IMIA Accreditation procedure

Task force IMIA accreditation,
Version 3, 1 October, 2012
1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to present IMIA’s accreditation review framework. This framework was accepted by the IMIA General Assembly in August 2011. Accreditation can be relevant for institutions that want to inform potential students of the international level and quality of their biomedical informatics program. Obtaining IMIA accreditation means that the quality of the program is at least at the same level as comparable international programs. Both academic bachelor and master programs in the field of Biomedical Informatics and vocational programs at a level just below the academic level are eligible for accreditation. (The term Biomedical Informatics is used as an umbrella term. It covers medical informatics, health informatics, nursing informatics, etc.)

This document is meant for institutes who want accreditation for one or more educational programs in biomedical informatics. It informs about how the accreditation process is carried out and which information should be provided in the self-assessment report. The institution has to contact the chairman of IMIA’s Accreditation Committee well in advance. A site-visit committee has to be established, a self-assessment report to be written and the site-visit committee will need one month to study the self-assessment report. The institution will pay the costs of the site-visit committee members (travel and accommodation). The site-visit committee will together with the program’s management determine an agenda for the site visit and the institution will arrange the necessary meetings and excursions to the library, computer facilities and teaching facilities.

The document describes the set-up of the review framework, the framework itself with the desired contents of the self-assessment report, the requirements for the composition of the site visit committee, the evaluation process, the decisions IMIA can make and the minimally needed documentation that has to be submitted before the site visit.

2. Set-up

This report ‘IMIA Accreditation procedure’ will be accessible via the IMIA website. Institutions can read this document and the accreditation process will start when an institution asks for accreditation by contacting the IMIA’s CEO (imia@imia-services.org). The CEO will pass the request to the chairman of IMIA’s Accreditation Committee. After the request for accreditation is received a site visit committee will be formed by the Accreditation Committee.

First the program has to write a self-assessment report which will be sent to IMIA’s Accreditation Committee via the above email address together with a number of mandatory documents. The Accreditation Committee sends the report to the site visit committee. The site visit committee has one month to study the documentation. In the mean time the chairman of the site visit committee will negotiate a date for the site visit. Then the site visit follows. The quality of the educational program is judged on the basis of discussions of staff and students involved in the program with ‘peers’ (the members of the site visit committee) about the content and the quality of the program. The discussions are based on the contents of the self-assessment report, written by the program and on experiences of the site visit committee during the site visit. In the self-assessment report an answer is given to the following six main questions:

1. What are the goals of the program for which the institute seeks accreditation?
2. How are the goals implemented in a curriculum?
3. What is the size and quality of the staff?
4. Which facilities for teaching are available?
5. How does the institute guarantee the quality of the program?
6. Are the stated goals achieved?

These six questions are translated into six subjects and 16 facets. For each facet a criterion is specified to evaluate the facet. For each facet the site visit committee will formulate a motivated judgement on a four-point scale: insufficient, sufficient, good, excellent. Only the facet ‘Regulatory requirements’ has a two-point scale: constraining or favourable.

Each subject is then given the score sufficient or insufficient, based on a weighted judgement of the related facets. Subsequently the site visit committee determines the quality of the entire program: the quality is positive if all subjects are judged sufficient, else the quality is negative.

The site-visit committee report is marginally tested by IMIA’s Accreditation Committee. The report of the site-visit committee is then sent to the institution. Factually incorrect statements will be corrected on the request of the institution.

The Accreditation Committee will make a decision about granting accreditation based on the report of the site-visit committee. Only if all subjects have been judged positively accreditation will be granted. IMIA’s CEO will inform the institution is about the decision. If the judgment is positive the program can use the label ‘Accredited by the International Medical Informatics Association’. The institution can appeal against a negative decision.

If the decision is negative, the institution can apply again for accreditation after they have corrected the identified shortcomings. Depending on the circumstances a new site visit will be necessary.

The Accreditation is valid for five years. Then the program should be accredited again. In the new self assessment report the program has to show how it dealt with an insufficient score on a facet and with the recommendations made by the site visit committee.

3. Accreditation Review Framework

The accreditation review framework consists of six subjects: Goals of the program (intended end qualifications, sometimes called graduate profile of professional competencies), educational program, staff, facilities, quality management and results (realized graduate professional profile). For all subjects one or more facets are defined for which criteria are provided. As stated above, each criterion is scored on a four-point scale. Below the subjects (bold face), facets and criteria (bold) are presented. The criteria are further explained in an Elucidation section. At the end of each Elucidation section the requirements of which topics should be reported in the self-assessment report are provided. The subjects and facets should be reported in the self-assessment report in the same order as the subjects and facets are ordered below.

**Goals of the program (Job Profile, Graduate Profile)**

*Domain specific requirements*

**Criterion 1:** The intended end qualifications are concretely described and match the requirements that (international) colleagues and professional practice demand of a program in
the domain concerned, taking into account the level (e.g. technical level, bachelor or master) and orientation (vocational or academic) of the program. There is a societal need for graduates with the characteristics described by the intended end qualifications.

**Elucidation:** The intended end qualifications of the program meet the demands that (international) colleagues and professional practice require of a program in the concerned domain. The end qualifications of the program are in accordance with general, internationally accepted descriptions of end qualifications of similar programs having the same level and orientation. There is a market for graduates possessing these end qualifications.

Non academic degrees should be assessed based on the stated competence profile of the graduate.

In the self-assessment report the intended end qualifications of the program should be concretely described, together with the level and orientation of the program. The societal need for the graduates should be discussed. How does the curriculum relate to the IMIA recommendations and to other comparable international programs?

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**Educational program**

**Academic requirements**

**Criterion 2:** The student’s knowledge develops in interaction with education and scientific research in the relevant disciplines. The program warrants the development of skills and knowledge for carrying out scientific research and/or professional activities.

**Non-academic requirements**

**Criterion 2a:** For vocational programs the curriculum has demonstrable links with current practice of the relevant professions. The program warrants the development of skills and knowledge for carrying out professional activities.

**Elucidation:** The program has demonstrable links with current developments in the professional field (e.g. the software industry) and theoretical developments in relevant scientific disciplines, if applicable.

In the self-assessment report the curriculum should be described and it should be made clear that the curriculum takes new developments in the relevant scientific disciplines (academic requirements) or professional practice into account. Also show that when theories, models and methods from the relevant disciplines are presented to the students simultaneously also the various areas in healthcare where these theories, models and methods are applied are discussed.

**Relation between goals and content**

**Criterion 3:** The curriculum is an adequate realization of the intended end qualifications as to level, orientation and domain specific requirements.

**Elucidation:** The end qualifications have been adequately translated into learning goals of (components of) the curriculum. Students are offered a coherent study program as regards to content.

In the self-assessment report it should be shown in which modules the various intended end qualifications are taught. Also it should be explained how a coherent curriculum is ensured, with not too much overlap between the various modules and that each module takes into account what has been taught in earlier modules. By which organizational measures is the coherence maintained?
Rapport between form and content of the education

Criterion 4: The design of the program stimulates study and offers students the possibility to reach the intended end qualifications.

Elucidation: The didactic concept is in line with the goals of the program and the educational work forms and format of the tests fit in with the didactic concept. In the self-assessment report the didactic concept should be discussed and the way in which it is worked out in the program. Provide figures about the educational work forms (lectures, working groups, practicals, etc) and the format of tests (oral, written, presentations, etc) for each module of the program.

Study load

Criterion 5: The program is doable.

Elucidation: Circumstances concerning the program that interfere with the progress of study are removed as much as possible. Provide figures about the number of contact hours and self-study hours for each module. Whether a program is doable can also be judged from examination results and student evaluations. In the self-assessment report insight should be provided of the organization of student evaluations of the program and about the results. If students reported bottlenecks, discuss how these bottlenecks have been tackled. Indicate how the study load is spread over the years. Present the examination results per module and per year.

Relation between intake and program

Criterion 6: The program in form and content fits in with the qualifications of new students.

Elucidation: The entry requirements are realistic in view of the intended end qualifications of the program and the entry requirements of the students. The self-assessment report should give insight in the number of students that enter the program yearly. Do the students have the competences as required by the program? Facet Judgment and examinations has to provide insight in the percentage of students that actually graduate.

Regulatory requirements

Criterion 7: The regulatory requirements concerning the scope and duration, etc. are favorable for the program.

Elucidation: Scope and duration of programs may vary from country to country and depend on the level (bachelor, master) and orientation of the program (vocational or academic). Also the university may have rules concerning the number of repeat examinations, the duration of the validity of marks for courses, the criteria for being accepted for the second year, etc. In the self-assessment report information about the legal requirements in the country of the program and the above mentioned rules of the university should be reported. Are these rules favorable for the program?

Judgment and examinations

Criterion 8: Assessments and examinations adequately test whether the students have realized the learning goals of (parts of) the program. The output of the program is satisfactory.

Elucidation: The program should provide an overview of the results of assessments and examinations for the various modules of the program. During the site visit examples of examination forms and actual written examinations should be present.
In the self-assessment report per module the number of students that directly pass the module examinations should be tabulated. Do students get feedback about their written examinations in addition to a grade? Are the exams and the evaluation valid, reliable and transparent for the students? Is there an Examination Board and what is its function? What is the return of the program (which percentage of the incoming students actually graduate)?

Staff

Quality of staff
Criterion 9: The staff is able to realize the program both with respect to content, education and organization.
Elucidation: The actual expertise of the staff is in accordance with the requirements asked for by the level and orientation of the program. At the academic level the teaching should be carried out predominantly by researchers who contribute to the development of the discipline. In the self-assessment report the type of staff (professors, teachers with PhD, without PhD, etc) involved in education should be described. Is the staff involved both in education and research? Make a list of the five most recent publications of the teachers involved in research. Is the student’s satisfaction with the educational performance of the teachers measured? For vocational training programs the type of staff and the experience of the staff in practical work should be mentioned.

Quantity of staff
Criterion 10: The size of the staff is adequate for the realization of the program.
Elucidation: An overview should be provided about the time the staff spends on education. A breakdown over the various staff positions (professor, PhDs, non PhDs, etc) should be provided if that was not already done in answering facet Quality of staff.
In the self-assessment report a breakdown should be provided of the type and number of staff involved in education. Give insight in the student-staff ratio. Does administrative staff provide educational support to the program?

Facilities

Material facilities
Criterion 11: The accommodation and material provisions are sufficient to realize the program.
Elucidation: A description of the accommodation and computer, internet, email and library facilities should be given. During the site visit the committee will visit the accommodation (lecture rooms, library) and computer facilities.
In the self-assessment report the computer, internet, email and library facilities should be described.

Study counseling and support
Criterion 12: The coaching of and information delivery to students are adequate with a view to study progress and fit in with the needs of the students.
Elucidation: Give information about the accessibility of the educational staff for students who have questions regarding the study content. Also indicate whether advisors (administrative staff that help students with problems like the choice of the study, problems with study skills, study planning, handicaps and other personal circumstances that negatively influence the study) participate in the program and if so, how many.
In the self-assessment report describe the organization of study counselling and support. Also describe how students are informed of changes in the program, information about how to register for examinations, etc.

Quality management

Evaluation results
**Criterion 13**: The program is evaluated periodically, also using testable targets.
**Elucidation**: The program monitors the quality of the intended end qualifications, the program, the staff, the facilities, the examinations and the realized end qualifications via periodic evaluations. The program also collects management information concerning the success rate of the courses and the staff-student ratio. Give information about the quality assessment system in use.
*In the self-assessment report information is provided about the way quality assessment is carried out and information is provided about the items mentioned above.*

Measures for improvement
**Criterion 14**: The results of the evaluation are the basis for demonstrable measures of improvement that contribute to the realization of the targets.
**Elucidation**: Provide the results of evaluations performed in the past and indicate the measures that have been taken to improve negative situations.
*In the self-assessment report provide information about the results of previous evaluations and indicate how the program reacted to possible critique.*

Involvement of staff, students, etc.
**Criterion 15**: The management of the program, teachers, students, alumni and the communities of interest are actively involved in internal quality assessment.
**Elucidation**: Give insight in the organization of the internal quality assessment system.
*In the self-assessment report the organization of the internal quality assessment system is described and provides insight in the involvement of the various stakeholders.*

Results

Realized end qualifications
**Criterion 16**: The realized end qualifications correspond with the intended end qualifications.
**Elucidation**: The realized level is implied by the interim and final examinations, the final project and accompanying thesis and in the way the graduates function in practice or in a continuation course. The program sends a list of 25 theses together with their summaries and table of contents in English to the chairman of the site visit committee. A number of theses will be selected by the site visit committee and these theses will be sent by the program to the site visit committee members. If the theses are not written in English the members of the site visit committee will discuss a number of theses with the staff who will provide a translation of the parts that the site visit committee members indicate. The site visit committee will meet a number of alumni and representatives of the working field who employ graduates of the program.
*In the self-assessment report the program should indicate whether they survey alumni. If so, what were their experiences with finding jobs and with working and were they of the opinion that their qualifications are well suited for the jobs they have.*
4. Composition of the site visit committee

It is important that the site visit committee is put together in such a way that a meaningful discussion can arise with the program management, staff and students. The committee should be sufficiently independent of the program that is visited. One committee member may come from the same country as the institute.

The members of the site visit committee can be proposed by the Accreditation Committee of IMIA. These members then have to be accepted by the program. Alternatively the program can suggest the members of the committee and this committee has to be endorsed by the Accreditation Committee. In this case the program delivers information about the expertise and independency of the proposed members to the Accreditation Committee. The Accreditation Committee nominates the chairman of the site visit committee. This person should have experience with leading a site visit committee.

The site visit committee has to fulfil the following requirements:

1. The committee consists of three senior members, who are domain experts.
2. The committee as a whole has at its disposal the following expertise
   a. Expertise with respect to the scientific developments in the field of study
   b. International expertise
   c. Expertise with teaching and with the development of education at the level concerned and familiarity with the way the education is delivered (distance education, workplace related education, flexible education, traditional education, etc.)
   d. Audit expertise
3. The members of the committee are independent (they were not affiliated or have had ties with the institution of the program for at least five years)

All members of the committee certify before the visit that they do not maintain relations with the institution concerned (as a private person, researcher/teacher or advisor) that could influence their judgement of the quality of the program in a positive or negative way and that they did not have such relations or ties with the institution during the last five years.

The members sign a declaration of independence and secrecy.

After the judgment process the chairman of the site visit committee writes the accreditation report and signs it when all members took note of the report and agreed with the contents.

5. Judgmental process

5.1 Self-Assessment Report

The program management delivers a document (*called the Self-Assessment report*), containing a critical reflection about the program to ease the work of the site visit committee. The critical reflection should be documented describing the subjects in the order specified in section 3. The subjects should be described in sufficient detail so that it is possible for the site visit members to evaluate the 16 facets of the accreditation review framework. Both the strong and weak points should be described. With respect to the subject Quality management the program also documents how the student and teacher satisfaction is investigated and reports about the results. Supporting evidence has to be available during the site visit for possible inspection. The critical reflection is laid down in a report that can be read independently of
other reports. The Self-Assessment report is written in English and should be submitted as a Word file.

The self-assessment report should start with a section containing some basic data about the program. The basic data are described in section 7.1 of this document. The next section (Introduction) introduces the University and relevant departments in relation to its environment, an explanation of the higher educational system in the country, etc. After the Introduction a description of the subjects and facets follows in the order given in section 3. Some mandatory appendices will be attached to the self-assessment report. The contents of these mandatory appendices are described in section 7.2.

One can refer in the self-assessment report to the appendices if otherwise the same data would be presented both in the mandatory appendices and in the self-assessment report.

The critical reflection is pre-eminently a means to let teachers, students and the members of the site visit committee discuss about the quality of the program. The report should therefore present the program in such a way that teachers and students recognize its content. The review framework offers the possibility not only to discuss the results of the past but also the ambitions for the future. What are the choices for the future, in which direction will the program develop? The plans for the future therefore should also be mentioned at the end of the document.

The size of the self-assessment report is maximally 20 to 30 pages, excluding appendices.

5.2 The site visit

The site visit will take two or three days, depending on the program. If the learning material and/or the theses are written in another language than English, (part of) a day will be devoted to discussions about their content (teachers from the institute will translate and explain parts of the documents on the request of the site visit members. The site visit committee will study prior to the visit a number of (master) theses to get a good impression of the realized qualifications of the graduates. The program composes a list of the theses, together with an English summary of these theses and the marks obtained and the committee will select a number of theses from this list (two per member of the site visit committee). The selected theses together with the criteria, used by the program to assess the theses, have to be sent to the members of the committee. If the theses are not in English the members will obtain the summary and a table of contents (in English) of the selected theses. Before the visit the members of the committee make a preliminary judgement of the program based on the Self-Assessment report and the theses and formulate questions to be asked during the site visit.

During the site visit the committee speaks at least with the program management, members of the examination committee, teachers and students and alumni. If possible the committee should meet with representatives of the working field who employ graduates of the program. Also the committee will study the material (text books, syllabi, examination questions, etc.) available for inspection. The duration of the discussions, the composition of the groups with which to speak and the organization of the visit is determined by the committee in consultation with the program. In principle groups are limited to six persons.

At the end of the visit the chairman of the site visit committee gives a concise exposé about the findings and presents the general judgment and the underlying considerations to the program.
5.3 Judgemental procedure of the site visit committee

The site visit committee judges all facets of the accreditation review framework. The judgement of facets is obtained by carefully weighing the positive and critical elements of the findings for each criterion. The judgment can be: insufficient, sufficient, good or excellent. Subsequently the committee formulates a general, weighed and motivated, judgement about the quality of the subjects (sufficient or insufficient). If facets of a subject contain a judgement ‘insufficient’ the site visit committee has to mention the reasons when a subject is judged sufficient. The quality of the program as a whole is positive if all subjects have been judged sufficient, otherwise the quality is negative. When the quality of the program is positive the program is accredited.

5.4 Accreditation report

The chairman of the site visit committee writes a concept Accreditation report of around 20 pages. The report contains the motivated judgements of the site visit committee of the subjects of the review framework. It supports its judgements with references to the Self-Assessment report, the discussions with the representatives of the program and data from the material that could be inspected during the visit. The committee reports about the way it organized the visit.

The Accreditation report starts with summarizing the judgements with respect to the quality of the program. In case the committee has formulated recommendations for improvement they are presented in a separate section at the end of the report. In addition the report contains the scores of the judgements of the subjects and criteria, information about the date of the site visit, the names of the discussion partners, basic data about the program, an overview of the studied material and the declarations of independence of the site visit committee members.

The report is sent by the chairman of the site visit committee to the Accreditation Committee of IMIA after all members agreed with the content.

6. Procedure followed by the Accreditation Committee

The Accreditation Committee receives the report from the site visit committee within six weeks after the site visit. The Accreditation Committee will check whether in the report all subjects have been covered, discussed and assessed and then will send the report to the requesting institution within two weeks after the receipt of the report from the site visit committee. The institution can suggest corrections and provide relevant additional information within a period of two weeks. After the corrections are made by the site visit committee, the Accreditation Committee decides whether the program will be accredited. The institution is informed about the decision. If the judgment is positive the program can use the label ‘Accredited by the International Medical Informatics Association’.

The institution can appeal against a negative decision. The institution can apply again for accreditation after they have corrected the identified shortcomings. Depending on the circumstances a new site visit will be necessary.

The Accreditation is valid five years. Then the program should be again accredited. The program should indicate in the self-assessment report what they did with the recommendations and how they repaired facets judged insufficient. The program cannot be accredited before the facets have been repaired.
7. Mandatory documentation

The program also provides - in addition to the Self-Assessment report - a limited number of documents to the site visit committee. IMIA's Accreditation Committee assumes that the information for these documents is readily available within the program. The documents serve to substantiate and possibly for verification. The following information is needed.

7.1 Basic data about the program

These data occur both at the beginning of the self-assessment report and are part of the mandatory appendices. Part of this information will again appear in the accreditation decision of IMIA).

Administrative data of the program

1. Name of the program
2. Orientation and level of the program
3. Number of credit points or duration of the program
4. Majors
5. Location(s) where the program is provided

Administrative data of the institution

1. Name and address of the institution

Quantitative data about the program

1. Data about the intake of students, about the students’ flow through the program and about the outflow of graduates of – if possible - the last 4 years.
2. Realized teacher-student ratio
3. Average number of contact hours per year of study and of the final project

7.2 Other mandatory appendices

Mandatory appendices accompanying the self-assessment report
(if the documents are not available as a Word file they can be sent in threefold by mail)

1. End qualifications of the graduates of the program
2. Time schedule of the program
3. Description of the content (main features) of the program components with mention of the end qualifications, learning goals, format of education, way of testing, literature (mandatory, recommended), teachers and credits
4. Overview of the staff involved, with name, position, extent of the appointment, title, expertise and list of publications
5. A list with the most recent 25 theses together with a summary and table of contents in English and the marks given to the theses. From these theses the final qualifications of the student can be inferred
6. An overview of the contacts with the professional field (if relevant)

In the self-assessment report part of the above data may also be asked for. In the self-assessment report one can then refer to the relevant appendix.

These documents should be in the possession of the Accreditation Committee **six weeks** before the actual site visit. If the theses are not written in English, they will be discussed during the site visit. The summary and table of contents will provide already some background for the site visit members.

**Documents available for inspection during the site visit**

1. Educational policy plan
2. Staff policy plan
3. Quality care plan
4. Summary and analysis of recent evaluation results and relevant management information
5. Examination assignments with corresponding judgement criteria and a representative selection of actually made exams (in the form of presentations, practicals, assessments, etc.) and their marks
6. Books and other study material.

These documents do not have to be translated if they are not in English. The site visit committee can ask questions about these documents during the site visit.

**7. Time schedule**

After the program has informed IMIA via an email to IMIA’s CEO, the time schedule of the accreditation procedure is as follows.

*After the request for accreditation:*
The chairman of IMIA’s Accreditation Committee in contact with the program’s management decides about the site visit committee members and appoints a chairman of this committee. The program writes a self-assessment report and sends it to the chairman of the site visit committee.

*After receipt of the self-assessment report:*
The chairman of the site visit committee will negotiate a date for the site visit. The duration can be two to three days and is dependent on whether the theses and other documents are written in English or not. Accreditation requests for a bachelor and corresponding master program can be handled in one visit, which then will take at least three days (four if the program language is not English).

The self-assessment report and mandatory documents are studied by the site visit committee.

*One month after receipt of the self-assessment report:*
The site visit committee will visit the program. Depending on the availability of site visit committee members and members of the program it is possible that the site visit is planned more than one month after receipt of the documentation.
After the site visit:
The chairman of the site visit committee writes the accreditation report and sends it to the other members for approval. The whole procedure should not take longer than 6 weeks. The chairman signs the report and sends it to the Accreditation Committee. After a marginal check the Accreditation Committee sends the report to the program. The program may indicate factual errors in the report that will then be corrected. The remarks of the program have to be sent to the Accreditation Committee within two weeks.
If the judgement by the site visit committee was positive the program will get the accreditation.
### Checklist

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<th>Subject 1: Goals of the program</th>
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<td>Facet 1: Domain specific requirements</td>
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<td>Facet 3: Relation between goal and content</td>
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<td>Facet 4: Rapport between form and content</td>
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<td>Facet 5: Study load</td>
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<td>Facet 6: Relation between intake and program</td>
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<td>Facet 7: Regulatory requirements</td>
<td>Constraining/ Favorable</td>
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<td>Facet 8: Judgement and examinations</td>
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<td>Facet 10: Quantity of staff</td>
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<td>Facet 12: Study counselling and support</td>
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<td>Facet 14: Measures for improvement</td>
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<td>Facet 15: Involvement of staff, students, etc.</td>
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<td>Facet 16: Realized end qualifications</td>
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Subject:
- S = Sufficient
- IS = Insufficient

Facet:
- E = Excellent: “best practice”, can serve as example for other programs
- G = Good: the quality is higher than the required basic quality
- S = Sufficient: satisfies the basic quality requirements
- IS = Insufficient: does not satisfy the basic quality requirements