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## Higher Education Policy as it applies to EIE programmes in Germany

This document applies only to education at Level 6 and above of the European Qualifications Framework. All terms used in this document have the meaning specific for Germany and may have different meaning when used in any other country.

### Overview of Quality Assurance

Paragraph overview of the quality assurance system in your country

Germany is a federalist country consisting of 16 States which are sovereign in educational and cultural affairs. Joint decisions are taken by the Standing Conference of the German Ministers for Education and Culture (KMK). Under Section 59 of the Framework Act for Higher Education (Hochschulrahmengesetz – R121) and the higher education legislation in place in the States (R126, R128, R131, R133, R135-136, R139, R141, R143, R145-146, R148, R149–152, R154, R157, R162), higher education institutions are subject to state supervision which is exercised by the States. The full texts of the current laws for higher education institutions are available on the KMK website ([www.kmk.org](http://www.kmk.org)).

In the field of higher education the Federal Ministry for Education and Research is mainly responsible for scholarships, funding research and determining research priorities, negotiating framework agreements, and organising and supporting international exchange in education and research.

The structure of the German accreditation system consists of two levels. The German Accreditation Council is at the top level under the guidance and control of which there are the actual accreditation agencies as the second level. The legal framework of the Accreditation Council refers to a foundation under public law. It has 17 members which are jointly appointed by the German Rectors' Conference and the KMK and whose term of office is four years: four representatives from the higher education institutions, four from the responsible State Ministries, four representatives from professional practice, two students, two international experts, and one representative of the accreditation agencies (with advisory capacity only). The Accreditation Council is a member of all important international networks for quality assurance, in particular INQAAHE and ENQA. In this context, it negotiates cooperation agreement with foreign accreditation agencies for mutual recognition of accreditation decisions and degrees [1], and works to ensure fair competition among the accreditation agencies.

The second level of the accreditation system consists of the actual accreditation agencies [2]. Only agencies, which are accredited by the Accreditation Council, are allowed to accredit degree programmes. Higher education institutions are free to choose by which agency they want to have their degree programmes accredited. Furthermore, they can choose to get an additional accreditation for a particular degree programme from an international accreditation agency to market this as an additional quality feature.

There are altogether ten accreditation agencies certified by the Accreditation Council (eight German, one Austrian, and one Swiss agency). They are either regionally active (e.g. in one or more but not all German States) and then accredit programmes in all subjects and disciplines,



or they carry out accreditations in all German higher education institutions but then are specialised to accredit certain subject areas and disciplines only. The legal status of these agencies varies, but the majority are non-profit organisations.

There is an intensive debate among actors in the field of German accreditation whether the highly complex programme accreditation should be replaced by process institutional called “process accreditation”, which is guided by the principle whether the institution as a whole has an adequate and well-functioning quality management system in place. If that can be confirmed in the process of accreditation then the institution is autonomous to set up any degree programme it wants. [3]

## **External Evaluation**

Paragraph overview of the external evaluation system in your country

Since 1994, various structures have been established to support both, internal and external evaluation, and these cover now the higher education institutions in all 16 States. In its resolution on quality assurance in teaching at higher education institutions from September 2005, the KMK defined the core elements of a coherent quality management system encompassing all aspects of higher education institutions by combining different measures and procedures of quality assurance. At both, the level of higher education institutions and the ministry level, international cooperation exists toward the development and implementation of evaluation measures. Such measures and procedures include an evaluation which refers to certain indicators and specifies individual tools (e.g., combination of internal and external evaluation, involvement of students and graduates). [4]

External evaluations generally take the form of peer reviews finishing with final reports. They are performed by competent experts from other higher education institutions, research establishments, or the business community and are repeated at various intervals. Reports on the implementation of evaluation results are available for the study courses of some higher education institutions. The results of the evaluation are increasingly being taken into account in the States as a basis for allocating resources to higher education institutions. [4]

## **New programme creation**

Brief overview of the rules about creating a new programme – who authorizes it? Is there a defined process, if so can it be referenced?

Traditionally the establishment of new degree programmes at German higher education institutions, including their study and examination regulations, needed the approval of the responsible State Ministry. With the advent of the Bologna reforms the Ministries realised that it was impossible to approve new degree programmes quickly and with the necessary quality and resource controls when all study programmes had to be changed to the new structure and for every traditional degree programme at least two new ones (a Bachelor and a Master programme) had to be established.



In its decision about the introduction of accreditation procedures for newly established degree programmes according to the tiered structure of Bachelor and Master degrees, the KMK emphasised the functional separation of State approval and accreditation. The responsible ministries continued to retain their rights to approve every new degree programme with respect to three dimensions: (a) guarantee that the programme to be established had sufficient resources; (b) compatibility of the new programme with the higher education plan of the respective State; (c) adherence to the structural rules and regulations of the State. And while the State continued to approve resources and legal issues, the objective of the accreditation is to guarantee standards in terms of academic content, maintenance of structural guidelines, and to determine the professional relevance of the degrees. It is to ensure quality in international competition and create transparency for international collaboration. Observance of the structural requirements is a pre-requisite for the accreditation of a study course. They form the basis for the accreditation process. The state legislation determines to which extent accreditation is a pre-requisite for the State approval of a new study course. It is essentially performed by external peer review. [4] [1]

## **Changes to existing programmes**

Who can approve changes to programmes, what level of change is permitted by whom?

Periodically, the study courses are re-accredited. In accordance with the principles for the future development of quality assurance for all States and higher education institutions (*Grundsätze für die künftige Entwicklung der länder- und hochschulübergreifenden Qualitätssicherung*), also adopted by the KMK in 2002, the system of accreditation is to be extended to all courses of study. [4]

## **Student influence of programme content**

How do students influence programme content? Are there formal and informal ways? This includes student feedback on teaching within the programme.

Students and graduates can be involved in internal and external evaluation. The evaluation of research and teaching has been provided for in the higher education sector since the amendment to the Framework Act for Higher Education of 1998. The internal evaluation refers to the quality of research and teaching, and the proper performance of the functions of the higher education institution. It consists of a systematic inventory and analysis of teaching and studying, taking account of research, performed by the individual department or the faculty and concludes with a written report.

With the Teaching Quality Pact (*Qualitätspakt Lehre*) of the Federation and of the States, in 2010, a support programme was launched which aims to improve the framework conditions for teaching at the higher education institutions, in the field of student/lecturer ratios, for instance, and to support higher education institutions with further measures to assure quality in teaching, such as the continuing education of teaching staff or the establishment of quality management systems in teaching. [5]



In June 2007, the States initiated a “Quality Offensive for Excellence in Teaching” (*Qualitätsoffensive exzellente Lehre*). In March 2008 the KMK and the *Stifterverband für die deutsche Wissenschaft*, the business community’s innovation agency for the German science system, launched a “Competition for excellence in teaching” (*Wettbewerb exzellente Lehre*) together to award and promote convincing concepts developed by universities and equivalent higher education institutions and *Fachhochschulen* for the development of strategies in teaching and learning. The competition provided funding totalling Euro 10 million. Through performance related resource allocations and student satisfaction surveys additional instruments have been introduced over time which are post-aggregate, although they frequently lack the power to seriously change or improve the teaching quality. [6]

## Industry influence of programme content

How does industry influence programme content? Are there formal and informal ways?

External evaluations generally take the form of peer reviews, i.e. they are performed by competent experts from other higher education institutions, research establishments or the business community. [4]

## Students with disabilities/special needs/unconventional needs

How are students with these requirements addressed (this has been covered in a questionnaire). Are there any National policies? Include a brief summary and references to relevant document.

Most German universities offer little or no technical or personal support. They are rarely equipped to cater for disabled students without outside help. [10]  
Further information can be found in the section ‘Information management’.

## Mobility and life-long learning processes

Policies or rules relating to accessibility of facilities within Institutions  
Policies, practices relating to exchanges

Institutions of higher education and other educational institutions offer continuing academic education in a number of different forms – ranging from individual courses to study programmes lasting several years and leading to a degree. Participation is not only open to people who have already completed a university degree but also to people who meet the conditions for admission in other ways. Continuing academic education serves to develop people’s own potential to secure their jobs and careers within the framework of lifelong learning and is a decisive precondition for translating research into innovations and employment. It strengthens Germany’s position as an industrial nation. [7]

In addition to the courses leading to a first degree, besides consecutive Master study courses, there are postgraduate study courses (further study, supplementary and follow-up courses) of two to four semesters’ duration that either build on the first degree, providing further vocational



skills, increased specialisation and reinforcement, or are taken in parallel with a different course of study. Postgraduate study courses are usually taken immediately after or during the first degree course of study.

An overview of the range of special graduate courses provided by the German Rectors' Conference (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz – HRK*) is available on the Internet at [www.hochschulkompass.de](http://www.hochschulkompass.de).

Concerning mobility, the world's largest funding organisation dedicated to international academic exchange, the DAAD encourages students and researchers with disabilities or chronic illnesses to spend part of their academic programmes abroad, improve their foreign language skills and cultivate international contacts. To ensure that disabled or chronically ill scholarship recipients are allowed equal access to study and research opportunities abroad, the DAAD can cover up to 10,000 euros in additional costs upon request which result from the disability or chronic illness and are not covered by other funding providers. The DAAD individually assesses and determines the amount of these additional costs upon request. These provisions apply to both individual funding programmes and project funding programmes at the DAAD. The DAAD does not offer special scholarships to disabled or chronically ill students or researchers. Like everyone else, they have to apply to one of the regular funding programmes offered by the DAAD. Applications are reviewed by a selection committee which awards the scholarships based on professional criteria, one of the most important of which is the candidate's academic qualification. [8]

As a rule, international students with disabilities do not receive any support from the German State in order to cover their extra costs. Therefore it is particularly important that disabled students from abroad clarify and secure their financing in advance. Grants do not usually cover the extra costs incurred through disability! Participants of EU-exchange programmes can apply for allowances for specific additional requirements. [9]

## **Information management**

What languages are institutional information for students available in  
Is all information accessible without a login

8 % of students feel affected by disability or a chronic illness. Students with disabilities more often interrupt their studies (20%), change the study course (23%), produce a higher demand to counselling services. [10] [11] On this background 38 Studentenwerke offer specific counselling services to students with disabilities, especially in social judicial questions. Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW) is the German national association of all student services organizations (STW) in Germany. DSW is a non-partisan, non-profit organization promoting and advancing student services in Germany. In Germany, there is one local STW in each university town or city, providing services to the students of all higher education institutions in the metropolitan region. The 58 local STWs perform public responsibilities related to the economic, social, health-care and cultural support to all students.

53 STWs offer resident halls for students with disabilities, and 9 STWs specific technical support. In their work the regional STWs are supported by the information centre for students with disabilities, located in the STW. [12]

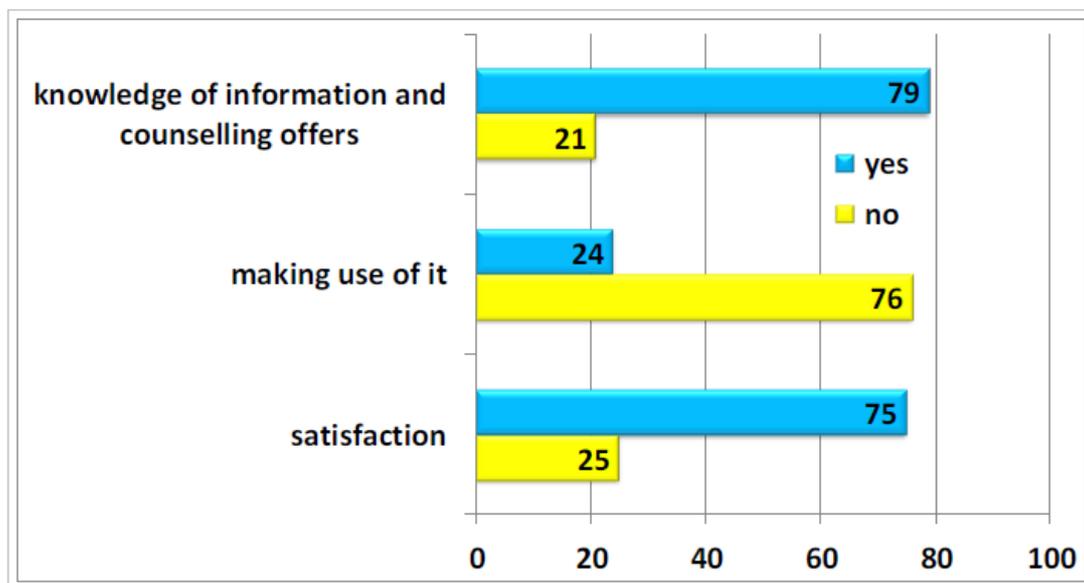
At almost all universities and in many STWs there are authorised representatives for the interests of students with disabilities and chronic illnesses. They provide information on all university-related questions, for example on offsetting possible disadvantages in conditions of study and examination regulations and on easy access to university buildings. [10] [11] They also offer counseling sessions by telephone, e-mail or Skype, so students do not need to meet with them in person.

According to a recent survey [13] the future challenges seen from the students\* perspective concern:



Deutsches Studentenwerk

### Information and counselling



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Presenting information and counselling more attractive and inviting for all students with impairments

- Making members of higher education institutions more sensitive to the requirements of students with impairments



- Qualifying for an inclusive teaching
- Working for more accessibility in buildings and communication

## Any other relevant information

Add in here anything else you want to say, but keep it short please.

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- [5] Quality Pact for Teaching - championing ideal study conditions,  
<http://www.bmbf.de/en/15375.php>
- [6] Excellence Initiative for Cutting-Edge Research at Institutions of Higher Education,  
<http://www.bmbf.de/en/1321.php>
- [7] Continuing Academic Education, <http://www.bmbf.de/en/349.php>
- [8] Mobility with a disability, <https://www.daad.de/der-daad/unsere-mission/en/29151-mobility-with-a-disability/>
- [9] Students with disabilities, [http://www.internationale-studierende.de/en/prepare\\_your\\_studies/studying\\_in\\_germany/students\\_with\\_disabilities/](http://www.internationale-studierende.de/en/prepare_your_studies/studying_in_germany/students_with_disabilities/)
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[http://www.best-umfrage.de/PDF/36\\_Studying-with-Impairments-DIN\\_A3\\_0.pdf](http://www.best-umfrage.de/PDF/36_Studying-with-Impairments-DIN_A3_0.pdf)
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[http://www.studentenwerke.de/sites/default/files/34\\_english\\_summary.pdf](http://www.studentenwerke.de/sites/default/files/34_english_summary.pdf)
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<http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=244>
- [13] Ursula Jonas, National Centre of Competence for the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities/Deutsches Studentenwerk): Experiences from Higher Education in Germany, European Agency Bi-Annual Meeting 6 November 2014, Berlin, <http://www.uni-frankfurt.de/53397325/Experiences-from-Higher-Education-Germany.pdf>
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