



FIBAA

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IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**Assessment Guide for
Institutional Accreditation**
according to the
**Higher Education Funding and
Coordination Act, HEdA**

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Introduction

The FIBAA Assessment Guide for Institutional Accreditation in accordance with the Swiss Higher Education Funding and Coordination Act (HEdA) is basis for the self-evaluation report of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) and also basis for the assessment by the expert panel of facts according to quality standards.

The Assessment Guide contains → [Questionnaire](#) including 34 questions (part 1) and a → [Evaluation Catalogue](#) containing 18 quality-standards as well as explanations (partl 2).

The answer to the questions in part 1 by the HEI should ensure that the HEI provides all necessary information that the expert panel needs to determine whether the quality standards are met. A link in the document points to the respective standard and the corresponding explanations.

E.g.:

What is the overall strategy of the HEI in order to fulfill its mission? Link: → [Standard 2.1](#)

A Link in the Assessment Guide points to the relevant question. E.g.:

Standard 3.2: The quality assurance system provides for a regular evaluation of the teaching and research activities, the services and the results.

Link → [Question 22 internal and external Evaluation](#)

Table of Content

Questionnaire	Page	Assessment Guide	Page
Mission and overall Strategy	3	Sector I. Internal	9
Questions 1 + 2		Quality-Assurance-Strategy	
Activities	3	Standards 1.1 – 1.4	
Questions 3 – 13			
Quality assurance	4	Sector II. Governance	12
Questions 14 – 19		Standards 2.1 – 2.5	
Processes	5		
Questions 20 + 21		Sector III. Teaching, Research,	15
Evaluations	6	Services	
Questions 22 + 23		Standards 3.1 – 3.4	
Quality Control Circuits	6		
Questions 24 – 26		Sector IV. Ressources	19
Participation of	7	Standards 4.1 – 4.3	
representative Groups			
Questions 27 – 30		Sector V. Internal und external	21
Ressources	7	Communication	
Questions 31 + 32		Standards 5.1 + 5.2	
Internal and external	8		
Communication			
Questions 33 + 34			

Part 1: Questionnaire

Mission and overall Strategy

1. What has been the responsibility of the HEI, and what are its **tasks and objectives**?
→ [Standard 1.2](#), [Standard 2.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

2. What is the **overall strategy** by the HEI in order to fulfill its mission?
→ [Standard 2.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

Activities

3. Which activities (Bachelor's and Master's courses as well as opportunities for further training) are carried out by the HEI in the field of **teaching** and which disciplines and subject areas are the activities assigned to?
→ [Standard 3.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

4. To what extent does the **programme portfolio** correspond to the mission and overall strategy of the HEI?
→ [Standard 3.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

5. Which **research** strategy pursues the HEI and which research activities result from it?
→ [Standard 3.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

6. To what extent do the **research strategy** and the research activities correspond to the mission and overall strategy of the HEI?
→ [Standard 3.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

7. Which other services offers the HEI for the community and **civil society**?
→ [Standard 3.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

8. To what extent do the offered **services** correspond to the mission and the overall strategy of the HEI?

→ [Standard 3.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

9. Which measures does the HEI take to ensure the **freedom and independence** of research and teaching?

→ [Standard 3.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

10. Which objective pursues the HEI in terms of **internationality**?

→ [Standard 3.3](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

11. How takes the HEI aspects of social, economic and environmental **sustainability** into account in its task fulfillment?

→ [Standard 2.4](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

12. Which objective pursues the HEI regarding
- a) **equal opportunities** for staff and students as a whole,
 - b) equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in particular,
 - c) actual equalisation of men and women
- and which measures are used to achieve the objectives?

→ [Standard 2.5](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

13. How is the HEI reviewed, whether it fulfilled its mandate and how is the sponsor **rendered an account**?

→ [Standard 1.2](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

Quality Assurance

14. Which **quality assurance strategy** pursues the HEI and how is the quality assurance strategy integrated into the overall strategy of the HEI?

→ [Standard 1.1](#), [Standard 1.2](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

15. What **guidelines** have been defined for quality assurance in the following organizational areas of the HEI?

- a) Governance,
- b) Ressources,
- c) Teaching,
- d) Research,
- e) Services.

→ [Standard 1.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

16. How does the quality assurance system take into account principles and objectives related to the **European Higher Education Area**, in particular the Bologna Declaration and the ESG?

→ [Standard 3.3](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

17. How ensures the HEI that the **admission and assessment** of students' achievements and the **granting of graduations** meet the requirements of the HEI as well as the requirements of the HEdA?

→ [Standard 3.4](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

18. How is the adequate **qualification** of the HEI's academic and administrative **staff** ensured within the framework of the quality assurance system?

→ [Standard 4.2](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

19. Which measures of **personnel development** and **qualification** are offered to the academic and administrative staff?

→ [Standard 4.3](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

Processes

20. Which **processes** includes the quality assurance system and where are they regulated / documented?

→ [Standard 1.1](#), [Standard 1.2](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

21. How are the distribution of tasks and **responsibilities** regulated in the quality assurance system and where are they documented?

→ [Standard 1.3](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

Evaluations

22. Which instruments of internal and external evaluation are used by the HEI in the following areas and what are the goals?

- a) Teaching,
- b) Research,
- c) Services,
- d) Financial and other resources for the areas
- e) Range of services for students

→ [Standard 1.4](#), [Standard 3.2](#), [Standard 4.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

23. How is a **view from the outside** in the evaluations of the individual organizational areas of the HEI ensured?

→ [Standard 1.4](#), [Standard 3.2](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

Quality Control Circuits

24. Which **qualitative and quantitative information** is obtained through the quality assurance system?

→ [Standard 1.4](#), [Standard 2.2](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

25. How are **needs of improvement** determined due to activities and the obtained knowledge – among other things the results of the evaluation?

→ [Standard 1.4](#), [Standard 2.2](#), [Standard 3.2](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

26. How is the **effectiveness** of the activities derived from the needs of improvement controlled?

→ [Standard 1.1](#), [Standard 1.4](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

Participation of representative Groups

27. How are the following **representative groups** of the HEI involved in the quality assurance system?

- a. Students,
- b. Mid-level faculty,
- c. Teaching staff,
- d. Administrative personell,
- e. Technical personell.

→ [Standard 1.1](#), [Standard 1,3](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

28. Explain whether and in which way **external partners** of HEI are involved in the quality assurance system.

→ [Standard 1.3](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

29. In which ways do the framework conditions for the participation of the representative groups enable their **independence**?

→ [Standard 2.3](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

30. How are the representative groups of the HEI informed about the **measures and results** of the quality assurance system?

→ [Standard 5.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

Ressources

31. Which **financial resources** are available to the HEI and in which modalities?

→ [Standard 4.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

32. Which **personell and material resources** are available to secure the continuity of the HEI and to achieve the strategic objectives?

→ [Standard 4.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

Internal und external Communication

33. How are representative groups (employees, students, and possibly external parties) **informed** about the quality assurance processes and their results?

→ [Standard 1.1](#), [Standard 5.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

34. Which information about the following areas are **published** where?

- a. the teaching activities (study offer, graduations and the awarded ECTS credit points),
- b. the study conditions (admission, costs, duration of studies, etc.)
- c. the research activities,
- d. the services,
- e. the infrastructure,
→ [Standard 5.2](#)
- f. the quality assurance strategy,
→ [Standard 5.1](#)
- g. Data on financing (origin, use and conditions of the provision of the funds)
→ [Standard 4.1](#)

Text of the HEI (incl. References to any appendices)

In addition to the responses to the aforesaid questions, annotations to the following points have to be made:

- a description of the factual situation (special characteristics, organization, key figures);
- a description of the progress of the self-assessment process in the preparation of the self-evaluation report;
- if applicable, reports or results from previous quality assurance procedures;
- a presentation of the quality assurance system in all its facets as well as the degree of its implementation;
- an assessment of the quality standards regarding the fulfillment;
- a description of the strengths, weaknesses and development opportunities for each quality standard or standard area;
- a plan of action for the further development of the quality assurance system.

Part 2: Assessment Guide

Quality standards and explanations

Area I: Quality assurance strategy

1.1 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall define its quality assurance strategy. This strategy shall contain the essential elements of an internal quality assurance system aimed at ensuring the quality of the activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and their long-term quality development as well as promoting the development of a quality culture.

Explanations

→ In order to guarantee the long-term quality assurance and development required by the law (Art. 27 HEdA), the HE institution defines an internal quality assurance strategy (ESG 1.1). This strategy defines a global vision for quality assurance at an institutional level and allows connections to be made between different processes and development objectives to be set.

→ The concept of a quality system refers to all the procedures and practices for documenting and improving the quality of the HE institution's activities. It requires a complete, coherent and dynamic set of rules, mechanisms and processes designed to:

- the achievement of objectives by implementing selected strategies;
- the implementation of actions arising from the objectives and strategies, and their evaluation;
- the introduction of corrective mechanisms, if necessary;
- the continuous improvement of the HE institution's activities and its adaptation to changes in its environment.

The resources deployed for the quality assurance system are proportional to the goals sought.

→ In accordance with the HEdA, the internal quality assurance system incorporates at least the following fields: governance (e.g. direction, decision, organisational mechanisms), resources, teaching, research and services. It addresses the organisation as a whole.

→ An assessment of the quality assurance system provides an assurance that the HE institution possesses the tools to ensure and develop the quality of its activities in accordance with its type, mission and its specific characteristics.

→ The development of a quality culture allows the entire HE institution community to take ownership of quality-based initiatives and to assume its responsibility for quality assurance. In particular, this requires the involvement of representative groups from the HE institution that will help to enrich and to spread the culture of quality.

Supporting evidence useful for the self-assessment and the external assessment

The assessment of that standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- the institution's quality strategy (documents and other elements);
- a description of its quality processes.

Link to questions

- [Question 14 Quality assurance strategy](#)
- [Question 15 Guidelines for quality assurance](#)
- [Question 20 Processes](#)
- [Question 26 Effectiveness of quality assurance](#)
- [Question 28 External partners](#)

1.2 The quality assurance system shall be incorporated into the strategy of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and efficiently support its development. It includes processes verifying whether the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector fulfils its mandate while taking account of its type and specific characteristics.

Explanations

→ In order to contribute effectively to the development of the HE institution and to support it in achieving its objectives, the quality assurance system must be integrated into the overall strategy of the HE institution.

→ Each HE institution has a clear mandate set for it by a supervisory authority, be it public or private. This mandate defines the mission of the institution according to its type and its specific characteristics. By means of the appropriate monitoring methods, the quality assurance system must allow the achievement of the objectives set by the HE institution to be verified together with the completion of its mandate; it must also ensure that its duty to account to its supervisory authority is fulfilled (Art. 30 para. 1 lit. a, ch. 7 HEdA).

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- strategy documents belonging to the HE institution;
- legal text for the foundation of the HE institution;
- other national and/or international legal requirements;
- reports intended for supervisory authorities (management, business or financial audit reports etc.).

Links to questions

- [Question 1 Tasks and objectives](#)
- [Question 13 Accountability](#)
- [Question 14 Quality assurance strategy](#)
- [Question 20 Processes](#)

1.3 At all levels, all representative groups of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall be involved in developing the quality assurance system and in its implementation, in particular students, mid-level faculty staff, professors and administrative and technical staff. Quality assurance responsibilities must be transparently and clearly assigned.

Explanations

→ In order to ensure that the expectations of different interest groups are taken into account, the development and implementation of the quality assurance system shall involve, among others, the students, the mid-level teaching staff and the professors of the HE institution together with its administrative and technical staff, but it may also include external partners such as supervisory authorities, alumni and representatives from the working environment, professional associations, the political sphere, civil society or any other interest group, depending on the specific characteristics and working methods of the HE institution (ESG 1.1).

→ The involvement of different groups may be required, for example, at the level of strategic discussions about quality assurance, and in the development of tools for quality assurance, their monitoring and use of their results for further development.

→ A clear and transparent assignment of quality assurance responsibilities shall ensure that all duties and tasks are known to everyone at every level of the system.

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- terms and conditions for the involvement of different interest groups;
- organisation chart.

Links to questions

- [Question 21 Responsibilities](#)
- [Question 27 Representative groups](#)
- [Question 28 External partners](#)

1.4 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall periodically analyse the relevance of its quality assurance system and make the necessary adjustments.

Explanations

→ A relevant quality assurance system implies that the objectives set meet the needs of the HE institution. Its periodic analysis allows the HE institution to ensure that it conducts adequate monitoring of its teaching, research and service provision, thereby applying itself to long-term quality development (Art. 27 HEdA and ESG 1.10).

→ Periodic analysis of the quality assurance system implies internal and external assessment. Those assessments may take different forms and apply at different organisational levels (institution, faculty/department, unit/service, study programme etc.).

→ The concept of external assessment implies an external perspective of the unit concerned or a perspective external to the institution itself while ensuring that conflicts of interest are avoided.

→ The results of assessments offer the HE institution new perspectives, particularly if external, and they allow the activities of the institution to be adapted or improved. They are taken into account in subsequent assessments in order to ensure coordinated and continuous improvement.

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- descriptions of the quality assurance system's assessment processes;
- examples of self-assessment and external assessment reports;
- examples of changes in the quality assurance system subsequent to assessments.

Links to questions

- [Question 22 Internal and external evaluation](#)
- [Question 23 View from the outside](#)
- [Question 24 Qualitative and quantitative information](#)
- [Question 25 Needs of improvement](#)
- [Question 26 Effectiveness of quality assurance](#)

Area II: Governance

2.1 The quality assurance system shall ensure that the organisational structure and decision-making processes enable the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector to fulfil its mission and to achieve its strategic objectives.

Explanations

→ The managerial and organisational mechanisms put in place by the institution are effective when they allow it to achieve its strategic objectives and to thereby complete its mandate (Art. 30 para. 1 lit. a, ch. 3 HEdA). They are relevant when they take account of the needs of the different stakeholders. In particular, they involve the preparation of a strategic plan together with its implementation, its monitoring and its adaptation to address internal changes and those deriving from the political, economic and social environment.

→ The mandate, mission and objectives of the HE institution are defined by agreement with the (public or private) supervisory authorities and are established in the founding legislation of the institution.

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- description of the competencies of the HE institution in relation to its supervisory authority;
- organisational structure and assignment of responsibilities within the HE institution;
- processes for appointments to senior management roles;
- examples of detailed job descriptions;
- documents explaining decision-making processes in detail;
- mission and strategic plan of the HE institution;
- examples of changes in organisation and decision-making processes subsequent to the monitoring of strategic objectives.

Links to questions

→ [Question 1 Tasks and objectives](#)

→ [Question 2 Overall strategy](#)

2.2 The quality assurance system shall systematically contribute to providing relevant and current quantitative and qualitative information on which the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector relies to make current and strategic decisions.

Explanations

→ The quality assurance system shall incorporate an information system that allows the collection, analysis and use of recent, relevant information for the management of all the activities of the HE institution at every level (ESG 1.7).

→ The data collected shall meet the needs of stakeholders and allow for the monitoring of the activities of the HE institution; in particular, it shall concern the issues of resources (infrastructure and financial, human and documentary resources), activities (teaching, research and service provision), the results of activities (research performance, student performance development, student population profile, monitoring of graduates, satisfaction etc.).

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- descriptions of data collection and analysis systems (responsibilities, indicators, technical resources etc.);
- statistical reports;
- examples of the systematic use of the quantitative and qualitative data produced by the system.

Links to questions

→ [Question 24 Qualitative and quantitative information](#)

→ [Question 25 Needs of improvement](#)

2.3 The quality assurance system shall ensure that the representative groups of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector have an appropriate participatory right and that basic conditions are in place allowing them to independently operate.

Explanations

→ Effective and appropriate governance implies the participation in decision-making processes of all representative groups of people from the institution, including the student body, the mid-level teaching staff and the professors, as well as administrative and technical staff (Art. 30 para. 1 lit. a, ch. 4 HEdA and ESG 1.1).

→ The right to participate, which relies if necessary on the cantonal legislation applicable, corresponds to the specific characteristics of the HE institution and it also encompasses the following elements: processes for the appointment of representatives, type of involvement in specific process type and at specific level, effective influence of those representatives, transparency of information, assignment of responsibilities, framework conditions and type of operation that they guarantee, and resources available.

Supporting evidences useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- legislation and regulations that establish participative bodies and their operating terms and conditions;
- description of the resources placed at the disposal of participatory bodies and representatives (premises, resources, internal and external channels of communication, administrative support, discharge etc.).

Link to question

→ [Question 29 Independence of representative groups](#)

2.4 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall give consideration to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in the completion of its tasks. The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.

Explanations

→ In order to guarantee its long-term development, and therefore its durability, in completing its tasks the HE institution is to take account of issues concerning social, economic and

ecological sustainability, according to its specific characteristics and within the limit of its powers (Art. 30 para. 1 lit. a, ch. 6 HEdA).

→ Social sustainability may encompass the following elements:

- the role of social partnerships in working conditions and workplace relations;
- consideration of medium and long-term needs at every hierarchical level (e.g. junior scientists and academics) within staff development policy;
- transparency and fairness in income and social security policy, including for outsourced work;
- health and safety for all.

→ Economic sustainability may encompass the following elements:

- the management of financial resources from a long-term perspective according to the mandate, objectives and tasks entrusted to the HE institution, including investment and debt policy;
- transparency in the use of public funds and in the terms and conditions for the acquisition of private funds;
- consideration of the source of products and equipment, and of the conditions of production within purchasing policy.

→ Environmental sustainability may encompass the following elements:

- effectiveness in the management of energy resources (consumption, recycling, renewable energies);
- consideration of the standards applicable in terms of environmental protection and energy consumption for the renovation or construction of buildings;
- soft mobility for personnel and students, including any relevant items of infrastructure, if applicable.

→ Sustainability also concerns teaching, research and service provision, and may encompass the following elements:

- consideration of sustainability issues in the courses, research and services on offer;
- promotion of sustainability activities and results;
- information and support that allow HE institution students and personnel to conduct their activities in a sustainable manner.

→ The sustainability policy or strategy concerns all the activities of the HE institution. In particular, it includes the objectives that the HE institution sets in this field for its areas of activities, and the methods of implementation and evaluation.

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- policy or strategy and projects concerning social, economic and environmental sustainability;
- annual sustainability reports;
- statistics.

Link to question

→ [Question 11 Sustainability](#)

2.5 To carry out its tasks, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall promote equal opportunities and actual gender equality for its staff and students. The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.

Explanations

→ In order to achieve excellence and with a view to fairness, responsibility and development in completing its tasks and depending on its particular characteristics the HE institution shall take account of the issues of equal opportunities and gender equality (Art. 30 para. 1 lit. a, ch. 5 HEdA).

→ Equal opportunities encompass the issues of gender equality, disability, social integration, minorities and concern cases of direct or indirect discrimination (Art. 8 para. 2, 3, 4 of the Swiss Constitution; Gender Equality Act; Disabled Equality Act)⁹. It applies horizontally to all the HE institution's spheres of activity and to the governance of the institution with appropriate resources (personnel, representation policies within various committees, finances etc.).

→ The evaluation of equal opportunities may encompass the issues of access to and involvement in studies, research and academic or administrative supervisory and management positions, the balance of different personal needs or occupations (study, research, work, family, health), integration and participation in the life of the institution, advice and financial support, and awareness-raising.

→ The evaluation of equal opportunities for disabled people includes, in particular, the issues of the suitability of the duration and organisation of the studies and exams available (compensatory principle for disadvantages), and of access to infrastructure and equipment.

→ Equal opportunities policy or strategy covers students and all personnel. In particular, it includes the objectives that the HE institution sets in this field for its areas of activities, as well as the methods of implementation and evaluation.

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- legislation and regulations guaranteeing non-discrimination;
- policy or strategy, measures adopted and equal opportunities projects;
- reports from the services responsible;
- objective indicators and statistics;
- description of mechanisms promoting the institutional embedding of equality policies.

Link to question

→ [Question 12 Equal opportunities](#)

Area III: Teaching, research and services

3.1 The activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall correspond to its type, specific features and strategic objectives. They shall mainly relate to teaching, research and services and be carried out in accordance with the principle of freedom and independence within the limits of the mandate of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

Explanations

→ Each HE institution is different and provides teaching, research and services according to its type and its specific characteristics, in various disciplines or areas of study (Art. 30 para. 1 lit. b HEdA and ESG 1.2).

Teaching encompasses Bachelor and Master degree education and continuing education.

→ The coherence and consistency of the offer in terms of teaching and its suitability to the specific characteristics of the HE institution are expressed, in particular, in terms of the design and approval of study programmes, learning objectives, level of qualifications to be achieved (alignment with the national qualification framework nqf.ch-HS), workload and feasibility for students, scope of subject area, position in relation to the environment, internationalisation, involvement of students and other interest groups, and connection to specific characteristics of the institution (e.g. distance learning).

→ The suitability of the research to the particular characteristics of the HE institution is expressed, in particular, through the research strategy of the institution and through the inclusion of the latter in its overall strategy, its positioning in relation to other institutions, the relationship between internal and external funding, the valuation modes, the international dimension and innovation.

→ The services provided encompass all service-based activities provided to the community and to civil society, such as short-term continuing training, on-line courses (e.g. MOOCs)¹⁰, scientific mediation work, institutional or individual projects and assignments for public and private-sector organisations.

→ The freedom and independence of research and teaching constitute a basic principle of HE institutions guaranteed by Swiss constitutional law (Art. 20 of the Swiss Constitution). In particular, the following elements are covered by this principle:

- transparency related to the source of funding and assignment of funds in all spheres of activity;
- the influence of external financial partners on the contents of teaching or the purpose of research;
- the sovereignty of the HE institution in the procedure for the selection and management of its staff at every level;
- the potential for personnel to report threats to or infringements of the principle of academic freedom, and the risks incurred by whistleblowers.

Supporting evidence

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- founding legislation of the HE institution;
- strategic documents;
- reports intended for those responsible (management and business reports, financial audits etc.); description of mechanisms that guarantee that the activities of the HE institution comply with its mission, its specific characteristics and its strategic objectives (e.g. preparation and approval of study plans, focus of research and priorities with regard to service provision);
- description of mechanisms that guarantee that account is taken of competitors when preparing new projects;
- description of mechanisms that allow research to be conducted in accordance with the best international practices;
- distribution of funds according to activities;
- description of mechanisms that allow the freedom and independence of research to be guaranteed (e.g. regulations connected to third-party funds, to secondary services of academic staff, research contracts, sponsorship contracts, procedures and guidelines for the selection and appointment of staff, description of terms and conditions laid down for reporting abuse).

Links to questions

- [Question 3 Teaching activities](#)
- [Question 4 Programme portfolio](#)
- [Question 5 Research activities](#)
- [Question 6 Research strategy](#)
- [Question 7 Civil society](#)
- [Question 8 Services](#)
- [Question 9 Freedom and independence](#)

3.2 The quality assurance system shall provide for a periodic evaluation of teaching and research activities, of services and of results achieved in these areas.

Explanations

→ The teaching, research and service provision activities of the HE institution and the results achieved in those fields are to be assessed periodically – and therefore continuously adapted – in order to ensure the achievement of the objectives set and to allow the HE institution to measure the completion of its mission (Art. 30 para. 1 lit. a, ch. 1 HEdA and ESG 1.9).

→ The assessment of teaching, research and service provision activities should take account of the specific characteristics of the HE institution and include internal and external assessment procedures based on quantitative and qualitative indicators. The quality assurance system is designed to ensure that the analysis of the results obtained is used to develop and improve those activities.

→ The assessment procedures provide for the involvement of people external to the unit for assessment. These people possess the expertise and skills necessary in order to provide an external view of the quality of the activities, avoiding any conflict of interest. This external perspective is complemented by the view of groups benefiting from the services of the HE institution, which may include, for example, students for the assessment of teaching activities, assistants/PhD students for the evaluation of research activities or the beneficiaries of services.

→ The assessment of teaching, research and service provision activities requires the assessment of the respective supporting entities or services.

→ The assessment of teaching activities, which is distinguished from the assessment of teaching staff, includes the assessment of lessons and study programmes and elements specific to the particular forms of teaching (e.g. distance learning). It reflects the active participation of students in the creation of learning processes (“student-centred learning, teaching and assessment”) (ESG 1.3).

→ The assessment of service provision ensures that the offer complies with the strategy of the HE institution and meets its mandate expectations.

→ The services provided are assessed periodically according to terms and conditions adapted to suit their specific characteristics.

→ The assessment relates not only to the activities carried out but also to their effects, their impact and to the results achieved in the context of those activities (e.g. the assessment of a lesson by the students, and analysis of the performance of students in that lesson, or the assessment of the resources invested in a research activity and of the performance of that research activity).

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- descriptions of assessment processes for teaching, research and service provision;

- examples of self-assessment and external assessment reports;
- description of framework conditions and measures adopted in order to improve the quality of teaching, research and service provision, and their effects;
- examples of improvements made following assessments;
- student statistics;
- activity reports at different levels of the institution;
- description of processes that guarantee the connection of teaching with research and with changes in society and professional fields.

Links to questions

- [Question 22 Internal and external evaluation](#)
- [Question 23 View from the outside](#)
- [Question 25 Needs of improvement](#)

3.3 The quality assurance system shall ensure that principles and objectives linked to the European Higher Education Area are taken into consideration.

Explanations

→ Switzerland is participating in the construction of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and is a signatory country of the Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999. It is committed to the implementation of its objectives. Using their own means and according to their particular characteristics, Swiss HE institutions implement the principles and objectives that underpin the EHEA (ESG 1.2)11.

→ In particular, the EHEA promotes mobility (of students, researchers, teaching staff, and administrative and technical staff), the recognition of degrees Europe-wide, the promotion of a European dimension within the development of curricula, the promotion of cooperation between institutions, and cooperation in the field of quality assurance.

→ The degree of internationalisation of the higher education institution depends on its type, profile and strategic goals.

→ The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), produced by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), approved in 2005 and revised in 2015 by the European Education Ministers, constitutes a European benchmark in quality assurance. The ESG also provides a frame for the agencies' activities; the agencies must comply with the ESG in order to be recognised at the European level.

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- strategy for the internationalisation of the institution
- rules on mobility and measures to promote it (e.g. support services, funding);
- rules on the validation of the learning outcomes and the awarding of degrees in relation to the nqf.ch;
- examples of degrees awarded;
- description of mechanisms that allow students to play an active part in the creation of learning processes;
- documents showing how the ESG Part I are implemented;
- measures and instruments for the recognition of titles and certifications.

Links to questions

- [Question 10 Internationality](#)
- [Question 16 European Higher Education Area](#)

3.4 The quality assurance system shall ensure compliance with the criteria for admission, for the assessment of the student performance and for issuing final diplomas according to the mission of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector. These criteria shall be defined, communicated and applied systematically, transparently and consistently.

Explanations

→ Student admissions, the assessment of student performance and the awarding of their degrees are essential components of the “student life cycle”.

→ The awarding of degrees and allocation of credits rely on the assessment of the performance levels of students, including examination and other methods of assessing the achievement of learning outcomes.

→ Rigour and transparency underpin the criteria for admissions, student performance assessments throughout their studies and the awarding of degrees and certificates for all education modes (including distance learning). Admission conditions are also to comply with the requirements imposed in the HEdA (Art. 23-25, Art. 73) on admissions to universities, universities of teacher education and universities of applied sciences (Art. 30 para. 1 lit. a, ch. 2 and ESG 1.4).

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- admissions regulations and other institutional founding documents, including their compliance with the HEdA;
- examination regulations;
- description of mechanisms introduced in order to provide information about admission and assessment methods;
- regulations on the awarding of degrees;
- description of appeal mechanisms (e.g. ombudsman).

Link to question

→ [Question 17 Admission and Assessment, granting of graduations](#)

Area IV: Resources

4.1 With its competent authorities, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall assure that its personnel resources, infrastructure and financial means allow for operating on a going concern basis and for achieving its strategic objectives. The origin and allocation of financial resources and financing conditions shall be transparent.

Explanations

→ In order to fulfil its mission, the institution is to have continuous sufficient resources at its disposal in terms of personnel, infrastructure and funding, and which are allocated with a long-term perspective (Art. 30 para. 1 lit. c HEdA). Resources are to support teaching and learning (ESG 1.6).

→ The resources and infrastructure are to suit the particular characteristics of the HE institution, including in terms of teaching methods (e.g. distance learning) and to meet the needs of the institution’s activities, including in terms of organisation, planning and method of allocation.

→ In particular, the resources are to include staff, infrastructure, equipment, and documentary and financial resources.

→ In particular, the evaluation of financial resources is to include the type and degree of engagement of the competent local authority, funding methods and external financial audits, methods for the use of external funds, methods for the approval of budgets and accounts, and financial planning.

→ The evaluation of resources is also to include support measures and structures for students (services, advice etc.).

→ Transparency of the provenance and allocation of funds and conditions for funding imply data publication.

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- documents relating to the financial commitment of the competent local authority;
- financial audit reports;
- rules for the preparation of budgets and the use of funds;
- documents guaranteeing the long-term use of infrastructure;
- statistics concerning personnel and student supervision rates;
- examples of contracts;
- documents relating to the acquisition and conservation of documentary resources;
- description of mechanisms allowing the suitability of organisations and student support measures to be guaranteed.

Links to questions

→ [Question 22 Internal and external evaluation](#)

→ [Question 31 Financial resources](#)

→ [Question 32 Personell and material resources](#)

→ [Question 34 External communication \(Finances\)](#)

4.2 The quality assurance system shall ensure that the entire staff is qualified according to the type and specific characteristics of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector. To this end, it shall also provide for its periodic assessment.

Explanations

→ In order to adequately complete its mission, the institution is to ensure that all its personnel is appropriately qualified (Art. 30 para. 1 lit. a, ch. 1 HEdA and ESG 1.5).

→ In particular, the assessment of staff qualifications includes recruitment, selection and promotion processes and, for academic staff, assessment of teaching and scientific skills. The assessment is to also consider the transparency of the processes.

→ The periodic assessment of personnel should take into account the nature of the appointment (academic or administrative) and of the specific characteristics of the HE institution.

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- description of staff categories;
- personnel statistics;
- legislation and regulations relating to the recruitment, assessment and promotion of personnel;

- descriptions of staff assessment processes;
- examples of specifications.

Link to question

→ [Question 18 Qualification of staff](#)

4.3 The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector supports the career development of its entire staff, particularly the new generation of scientists.

Explanations

→ The assessment of staff career development encompasses the issues of equal opportunities, continuing education and training and other professional development support measures (counselling, scientific leaves, training placements, “protected time” for project research and development etc.), career prospects and measures for internal placement and promotion of junior staff.

→ It should also involve career policies for its personnel and encourage internal promotion up to the top of the hierarchy.

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- personnel promotion policy, particularly for junior scientists and academics;
- regulations for promotion and continuing education and training;
- description of organisations and measures that offer counselling and support;
- examples of detailed job descriptions;
- regulations with regard to scientific conferences;
- description of personnel categories;
- special projects to support junior staff.

Link to question

→ [Question 19 Personal development and qualification](#)

Area V: Internal and external communication

5.1 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall make public its quality assurance strategy and ensure that the provisions corresponding to quality assurance processes and their results are known to employees, students and if necessary external stakeholders.

Explanations

→ Internal and external communication is an important part of quality assurance both in order to develop a quality culture and to ensure transparency for internal and external stakeholders. HE institutions shall therefore ensure that regular and transparent information about objectives, quality processes and their results is provided to personnel and students and to external stakeholders, wherever applicable.

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- internal and external communication strategy and means;
- description of the measures introduced in order to ensure a good understanding of

quality assurance processes and results.

Links to questions

- [Question 33 Internal communication](#)
- [Question 34 External communication](#)

5.2 The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall regularly publish objective information about its activities, its study programmes and the qualifications awarded.

Explanations

→ In order to ensure transparency for students and other stakeholders regarding its activities, HE institutions shall regularly publish current, impartial and objective information, both qualitative and quantitative, concerning the activities, study programmes and degrees that it awards (ESG 1.8).

→ Information and communication means vary according to the target group.

→ In particular, this information is to include the issues of admission conditions, deadlines, costs, duration, assessment conditions and ECTS credits awarded.¹² In addition, it is to include information about infrastructure, students and teaching staff, and teaching, research and service activities. Information about funding shall be published as well, including, for example, an annual report distributed both internally and externally.

Supporting evidence useful for self-assessment and external assessment

The assessment of this standard may, for example, rely on the following items:

- description of methods for providing information about the HE institution's activities according to the target group;
- description of measures in place for the updating of data;
- sample descriptions of programmes and of supporting means for the presentation of activities;
- annual report;
- external evaluation reports;
- website.

Link to question

- [Question 34 External communication](#)