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## **Ordinance of the Higher Education Council on Accreditation within the Higher Education Sector (HEdA Accreditation Ordinance)<sup>1</sup>**

of 28 May 2015 (Status as of 1 January 2022)

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*The Higher Education Council,*

on the basis of Article 30 paragraph 2 of the Higher Education Act of 30 September 2011<sup>2</sup> (HEdA) and Article 2 paragraph 2 letter b number 1 of the Federal-Cantonal Agreement of 26 February 2015<sup>3</sup> on Cooperation in Higher Education,  
*ordains:*<sup>4</sup>

### **Section 1     General Provisions**

#### **Art. 1            Object**

This Ordinance<sup>5</sup> specifies the conditions for institutional accreditation under Article 30 HEdA and programme accreditation under Article 31 HEdA. It establishes:

- a. the admission requirements for accreditation procedures;
- b. the conditions for institutional accreditation and programme accreditation;
- c.<sup>6</sup> the procedure for first-time accreditation;
- d. the quality standards to be applied in the procedures.

#### **Art. 2            Study programmes**

The following are considered study programmes under this Ordinance:

AS 2015 1877

<sup>1</sup> Amended by No I of the Ordinance of 23 Nov. 2017 of the Higher Education Council, in force since 1 Jan. 2018 (AS 2017 7375).

<sup>2</sup> SR 414.20

<sup>3</sup> SR 414.205

<sup>4</sup> Amended by No I of the Ordinance of 23 Nov. 2017 of the Higher Education Council, in force since 1 Jan. 2018 (AS 2017 7375).

<sup>5</sup> Term in accordance with No I of the Ordinance of 23 Nov. 2017 of the Higher Education Council, in force since 1 Jan. 2018 (AS 2017 7375). The term is used throughout the entire act.

<sup>6</sup> Amended by No I of the Ordinance of 23 Nov. 2017 of the Higher Education Council, in force since 1 Jan. 2018 (AS 2017 7375).

- a. Bachelor's study programmes ranging up to 180 ECTS<sup>7</sup> points;
- b. Master's study programmes ranging from 90 to 120 ECTS points;
- c. continuing education study programmes ranging up to at least 60 ECTS points;
- d. study programmes whose accreditation under HEEdA is provided for in a special act.

### **Art. 3** Accreditation agencies

<sup>1</sup> An accreditation agency under this Ordinance is considered to be the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance as well as other Swiss or foreign agencies recognised by the Swiss Accreditation Council.

<sup>2</sup> Accreditation agencies implement accreditation procedures under Article 32 HEEdA.

<sup>3</sup> The requirements and procedure for recognising other Swiss and foreign accreditation agencies is defined by the Accreditation Council in its own guidelines.

## **Section 2 Admission Requirements for the Accreditation Procedure**

### **Art. 4** Institutional accreditation

<sup>1</sup> Higher education institutions or other institutions within the higher education sector shall be admitted for institutional accreditation if they meet the following requirements as attested by suitable supporting documentation:<sup>8</sup>

- a. they respect the principles of freedom and the unity of teaching and research;
- b. they correspond to one of the following types of higher education institution:
  1. tier-one university,
  2. university of applied sciences or university of teacher education;
- c. they meet, if applicable, the admission requirements for the first level of studies under Articles 23–25 and 73 HEEdA. Universities of applied sciences shall also fulfil the regulations on the structure of studies under Article 26 HEEdA;
- d. they have a quality assurance system in place (Art. 30 para. 1 let. a HEEdA);
- e. they are compatible with the European Higher Education Area;
- f. they have infrastructure and staff in Switzerland for teaching, research and services appropriate to their type and profile;

<sup>7</sup> ECTS = European Credit Transfer System

<sup>8</sup> Amended by No I of the O of the Higher Education Council of 26 Nov. 2020, in force since 1 Jan. 2021 (AS 2020 5929).

g.<sup>9</sup> ...

- h. they have the resources to continue their operations over the long-term (Art. 30 para. 1 let. c HEdA) and have taken measures to ensure that their students can complete a study programme;
- i. they are legal entities in Switzerland.

<sup>2</sup> Higher education institutions or other institutions within the higher education sector shall be admitted for the institutional accreditation procedure without an examination under paragraph 1 if they meet one of following requirements:

- a. they are already institutionally accredited under HEdA; or
- b. they were created under federal law before HEdA came into force; or
- c. they were recognised as authorised for contributions based on the University Funding Act of 8 October 1999<sup>10</sup> (UFundA) and the Universities of Applied Sciences Act of 6 October 1995<sup>11</sup> (UASA) before HEdA came into force (Art. 75 para. 2 HEdA); or
- d. they were already a public university of teacher education under cantonal law before HEdA came into force.

#### **Art. 5** Programme accreditation

<sup>1</sup> A study programme shall be admitted for programme accreditation if it meets following requirements:

- a. the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector running the study programme is institutionally accredited under HEdA; and
- b. a cohort of its students have completed the study programme.

<sup>2</sup> The same rules and standards apply to cooperation study programmes as for other study programmes. They are admitted for programme accreditation if the applying higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector:

- a. confers the title; and
- b. assumes responsibility for the quality of the study programme.

<sup>3</sup> Study programmes may be submitted for programme accreditation without prior verification of fulfilment of the requirement laid down in paragraph 1 letter b if accreditation is a prerequisite under special legislation for recognition of the given professional activity.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Repealed by No I of the O of the Higher Education Council of 26 Nov. 2020, with effect from 1 Jan. 2021 (AS 2020 5929).

<sup>10</sup> [AS 2000 948; 2003 187 Annex No II 3; 2004 2013; 2007 5779 No II 5; 2008 307, 3437 No II 18; 2012 3655 No I 10; 2011 5871. AS 2014 4103 Annex No I 1]

<sup>11</sup> [AS 1996 2588; 2002 953; 2005 4635; 2006 2197 Annex No 37; 2012 3655 No I 11; AS 2014 4103 Annex No I 2]

<sup>12</sup> Inserted by No I of the O of the Higher Education Council of 26 Nov. 2020, in force since 1 Jan. 2021 (AS 2020 5929).

### **Section 3 Requirements for Institutional Accreditation and Programme Accreditation**

#### **Art. 6** Institutional accreditation

A higher education institution or another institution within the higher education sector is accredited if it fulfils the quality standards under Article 22.

#### **Art. 7** Programme accreditation

The study programme of an accredited higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector under HEdA is accredited if it fulfils:

- a. the quality standards under Article 23; and
- b. any other standards that may be set by special acts.

### **Section 4 Effects of Institutional Accreditation**

#### **Art. 8**

<sup>1</sup> The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall be accredited in accordance with its application as a university, an institute within a university, a university of applied sciences, an institute within a university of applied sciences or a university of teacher education.

<sup>2</sup> The accredited higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall comply with the right to use reserved designations in accordance with Article 29 HEdA.

<sup>3</sup> If a university of teacher education is part of a university of applied sciences, the university of applied sciences is entitled to use the reserved designation for the university of teacher education in the context of institutional accreditation of the university of applied sciences.

### **Section 5 Procedure for First-time Accreditation<sup>13</sup>**

#### **Art. 8a<sup>14</sup>**

The provisions of this Section set out the procedure for first-time accreditation.

<sup>13</sup> Amended by No I of the Ordinance of 23 Nov. 2017 of the Higher Education Council, in force since 1 Jan. 2018 (AS 2017 7375).

<sup>14</sup> Inserted by No I of the Ordinance of 23 Nov. 2017 of the Higher Education Council, in force since 1 Jan. 2018 (AS 2017 7375).

**Art. 9** General provisions

<sup>1</sup> The object of the accreditation procedure is the quality assurance system of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

<sup>2</sup> Taking into account their organisational characteristics, higher education institutions or other institutions within the higher education sector shall include in the accreditation procedure all representative groups of the institution, particularly students, mid-level faculty staff, professors and administrative and technical staff.

<sup>3</sup> Results of external quality assessments may be taken into account if they are no more than three years old.

<sup>4</sup> A Bachelor's study programme may be accredited with the corresponding consecutive Master's study programme in the same procedure.

<sup>5</sup> Accreditation procedures under HEdA may be carried out with the procedures of other accreditation agencies or organisations if all the quality standards of this Ordinance are thereby taken into consideration.

<sup>6</sup> The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector selects an agency from agencies recognised by the Accreditation Council to implement institutional or programme accreditation.

<sup>7</sup> It chooses one of the official languages of the Swiss Confederation as the language to be used in the procedure. It may submit documents drafted in the language chosen for the procedure or documents drafted in English.<sup>15</sup>

**Art. 10** Filing of the application and decision on admission

<sup>1</sup> For institutional accreditation, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall file a well-founded application to the Accreditation Council. If the requirements are fulfilled in accordance with Article 4, the Accreditation Council decides on admission and transmits the application to the accreditation agency for the assessment. If the requirements are not fulfilled, the Accreditation Council makes a non-admission decision.

<sup>2</sup> For programme accreditation, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall file a well-founded application to the accreditation agency. If the requirements are fulfilled in accordance with Article 5, the accreditation agency decides on admission. If the conditions are not fulfilled, the accreditation agency makes a non-admission decision. In both cases it shall notify the Accreditation Council.

<sup>3</sup> For accreditation and renewal of accreditation the application shall be filed in good time so that the decision can be made before the accreditation or transitional period can expire (Art. 75 HEdA).

<sup>15</sup> Inserted by No I of the O of the Higher Education Council of 26 Nov. 2020, in force since 1 Jan. 2021 (AS 2020 5929).