Common Guidelines on External Quality Assurance at Universities

The German Rectors' Conference, Universities Austria, and the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) have agreed on guidelines for the organisation of Quality Assurance at their member universities.

- Responsibility for the quality of teaching, learning, research and support services lies with the universities themselves and they must be able to exercise this responsibility. The universities must also decide on how they intend to maintain and continuously improve the quality of the tasks they perform in the context of their strategic objectives. External, quality-driven assessment and review of the internal university quality assurance and development processes contributes to this goal.

- The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), recognised as binding within the European Higher Education Area, are decisive in the assessment and review of institutional quality assurance and development processes. The universities are free to choose any agency listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

- External quality assurance is carried out as an "institutional audit".[1] Building on the basis of the university's aspired profile and defined objectives, the audit assesses whether the implemented or conceived quality assurance and development structures and processes are suitable for achieving the chosen objectives, especially in teaching and studies.

- A positive audit serves as an important instrument in the competition between universities for prospective and actual students, since it serves as proof of high quality teaching and successful continuing development. Furthermore, it is a substantial element of accountability and justifies the state's trust in the universities regarding the autonomous introduction, enhancement or closure of degree programmes.

Universities Austria, the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS), and the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) are convinced that any external quality assurance complying with these principles will contribute to raising the universities' profiles and will promote mutual and reciprocal trust in the European Higher Education Area.

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[1] To be called "Institutional Accreditation" in Switzerland in accordance with the forthcoming act.