Qualification Frameworks and their Relation to Quality Assurance and Recognition in Germany

Frank Niedermeier

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1. Qualification Frameworks in Germany
2. Accreditation in Germany
3. QM at University of Potsdam
4. Recognition at University of Potsdam
German Qualification Framework for Life Long Learning (DQR) was introduced in 2013 by decision of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) and the Conference of Ministers of Economics.

Its goals are to support and facilitate:
- the orientation in the german education system
- the comparability of german qualifications in Europe

→ Transparency of competencies that can be achieved in the German Education System
The DQR...

- aims to span across all educational sectors
- has 8 levels that are aligned to the European Qualification Framework (EQF)
- sees itself as a tool of orientation, not regulation (such as regulations of admissions)

➔ DQR is the national implementation of the EQF. As such it considers the specifics and particularities of the German education system. A referencing report can be found on the EC website. (self-certified)
• Levels are described as generic learning outcomes,
• Concept of competences plays a key role: it forms the umbrella for all learning outcomes being considered.
  – Professional competence → knowledge and skills
  – Personal competence → social competence and autonomy
• Higher Education Qualification Framework, first introduced in 2005 and revised in 2017
• Drafted by the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK) and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK)
• Compatible with the QF-EHEA (steering group report, „self-certified“?)
• Oriented towards the tuning project and the dublin descriptors
• Basis to design study programmes and used for programme accreditation
• Includes formalia such as access requirements, length and ECTS
• The DQR refers to the HQR as a binding document for level 6, 7 and 8 for higher education degrees and is included in its annexes
Relation Regional/National

EQF

DQR

QF-EHEA

HQR
Two-Level Accreditation System

Accreditation Council
HEI (4), state (4), students (2), professional practice (5), international experts (2)
Defines procedures, criteria and requirements

accreditation, monitoring, regulating fair competition

Accreditation Agencies
independent, with or without subject specification (10)

Conduct accreditation procedures on programme or system level
Types of Accreditation

Accreditation Agency

System accreditation

System

Internal Accreditation

Study Programmes

Programme Accreditation
Criteria for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany

2.1: Qualification Objectives of the Study Programme Concept
2.2: Conceptional Integration of the Study Programme in the System of Studies
2.3: Study Programme Concept
2.4: Academic Feasibility
2.5: Examination System
2.6: Programme-related Co-operations
2.7: Facilities
2.8: Transparency and Documentation
2.9: Quality Assurance and Further Development
2.10: Study Programmes with a Special Profile Demand
2.10: Gender Justice and Equal Opportunities
2.2: Conceptional Integration of the Study Programme in the System of Studies

The study programme complies with

(1) the requirements of the Framework of Qualification for German Degrees of 21 April 2005 in the respective valid version,

(2) the requirements of the Common Structural Guidelines of the Länder for the Accreditation for Bachelor and Master's Study Programmes of 10 October 2003 in the respective valid version,

(3) Länder-specific structural guidelines for the accreditation for Bachelor’s and Master's study programmes,

(4) the binding interpretation and summary of (1) to (3) by the Accreditation Council.
Criteria for System Accreditation in Germany

4.1: Definition of the subject matter
4.2/4.3: Prerequisites for admittance
6.1: Qualification objectives
6.2: Internal Management in Teaching and Learning
6.3: Internal Quality Assurance
6.4: Reporting system and Data Collection
6.5: Responsibilities
6.6: Documentation
6.7: Cooperation

(Resolution of the Accreditation Council (08.10.2007, amended on 20.02.2013)
6.2: Internal Management in Teaching and Learning

„The system warrants

(...) 

• agreement of the qualification objectives with the German Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and compliance with legal requirements, particularly common and state-specific structural guidelines and, where appropriate, existing special regulations for study programmes preparing students for state regulated professions;”

• The same reference to the HQR is made in the regulations to the samples within the Systemaccreditation.
UP has a central QA unit (ZfQ), managing and supporting the faculties in scientific-led QM, a dialogue-oriented approach and instruments and mechanisms that are adapted to the context (e.g. different evaluation instruments of t&l).

ZfQ puts topics on the agenda through its expertise, research, and cooperation and exchange.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centralised</th>
<th>Decentralised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common fields of action, guidelines and standards</td>
<td>Faculty specific definition of quality and development goals. Execution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal study programme accreditation, meta-evaluation, policies</td>
<td>Evaluation of study programmes and teaching &amp; learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation, support and consultancy (expertise, research, cooperation)</td>
<td>Execution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Quality Development (ZfQ)</td>
<td>Quality managers on faculty level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The QM Structures

New faculty of Digital Engineering as of April

- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Science
- Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences
- Faculty of Human Sciences
- Law Faculty

Vice President for Teaching and Studies

Centre for Quality Development of Teaching and Studies

1 Quality Manager
1 Dean of Studies

Higher Education Studies

Career Service and University College

Teaching and Media
Review criteria:

1. Concept of the programme (goals, conception)
2. Structure of the programme (selection options, modules, equipping)
3. Student assessment system (organisation, competence-based)
4. Internationalisation (preparation, promotion)
5. Study organisation (combination possibilities, access to seminars)
6. Research, practical and occupational reference
7. Counseling and support (reference persons)
8. Quality enhancement (evaluations, feedback, quality of teaching)
1.1 Goals of the study programme

The qualification goals include professional and interdisciplinary aspects and especially relate to the field of scientific qualification, the qualification to for qualified employment, the qualification to social commitment/responsibility and personal development. The study regulations include the professional, method, personal competences and future employments fields.

6.3. Occupational reference

The graduates have gained career-related professional, methods, social and personal competences, in order to allow a successful transition into occupation. (reference to HQR)
Document analysis:
• Study regulations (Studienordnung)
• Module handbook
• Course catalogue
• Self-report of the programme
• Expert reports (representatives of science and labour market)
• Website, information material etc.

Statistics:
• Institutional statistics (demand, exhaustion, capacities, resources)
• Statistics on student progression (graduates/drop-outs, transfer to master)

Quantitative surveys:
• Longitudinal student panel (study entry, middle and progress)
• Tracer study

Qualitative interviewees:
• Student representatives (FSR, Studienkommission)
• Representatives of the discipline (Study programme managers, chairmen of the study commission)

➢ internal accreditation is implemented as a study programm evaluation and not only checking of criteria
Members of the Commission:
- Vice-President (head – no vote)
- 5 Deans of Studies (4 with vote)
- 2 Students of the internal student accreditation-pool

Basis of decision:
- Quality profile (with proposal of recommendations and conditions)
- Comment/statement programme
- Comment/statement FSR (student representatives)
- Discussion
Accreditation decision:
• Accredited with/without conditions and/or recommendations
• Denial of accreditation ➔ external programme accreditation

Deadlines and validities:
• 9 months to proof conditions have been met
• Accreditation for 5 years (first accreditation) and 7 years for re-accreditation

Accreditation decisions and quality profile are published online.
As a result of a meta-evaluation (2014) on “designing and revising study programmes”, “recognition” and “development of process-management” a working group was formed to work on the recommendations on recognition. Part of the recommendation was:

“for the recognition of study achievements (national and abroad) it is urgently necessary to set clear and standardized regulations according to the Lisbon Convention and under..”

→ Guidelines for academic recognition (2017)
→ Guidelines for recognition of non-academic work and knowledge (2017)

The Guidelines outline the process, responsibilites, tools and quality assurance of recognition etc.
For the assessment of substantial differences, the following criteria can be used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key elements</th>
<th>Assessment criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning outcomes</td>
<td>• Acceptance is oriented on the learning outcome → no micro-level analysis <strong>but (probable) success of studies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>• Validation of the study degree at the host institution → legislation, accreditation, cooperation agreement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In case of doubt: international office and ZfQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>• Level of study degree at the host institution? (HQR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>• Focus on the qualitative level of the academic work → differences on the quantitative level are no grounds for non-recognition,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The focus is on the gained learning outcomes/competences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• European universities: ECTS Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile</td>
<td>• Do the gained learning outcomes fit into the profile of the study degree at UP?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paradigm change: from Equivalence → substantial differences = learning outcomes
Thank you for your attention!
Frank Niedermeier – frank.niedermeier@uni-potsdam.de
Workflow description of the recognition procedure

- Confirmation of the place to study by the exchange-coordinator (stay abroad) or guest students (other national university)

- Set-up of the Learning Agreement before the stay at the host institution → signature of the board of examiners to ensure liability

- Student adjusts Learning Agreement during the stay abroad → if possible feedback from UP within two weeks

- Application for acceptance: Student hands in to the examination board: Learning Agreement or guest listenership, Transcript of Records, description of the courses including the learning goals, actual transcript from the UP (PULS-extract) application form for acceptance of academic work

- Examination board processes the application form for acceptance of academic work → informs the student about acceptance within one month
Workflow description of the recognition procedure

1. Examination board processes the application form for acceptance of academic work → informs the student about acceptance within one month

2. Student decides about objection within one month

3. Student hands in application form about acceptance and Transcript of Records to the records office

4. Records office enters accepted academic work within one month
# Responsibility in the recognition process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Acceptance Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>• Application including evidence of qualifications that are absolved (duty to collaborate)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Erasmus- or Exchange-coordinator | • Consulting students about the procedures of acceptance at UP  
• Consulting the board of examiners about requests of foreign universities |
| Board of examiners | • Final settlement of the Learning Agreement with the students  
• Acceptance of academic work according to the Lisbon Recognition Convention  
• Preparation of an explanation when academic work is (party) not accepted (notation of unaccepted academic work including the explanation on the application form)  
• Documentation and filing of acceptance forms |
| Course adviser | • “arbitration board” in case of ambiguities between students and the board of examiners concerning the acceptance |
| Division       | • Legal supervision |
Responsibilities of the quality assurance of the recognition procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VPL</th>
<th>ZfQ</th>
<th>D2</th>
<th>Course advisers</th>
<th>Boards of examiners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Implementation of procedures</strong></td>
<td>General Information about the implementation of a procedure and the criteria</td>
<td>Development of - central information - a database to document and achieve acceptance forms and decisions</td>
<td>Detailed Information about the boards of examiners → Consulting in legal issues → Faculty websites</td>
<td>Responsibility for the presentation of faculty-specific information → Faculty websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Control of procedures</strong></td>
<td>Regular conversations with the course advisers every 3 years (with D2 and ZfQ)</td>
<td>Evaluation of the feedback of applicants (qualitative and quantitative student-surveys)</td>
<td>Communication of problems to VPL</td>
<td>Responsibility for the processes on the level of the faculties, regular report every 3 years to VPL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VPL</td>
<td>ZfQ</td>
<td>D2</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Adaption of the criteria and</td>
<td>Publication of the evaluation-</td>
<td>Caring about the central website</td>
<td>Updating the faculty websites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the processes</td>
<td>results inside UP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Updating central information</td>
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### Differences to the recognition process of non-academic work and knowledge

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<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Acceptance Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>• Supplementary needs to hand in a portfolio about the learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic adviser</td>
<td>• Consulting students about the procedures of acceptance at UP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person responsible for the module</td>
<td>• Consulting the board of examiners about requests of foreign universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of examiners</td>
<td>• Examination and decision about the acceptance of non-academic work and knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Decision pathways for the selection of the recognition process

Composition of students regarding their qualifications (=learning outcomes)?

Homogeneous

(Homogeneous) form of the achieved learning outcomes?

Formal

(Dominant) form of the achieved learning outcomes?

Formal and non-formal (Certificate)

Non-formal (Certificate)

Non-formal (no Certificate)

Informal

Number of students?

High (>15)

Affinity of the learning outcomes to the transfer study programme?

Low

Strategic importance of the target group for the university?

Low

Individual recognition

Combined recognition

General recognition

Low

Decision pathways for the selection of the recognition process

Individual recognition: single case decision on formal, non-formal or informal, detailed assessment of equivalence ➔ very intensive

Combinded recognition: esp. interesting for programmes targeted at non-traditional students.
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