Accreditation of Study Programmes in Slovakia (in Europe)

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Objectives of this Presentation

- To provide information
- To share experience
- To give a view of the perspective

Our Experience

- 1990, Higher Education Law
  - academic liberties
  - institutional autonomy
  - a provision for 2-tier Bc/Mgr degree system was made
  - Accreditation Commission was established

Accreditation Commission

- Mission:
  - to assist in development of higher education system in Slovakia by evaluating level of educational and research activities of institutions and by accrediting courses
- Legal Status:
  - advisory body of the Government
  - both before and after the new Law 131/2002 on HE
  - at the same time, legal guarantee of independence from government

Accreditation Commission – Principal Tasks:

- to accredit newly proposed degree courses and re-accredit the running courses
- to accredit institutions

Accreditation Commission – Principal Tasks:

- to give opinions on proposals to establish / close down institutes / institutions (Faculties or HE institutions)
- to make recommendations regarding the status of the higher education institution
Programme Accreditation

- Accreditation is compulsory for all degree courses at all three levels.
- Accreditation is performed periodically.
- Results in report.

Accreditation Criteria

- Accreditation criteria are based:
  - Mostly on evaluating resources: human, infrastructure, information, material, financial, laboratory etc.
  - Programmatic reviews.
  - To some extent, outcomes.

Institutional Accreditation

- Is based on a mission (as declared by each institution).
- Concerns principal activities.
- Involves:
  - Self report.
  - Peer review.
  - On site visit.

Institutional Accreditation

- Results in report.
- Recommendation regarding the status of the higher education institution:
  - University.
  - Research university.
  - Polytechnic (Fachhochschule).

Accreditation Procedures

- Transparency (documents including minutes of meetings on web site).
- General criteria discussed with representation of HE.
- Meetings are public;
  - Frequently Minister, President of Rectors’ Conference, President of HE Council, President of Students’ Council take part.
- Rectors and Deans of institutions on agenda are invited as a rule.

Accreditation Outcomes

- Recommendations to the Minister:
  - To grant the right to offer a programme and confer a degree.
  - To grant the right to nominate professors.
  - To suspend the rights …
- Opinions for the Minister:
  - To establish a new university.
- Opinions for the Rector:
  - To establish a new Faculty.
Accreditation Outcomes

- Outcome from Institutional Accreditation:
  - a detailed report that
    - identifies strengths and weaknesses
    - makes recommendations to the Institution

Recent Experience – point of departure

- Law 131/2002 stipulated:
  - Only (re-)accredited programmes can be offered in 2005/06
  - Only 3-tier compliant programmes can be offered in 2005/06
  - Every programme must be linked to some field(s) of study from a general classification

Recent Experience – process

- HE institutions:
  - Learning process
  - Design process
- Accreditation Commission
  - Learning process
  - Programmes evaluation (management: 2*10^3 programmes, 4*10^2 experts in 3*10 groups)

Recent Experience – outcomes

- HE institutions:
  - Roughly 80% success rate
  - Matter to reflect upon
- Accreditation Commission
  - Still easier to evaluate input criteria than output ones

Case 1

- HEI from abroad intends to offer their study programme in Slovakia
  - (The most popular study fields: law, management, etc.)
  - National legislature must be applied:
    - HEI opens its local branch (needs government approval)
    - Submits study programme for accreditation in Slovakia

Case 2

- A Slovak HEI intends to offer its study programme abroad (e.g., in country X)
  - Submits study programme for Slovak accreditation
  - Any further steps depend on local legislation of country X
Case 3

- 2 HEI intend to open a common study programme: (e.g. the first part of the study in one country (Germany), the second part in other country (Slovakia)).
  - Joint degree (?)
  - ECTS

International aspects

- Sharing knowledge
- Sharing experts
- Sharing results

- Mutual acceptance/recognition:
  - Criteria
  - Procedures
  - Outcomes
  - Decisions

A possible outline for [some] steps towards [partial] mutual acceptance between accrediting bodies

- Studying and assessing each other’s
  - Legislation
  - Criteria, standards
  - Procedures
  - Outcomes
  - Decisions

A possible outline for [some] steps towards [partial] mutual acceptance between accrediting bodies

- Proposals of necessary changes (if needed) to achieve consistent and comparable
  - Criteria and standards
  - Procedures
  - Outcomes
  - Decisions

Issues for the future

- Achieving comparable criteria and procedures of accreditation may be a step towards a mutual acceptance of outcomes and decisions
- Developing the legal framework
  - (in Slovakia: e.g. transnational education, joint, double degrees)