

Quality Assurance Strategy of the University of Rostock

for Studies and Teaching

Decree passed by the Rectorate on 12 December 2022

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1 Principles of the Quality Development System

(see § 2 [Qualitätsordnung \(hereinafter Quality Assurance Regulations\) \[de\]](#))

Objective, subject and understanding of quality

The University of Rostock has an evaluation-based quality development system, which enables it to manage and develop itself in line with the Mission Statement for Studies and Teaching.

Quality development is based centrally around the university's study offers and study conditions and how these are planned and implemented.

In the context of the Mission Statement, the following aspects play an important role for the understanding of quality:

- As far as possible, studies shall be designed to match the needs of a heterogeneous student body, taking into consideration the aspects of tolerance, equal opportunities and family friendliness and allowing for the greatest possible amount of flexibility.
- Studies and teaching should foster democratic relationships, secure peace and raise awareness for sustainability. Mobility periods are provided to enable periods of stay abroad.
- The broad range of subjects provides attractive study offers and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Students' independence and self-responsibility as well as the capability of lifelong learning shall be encouraged during studies and reflected in the learning and qualification goals.
- The University of Rostock considers its responsibility to the surrounding region when developing study offers.

The Quality Development System achieves this whilst following the principle of continuous improvement, taking into account the national and European standards and guidelines for quality assurance at higher education institutions.

The most important standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the field of studies and teaching are:

- the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG),
- the *Qualifikationsrahmen für deutsche Hochschulabschlüsse* - HQR (Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Degrees) and the resulting requirements for imparting competencies through study offers,
- the regulations of the German Accreditation Council for the accreditation of study programmes and system accreditation,
- the *Studienakkreditierungslandesverordnung* (State Ordinance for the Accreditation of Studies), and
- the provisions of the *Landeshochschulgesetz* - LHG M-V (State Higher Education Act), and
- the University of Rostock's *Rahmenprüfungsordnungen* (General Examination Regulations).

Structure and persons involved in quality development

The quality development system is realised in quality assurance cycles (see illustration 2). In this process, quality objectives are drafted, quality improvement measures are developed and implemented, the quality developments are monitored and the resulting consequences are used for further development. The underlying processes for drafting quality objectives (plan), realising measures to improve quality (do), monitoring quality development (check) and developing (act) are used in the following description of the procedure for developing quality.

The university-wide quality assurance cycle is characterised in its various phases by the dialogue between the Rectorate and faculties or facilities in the area of studies and teaching (e.g. Language Centre, Further Education Department). The faculties and facilities are hereinafter referred to as university organisational units. They underpin the university-wide quality assurance cycle with their own organisation-related quality assurance cycles. The description of the quality assurance cycles of the individual organisational units is the subject of the respective organisation-specific quality assurance concepts pursuant to § 2(6) Quality Assurance Regulations.

The Rectorate may issue guidelines for quality development procedures in accordance with § 2(4) [Quality Assurance Regulations \[de\]](#). In this sense, the Quality Assurance Regulations are underpinned by the current [Quality Assurance Regulations \[de\]](#), the [Verfahrensrichtlinie zur Einrichtung, Änderung, Akkreditierung und Aufhebung von Studiengängen \(hereinafter Procedural Guidelines for the Establishment, Modification, Accreditation and Discontinuation of Degree Courses\) \[de\]](#), the [Befragungskonzept \(hereinafter Survey Strategy\) \[de\]](#), and the [Monitoring-konzept \(hereinafter Monitoring Strategy\) \[de\]](#).

The Academic Senate is also involved in the quality development procedures. In accordance with § 16 *Grundordnung* (hereinafter Basic Regulations), it passes university statutes such as the Quality Assurance Regulations and the study and examination regulations and is consulted in important decisions such as the establishment, modification, or discontinuation of degree courses. In particular, the Senate Committee for Studies, Teaching and Evaluation is an important body for discussing, developing and monitoring quality objectives and quality criteria.

Furthermore, in accordance with § 17 Basic Regulations, the University Council functions as an advisory body in strategic matters.

The quality development system and its processes are regularly reviewed in a peer-review procedure involving external auditors, at least every eight years.

This system review can take place as part of a system accreditation procedure. A further format of mutual advisory services on quality development aspects is being tested as part of the activities performed by the Association of North German Universities ("NordAudit").

2 Strategic Planning and Management

(See § 3 [Quality Assurance Regulations](#))

Plan

Pursuant to § 3(1) Quality Assurance Regulations, the Rectorate develops and passes a Mission Statement for Studies and Teaching, strategic goals for studies and teaching, and ensuing university-wide quality objectives and measures.

The Mission Statement and the strategic goals are developed in a process involving the entire university, in exchanges between the heads of the university organisational units on the one hand, and the Rectorate on the other. The Rectorate ensures that the central university bodies (Academic Senate with its competent committees, the Council, the University Council) and the central student representatives are involved in the process. The heads of the university organisational units make sure the Faculty Councils or equivalent bodies and the student representatives are suitably involved in the process.

The drafted strategic goals are used to prepare the agreement of benchmarks and the related target agreements with the State Government pursuant to § 15 LHG M-V and as the foundation for devising objectives and measures for the target agreement periods of five years at a time.

The individual structural units can define their own quality objectives for the field of studies and teaching that go beyond the central objectives as long as these do not contradict the central objectives and the University of Rostock's Mission Statement. The Rectorate shall check whether central funds administered by the Pro-Rector of Studying, Teaching and Evaluation can be provided for realising the measures.

As the representative of the Rectorate, the Pro-Rector for Studying, Teaching and Evaluation holds regular talks with the heads of the respective university organisational units to agree measures for realising the quality objectives (quality assurance talks). These talks with the individual organisational units shall take place every four years and correspond to the cycle of the internal degree course evaluation procedure – one year after the cluster evaluation

of a faculty or organisational unit and again after approx. four years (see figure 1). The heads of the university organisational units convene with the Pro-Rector to decide, depending on the specific topics, whether other persons, such as the chairpersons of the examination boards and persons responsible for the degree courses shall take part in the talks. The results of the talks are documented by means of a catalogue of measures with persons responsible and the planned dates. These are discussed again during the next talks. (see Check). The organisation and documentation of the talks is the responsibility of the HQE – University and Quality Development Office.

Figure 1: Cycle of the degree course evaluation/internal accreditation and quality assurance talks

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038
Systemakkreditierung	Sys. Akkr.		Q-G 1			Q-G 2			Sys. Akkr.		Q-G 1			Q-G 2		
Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät		Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2		
Philosophische Fakultät			Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2	
Theologische Fakultät			Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2	
Agrar- und Umweltwissenschaftliche Fakultät				Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2
Fakultät für Informatik und Elektrotechnik	Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1		
Juristische Fakultät	Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1		
Fakultät für Maschinenbau und Schiffstechnik		Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1	
Universitätsmedizin Rostock		Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1	
Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät			Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1			Q-G 2				Akkr.	Q-G 1
Lehramt				Q-G 2			Eval.		Q-G 1			Q-G 2				Eval.
Eval. = Evaluation Akkr. = Akkreditierung Sys. Akkr. = Systemakkreditierung Q-G = Qualitätsgespräch																

Do

The quality objectives are pursued in the conception and realisation of the University of Rostock's study offers. The term 'study offers' is used in a broad sense and covers both the degree courses and the associated processes and services, e.g. in the areas related to counselling and supervision, equipment or examinations.

The study offers are fine-tuned by the university organisational units, in particular the faculties and the persons responsible for the degree courses and lecturers, in collaboration with the relevant areas of the university administration, central organisational units, and central scientific facilities.

The Mission Statement for Studies and Teaching and the quality objectives defined under "Plan" provide essential orientation for the fine-tuning and internal accreditation of degree courses.

The Rectorate can provide specific support for quality development measures and maintains an incentive structure for this purpose. More specifically, the Pro-Rector for Studying, Teaching and Evaluation has a fund for supporting quality development. The purpose of the fund is to support new developments to complement regular activities in the field of studies and teaching and to create room for change. The fund's funding activities are linked closely to the University of Rostock's goals in the field of studies and teaching. The fund is limited in time and is usually tied to the Pro-Rector's term of office. The fund's activities are overseen by an advisory board, comprising student and faculty representatives, as well as further members of teaching staff, and is appointed by the Rectorate. The advisory board recommends activities to be funded by the Pro-Rector for Studying, Teaching and Evaluation.

In addition, the HQE – University and Quality Development Office plays an advisory and supporting role and coordinates and accompanies all of the quality development processes on the central level.

Check

Regular internal and external evaluation procedures are implemented to monitor quality development. Important evaluation procedures in the field of studies and teaching are listed in § 6 Quality Assurance Regulations.

Quantitative productivity and achievement values from monitoring (see [Monitoring Strategy \[de\]](#)) and qualitative and quantitative data from surveys (see [Survey Strategy \[de\]](#)) are included in evaluation processes.

Evaluation and internal accreditation procedures for study offers are subject to an individual quality assurance cycle and, if possible, shall be bundled for each faculty or organisational unit and realised in an eight-year cycle that is decided by the Rectorate and alternates between organisational units (see figure 1).

In addition and if required, the Rectorate and the management of the individual university organisational units can carry out evaluation procedures for their own areas of responsibility.

Required additional evaluation procedures apply in particular to the following situations:

- A comprehensive judgment of quality is required if a structural decision is to be made.

- A judgment of quality is not possible as no data is available. This can be the case, e.g. when evaluating cross-sectional aspects for which only insufficient information is available from the regular procedures to monitor quality development.

In order to conserve resources, consideration must be given in each case to how additional and regular evaluation procedures can be sensibly pooled or are able to complement one another.

The Rectorate convenes with the respective university organisational units to regularly decide on a plan for which evaluation procedures with external assessment within its area of responsibility are to take place when. The HQE – University and Quality Development Office is responsible for coordinating and supervising the procedures.

The regular quality assurance talks between the Rectorate and the respective heads of the organisational unit not only define goals (Plan), but also analyse and evaluate quality development throughout the university, the attainment of goals, and the realisation of measures at organisational unit level (see Figure 1) This is based on data from monitoring (see [Monitoring Strategy \[de\]](#)), surveys (see [Survey Strategy \[de\]](#)) and Complaints Management, the results of the evaluation procedures, and reports from the university organisational units pursuant to § 4 Quality Assurance Regulations. The data and information is contributed by the HQE – University and Quality Development Office.

The aspects of quality development that are taken into account are based on the understanding of quality defined in the Mission Statement and the respective quality objectives, as well as the recommendations and conditions resulting from the degree course evaluation/internal accreditation procedures.

Results from the evaluation procedures are included to the extent that is significant beyond the individual circumstances (i.e., for example, contain indications of fundamental problems) or if certain topics occur repeatedly.

Act

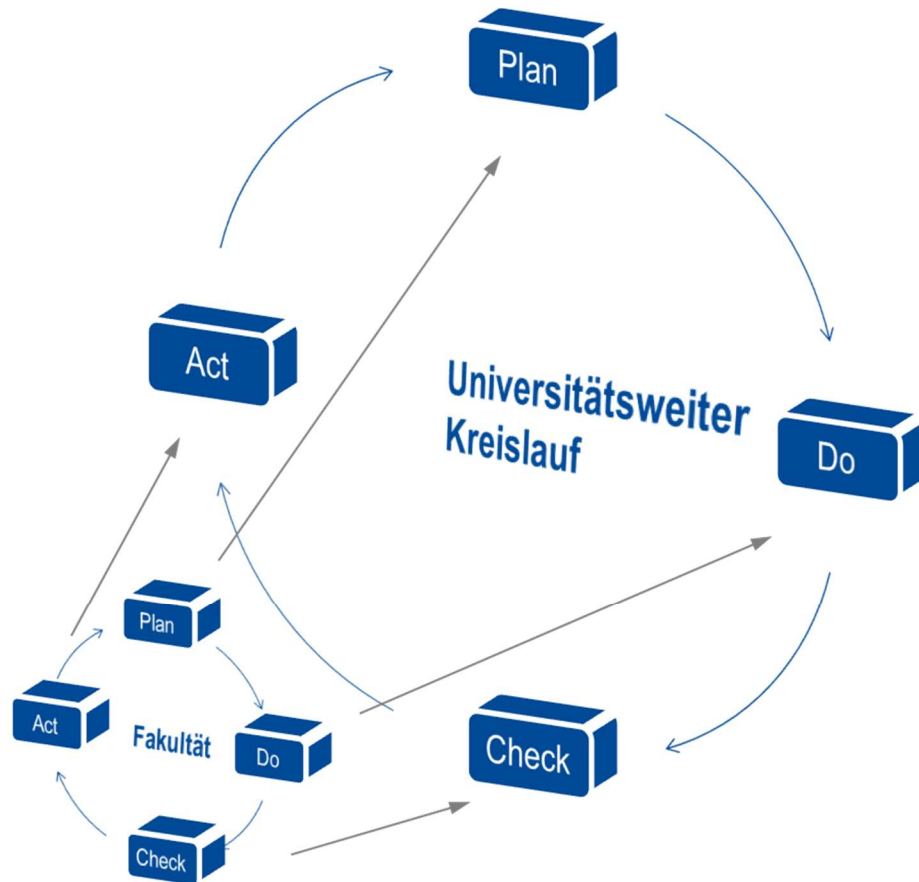
Consequences are derived from the analysis that lead to a specific implementation of quality development measures or are included in the further or new development of quality objectives and measures.

As part of the quality assurance talks between the respective university organisational unit and the Rectorate, agreements are usually made on the following aspects:

- The university organisational units announce measures in their area of responsibility that will remedy weaknesses and consolidate existing strengths. Such measures could address e.g. the organisation of teaching, student administration and examinations, or the further training of lecturers in higher education didactics, as well as the realisation of recommendations and requirements from the degree course evaluation/internal accreditation procedures.
- The Rectorate reviews its possibilities to promote the development of quality and to correspondingly manage the resources at its disposal. It also considers to what extent previously agreed measures have been implemented.

At the same time, new quality objectives are derived, which themselves are included in the strategic planning process. This closes the quality assurance cycle.

Figure 2: Quality development cycle at the University of Rostock



3 Quality Development of Degree Courses

(see § 5 [Quality Assurance Regulations](#))

Plan

In consultation with the organisational units, the Rectorate passes an annual plan on the procedures to establish, modify and discontinue degree courses for the coming academic year.

Required changes come, for example, from legal, formal or capacity-related changes, through aiming to adjust to university-wide or the faculties' own quality objectives, from target agreements with the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and through the assessment of results from evaluations, surveys, examination statistics, and complaints.

As a general rule of principle, the following quality criteria are decisive for degree courses:

- the Mission Statement for Studies and Teaching
- the university's and faculty's specific quality objectives, and
- standards and guidelines pursuant to section 1 'Principles of the Quality Development System'.

The organisational units can submit requests for corresponding procedures on the basis of the Guidelines for the Establishment, Modification, Accreditation and Discontinuation of Degree Courses. Alternatively, certain procedures can be initiated by the university governance.

The HQE – University and Quality Development Office publishes necessary information, documents and templates for corresponding procedures on its website.

Do

The implementation or modification of study programmes is subject to a quality development procedure, which is strictly regulated in the [Procedural Guidelines for the Establishment, Modification, Accreditation, and Discontinuation of Degree Courses \[de\]](#).

All degree courses must undergo a quality assurance procedure with external assessment (concept evaluation) before they are established or substantially modified.

For all other procedures linked to modifications of degree courses, the Pro-Rector for Studies, Teaching and Evaluation decides together with the Senate Committee for Studies and Teaching on the basis of the procedural guidelines which procedure is to be used.

As part of the approval procedures for establishing or modifying degree courses pursuant to the procedural guidelines, the university bodies (in particular reform committees and the Senate Committee for Studies, Teaching and Evaluation, or the Academic Senate) shall ensure that all status groups are involved and make efforts to make sure the quality objectives and the recommendations from evaluation procedures are realised.

The Senate Committee for Studies, Teaching and Evaluation plays a special role. It convenes once a month and advises the Academic Senate and, if necessary, also the Rectorate, on decisions in the field of studies and teaching. As part of the approval procedures for examination and study regulations, a preliminary review of the observation of formal standards is carried out by the HQE – University and Quality Development Office. A member of the Senate Committee uses a predetermined set of questions to assess the further quality criteria (accreditation requirements and internal standards) and reports the results to the Committee. If improvements are required or there are still problems that need addressing, it may be necessary to treat/discuss the matter again in the Senate Committee. The vote of the Senate Committee is heard before a decision is made in the Academic Senate.

Check

All of the degree courses must be the subject of a quality development procedure with external assessment (external degree course evaluation) at regular intervals of no more than eight years. As a general rule of principle, this also applies to degree courses with state or church examinations. The Rectorate decides on justified exceptions.

The degree course evaluation examines the objectives and contents of the curricula, the studyability and mobility, as well as the advice and supervision given to the students, the organisation of studies and examinations, as well as the staff and financial resources. The surrounding academic environment provides the required context.

Where possible, the procedures shall be bundled for each of the university organisational units and carried out at regular intervals (see figure 1). Related subject disciplines shall be grouped together in a procedure with a joint group of reviewers (cluster evaluation). If necessary, the Rectorate can extend individual accreditation deadlines for individual degree courses in order to enable a cluster evaluation.

The HQE – University and Quality Development Office coordinates the external degree course/internal accreditation procedures, which are financed by central budgetary funds. The significant aspects of the procedure are stipulated in the [Procedural Guidelines for the Establishment, Modification, Accreditation and Discontinuation of Degree Courses \[de\]](#). In addition, the HQE – University and Quality Development Office publishes templates for self-description reports and for evaluations based on current criteria for the accreditation of degree courses. The HQE – University and Quality Development Office is responsible for regularly updating the templates and provides basic statistical data and key figures as well as the evaluations of relevant surveys for the individual procedures. The final compilation of the self-evaluation is the responsibility of the member of staff responsible for the degree course. The completed self-evaluation is passed on to the Dean of Studies of the relevant faculty for reference.

The results of the degree course evaluation are documented by the HQE – University and Quality Development Office and must be considered when reforming the respective degree course and when holding the regular quality assurance talks.

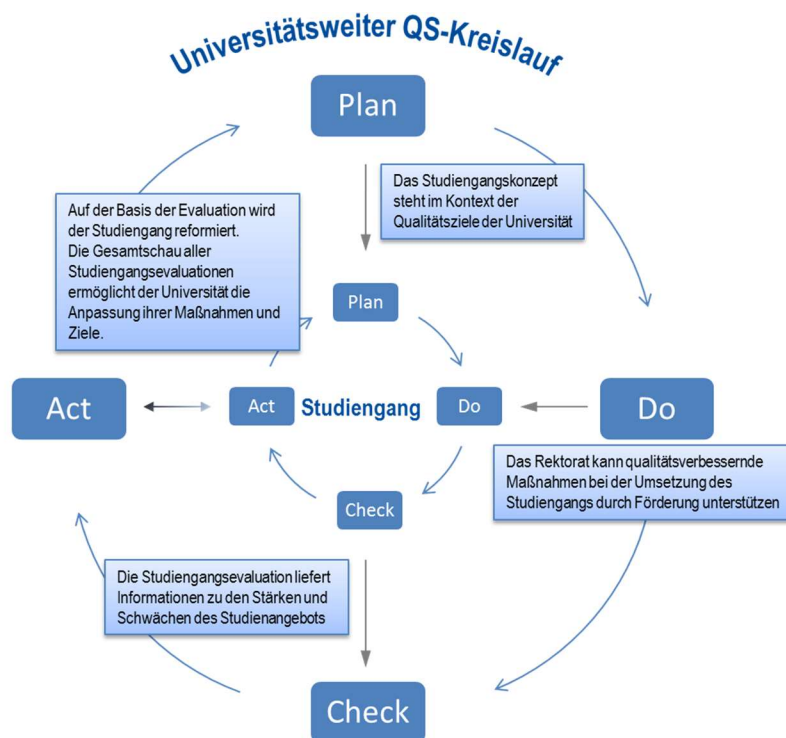
Act

Within 12 months after the regular evaluation procedure of an organisational unit, a quality assurance talk shall be held between the management of the organisational unit and the Rectorate, which is usually represented by the

Pro-Rector for Studying, Teaching and Evaluation. This talk not only covers the general strategic aspects and an assessment of the realisation of the quality objectives, but also and in particular, the further development of the degree courses. The university governance checks to what extent it can support the realisation of measures. Financial support is available from the Pro-Rector's fund. The assessments and any possible recommendations and/or requirements, alongside further information and data, constitute an important foundation for deriving measures and defining or adjusting quality objectives.

This creates a connection between the quality assurance cycle of an individual degree course and the university-wide cycle described under "2. Strategic Planning and Management":

Figure 3: Degree course development cycle at the University of Rostock



4 Complaints Management

(see § 7 [Quality Assurance Regulations](#))

In accordance with § 7 Quality Assurance Regulations, the respective competent university organisational unit is responsible for handling complaints. Corresponding regulations can be found in the respective quality assurance strategies.

At central level, the Pro-Rector for Studying, Teaching and Evaluation is responsible for handling complaints or recommended improvements related to studies and teaching. In addition, various officers can be contacted.

In order to protect students who have lodged complaints, complaints offices have been set up by the student representatives, in particular the Students' Union (AStA). Regular consultations between the Pro-Rector for Studying, Teaching and Evaluation and AStA representatives ensure that students' complaints can be brought forward in anonymous form and possible solutions can be discussed together. The Senate Committee for Studies, Teaching and Evaluation can also contribute towards solving cross-organisational conflicts or problems. The student representatives are able to introduce corresponding topics to the committee.