



FIBAA

YOUR PARTNER FOR EXCELLENCE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Guidelines for the Programme Accreditation by FIBAA

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Preface

FIBAA is a nationally as well as internationally experienced agency for quality assurance. Customer-oriented, efficient, fast and flexible work are some of its trademarks. FIBAA carries out accreditation procedures in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG). FIBAA awards its Quality Seal to higher education institutions and programmes of high quality worldwide. Excellent performances, especially those that demonstrate a strong strategy-based and international profile, receive the FIBAA Premium Seal. As a partner to HEIs and education providers, we support you at every step of your quality strategy. FIBAA's expertise has expanded nationally and internationally, encompassing business, law, IT, education, natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and interdisciplinary fields.

Proper preparation is key to a successful evaluation. These guidelines provide essential information on the accreditation process, including key requirements, evaluation criteria, and procedural steps. Feel free to contact us with any questions.

Your FIBAA Team



1. General Information

FIBAA's accreditation aims to support the development of your study programme through expert assessments, recommendations, and internationally recognised quality criteria. It ensures transparency, international comparability, and offers the chance to earn the FIBAA Premium Seal with results summarised in a quality profile.

FIBAA accredits Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes.

We carry out:

- **Initial accreditation** for new or existing programmes;
- **Re-accreditation** of programmes that have been accredited in the past;
- **Concept accreditation** of study programmes applies if the concept of a study programme is supplied but the programme has not yet started.

Period of Accreditation. 5 years – initial accreditation or concept accreditation / **7 years** – re-accreditation.

All accreditation procedures are conducted based on FIBAA's own quality standards, the meeting of which will lead to the awarding of the FIBAA Quality Seal. The quality of a study programme is evaluated in a peer review process. It will be examined if and in how far the FIBAA quality criteria are met in the development and implementation of a study programme.

Note: *Even if a study programme has not yet produced graduates, it will be assessed by the same criteria as an already established programme.*

Asterisk criteria (*). Quality criteria that are essential for study programmes are marked with an asterisk (*). These criteria, known as asterisk criteria, must achieve at least a 'Meets quality requirements' rating. Failure to meet any of these criteria will result in the imposition of a respective condition upon accreditation. The deadline for meeting and proof the fulfilment of the conditions is nine months and could, in well-founded cases, be extended (by a maximum of six months).

Other quality criteria. If such criteria are assessed with a "*Not met*" lead to a recommendation instead of a condition. The recommendation does not compromise the accreditation. The implementation of measures regarding recommendations will be reviewed during the re-accreditation procedure.

Object. The assessment of the study programmes is based on the self-documentation of the HEI and the information gathered in the interview rounds during the online conference or on-site visit.

The following aspects are given particular attention:

- Contents of the study programmes that are displayed in the course descriptions for all courses of the programme,
- Evaluation of the programme's success, e.g. through interviews with graduates and alumni-tracking studies,
- Review of the calculations of student workload in the individual modules,
- Assessment of evaluation results, and

- Assessment of the statistical data relating to enrolment rate, first-year student count, the percentage of foreign students, graduation rate, the average duration of study and the average final grade.

2. FIBAA Quality Seal for Programmes and FIBAA Premium Seal

FIBAA Quality Seal for Programmes. For study programmes that have been successfully accredited according to FIBAA's international quality standards, the FIBAA Quality Seal for programmes is awarded. This seal internally and externally confirms the high quality of your study programme.

FIBAA Premium Seal. We are the only accreditation agency awarding a FIBAA Premium Seal for established degree programmes that have demonstrated their outstanding quality in studies and teaching. The seal provides prospective students, graduates, other higher education institutions as well as employers with reliable orientation on the outstanding quality of the degree programme. For further and detailed information please refer to the General Terms and Conditions within your agreement with FIBAA.

3. Procedural Steps

3.1 Inquiry and Contract

For initial information and for us to be able to provide you with a tailor-made quotation, please complete the application form and send it to international@fibaa.org. We will provide you with a non-binding quotation and discuss all matters related to the accreditation procedure.

Note: Only public, state-approved, or state-approval-seeking institutions qualify for FIBAA accreditation.

There is also an option to accredit several programmes in one or more clusters if they are similar (up to 5 study programmes in one cluster).

3.2 Self-Evaluation Report

After your confirmation and after contract signing, you should proceed with preparing a self-evaluation report. The report is based on the Assessment Guide for the Accreditation of Programmes by FIBAA (Bachelor/Master or PhD). All requirements to the report are stipulated in the [Guidelines to the SER](#) available on our [website](#).

As soon as you have submitted your self-evaluation report on the FIBAA SharePoint, we will provide you with an official confirmation. Afterwards, we will name a FIBAA project manager as your contact and begin the procedure.

In a first step, your self-evaluation report will be checked for completeness. In case of missing documents or information we will let you know in good time and ask you to submit these.

Study programmes are assessed through a peer-review process where experts critically and constructively discuss the programme with HEI representatives based on provided documentation. The expert panel then compiles an assessment report with a recommendation for the FIBAA Accreditation and Certification Committee (F-ACC).

3.3 Date for On-Site Visit / Online conference

You and your FIBAA project manager will agree on a date for the expert panel's on-site visit or online conference. FIBAA determines whether the procedure will be conducted online or on-site based on several factors.

Online conferences are possible only based on (i) FIBAA's decision and/or (ii) if:

- FIBAA has already conducted an on-site visit at your University, and is ensured that the experts are in a position to validate the evidence provided by institution and to carry out interviews of different stakeholders as it finds appropriate;
- The on-site visitation is not possible (warning from the Federal Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*)).

Please note that, upon prior agreement, eight to ten months can lie between the submission of your self-evaluation report and the decision through FIBAA Accreditation and Certification Committee (F-ACC), provided that all documents are complete and submitted in English. The F-ACC meets four times a year. Please check our [Homepage](#) for the specific dates.

3.4 Review Panel Appointment

Once dates for the on-site visit / online conference are confirmed, FIBAA will proceed with appointing the review panel. If there are any impediments (e.g., potential partiality), the panel will be adjusted accordingly. FIBAA makes the final decision on the panel's composition. FIBAA experts receive regular trainings and are called in as experts by FIBAA only after a trial period.

The compilation of the **review panel** ensures the experts' evaluation of all areas relevant for the accreditation procedure (e.g. subject-specific aspects, structural and formal aspects, social aspects).

A FIBAA review panel generally includes at least **five** members, comprising:

- At least two experts from the field of academia;
- One expert from professional practice;
- One country expert who is familiar with the respective national Higher Education Area;
- One student representative.

For the accreditation of a distance learning programme the expert panel will be complemented by an expert for distance learning; for the accreditation of a cooperative programme an expert for cooperative studying will be called in.

3.5 Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report

As soon as we receive your confirmation on the expert panel, the experts receive the self-evaluation report along with required documents. Should they require additional information, we will forward their requests to you in good time.

3.6 On-Site Visit / Online conference

The on-site visit / online conference through the expert panel is usually conducted approx. four to six months after the submission of your self-documentation. Experts conduct separate interviews with HEI representatives, including management, teaching staff, students, graduates, administrative staff, and, if applicable, partners from cooperating institutions or companies. To ensure diverse perspectives, different interlocutors are chosen, avoiding overlaps from individuals with multiple roles.

Usually, the on-site visit typically lasts two days but may be extended for multiple programmes. Online conferences take at least three half days, considering time differences. Both include initial expert feedback on the programme's compliance with requirements.

The time schedule and the compilation of the meetings depend on various factors, such as the programme's profile or the interlocutors' availability, and are agreed upon by your FIBAA project manager together with you.

Unless agreed otherwise with FIBAA, the HEI is responsible to cover travel expenses, accommodation for four nights for the expert panel and project manager, as well as costs during the on-site procedure (e.g. meal, transfer).

For the example of a time schedule for an on-site visit please refer to [Annex 2](#).

3.7 Assessment Report

Based on the self-evaluation report and on further information, if necessary, as well as on the insights gained during the on-site visit / online conference the assessment report is drafted.

The structure of the report follows the structure of the respective [FIBAA Assessment Guide](#). The report includes the experts' evaluation of the conformity of the programme's essential features with relevant standards and requirements as well as a decision recommendation for the F-ACC. A copy of the report will be forwarded to you for your statement. Your statement will be considered by the expert panel before handing in the final report to the F-ACC.

3.8 Decision-Making

F-ACC discusses the assessment report and decides on the programme accreditation taking your statement into consideration. F-ACC may decide on:

- Accreditation
- Accreditation with conditions
- Refusal of Accreditation

The FIBAA Quality Seal will be awarded for study programmes which have successfully been accredited with or without conditions, in the latter case listing the conditions. FIBAA subsequently hands out the assessment report and the accreditation certificate to the HEI (in digital and printed form).

3.9 Publishing

The complete assessment report will be published on FIBAA's website and in EQAR's Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR).

3.10 Fulfilment and Proof of Fulfilment of Conditions (if applicable)

The meeting of conditions is to be proven within the deadline (nine months' time period). The evidence must be submitted to FIBAA in written form via email to Auflagen@fibaa.org. For further information please refer to the Guidelines regarding SER.

3.11 Final Steps

After awarding the FIBAA Seal, you will receive:

1. **The final Accreditation Report:** The final accreditation report includes a detailed description and evaluation of the review panel's findings.
2. **The FIBAA Seal Logo:** This logo can be used in your materials, website, and publications to showcase the achievement of accreditation.
3. **Official Certificate:** A formal certificate that recognises the accreditation status, which can be displayed in the HEI or included in official documents. The certificate will be made available to your University in print and in digital form.
4. **Public Recognition:** The study programme will be included in FIBAA's list of accredited institutions on their website, offering global visibility.
5. **Promotional Texts:** Upon your request, FIBAA may provide text templates for press releases, official statements, or social media posts to promote your achievement.

FIBAA offers an optional and voluntary follow-up procedure. The follow-up is part of the current accreditation procedure and is offered to HEIs that received recommendations for programme or institutional accreditation. It provides an opportunity to receive feedback on the quality of the measures taken to address the recommendations.

To initiate the follow-up, HEIs can contact FIBAA any time after the final accreditation decision to receive further information about the follow-up procedure and fees. Ideally, it occurs about three years after initial accreditation or four years after re-accreditation.

The HEI prepares a report outlining the recommendations, the measures taken, and evidence of their effectiveness. The follow-up is a shortened written procedure that reviews the measures outlined in the HEI's report.

4. Appeal

We generally propose that you approach a responsible project manager or international@fibaa.org directly in case of problems during the accreditation process. Solutions can usually be found during the further course of the procedure and misunderstandings can often be clarified. Within the framework of your statement to the assessment report, you have opportunity to point out aspects that, from your point of view, are not represented or assessed correctly.

You can submit appeals to FIBAA against decisions of the FIBAA Accreditation and Certification Committee (F-ACC) or file complaints against procedures (procedural complaint). In order to initiate a complaints procedure, a written appeal against the decision of the F-ACC or a complaint about the procedure (procedural complaint) must be lodged with the FIBAA office within one month of written notification of the decision by the F-ACC.

In this case, the F-ACC – after a statement by the experts – will attend to the programme and to the HEI's statements anew. Should the F-ACC agree with the HEI's arguments for complaint, the accreditation decision may be changed.

If the F-ACC confirms its prior decision or no agreement is found, you or the F-ACC might ask for the FIBAA Appeal Committee¹. This FIBAA Appeal Committee will be asked to examine in detail and clarify the facts of the accreditation procedure, its results and the complaints brought forward by the institution and to submit a well-founded recommendation to F-ACC (“appeal procedure”) [for a final decision in the pending procedure](#). After referral to the FIBAA Appeal Committee and based on their recommendation, the F-ACC will again discuss the accreditation decision in a subsequent meeting and shall decide again and finally on the (initial/re-) accreditation, conditions, suspension or refusal.

For further and detailed information please refer to the General Terms and Conditions within your agreement with FIBAA.

5. Re-Accreditation

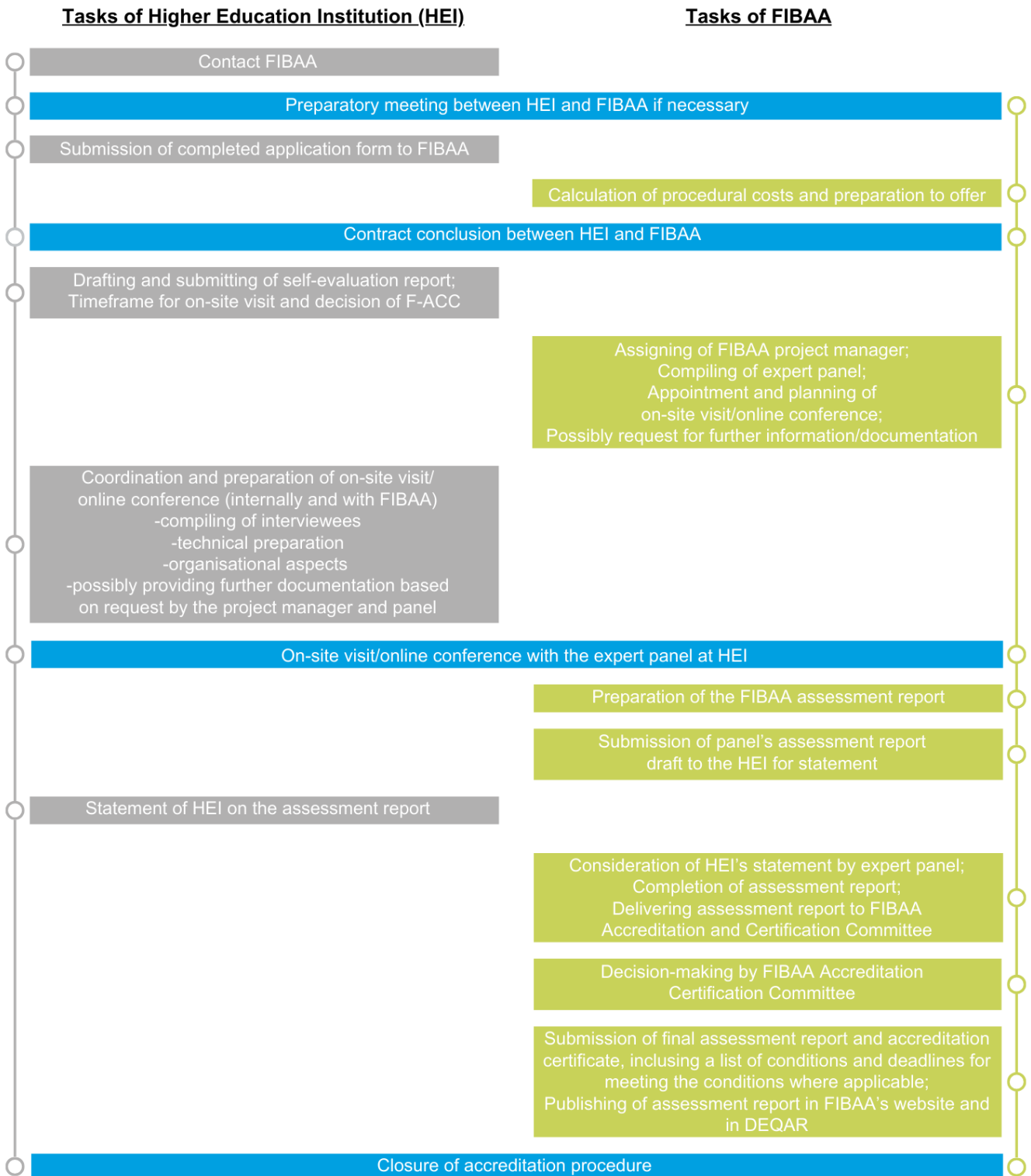
As part of the re-accreditation procedure, the measures taken by the HEI in order to comply with the recommendations of an earlier accreditation must be reviewed together with all major changes concerning the study programme (i.e. changes to programme content, modularisation/ECTS, staff, equipment, cooperation agreements, etc.).

In general, the decision on re-accreditation must be taken before the running accreditation period expires. If there are valid reasons and an extension period is required, it is possible to provisionally extend the accreditation period by one year. This would allow you and us to conduct an efficient procedure and give you time for the preparations. The prolongation period will be offset with the re-accreditation period. For further and detailed information please refer to the General Terms and Conditions within your agreement with FIBAA.

¹ See: Rules of Procedure for the FIBAA Appeals and Complaints Committee of 19 September 2011, last amended by 1st Amendment Resolution of 16 November 2016, last editorially amended in September 2023: https://www.fibaa.org/fileadmin/redakteur/pdf/Beschwerdeverfahren/GO_Beschwerdeausschuss_nov-eliert_DRAFT_en.pdf.

Annex 1

Overview of the procedural steps



Annex 2

Part I: Example of a time schedule for an on-site conference

1st Day	
Until 8:30	Transfer to HEI
8:30 – 9:30 (Room)	<p>Reception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of the FIBAA Team - Introduction of the HEI <p><i>Short presentation (max. 15 min.) on the structure and objectives as well as the positioning of the study programme in the HEI's or department's strategy, with potential subsequent discussion.</i></p>
09:30 – 10:30 (Room)	Internal panel deliberation
10:30 – 13:00 (Room)	<p>Panel interview with the programme of the programme management (no presentation)</p> <p><i>Main topics:</i> Goals and position of the programme in regard to labour and educational market, internationality, curriculum (structure and content, employability), examination frequency and organisation, teaching and learning, support of students, programme administration, research, specifics of the PhD.</p>
13:00 – 14:00 (Room)	Break / lunch
14:00 – 14:30 (Room)	Internal panel deliberation
14:30 – 16:30 (Room)	<p>Panel interview with lecturers (full-time and part-time lecturers, lecturers from each programme, one interview with all participants, no presentation)</p> <p><i>Main topics:</i> Support of students, teaching content, didactics/methods, involvement in decision making, staff education and qualification, internal cooperation and exchange/commutation.</p>
16:30 – 17:30	Round tour through/inspection of building (seminar rooms, computer cluster, library etc.)
17:30 (Room)	Internal panel deliberation
18:00	Transfer to the hotel
2nd Day:	
Until 9:00	Transfer to HEI
9.00 – 9:30 (Room)	Internal panel deliberation
9:30 – 10:30 (Room)	<p>Panel interview with students and graduates (three students and two graduates per programme, one interview with all participants, no presentation)</p> <p><i>Main topics:</i> Study structure, study process, study content, consultation and support for students, examination organization, potentially internships, terms abroad, field trips, working conditions, administration support, workload, involvement in decision making, evaluations).</p>

10:30 – 12:00 (Room)	<p>Panel interview with the administration staff (one interviews with all participants, no presentation)</p> <p><i>Main topics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support of students - programme organisation - career consulting - alumni activities - issues on internationality - financing - quality management
12:00 – 12:30 (Room)	<i>For cooperative study programmes: meeting with partners from the business world. / For distance-learning programmes: presentation of electronic learning platform.</i>
12.30 – 13:00 (Room)	An additional interview (if necessary)
13:00 -14:00 (Room)	Break / Lunch
14:00 – 16:30 (Room)	Internal panel deliberation (Assessment of the programmes)
16:30 (Room)	<p>Final meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Summary of impressions gathered during the on-site visit</i> - <i>Further action</i>
16:45	End of the on-site visit

Part II: Example of a time schedule for an online conference.

1 st day	
08:00 am – 8:30 am (CET)	Internal panel deliberation
8:30 am – 9:30 am (CET)	<p>Reception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short introduction of the FIBAA-Team • Short introduction of the HEI • Short Introduction of the study programmes <p>(Short presentation (approx. 15 min. on the structure and goals, cooperations and classification of the study programmes at hand in the overall structure and strategy of the HEI).</p>
9:30 am – 9:45 am (CET)	Break
9:45 am – 10:00 am (CET)	Internal panel deliberation
10:00 am – 11:45 am (CET)	<p>Panel interview with the programme management of each study programme (no presentation, no individual interviews)</p> <p><i>Main topics:</i> <i>Goals and position of the programme in regard to labour and educational market, internationality, curriculum (structure and content, employability), examination frequency and organisation, teaching and learning, support of students, programme administration, research.</i></p>
11:45 am – 12:00 (CET)	Break
12:00 – 1:30 pm (CET)	<p>Panel interview with the programme management of each study programme (no presentation, no individual interviews)</p> <p><i>Main topics:</i> <i>Goals and position of the programme in regard to labour and educational market, internationality, curriculum (structure and content, employability), examination frequency and organisation, teaching and learning, support of students, programme administration, research.</i></p>
1:30 pm – 1:45 pm (CET)	Internal panel deliberation and end of the online conference



2 nd day	
08:00 am – 8:15 am (CET)	Internal panel deliberation
08:15 am – 10:15 am (CET)	<p>Panel interview with lecturers (full-time and part-time lecturers, two lecturers from each programme, one interview with all participants, no presentation)</p> <p><i>Main topics:</i> <i>Support of students, teaching content, didactics/methods, involvement in decision making, staff education and qualification, internal cooperation and exchange/commutation.</i></p>
10:15 am – 10:30 am (CET)	Break
10:30 am – 10:45 am (CET)	Internal panel deliberation
10:45 am – 12:45 am (CET)	<p>Panel interview with students and (if possible) graduates ((three students and two graduates per programme, one interview with all participants, no presentation)</p>

	<p><i>Main topics:</i> <i>Study structure, study process, study content, consultation and support for students, examination organization, potentially internships, terms abroad, field trips, working conditions, administration support, workload, involvement in decision making, evaluations).</i></p>
12:45 pm – 1:00 pm (CET)	<p>Internal panel deliberation <i>End of online conference</i></p>

3rd day (CET)	
08:00 am – 8:15 am (CET)	Internal panel deliberation
08:15 am – 10:15 am (CET)	<p>Panel interview with the administration staff (no individual interviews, no presentation)</p> <p><i>Main topics:</i> <i>support of students, programme organisation, social assistance, career consulting, alumni activities, issues on internationality, financing, quality management.</i></p>
10:15 am – 10:20 am (CET)	Break
10:20 am – 10:30 am (CET)	Internal panel deliberation
10:30 am – 11:00 am (CET)	<p>Additional interview (if necessary)</p> <p><i>Possible topics:</i> <i>Additional questions about the structure and contents of the programmes, didactics, cooperation, international orientation etc.</i></p>
11:00 am – 1:30 pm (CET)	Internal panel deliberation
1:30 pm – 2:00 pm (CET)	<p>Short feedback of the panel to the programme management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Resume/summary on the impressions left by the visit</i> • <i>Next line of action</i>
End of online conference	

Annex 3

Do's and Don'ts for online conferences²

	Do's	Don'ts	
	Make sure you have the correct Zoom-link to enter the meeting	Do not share the meeting link with anyone who is not invited	
	Make sure you have a strong internet connection	Do not record our session	
	Join the waiting room five minutes early	Do not be late or leave early without notice	
	Mute your microphone when you are not speaking	Do not stay unmuted This causes background noise, and it is difficult to hear the speaker	
	Turn on your video and make sure we can see you	Do not interrupt others and use the “raise hand” function instead to signal that you also want to comment <i>Note: In some cases, the <u>moderator</u> might have to interrupt if the question was misunderstood or if the exact answer was already given. Please do not feel offended if this happens. This is not meant personally, but the time needs to be used effectively so that the experts have all the answers they need to make an assessment.</i>	
	Use a headset and make sure we can hear you	Do not lose patience <i>Note: The interview rounds are short, and the experts have many questions. Sometimes it is not possible to let everyone answer, especially if the experts are already satisfied with the answers given.</i>	
	Raise your digital hand if you want to speak. Use the function “raise hand”	Do not repeat answers that have already been provided by other speakers	
	Put the hand down after you have spoken	Do not get distracted and focus on the discussion	
	Feel free to use a virtual or blurred background		
	When entering the room, fill out your full name		
	Keep your answers short and precise As we do not have much time and many questions to answer		
	Log in with only one device to avoid duplication noise		
	Use a quiet environment to better follow the session		

² Relevant for the session with the University management, the programme management, lecturers, administrative staff, and feedback session.