

## Accreditation – from programmes to institutions

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## Setting the stage

- Slovakian tradition of accreditation originates in 1990
- Accreditation compulsory for all three levels
- Accreditation endorsed strongly in 2002 law on HE

## New law on HE (2002)

- Implements Bologna
  - 3 levels - very consequently
  - Simplification of degrees – failed (e.g., 4 types of doctorates, 2 different titles for Master)
- Introduces the concept of „comprehensive accreditation“
- Introduces the concepts of non-universities and research universities
- Eases procedure for establishing a new HEI
- Introduces the concept of a professor also as a position

## comprehensive accreditation

- Concerns HE institution
- Comprises
  - Study programmes
  - Research (in 24 groups)
  - Other activities (right to nominate professor in particular field)
  - Institution as a whole

## comprehensive accreditation

- Compulsory for all HE institutions
- Periodical (once in cca 6 years)
- Performed by Accreditation Commission

## comprehensive accreditation

- Results in:
  - Report evaluating the institution
  - Accreditation decisions on all study programmes
  - Decisions on all professor-nominating rights
  - Decision on the category of HEI

## comprehensive accreditation

- Experience from the past:
  - Evaluation of Faculties (2000)
    - Resulted in a report and a „mark“ for a Faculty based mainly of quality of research
    - a mixed acceptance by HEIs

## comprehensive accreditation

- Evaluation of research:
  - Criteria inspired by the British RAE
  - Results in „marks“

## experience

- IV/2002-IV/2003 criteria for accreditation of study programmes
- 2003-2005 (re-)accreditation of study programmes
- 2006 criteria for comprehensive accreditation

## accreditation of study programmes

- At a first glance, just a reaccreditation
- But:
  - Before the new law, only few cases of 3-tier scheme, thus
  - Redesign from the long 5 year programme to 3 *perhaps* + 2

## Criteria for accreditation of study programmes

- 16 particular attributes
  - Input: e.g. quality of staff
  - Process: e.g. engineering, art
  - Output: e.g. employability of graduates
- Criteria are universal
  - Simple, transparent
  - But: need for specificity, e.g. medicine

## Criteria for accreditation of study programmes

- Quality of research: requirements reflect the level
- 3rd level:
  - Since rights to confer all the degrees, including PhD, have only HEIs, research institutes participate in doctoral programmes within arrangements with HEI:
  - Subject to accreditation

## Criteria for accreditation of study programmes

- Questions:
  - Should criteria be universal for all types of HEI?
    - (In Slovakia, they are, only their interpretation differs slightly.)
  - Should criteria be universal for all fields of study?
    - (In Slovakia, they are, only their interpretation differs slightly. BTW, how about the regulated professions?)

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## Process of accreditation of study programmes

- A unique experience:
  - cca 2 and a half thousand programmes assessed in cca 2 and a half years
- Only possible because:
  - Very responsible attitude of the HEIs (and the commission ☺)
  - Essentially, a reaccreditation
  - One fifth negative

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## Another view

- Accreditation of a single study programme can be much more detailed and demanding –
  - example Informatics at the Slovak Uni of Tech in Bratislava, accredited by the British Engineering Council (IEE)
- Facultative may mean higher quality

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## (Limited) experience with „international“ accreditation

- may mean higher quality, but only may...
  - A loose concept, covers many things
- Internationalisation of „national“ accreditation
  - Incorporating overseas experts generally (a need in a „small“ country), and in particular in „small“ fields

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## Cross border

- Foreign HEIs either
  - Establish a branch (operate legally as a Slovak HEI, subject to Slovak accreditation, to date none)
  - Operate in a grey zone, accreditation unclear - presumably in their home country and issuing home country diplomas, subject to recognition process

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## Cross border

- HEI operating abroad:
  - Does it suffice for it to have the programme accredited somewhere, somehow?
- Comparability of accreditation criteria, process, outcomes
- Issues:
  - Transparency
  - Fair competition

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## A possible way

- „national“ accreditation agencies learn about their respective criteria, processes, outcomes
- Agree on level and extent of comparability
- If they do, to the agreed extent the „national“ accreditation can be replaced by an „international“ one
  - A project with the Czech agency in preparation

## International accreditation

- Questions:
- two levels accreditation?
  - One – to fulfil national legal requirements to be eligible to enroll students
  - Two – to assess compatibility with professional standards in a particular field, which are by their nature international
- Opening competition in accreditation?
  - To increase quality of accrediting? (what is a more analogous case: judges, regulatory bodies, telecom operators, any service providers...?)