

The Shift from Program Accreditation to System Accreditation: Evaluation and Further Development of Study Programs at Universität Regensburg



Universität Regensburg

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Some Facts about Universität Regensburg (UR)

The University of Regensburg in Facts

- foundation: July 18, 1962
- research university incl.
university hospital
- modern campus university
- ~21,588 full-time students
- over 150 study programs
covering a wide range of subjects





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11 Schools / Faculties

Law

Business, Economics and
Management Information Systems

Catholic Theology

Philosophy, Art,
History and Humanities

Psychology, Education
and Sport Science

Language, Literature and Cultures

Biology and Pre-Clinical Medicine

Mathematics

Physics

Chemistry and Pharmacy

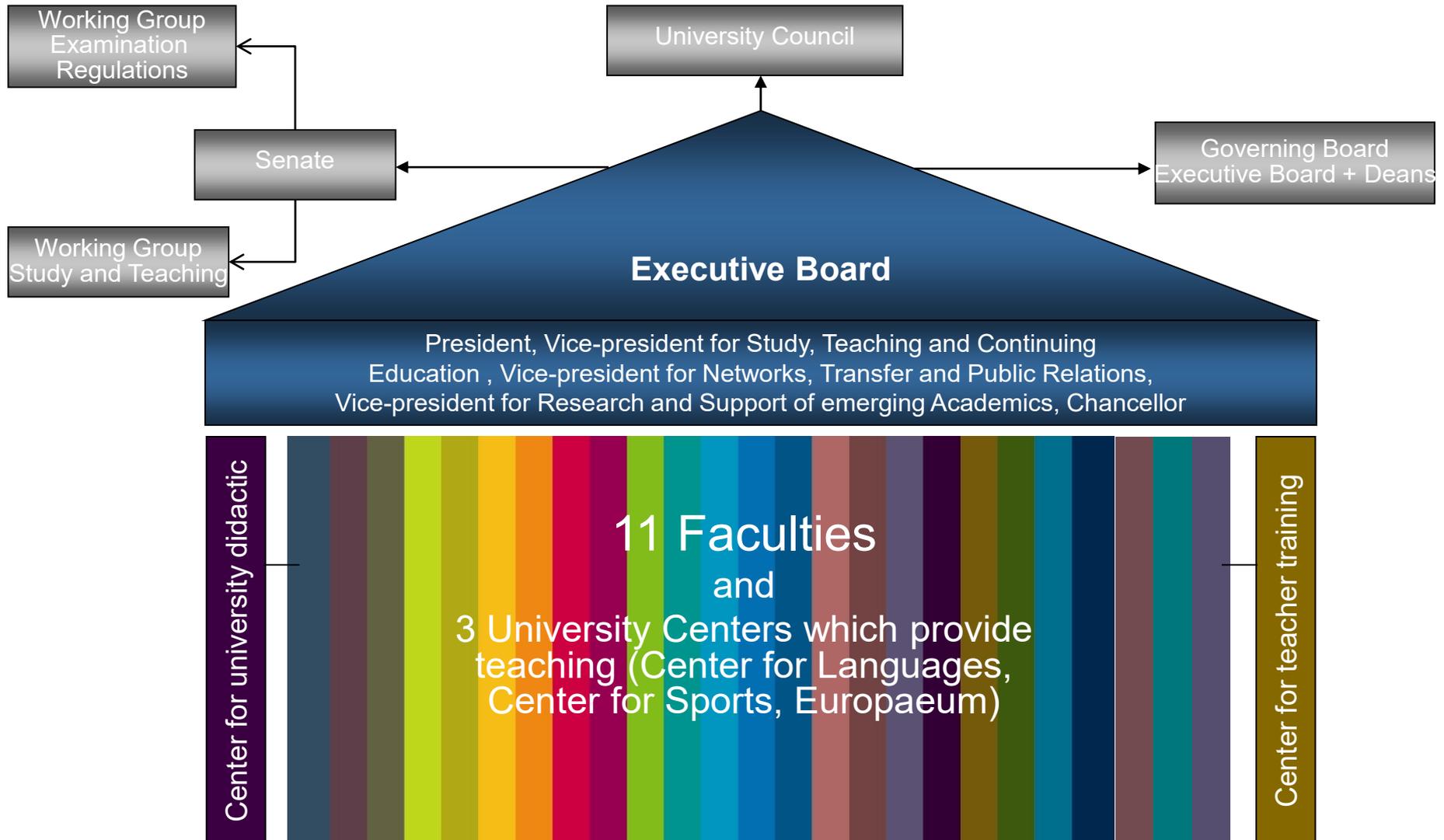
Medicine



Study Programs at Universität Regensburg (UR)

- Almost all faculties (few exceptions are e.g. Medicine and Pharmacy) have modularized their Bachelor and Master programs.
- The B.A. programs at the university comprise two or three subjects that are studied simultaneously. In the B.Sc. programs of study one subject is studied as the main focus.
- Bachelor programs are based on a three-year study cycle, Master programs on a two-year cycle.
- In total, UR offers 112 bachelor and master programs (all of them have to be accredited)

Organizational Structure of UR





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Accreditation in Germany

Legislative Changes in Germany: Introduction of Accreditation

- **1998:** fundamental change to the German higher education law: → nationwide framework regulations for study programs were abolished
- **July 1998:** **program accreditation** as the main instrument of quality assurance was established
- **March 1999:** The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs defined minimum standards for program accreditation
- **2006:** Bavarian higher education law is changed – all Bavarian universities now have to establish a quality assurance system.
- **2007:** The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs decided to establish **system accreditation** as a alternative form of accreditation

Program vs. System Accreditation

	Program Accreditation	System Accreditation
Subject of accreditation	The bachelor and master study programs of the University	The quality management system of the University
Outcome / Result	A positive program accreditation attests that the accredited study program complies with a minimum set of quality standards defined by the German Accreditation Council	<p>A positive system accreditation attests the University that its quality assurance system in the field of teaching and learning is appropriate to assure the quality standards of its study programs.</p> <p>As a result the University is allowed to accredit its own study programs. All study programs that have passed the accredited quality assurance procedure are accredited.</p>
Accreditation procedure	A multistage procedure which is based upon the principle of peer review. The basis for accreditation is a "self-documentation report" of the University	
Accreditation process	one on-site visit for each study program	Three on-site visits
Accreditation period	5 – 7 years	6 – 8 years
Accreditation costs	12,000€ per study program	approx. 50,000€

Advantages of System Accreditation

Increasing autonomy

- The University has the freedom to develop the ways, methods and instruments of quality assurance on its own and has the possibility to adjust them to individual needs
- Not only external minimum standards are checked, but also the quality standards of the university itself (based on a checklist of criteria).
- The decision whether a single study program gets its accreditation or not is made by a university committee (not by external expert groups)

Overcoming the „accreditation-improvement paradox“

- Evaluating study programs by the university itself helps to focus on improving the study program, not on judging them.
- The quality culture within the University is increased

Advantages of System Accreditation

Sustainability

- The quality management system of UR is compatible with newly upcoming models such as quality audits (recommended since 2010 by the German Rectors' Conference, German Council of Science and Humanities and others)

Reducing bureaucracy

- No extensive self-documentation required, but short reports on quality that focus on the essential matters
- Administrative procedures in the field of teaching and learning are improved

Reducing costs

- The mere accreditation costs for system accreditation are lower than for program accreditation



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History: UR's Long Journey to System Accreditation (2005 – 2015)

History: Laying the Foundations (2005 – 2007)

In 2005 the executive board of UR decided to introduce a QMS and established the structural requirements:

- Appointment of the third vice-president for study and teaching
- Introduction of regular meetings of the “deans for study affairs” to discuss the development of the QMS and all issues regarding the quality of study programs
- Development of the University’s mission statement (Leitbild);
- Request for additional staff members on the basis of a project proposal to establish a university wide QMS submitted to the Bavarian Ministry (2 new staff members were approved)
- Establishment of a project group composed of the vice-president and the chancellor (leadership) and 4-5 staff members

History: Establishing the QMS (2008 – 2012)

In December 2007 the executive board of UR decided to head for system accreditation. The following major steps for the establishment of the QMS were undertaken:

- Program accreditation of several study programs
- Definition of the University's and the Faculty's quality objectives in the field of teaching and studying (2009/10)
- External evaluation of the University's QMS (2010/11)
- Development of an internal procedure for evaluating the University's study programs and definition of evaluation criteria (2011/12)
- Adoption of the University's regulations for evaluation by the senate (2012)
- Establishment of a university-wide board for evaluating study programs by the senate (2012)
- Until March 2013 the first 17 study programmes went through the newly established evaluation procedure

History: System Accreditation at UR (2012 – 2016)

In July 2012 the executive board decided to apply for accreditation. Major steps of the accreditation procedure were:

- **September 2012:** application for admission to system accreditation
- **July 2013:** submission of the “self-documentation report”
- **February 2014:** first on-site visit of the expert group
- **September 2014:** second on-site visit: program random sample
- **October 2014:** third on-site visit of the expert group and feature random sample
- **March 2015:** Accreditation agency announced the accreditation of Universität Regensburg until March 2016.
- **March 2016:** after verifying some corrections to the quality assurance system the accreditation agency announced the accreditation of Universität Regensburg until September 2021



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Ensuring the Quality of Study Programs at UR

Procedures to Ensure the Quality and Accredit Study Programs at UR

- With the successful system accreditation, UR is allowed to accredit its study programs.
- Two different procedures for accrediting study programs have been established:
 - Concept evaluation (for newly developed programs before they start)
 - program evaluation (for on-going study programs)
- As of May 2017 82 study programs of UR have been accredited.
- The current accreditation period is 5 years.

The Quality Assurance System of UR is based on...

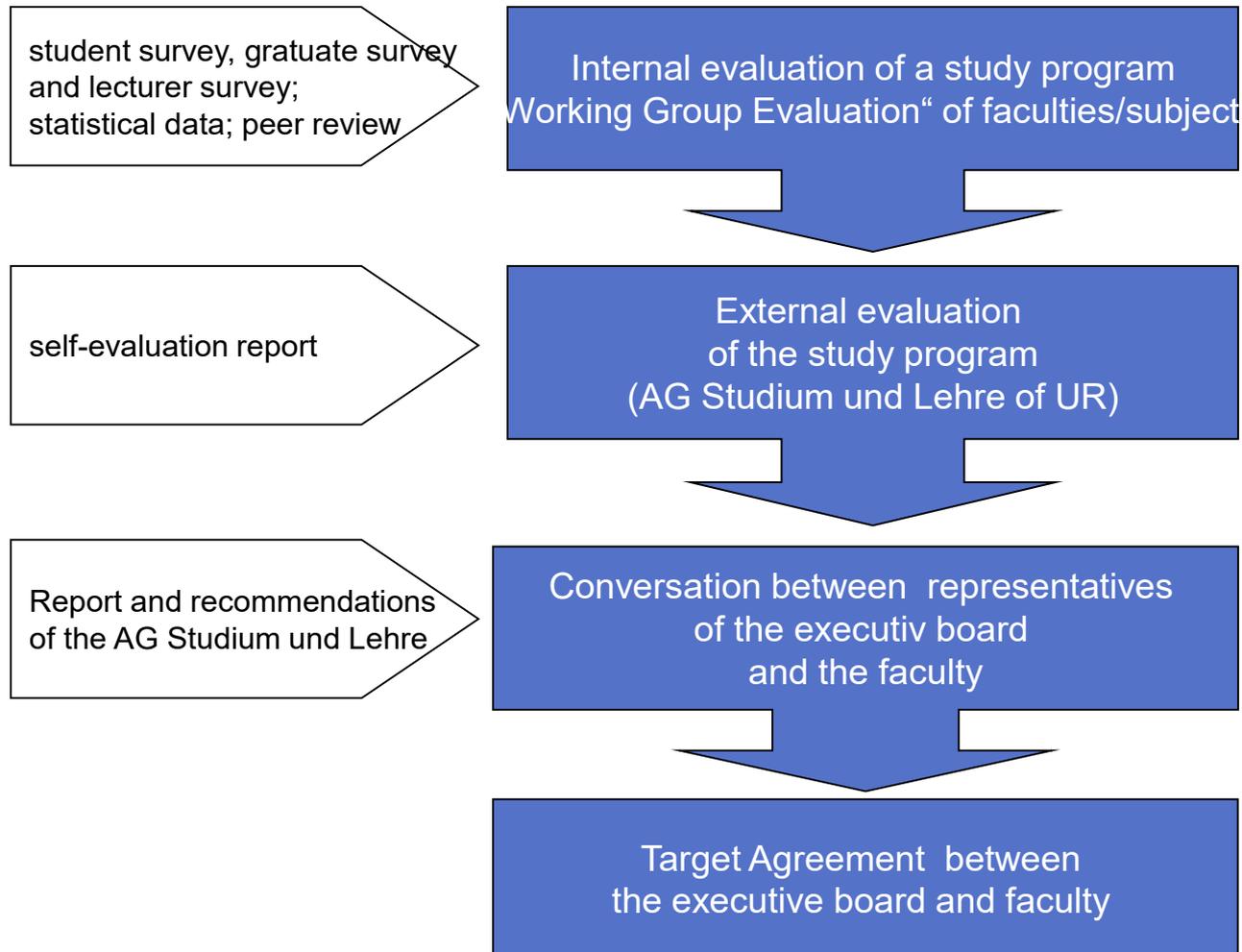
Regulations for the evaluation of teaching and learning at Universität Regensburg (senate decision)

Guideline manual for the evaluation of study programs (including: criteria for the evaluation)

Questionnaires for several surveys (students, alumni and teaching staff)

Evaluation of a Study Program

(every five years)



Internal Evaluation of the Study Program

- Working Group Evaluation: The Working Group Evaluation is set in by the faculty board. Every status group is included
- There is a guideline manual which contains the criteria of evaluation
- Self-evaluation of the study programs is based on statistic data, surveys (student, teacher and graduate survey) and relevant documents (such as module description, examination regulations, etc.)
- Peer review
- Results in an self-evaluation report

External Evaluation of the Study Program

- AG Studium und Lehre (Working Group of professors, lecturers and students)
- The AG Studium und Lehre reviews the self-evaluation reports of the study program
- The AG Studium und Lehre talks to students and lecturers of the study program
- Additional peer review is possible when needed
- Results in a report containing recommendations to the faculty in order to develop the study program
- The faculty has the possibility to comment this report
- Finally the report is sent to the executive board

Target Agreement

- The executive board discusses the recommendations with the dean and the dean of study affairs of the faculty
- The elected student representatives and the elected lecturer representatives of the faculty board are invited to join this conversation
- Within the framework of this conversation the executive board and the dean of the faculty agree upon a set of actions in order to develop the study program
- The agreement is signed by the executive board and the dean of the faculty
- The faculty reports on a regular basis whenever one or more of the agreed actions are carried out

Overview on the Quality Criteria

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3 main themes		
Further development of the study program (2 criteria)	Concept of the study program (6 criteria)	Running the study program (4 criteria)
12 criteria (with 45 specifications = number in brackets)		
How systematically does the faculty improve the program (3)	Competence focused study goals (3)	The Possibility of finishing a study program in the given time (7)
Facts and figures (number of students, average duration of study, etc.) (3)	Concept of modularization focused on learning outcomes (5)	Support for individual learning (3)
	Realistic credit points (2)	Student-centered counselling (3)
	Science-based and research-related study program (2)	Providing student-centered information (3)
	Getting students fit for the future and broadening their academic horizons (7)	
	Support for national and international mobility (Internationalization) (4)	

Self-Evaluation Report

- Based on results of several surveys and data (such as number of students, number of graduates, etc.) the “Working Group Evaluation” evaluates every criteria and every specification
- The “Working Group Evaluation” gives a brief statement to every criterion and every specification
- The “Working Group Evaluation” gives a brief conclusion of the strengths and weaknesses at the end of the report

Evaluating the Study Programs

- The administration provides several forms of data and evidence (e.g. results of several surveys, facts and figures from the data processing systems) in order to help the faculties to discuss their study program self-critically.
- All the relevant stakeholders (students, alumni, teaching staff) are brought together to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the study program.
- At the end of the process several proposals for the further improvement of the study programs are made.

Thank you for your attention!

