



organ für akkreditierung und qualitätssicherung  
der schweizerischen hochschulen

## **Visit of Chinese Delegation in Switzerland Bern, 3 April 2006**

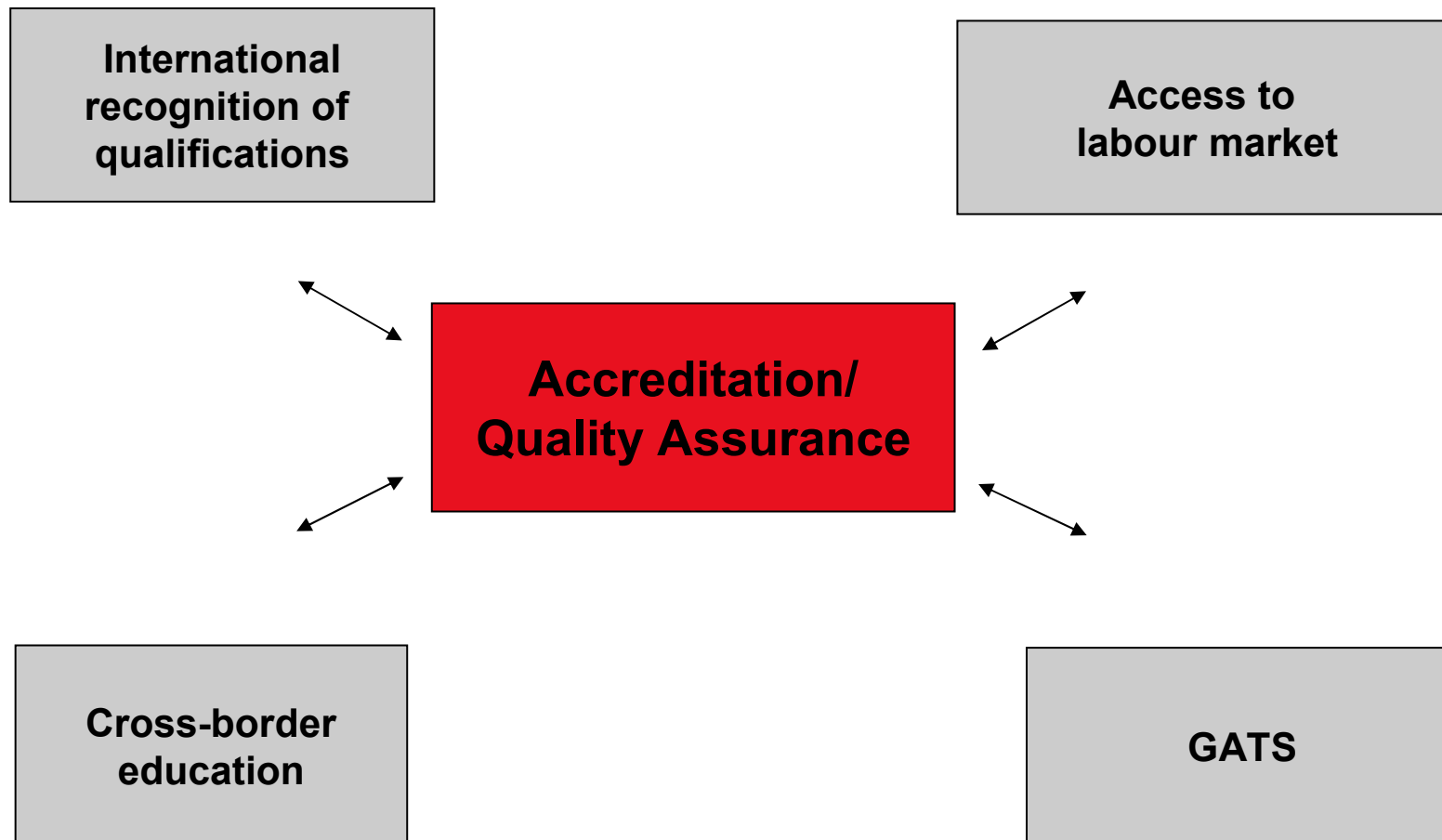
**Speech Rolf Heusser:**

- 1. Quality assurance and the Bologna process**
- 2. Goals and activities of OAQ**
- 3. The Swiss accreditation system**
- 4. Audits of the quality assurance systems of the Swiss universities**

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# International dimension of quality assurance

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## **Bologna Declaration 1999: purpose and goals**

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- **Creation of a competitive HE area until 2010**
- **Promotion of mobility in Europe**
- **Six goals formulated (comparable diplomas, two cycles, ECTS, etc.)**
- **Quality assurance as a mechanism to increase transparency**

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## **Berlin conference 2003**

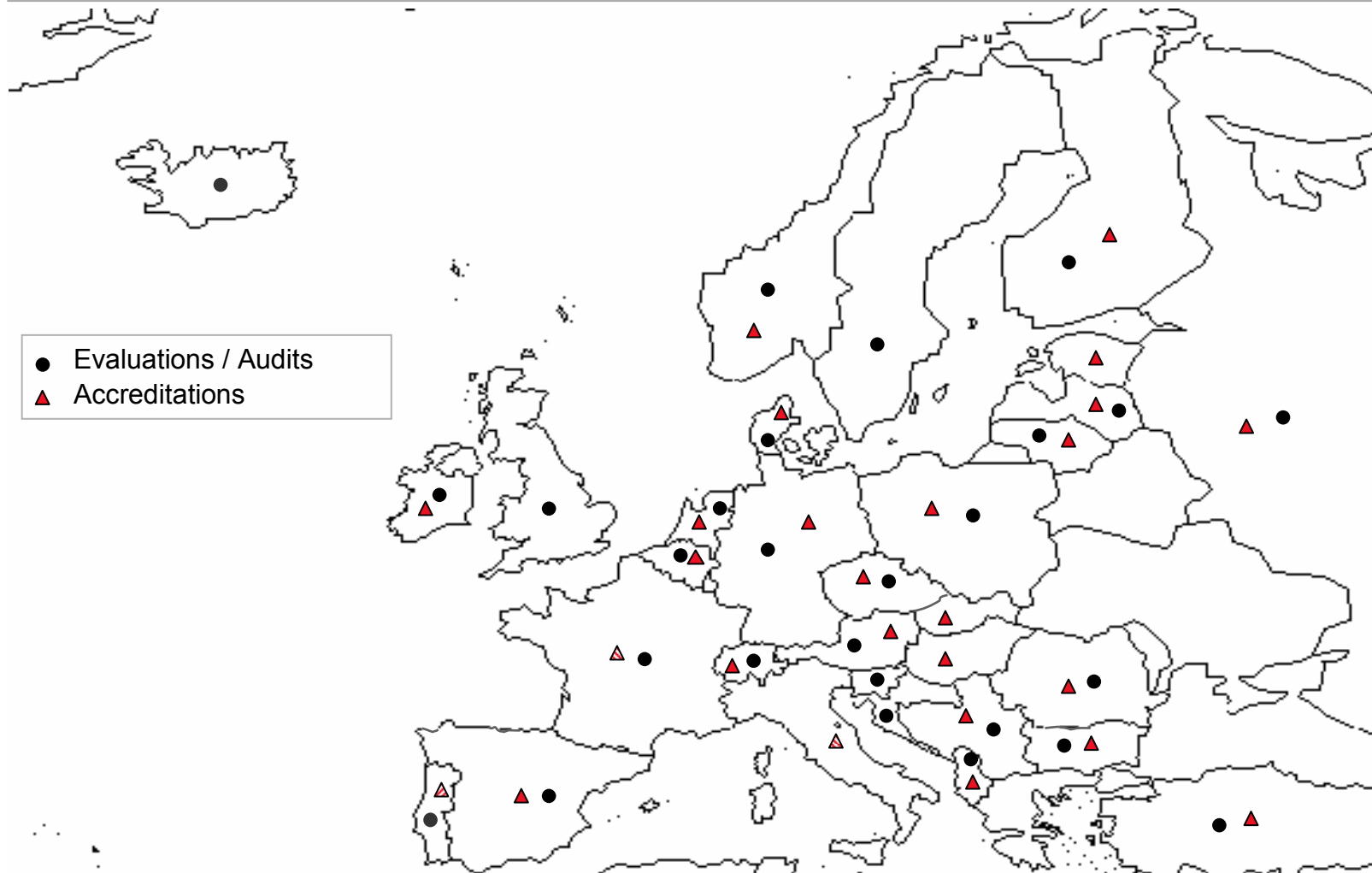
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**«Quality (...) has proven to be at the heart of the EHEA»**

**■ Goals for 2005:**

- Implementation of national quality assurance systems**
- Including a system of accreditation or comparable procedures**
- Evaluation of programmes and institutions**
- International cooperation and networking**

# National Agencies for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Europe, 2005



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## Bergen Conference 2005

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- **«Almost all countries have made provisions for a quality assurance system based on the criteria set out in the Berlin communiqué and with a high degree of cooperation and networking»**
- **«We underline the importance of cooperation between nationally recognised agencies with a view to enhancing the mutual recognition of accreditation or quality assurance decisions»**

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## **ECA – Foundation and Aim**

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- **Consortium of national accreditation organisations**
- **Established in November 2003**
- **15 member organisations from 10 European countries:  
AT, BE, CH, DE, ES, FR, IE, NL, NO, PO**
- **Aim: mutual recognition of accreditation decisions  
among participating countries until 2007**

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## **Mutual recognition of accreditation decisions - Purpose**

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- **To increase transparency in higher education**
- **To remove barriers in the process of recognition of foreign qualifications**
- **To enhance mobility of students and academic staff**
- **To facilitate accreditation/recognition of joint programmes and other forms of trans-border education**

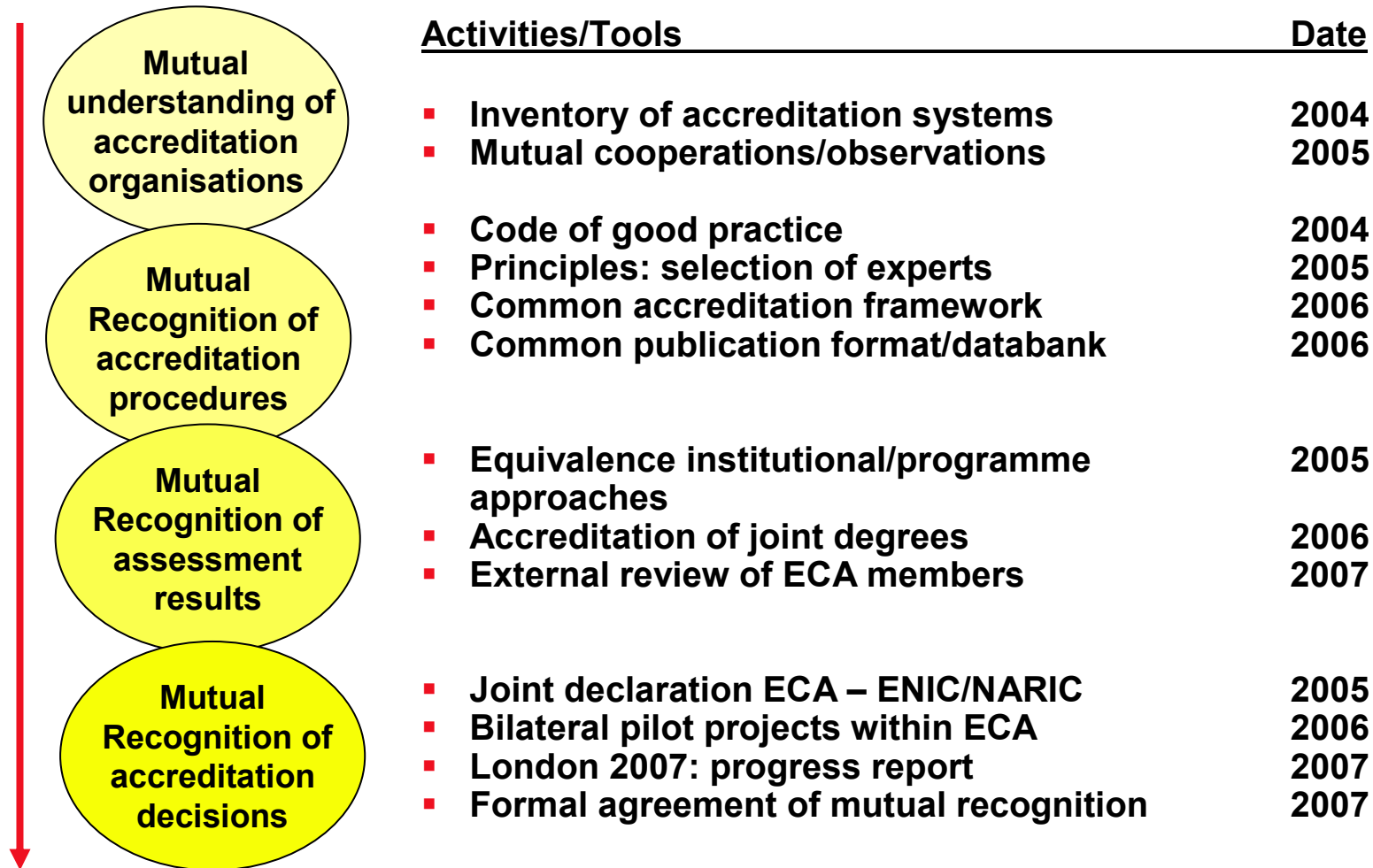
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## **Mutual recognition of accreditation decisions – Elements**

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- **Mutual trust needed ▲ stepwise procedure**
- **Built upon mutual understanding**
- **Development of common guidelines and procedures**
- **Development of common tools**
- **Mutual cooperations in practice necessary**

# ECA Road map to mutual recognition



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## **ECA – Activities 2004/2005**

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- **Inventory of accreditation systems**
- **Code of good practice (signed)**
- **Common principles: selection of experts (signed)**
- **Common publication format / databank**
- **Joint declaration with national recognition offices**

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## **Bergen Conference 2005 – other results**

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- **Ministers adopt ENQA standards and guidelines**
- **Ministers commit to introducing peer review system for QAA's**
- **Ministers welcome principles of an European register for QAA's**
- **Ministers adopt overarching framework for qualifications**
- **Ministers stress need for international cooperation**

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## Summary and Conclusions

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- **Accreditation and QA are key elements for the implementation of the EHEA**
- **Progress has been made in the development of common standards, guidelines and procedures**
- **A lot of challenges are ahead: strong commitment of QAA's needed;**
- **Close collaboration with other partners necessary (e.g. in the domain of mutual recognition, quality provision of crossborder education, etc.)**

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## **Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ)**

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- **Established in October 2001**
- **Based on a legal act**
- **Mission: assure and promote the quality of education and research of the Swiss Universities**
- **Business office and scientific advisory board: autonomy in working process**

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# OAQ - International Co-operations

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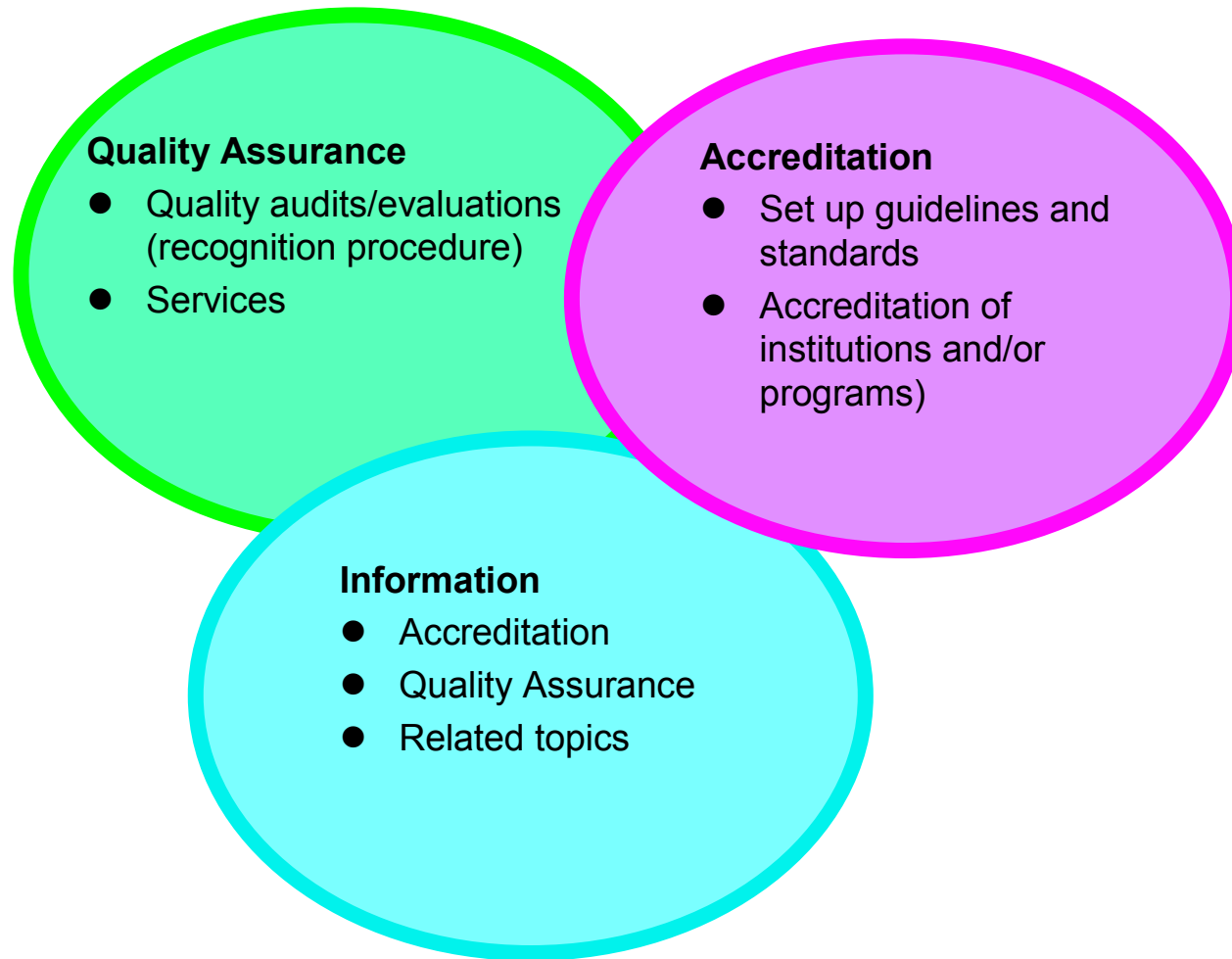
## Memberships:

- **European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA)**
- **European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) -> CH observer status until 2005**
- **Joint Quality Initiative (JQI)**
- **International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)**

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# OAQ - Core Functions

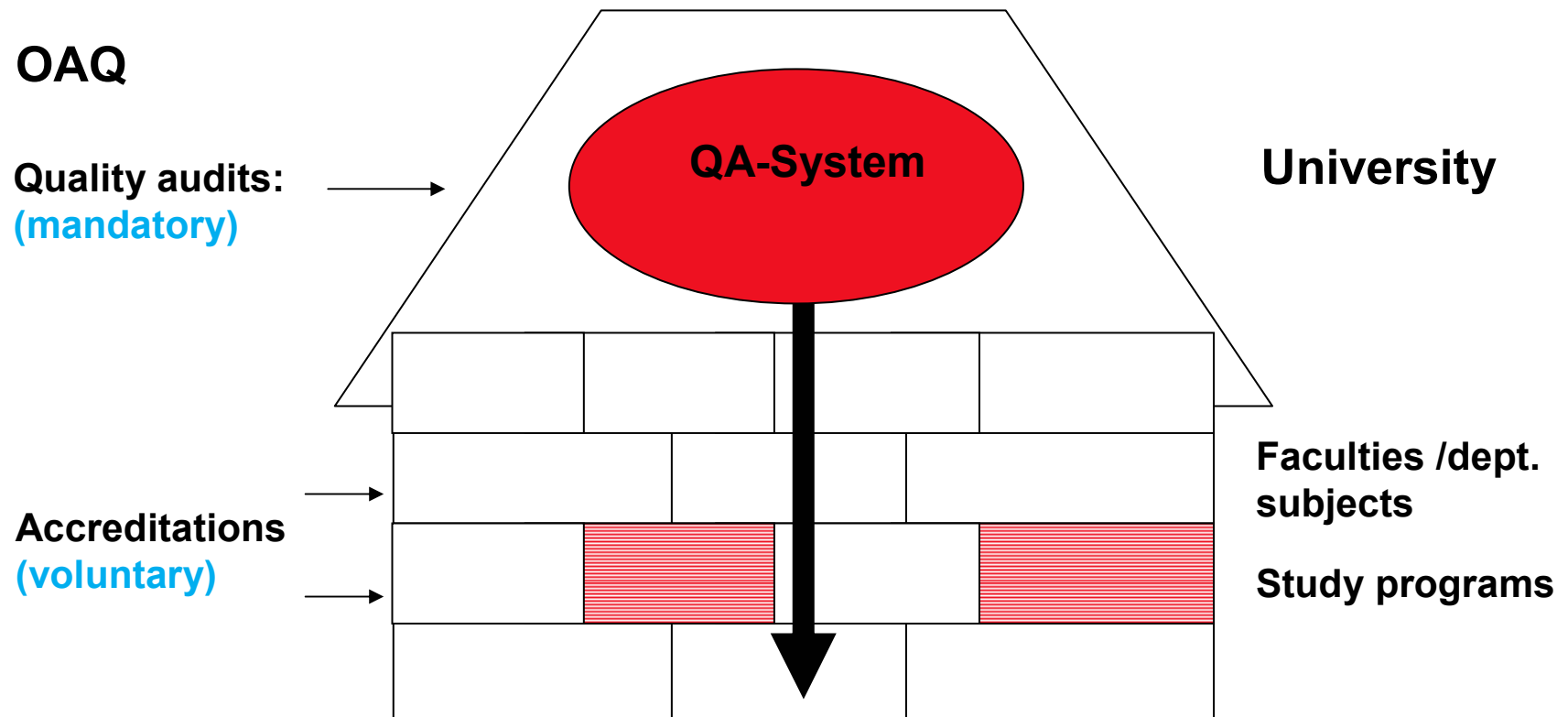
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# External QA at Swiss Public Universities

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# **The Swiss Accreditation System in Higher Education**

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# Accreditation - Definition

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- **Formal and transparent procedure of quality assessment**
- **Carried out by independent institution, using predefined quality standards**
- **Multistep evaluation procedure, leading to yes/no decision**

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# Accreditation - Concept in Switzerland

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- **Accreditation procedures and quality standards based on international best practices**
- **Accreditation of academic institutions and / or programs (public and private)**
- **Focus on education**
- **Quality control and quality development**

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# Accreditation - Procedure in Switzerland

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- **First step** : **Self-evaluation by unit seeking accreditation**
- **Second step** : **External evaluation / on-site visit by independent experts**
- **Third step** : **Decision, based on assessment of pre-determined quality standards**

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## **Accreditation - Quality standards**

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- **Defined and published quality standards**
- **According to best international practices**
- **Generic standards, mainly process oriented**
- **No standards on content of study programs**
- **Addition of specific standards possible**

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## **Accreditation - On site visit**

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- **3 - 5 experts/peers, chosen by OAQ in consensus with unit undergoing accreditation**
- **Selection criteria published (e.g. independency)**
- **Briefing of experts prior to visit**
- **Two days on site visit → report of expert group**

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## **Accreditation - Decisions in Switzerland**

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- **The Swiss authorities decide on proposition of OAQ**
- **Decisions: yes / no / yes under certain conditions**
- **Unconditional accreditation is granted for 7 years**
- **Possibility to appeal against decisions is provided**

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## **Accreditation - Status End 2005 in Switzerland**

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- **Guidelines, criteria and instruments developed**
- **International compatibility of Swiss accreditation system secured**
- **65 accreditation procedures carried out (university institutions/ study programs/medicine)**
- **Future: mandatory accreditation system in Swiss Higher Education Area (institutional accreditations)**

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# Quality Audits at Swiss Universities

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# Quality Audits in Switzerland - Background

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- **Legal basis  
(federal law on financial aid to universities 1999)**
- **Mandatory procedure for all recognized Swiss universities**
- **OAQ has to check every four years whether Universities provide „high quality education and research“**
- **Link to financial aid of federal government**

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# Quality Audits in Switzerland - Principles

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- **Self evaluation and external evaluation**
- **Audit team: 4 international experts with expertise in QA and with leadership experience; on site visit of 2 days**
- **Basic expectations for QA-systems formulated/published**

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## **Basic requirements for quality assurance systems of universities**

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- 1. The quality assurance system of the university should cover both quality control and quality development.**
- 2. Quality assurance must be an integral part of the university overall strategy, cover all the subunits and be applied systematically.**
- 3. The results of internal and external evaluations and of other QA measures must be used continuously to improve the quality of teaching and research.**

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## **Quality Audits - Status 2005 and outlook**

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- **Audits completed at all Swiss public universities**
- **Final report of OAQ for attention of Swiss government in June 2004, publication of synthesis report in February 2005**
- **Discussion of results in the „Swiss Quality Assurance Network“ (including all Swiss universities)**
- **Development of guidelines for quality assurance systems at universities (to be applied in next quality audit cycle 2007/08)**
- **High international attention for audit process in Switzerland**

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## Further Information about OAQ:

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### Requests and information:

- e-mail:  
Rolf Heusser <[rolf.heusser@oaq.ch](mailto:rolf.heusser@oaq.ch)> or [info@oaq.ch](mailto:info@oaq.ch)
- Telephone: [++41 31 380 11 50](tel:++41313801150)
- Website: [www.oaq.ch](http://www.oaq.ch)