# Internal Accreditation

## At a glance

Checking Documentation | Peer Consultation | SPO / "Traffic Light" System | Statistical Data Analysis | Questionnaire / Surveys
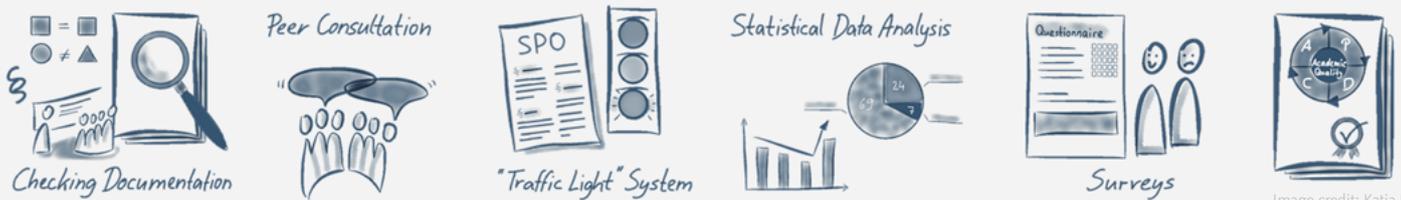
Image credit: Katja Buchholz

## Goals and Purpose

In 2016, Freie Universität Berlin as an entire institution was awarded "system accredited" status. The seal of approval, awarded by the German Accreditation Council, grants the university the authority to conduct its own quality assessments of degree programs through its quality management system, using the structures and processes established. It entitles the university to carry out internal accreditation for its degree programs rather than relying on an external accreditation process. Under certain conditions, the university may also carry out internal accreditation for its degree programs offered in partnership with other universities in Germany or abroad.

Internal accreditation status confirms that quality assurance procedures are regularly carried out for a specific degree program. It acts as a guarantee that the program is regularly reviewed and updated, and that the appropriate measures to ensure quality standards have been put in place.

For students, the accreditation of their degree program guarantees the quality of their academic studies and its (international) recognition. It can help graduates to gain access to further postgraduate qualifications and can be advantageous in terms of career prospects.

## Internal accreditation within Freie Universität's Quality Management System (QM System)

Freie Universität Berlin views the internal accreditation process as a meta-process within its teaching and education quality management system, as it tests the impact of various QM System instruments and procedures at the level of individual degree programs. As the term "system accredited" suggests, it is a systematic process which centers around the regular use of quality assurance procedures, including follow-up measures, to ensure compliance with legally binding quality standards. An internal accreditation process is carried out for all new degree programs, and every eight years for established programs. If a degree program is due to be discontinued, an extension of the accreditation deadline beyond the eight-year period can be requested as long the deadline is still prior to the date when the program is due to end. This allows students already enrolled in the program the chance to complete their degree in an accredited degree program (acting on the "good faith" principle).
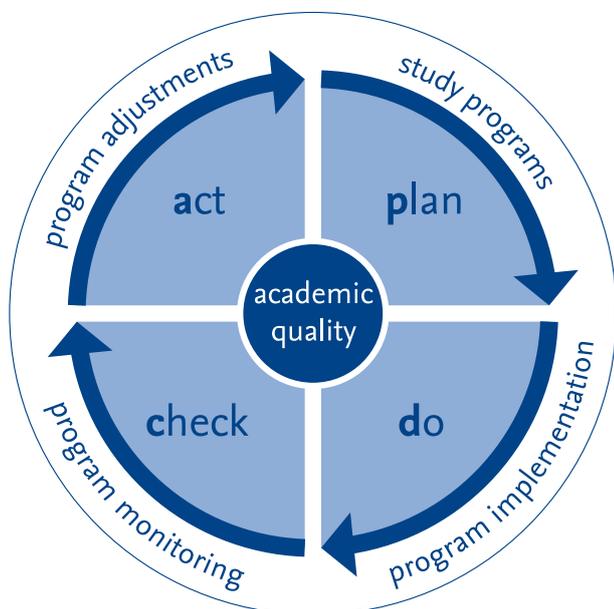
## Further Information

- www.fu-berlin.de/qm
- www.fu-berlin.de/prozessmanagement

Contact us (QM Office): *qm@fu-berlin.de*

## Internal accreditation of newly developed degree programs

Internal accreditation of new degree programs is carried out on the basis of quality assurance measures set out in the design for the program's content and structure (**plan**). These measures will include a peer consultation along with checking documentation to ensure the program is fit for purpose in terms of content and proposed costs, and that it complies with legal requirements. In cases of degrees to be offered in partnership with other universities, further quality assurance measures may apply. A new degree program can only be approved after it has undergone the mandatory quality assurance procedure. Internal accreditation confirms that the new degree program has been developed in compliance with the relevant quality criteria and that these will also be met in full by the time the degree program is due to commence. New degree programs are therefore automatically eligible for internal accreditation.



Quality assurance control cycle for degree programs

## Internal accreditation of existing degree programs

An existing degree program can be accredited as long as it can be demonstrated that the quality assurance processes for the program are based on a closed control cycle. It should be clearly shown during the accreditation period that the applicable quality assurance criteria are regularly monitored using the various quality assurance instruments relevant to the degree (**check**). Regular monitoring instruments include student feedback, statistical data analysis, checking compliance with current framework requirements ("traffic light" system), and peer consultations. The quality report put together by the relevant department must show that it is meeting the requirements of official follow-up processes by responding appropriately to the findings of the quality assurance procedure (**act**), and that where a need for improvement has been identified, it is putting measures or has already put measures in place to improve and/or develop areas of the program further (**plan** / **do**).

## Steps

### Accreditation cycle for new degree programs

Proposal for new program submitted to Executive Board by QM Office based on documented findings from the quality management procedure

**Accreditation by the Executive Board**, issue of accredited status certificate

Accredited status certificate transferred to the relevant department/central institute, QM Office generates accreditation report

**Accreditation decision published on Freie Universität Berlin QM website and German Accreditation Council database**

### Accreditation cycle for existing degree programs

QM Office initiates reaccreditation procedure

Department/central institute generates quality report

Proposal submitted to Executive Board by QM Office based on documented findings from the quality management procedure. Response from department/central institute requested and attached to proposal where applicable.

**Accreditation decision by Executive Board:**
a) **Accreditation approved:** Certificate of accredited status issued and transferred to department/central institute
b) **Accreditation approved subject to specific conditions being met within 12 months**, issuing of accredited status certificate
c) **Not approved**

QM Office generates accreditation report

**Accreditation decision published on Freie Universität Berlin QM website and German Accreditation Council database**

**For (B), if stipulated conditions are met within 12 months**: Provisional status amended to full accredited status, QM Office transfers certificate of accredited status to relevant department/central institute

**If requirements are not met**: Accreditation revoked by Executive Board

Emendation of published accreditation information