



Agència  
per a la Qualitat  
del Sistema Universitari  
de Catalunya



# ACREDITACIÓ **DE** MÀSTERS

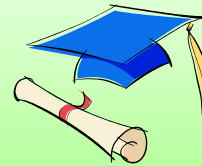
## ACCREDITATION OF THE MASTERS IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Ton I. Vroeijenstijn

# Accreditation of the Masters



in  
the European Higher Education Area



Ton Vroeijenstijn  
Quality Consultants  
The Netherlands



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## MY MESSAGE:

- Accreditation of the Master is necessary for marketing and competition in the EHEA
- There is more than national, public accreditation only
- State monopoly should be replaced by multiple accreditation
- One must make a clear distinction between accreditation decision and the consequences
- Accreditation asks for a common framework
- We are on the right track, but still a lot of work has to be done



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## Bologna Declaration

- goal: to create a *European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of students and graduates and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education*
- keywords : transparency, compatibility, flexibility, comparability
- the adoption of a common framework of *readable and comparable degrees*, "also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement";
- the introduction of *undergraduate and postgraduate levels* in all countries, with first degrees no shorter than 3 years and relevant to the labor market;
- *ECTS-compatible credit systems* also covering *lifelong learning* activities;
- a *European dimension in quality assurance*, with comparable criteria and methods;



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## CHARACTERISTICS EHEA

- ECTS and credit transfer
- Diplome supplement
- Qualification framework
- Joint degrees
- Equivalence of programmes
- Quality label through accreditation



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## EQA and Bologna

- Bologna process can only be successful with a well functioning QA-system
- the Bologna process asks for a quality label for Bachelor-Master-PhD.
- the Bologna process asks for international dimension



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## Accreditation is coming to Europe

- Bologna documents do not use the word Accreditation
- Central and Eastern Europe: introduction of accreditation after the fall of the communism (1989-1990)
- Western Europe: discussion after 1999, but opinions are still divided
- Europe introduced the word accreditation, but can not copy the US, because:
  - different role of the governments
  - different role of professional bodies
- Bologna changed the nature of EQA in Europe



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# Bologna

- student mobility
- 2 tier structure (BAMA)
- Transparency
- Competition
- comparability



Ask for Accreditation  
=  
European quality label

Accreditation is important for marketing and competition,  
but is too often seen as annoyance, burden and control



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## WHAT IS ACCREDITATION??

### *Accreditation is:*

- A formal decision
- based on overall assessment
- based on at least minimum requirements
- concerns yes/no decision

### *Consequences (might be:)*

- funding
- diploma recognition
- students get student loan



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## Problems with accreditation in the EHEA

- Each country has developed its own accreditation framework
- Governments claim a monopoly for accreditation
- Accreditation is more a national activity and less an international one
- Object of accreditation differs: institution or program
- Lack of a common framework



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## Accreditation in the EHEA

- **National public accreditation:**  
(e.g. Spain, NL, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Norway, Central and East Europe,)
- **National Professional accreditation**  
(e.g. Engineering Council UK, Commission des Titres d'Ingenieurs (CTI), Ordem dos Engenheiros Portugal)
- **European accreditation**  
(e.g. EQUIS, EUR-ACE, Queste and other upcoming disciplinary organisations)



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## Necessary developments

- *National, public accreditation abandon monopoly*
- *A HEI can choose: national, professional or European accreditation*
- *Clear distinction between accreditation decision (= professional activity) and the consequences (=political)*



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## Important questions

- *What is a reliable accreditation agency, providing a valid quality label?*
- *Who recognise a reliable agency in such a way that all stakeholders can trust it?*
- *Who set the standards for accreditation?*



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## Reliable accreditation agency?

- *INQAAHE: guidelines of good Practice*
- *ENQA: Standards and Guidelines*
- *ECA: Code of Good practice*



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## A reliable agency

- *Is included in the European register (of ENQA ??)*
- *this means that the accrediting body can be trusted*
- *and governments accept the accreditation decision*



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## BENCHMARK STANDARDS RELIABLE EQA- AGENCY 1

### Organisation

1. The agency is recognised by the competent authorities.

2. The agency acts independently of government, higher education, business, industry, or professional associations. Third parties cannot influence verdicts or decisions.

3. The agency has a clear mission and clearly formulated objectives. The mission statement is translated into a clear policy and strategic plan, expressing that:

- accreditation is its main activity
- quality improvement and accountability are also a goal
- the agency takes into account the cultural and social context
- it respects the autonomy, identity and integrity of the HEIs.

## BENCHMARK STANDARDS RELIABLE EQA- AGENCY 2

4. The agency has adequate human and financial resources, making it possible to run the activities. A staff development policy is in place.

5. The agency has an internal quality assurance system and is externally evaluated on a cyclical basis.

6. The agency is accountable to the public by means of:

- public documents on its mission and strategy
- accreditation processes and procedures
- standards and criteria
- evaluation outcomes.

7. The agency cooperates as far as possible with other agencies in exchanging experience, examples of good practice, joint assessments, etc.

## BENCHMARK STANDARDS RELIABLE EQA- AGENCY 3

### Process

1. The accreditation process is based on self-assessment and external review, unless circumstances require another approach.
2. The process and procedures of the accreditation are well known and made public.
3. The process respects the internal quality assurance activities of an HEI; the requirements for self-assessment are in line with it.
4. External assessment is done by a group of experts. Such a committee:
  - is nominated according to clear rules
  - acts independently within the given accreditation framework
  - has no conflicts of interest
  - is well trained.

## BENCHMARK STANDARDS RELIABLE EQA- AGENCY 4

5. The decision making process is rigorous, fair and consistent:
  - The rules leading to accreditation decisions are transparent
  - The rules guarantee equal treatment.
6. The accreditation standards and criteria are:
  - predefined by the agency after consultation of all stakeholders
  - are made public.
7. Appropriate methods for appeals against accreditation decisions exist

## Basic conditions for accreditation of a Master:

- *Accreditation only make sense if the quality label has intrinsic European value*
- *Accreditation must be based on equivalent accreditation procedures and processes (common framework)*
- *In the accreditation process, equivalent standards for Master must be used*



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## Standards for a Master

- The **level** of a Master (Dublin descriptors and the European Qualification framework)
- The **content** of a master ( discipline specific)

**Standards are based on learning outcomes, not on input**



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## Who formulates the standards?

- the **level** standards are formulated by the accrediting body and are often based on the Dublin descriptors
- The formulation of the **discipline** specific standards of a Master is left to the experts in the field. Use can be made from the outcomes of the Tuning project and e.g the benchmark standards of the QAA



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## Quality label of the Master

*has only value:*

- *if it is provided by a reliable agency*
- *Is based on general accepted procedures*
- *Is based on well formulated standards, witch are compatible with standards elsewhere used*
- *Is recognised by all stakeholders*



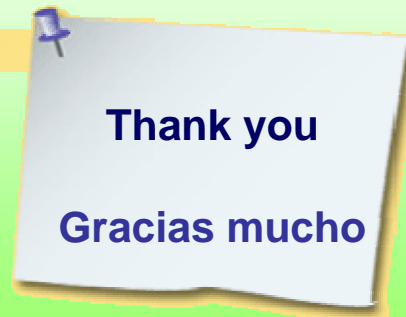
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## What to expect in the near future?

- *National, public accreditation will move from discipline/program accreditation towards institutional accreditation and/or institutional quality audit*
- *At European level there will be more and more disciplinary based accreditation organisation (Engineering, Chemistry, Business administration, Public Management, Psychology, Dentistry etc)*
- *A clear link between national, public accreditation and European accreditation is necessary*



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