedures as alternative procedures. This third procedural track offers universities the potential to develop innovative and flexible approaches to accreditation. Alternative procedures can thus serve as a catalyst for alternative approaches to external quality assurance beyond the standard accreditation procedures.

Building on this, the "Accreditation Council in Dialogue" provided information on alternative procedures and their accreditation and offered higher education institutions that implement such procedures the opportunity to share their experiences and initial findings to date.

Following a welcome and introduction to the topic by Prof. Dr.-Ing. Hans-Joachim Bargstädt, Chair of the Accreditation Council, Ulf Schöne, Head of the Alternative Procedures Division at the Accreditation Council's office, Prof. Dr. Folker Roland, President of Harz University of Applied Sciences, and Prof. Dr. Mathias Hinkelmann, Vice Rector for Teaching and Quality Management at Stuttgart Media University, gave short presentations. In the subsequent panel discussion, Christoph Back, student member of the Quality Advisory Board at Furtwangen University in the Alternative Procedure, Prof. Dr.-Ing. Hans-Joachim Bargstädt, Chair of the Accreditation Council, Dr. Imke Buß, advisor at the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research, and the Arts and deputy member of the Group of Federal States in the Accreditation Council, Dr. Sibylle Jakobowicz, Foundation Board Member and Head of the Department of Consulting, Evaluation, and Organizational Development at the Evaluation Agency of Baden-Württemberg (EVALAG), Dr. Frank-Peter Ritter, auditor and member of the expert panel in the accreditation process of the Alternative Procedure at the Stuttgart Media University, the Nürtingen-Geislingen University of Applied Sciences for Economics and the Environment, and the

Furtwangen University, and Prof. Dr. Ulrich Vossebein, Chair of the Quality Advisory Board at Furtwangen University under the Alternative Procedure, along with the approximately 200 participants. The event concluded with closing remarks by the Chair of the Accreditation Council, Prof. Dr.-Ing. Hans-Joachim Bargstädt.

7 Conclusion and Outlook

With the completion of the strategic process—including the further development of the Accreditation Council’s self-concept and the implementation of its tasks—as well as with the ongoing activities related to the thematic analyses, the Accreditation Council has analyzed and implemented key findings from the ENQA review.

These measures are supported by the results of the structured evaluations conducted following accreditation procedures. The most recent survey clearly continues the generally positive assessment of the applicant institution from previous surveys.

Furthermore, it is evident that the various feedback formats regularly conducted by the Accreditation Council and directed at all stakeholders in the accreditation system are well-established and widely utilized. In particular, the further increase in participation in the “*Quality Dialogue*” and “*Accreditation Council in Dialogue*” formats attests to a high level of acceptance and strong demand for the Accreditation Council’s dialogue initiatives.