A Directory to International LIS Education Accreditation Processes: Part II

Xiaoai Ren

Abstract:

Let us continue to look at the LIS education accreditation processes across the world in Part II of this directory. This time, readers will find information on the accreditation processes for higher education in general, and LIS education in particular in Ireland, Germany, and South Africa. In Ireland, the Library Association of Ireland (LAI) accredits only LIS programs that meet the academic quality assurance requirements of the state agency Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). In South Africa, a LIS program provider will first contact the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) for input before submitting the accreditation application to The Council on Higher Education (CHE), the statutory body in South Africa for quality assurance in higher education. In Germany, the Accreditation Council is the central decision-making body that is responsible for the accreditation of all study programs of any disciplines in Germany. There is no specialized accreditation institution for LIS accreditations, and German Library Associations is not involved in the LIS education accreditation processes.

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A Directory to International LIS Education Accreditation Processes: Part II

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Ireland

Accreditation Office (https://www.libraryassociation.ie/)

The Professional Standards Committee of the Library Association of Ireland (LAI) is responsible for accrediting the courses offered by Universities and Colleges in Ireland that offer Information and Library Studies courses. Two LIS programs are accredited in Ireland by LAI. One is in University College Dublin and the other is in Dublin Business School. LAI accredits courses and programs leading to graduate and postgraduate qualifications in Library and Information Management.

The LAI's program accreditation process assures that the quality of library and information studies education programs in Ireland is in line with international norms. Accreditation can only be undertaken for courses and programs that meet the academic quality assurance requirements of the agencies responsible for quality assurance in the Republic of Ireland e.g. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

QQI was established by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. It is an independent, State agency of the Department of Education and Skills. QQI is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education, and validates and approves programs in Ireland. Any programs can apply to QQI to have their programs approved to a national qualification (QQI award).

Accreditation Process

The Professional Standards Committee first seeks a report from the institutions seeking accreditation. This is followed by a site visit and subsequent discussions. Once a program is accredited, the accreditation lasts for a period of five years. A monitoring process is in place to assess progress. The course provider must meet with the Professional Standards Committee annually to update the Committee on course development and to discuss matters of common interests.

Procedures for Accreditation
(https://www.libraryassociation.ie/sites/default/files/Accreditation%20Guidelines%202014.pdf)

1. The course provider should make a formal application to the LAI Professional Standards Committee.
2. The Professional Standards Committee will convene a meeting with the provider to discuss course content, institutional educational policy, resourcing etc.
3. An accreditation timetable will be drawn up by the Committee and approved by the provider.
4. The provider will map core content provision as nearly as possible to the Professional Knowledge and Skills Base.
5. The provider will be advised by the LAI of other key courses, which in the opinion of the Professional Standards Committee would be important in the context of course delivery in Ireland.
6. The provider should supply detailed information as to the content of all courses, topics and fields of knowledge covered during the course year; and the faculty and staff involved in the course provision.
7. The provider should show evidence of engagement with practitioners, employers and leading figures in the information field.
8. The provider should supply data as to the expected number of students or the number of students already registered.
9. Evidence of institutional backing and support for the course should be shown.
10. A date will be set by which the course documentation should be sent to the LAI Professional Standards Committee for review and assessment. A non-refundable accreditation fee of €1,000 is payable to the LAI on submission of course documents.
11. The accreditation panel consists of the members of the Professional Standards Committee or their nominees, no less than three members of the Committee should take part in the assessment process. No more than three members should participate in the subsequent site visit; these three members must have already participated in the assessment process.

12. The assessment should be completed in four to six weeks. Nominees of the Professional Standards Committee will participate in a site visit, preferably in tandem with assessors from the appropriate academic quality assurance body.

Useful Links

- The Professional Standards Committee of the Library Association of Ireland (LAI)
  https://www.libraryassociation.ie/library-association-ireland/committees-panels-task-forces/education-committee-professional-standar-1
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
  http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/Home.aspx
- The Professional Knowledge and Skills Base
  https://www.libraryassociation.ie/career/pksb

Germany

Accreditation Agency – Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany (http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=44&L=1)

All bachelor and master programs in Germany must be accredited. The Accreditation Council is responsible for the accreditation of all study programs of any disciplines in Germany. There is no specialized accreditation institution for LIS accreditations, and German Library Associations not involved in the accreditation processes.

The Accreditation Council is the central decision-making body of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programs in Germany. The Foundation was established by the Accreditation Foundation Law (ASG). Its statutory mission is to organize the quality assurance system for study programs and teaching by accrediting study programs. Members of the Accreditation Council are appointed for a period of four years in agreement between the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder and the German Rectors' Conference.

The Accreditation Council contracts with Accreditation Agencies to carry out the accreditation of study programs. These Accreditation Agencies themselves must be accredited by the Accreditation Council before they accredit study programs.

Currently there are 12 LIS programs accredited in Germany, both bachelor and master programs. A detailed list of the programs is available in the central database of the German Accreditation Council.

Accreditation Process

The accreditation process in Germany is a multistage procedure based upon the principle of peer review. If an institution of higher education applies to an accreditation agency for accreditation for one of its study programs, the agency will appoint a group of experts, which will reflect both the academic focus, and the specific profile of the study program. The expert group will comprise representatives of all the relevant stakeholders. The assessment of the study program

by the expert group takes place in accordance with the Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation.

It generally includes an on-site visit to the higher education institution, as well as the analysis of the higher education institution's application rationale. In this context, the group of experts will conduct on-site interviews with the management of the higher education institution, teaching staff and students.

Finally, the experts will prepare a report with a recommendation on the accreditation of the study program. Based upon the report and according to the rules for decisions stipulated by the Accreditation Council, the agency's relevant decision-making body will then decide upon the accreditation for the respective study program: an accreditation with conditions, a suspension, or a refusal of accreditation. A program accreditation is usually valid for a period of between five and seven years.

Useful Links

- The list of Accreditation Agencies
    - http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=agenturen&L=1
- The Central Database of the Accreditation Council
    - http://www.hs-kompass2.de/kompass/xml/akkr/maske_en.html
      (entering "bibliothek" (the German word for "library") in the "Study programme" search field)
- The Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation
    - http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/fileadmin/Seiteninhalte/AR/Beschluesse/en/AR_Regeln_Studiengaenge_en_aktuell.pdf
- German Library Associations
    - http://www.bibliotheksverband.de/metamenue/english.html

South Africa

Accreditation Office (http://www.che.ac.za/)

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is an independent statutory body established in May 1998 in terms of the Higher Education Act. The CHE has executive responsibility for quality assurance and promotion and discharges this responsibility through the establishment of a permanent committee (as required by the Higher Education Act), the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). Only programs accredited by the HEQC can be offered by a higher education institution,

Accreditation Process

When a new accreditation or a review of an existing accreditation is required, the curriculum and supporting documents are submitted to the CHE through HEQC-online, this is a web-based accreditation application system. Institutions can submit applications throughout the year. HEQC does the review, including reviewing the process followed by the institution on consulting with the relevant Professional Organization, before making the final decision.

The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) is the Professional Organization for the Library and Information Services sector. Therefore, when a new accreditation application is submitted to CHE, LIASA will make input into the minimum standards, how the qualification is meeting the needs in the LIS sector, how the established core competencies are addressed in the qualification, etc. Typically, the submitting institution would contact LIASA for a report prior to submitting to the CHE. The CHE would review and follow their processes, again consult with the professional body, prior to final decision.

Useful Links

- HEQC-online
    - http://heqc-online.che.ac.za
- The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA)
    - http://www.liasa.org.za

About the author

Dr. Xiaoai Ren is an Assistant Professor in the Master of Library and Information Science program at Valdosta State University. This is a fully online program. Dr. Ren teaches reference course. She holds an M.S. in Information Management from Peking University and a Ph.D. in Information Science from the University at Albany. Her research interests include library cooperation at regional, national, and interaction levels, reference services, international librarianship, and eBooks in libraries.