



Agentur für
Qualitätssicherung
und Akkreditierung
Austria



Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria – AQ Austria

CEENQA Bi-Monthly Meeting

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Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria

Content

Higher Education in Austria

External Quality Assurance in Austria & AQ Austria

AQ Austria: principles, set up, structure, scope of tasks

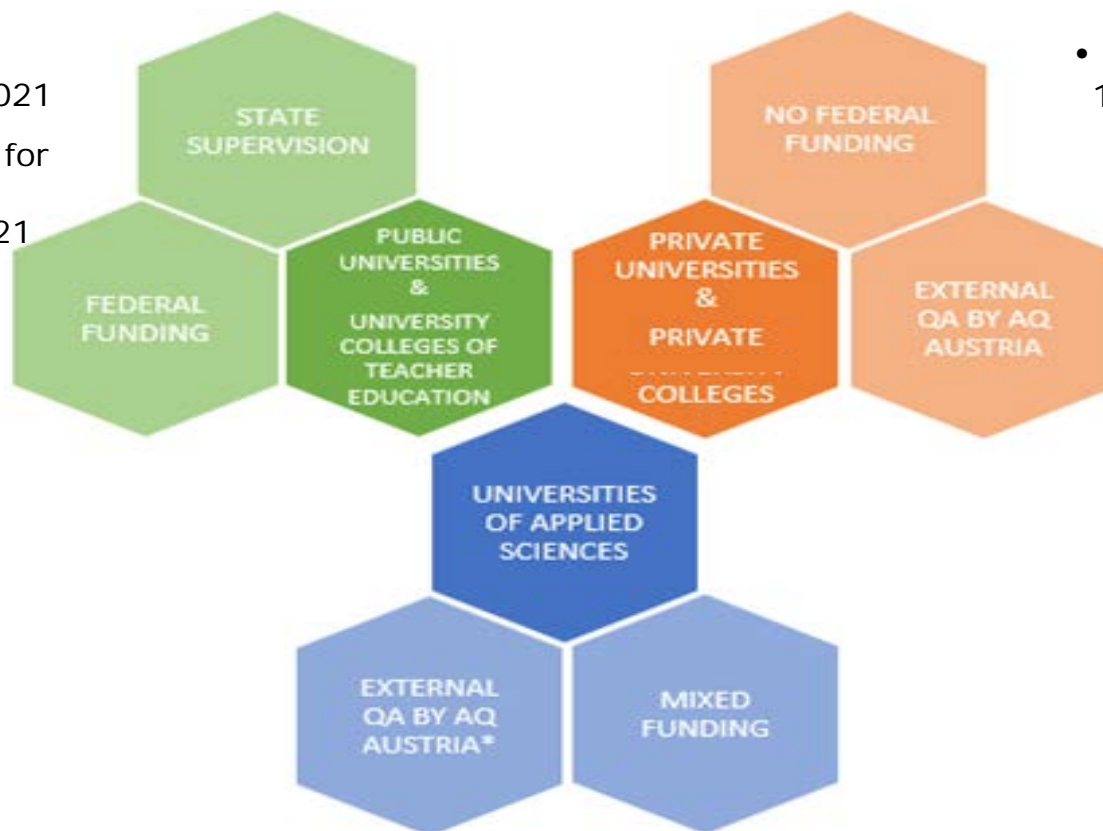
AQ Austria: procedures



Higher Education in Austria

Higher Education in Austria

- 22 Public Universities;
268,420 students in 2021
- 14 University Colleges for
Teacher Training;
16,526 students in 2021



- 16 Private Universities;
13,963 students in 2021

- 21 Universities of Applied Sciences;
2021: 58,735 students

For more information see
[BMBWF uni: data Higher Education statistics](#)
[BMBWF Higher Education system](#)



External Quality Assurance in Austria & AQ Austria

External Quality Assurance until 2012

Different agencies & different approaches

- **Fachhochschul-Council (FHR)**: Accreditation and supervision of the Universities of Applied Sciences since 1993
- **Accreditation Council (ÖAR)**: Accreditation and supervision of Private Universities since 1999
- **Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA)**: Public Universities could voluntarily get Quality Audits since 2004

2012 AQ Austria is founded on the basis of merger of the three predecessor organisations, as a result of a legal reform.

Major reform in 2012: The HS-QSG

Law on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Hochschul-Qualitätssicherungsgesetz HS-QSG):

- **AQ Austria:** established as part of a reorganisation as an independent institution and legal entity under public law responsible for external QA in the entire Austrian Higher Education sector.
- **Principles and procedures:** addressing all Higher education institutions except Teacher training colleges
- **Notification** of Cross-Border Degree Programmes



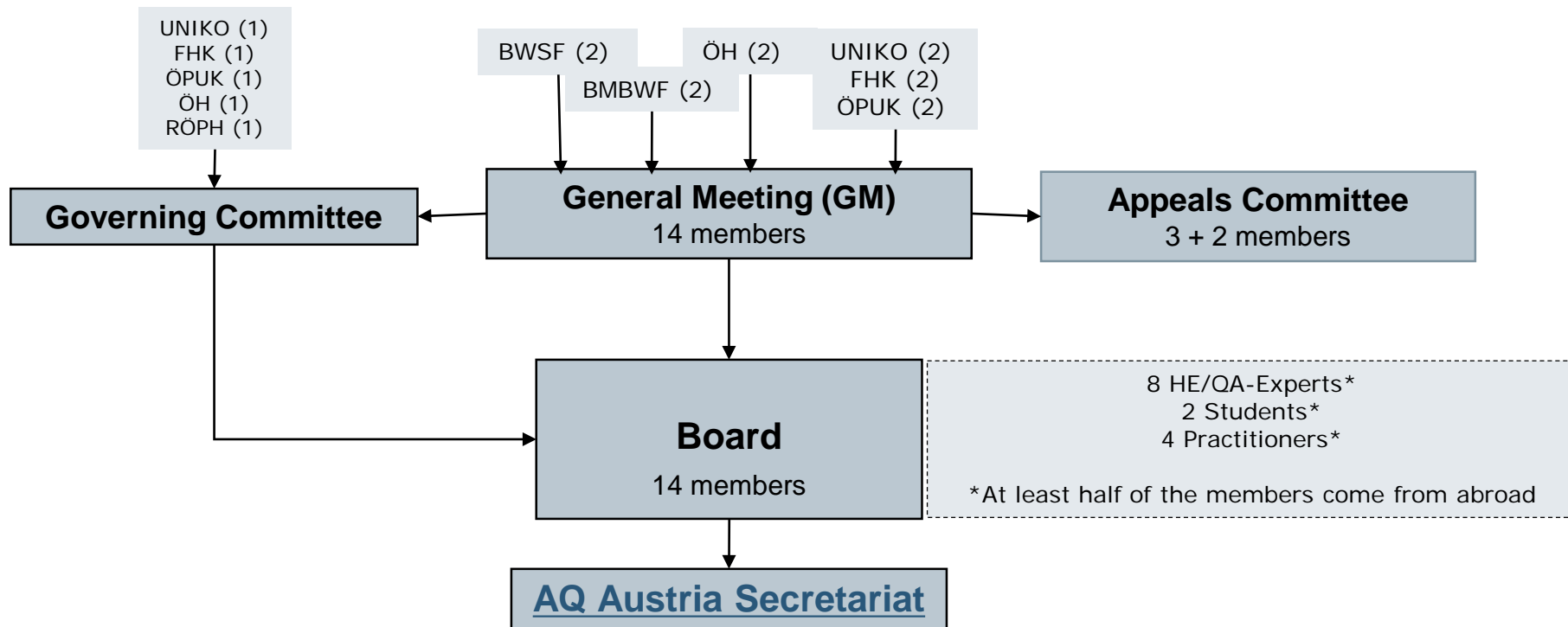
AQ Austria: principles & setup, structure, scope of tasks

AQ Austria: principles & setup

Core principles in accordance with ESG:

- **Legal foundation:** organisational setup and type of procedures defined but not standards and criteria
- **Independence:** in particular as regards standards, procedures and decisions
- **Stakeholder Involvement:** within the governance of AQ Austria
- **European / International activity:** international accreditations, ERASMUS+ projects, member of CEENQA, ENQA, EQAR, BFUG, etc., and foreign experts in the Board of AQ Austria as well as within the peer-review procedures

AQ Austria: structure



BWSF – Advisory Council for Economic and Social Affairs
 BMBWF – Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research
 ÖH – Austrian National Union of Students
 RÖPH – Rectors Conference of Austrian University Colleges of Teacher Education

UNIKO – Public Universities Austria
 FHK – Austrian Association of Universities of Applied Sciences
 ÖPUK – Austrian Private Universities' Conference

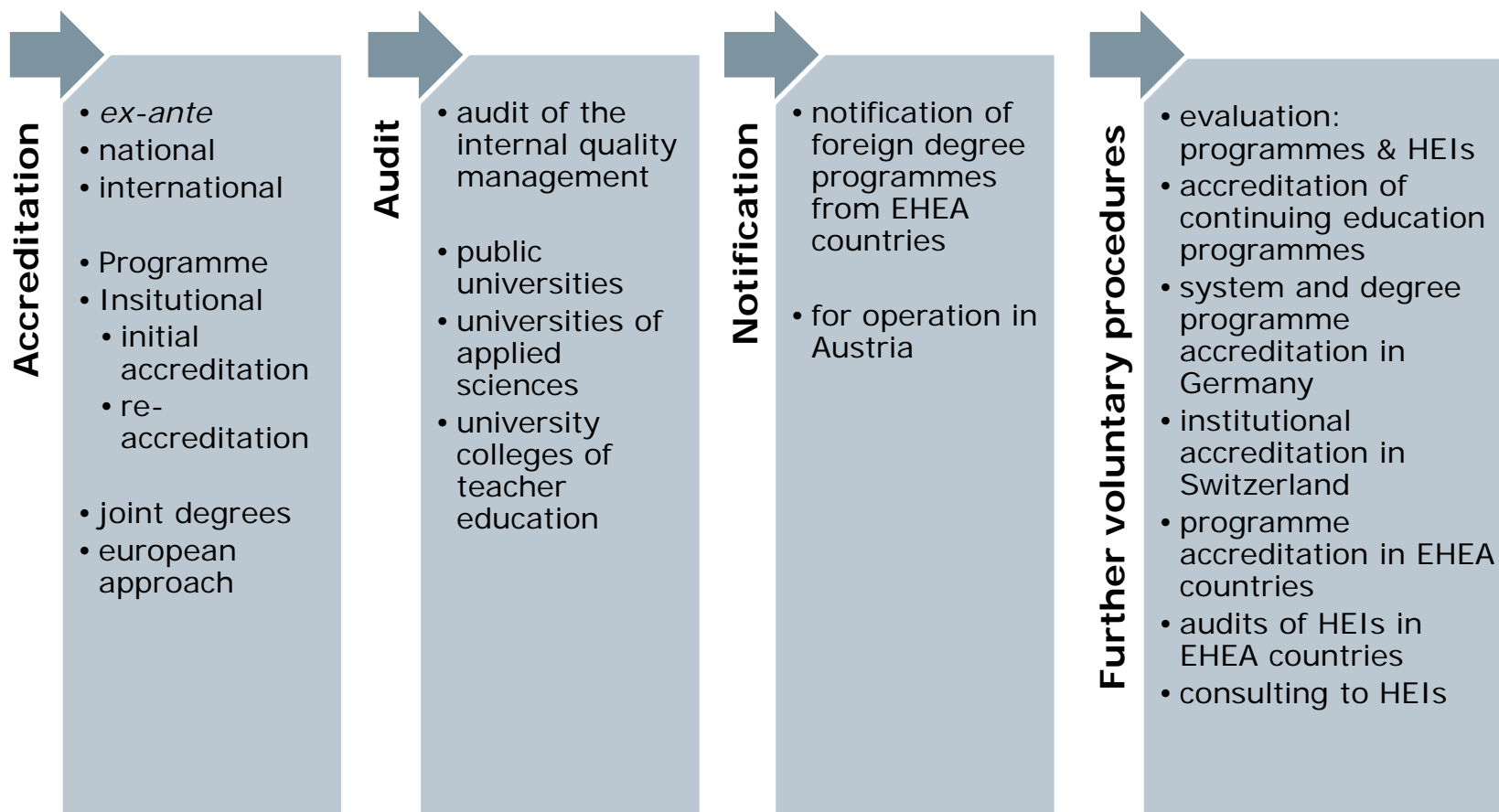
AQ Austria: scope of tasks

- **Higher education institutions** are autonomous, main responsibility for quality
- **External quality assurance** is necessity, added value & aims at quality development
- **Cooperation = communication & reliability**
- **Tasks:**
 - development and implementation of external quality assurance procedures
 - audit and accreditation procedures, according to national and international standards
 - supervision of accredited HEI and degree programmes regarding accreditation requirements
 - studies and system analyses as well as information, advice and consultancy
 - international cooperation and notification of cross-border degree programmes



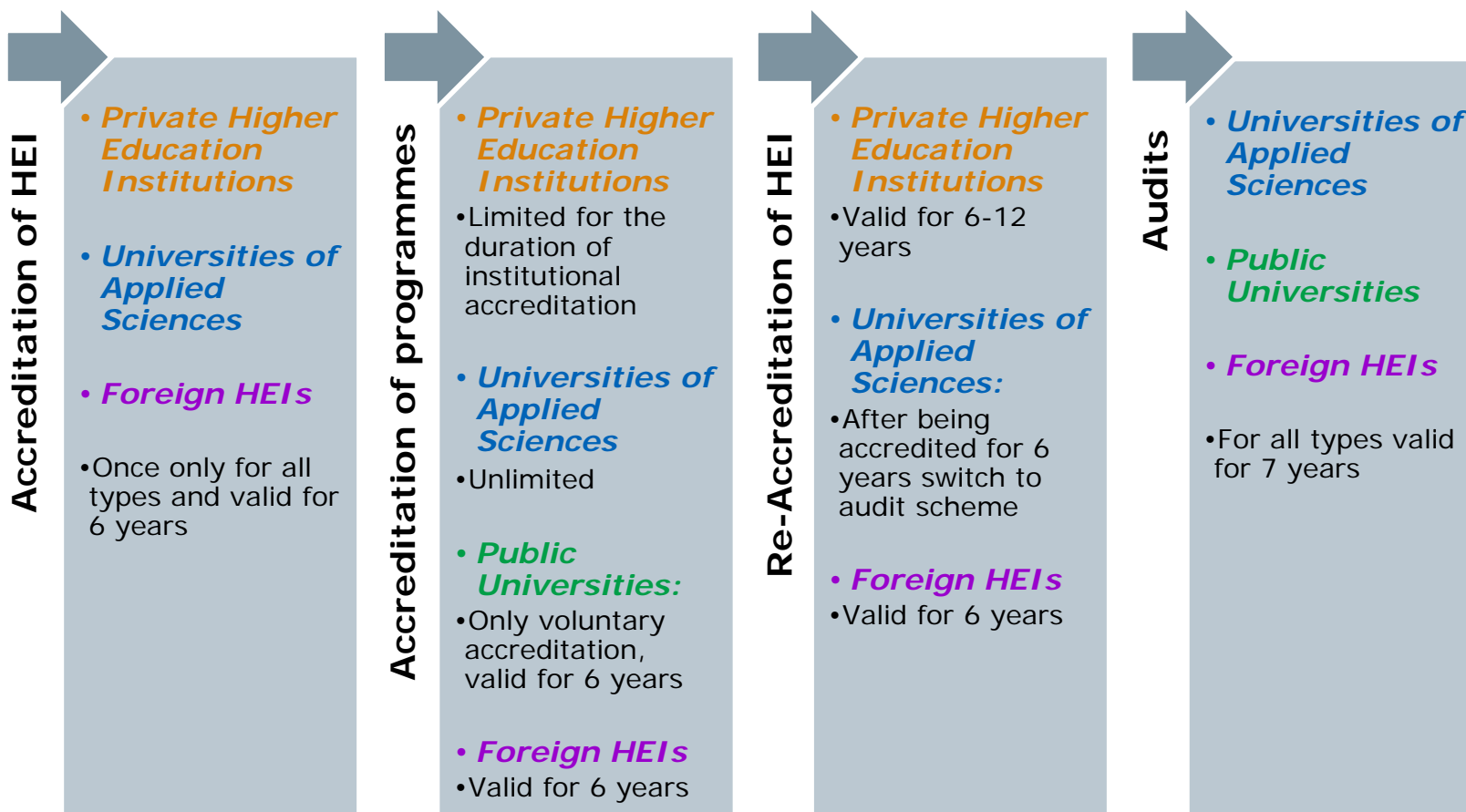
AQ Austria: procedures

AQ Austria: procedures *in general*



[See also: Definitions of Accreditation and Audit](#)

AQ Austria: procedures & *type of HEI*



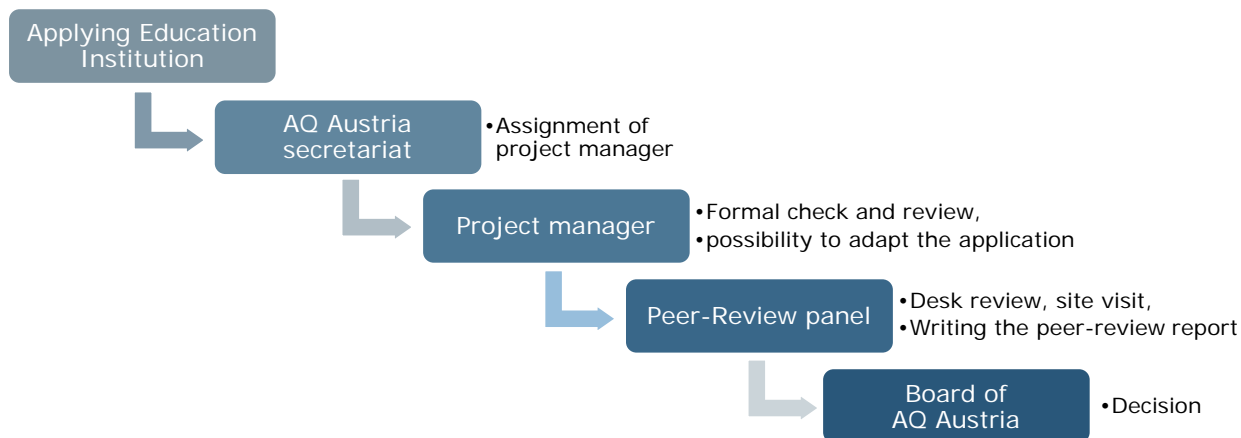
Accreditation



CS Mit CamScanner gescannt

Basic assumptions

- Does the HEI meet externally set, quantitative & qualitative standards?
- Experts in peer-reviews as *critical friends*
- Since 2021: conditions for initial accreditation possible
- In every case: focus on quality assurance & quality development
 - Different areas of focus: [Institutional Accreditation](#) & [Programme Accreditation](#)

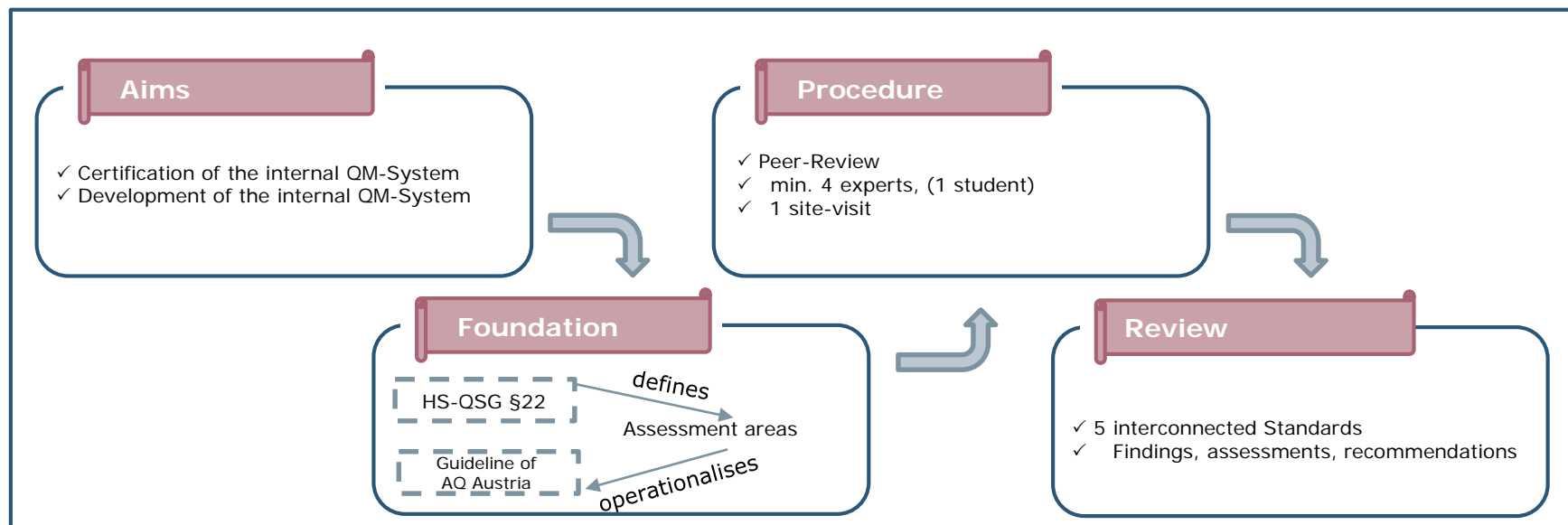


Legal framework

- Official procedures based Administrative Law
- Decision Period 9 months
- Obligation to publish results
- Control mechanisms in certain cases

Audit

- Review of the institutional quality management system, its organisation and performance in core areas of the HEI, see [areas of assessment](#)
- HEI have free choice of Agency



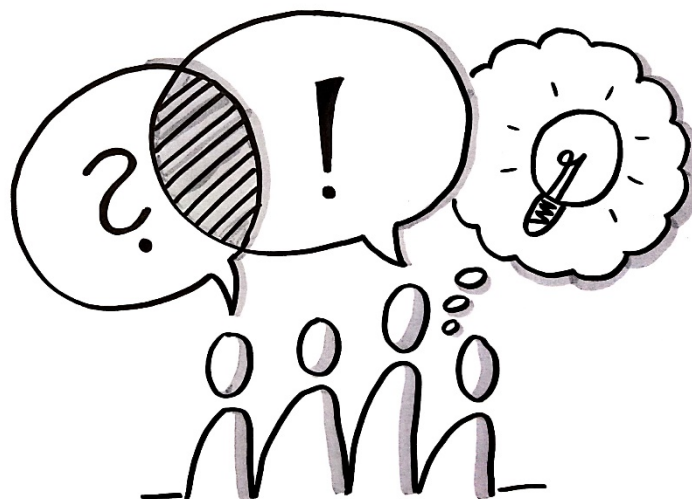
Notification of foreign degree programmes

- **Programmes are notified** (*not recognized!*) if the offering HEI is recognized in the home country
- If the programme is offered by collaborating with an Austrian educational institution the Austrian partner has to be evaluated
- Criteria refer to whether the partner guarantees high quality provision of those parts of the programme he conducts. The programme as such is not reviewed
- **Legal framework and procedures:**
 - §27 HS-QSG: AQ Austria as reporting office, keeps a register of reporting procedures; task with official character
 - §27a EU/EEA Provider: Desktop procedure; low reporting effort; Confidence principle: European quality assurance
 - §27b non-EU/EEA: Peer-review procedure; Assessment criteria based on accreditation; Assessment mostly at Austrian cooperation partners

Thank you!

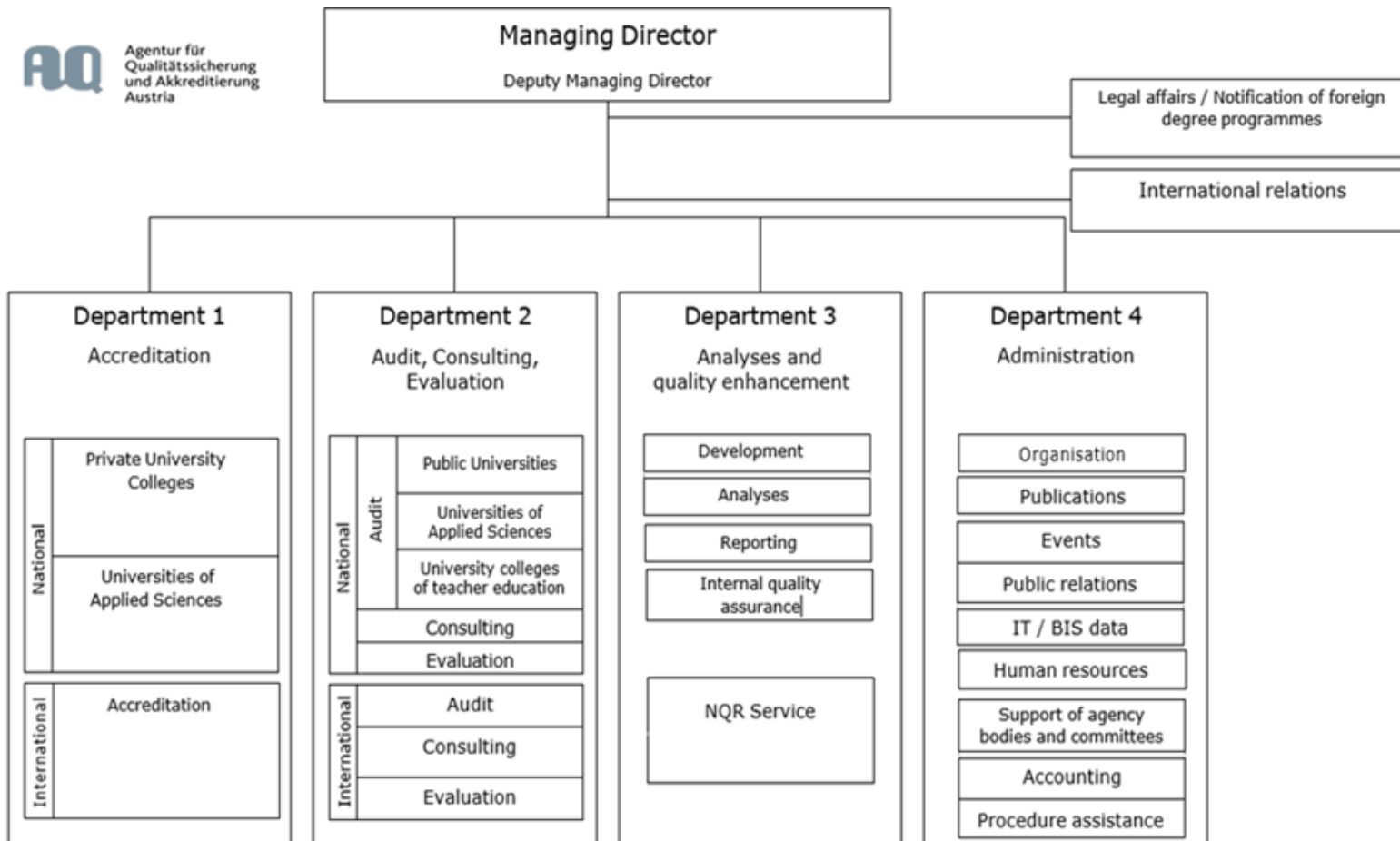
For further questions, suggestions, interaction –

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Further Information

AQ Austria: Secretariat



AQ Austria: definitions

Accreditation - is legally defined as a formal and transparent quality review procedure, based on defined criteria & standards, leading to state recognition of a higher education institution and/or of study programme

→ Universities of Applied Sciences, Private HEIs (Private Universities and Private University Colleges)

Audit & Certification - Certification is legally defined as the formal certificate documenting the conformity of an educational institution's quality management system with pre-defined criteria and standards involves reviewing and certifying a higher education institution's internal quality management system as well as providing support in continued development of that system

→ applies to all types of HEIs

Institutional Accreditation, areas of assessment

Areas of assessment for institutional accreditation

- objectives and profile
- development planning
- degree programmes and teaching
- (applied) research and development
- organisation of the higher education institution and its activities
- funding and resources
- national and international cooperations
- quality management system

Programme Accreditation, areas of assessment

Areas of assessment for programme accreditation

- degree programme and its management
- staff
- quality assurance
- funding and infrastructure
- applied research and development
- national and international cooperation

Audit, areas of assessment

Areas of assessment for programme accreditation

- quality strategy and its integration into the management of the HEI
- quality assurance structures and procedures in the areas of degree programmes and teaching, (applied) research or advancement of the arts, organisation and administration and staff
- integration of internationalisation and societal objectives into the QM system
- information systems and involvement of stakeholder groups
- quality assurance structures and procedures for certificate programmes for further education offered by providers of University of Applied Sciences