

**Accreditation of the Master-Programme „Higher Education“
within the Department of Social Sciences (Fb 5) and the Centre
for Research on Higher Education and Work (WZ 1) at the
University of Kassel by ZEVA
– Background, Aims, Process, and Results**

Contribution to a
Further Education Seminar
for Scientists from Uzbekistan and Kyrgystan
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1. Why do we need Accreditation?

At first it should be mentioned that Germany has developed a new consciousness about Quality Assessment in Higher education. Therefore it seemed to be meaningful to combine the introduction of new Bachelor- and Master-Programmes within the Bologna process with appropriate measures securing the quality of study programmes.

Secondly it shall be mentioned that the state of Hesse is requiring any new study programme to be accredited before being introduced at a specific university in the state.

The Faculty of Social Sciences of the University Kassel had decided to restructure its whole study system into the new two-tier study structure with a first Bachelor degree followed by specific Master-Programmes.

The MAHE-programme – where teaching is provided mostly by scholars from the Centre of Research on Higher Education and Work (WZ I) being also members of the Faculty of Social Sciences – is thought as a specialised Master programme in educational sociology, based on a Bachelor Degree in social sciences. It includes also elements from other related disciplines as economy, law, work sciences, planning, and education.

2. German Agencies and Procedures in Accrediting Study Programmes

After long-lasting discussions about the international competitiveness of German students and the attractiveness of Germany for foreign students regarding the structure of German degree programmes, eight years ago the 16 German Länder (the federal states) tentatively agreed to the establishment of a new course structure of Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes which will co-exist alongside the traditional course system. Moreover, the federal legislation has accepted accreditation as a new steering instrument in the approval procedures of new Bachelor's and Master's programmes in Germany. In 1999 the Joint Commission for the Co-ordination of Study and Examination Regulations of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) and the Conference of Rectors and Presidents of Universities and Other Higher Education Institutions (HRK) appointed the Accreditation Council that operates nation-wide. Since that time the Council has accredited some accreditation agencies owned by higher education institutions, scientific societies, or discipline-oriented foundations. The agencies take over the task of assessing and accrediting, acting in the framework of fixed and widely accepted procedures, criteria, and standards set by the Accreditation Council. The implementation of accreditation procedures for new degree programmes within the traditional recognition procedures marks a fundamental shift in the relationship between higher education institutions and the state. This will offer further possibilities for the development and modernisation of the German higher education system in the framework of the European Bologna process.

During the last years several German agencies for accreditation and evaluation have been established. Some are responsible for a state, some are responsible for certain study fields, e.g. engineering and the sciences. The “Central” Evaluation Agency (ZEvA) in the state Lower Saxony (Hanover) was established in 1995. It is maintained by the Rectors' Conference of Lower Saxony's HE institutions and funded by the state. The Association of Northern German Universities ("Northern Association") as a cross- regional evaluation network of the universities of Oldenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Kiel, Rostock and Greifswald has been established in 1994. They agreed on an assessment procedure that has already been used for some subjects and faculties/departments. After initial widespread scepticism, the procedure has met with approval both in the higher education institutions concerned and beyond. The Association is supported by the HIS GmbH in Hanover, which is a professional agency for the promotion of HE acting on behalf of the federal government and the Land of Lower Saxony. For the Southern States of Germany a comparable agency named ACQUIN has been established and is located at the University of Bayreuth.

3. A Special Case of a “Bundled” Accreditation Procedure: the MAHE-Programme within the Accreditation of all BAMA-Programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences at U Kassel

The new process of accrediting study programmes today shows significant differences against the former processes:

- Formerly the respective state governments legally accepted new study programmes of institutions of Higher Education in accordance with frame regulations mutually developed by the Steady Conference of Higher Education Ministries (KMK) and the German Rectors Conference (HRK). The acceptance notice had the form of a legal act, printed out in an official state document.
- Prior to this acceptance the civil servants within the ministry have been responsible for the rating of the quality of the proposal for the specific study programme. They could be assisted through expertise of single scientists from the specific field based on individual request.
- The acceptance was free of charge to the applying university.

Due to the new system of accreditation the faculty had to proceed in the following way:

- Requesting the ministry to allow the start with of new study programmes on the basis of a positive preliminary rating by the specific accreditation agency. In this case it was the ZEvA in Hanover. The preliminary rating was not more than the statement that the accreditation procedure could start on the base of the proliferated accreditation application from the faculty.
- As nowadays the university will be charged fees for any accreditation procedure the faculty decided to write a “bundled” accreditation application to reduce costs.

4. The Accreditation Application: Contents, Form, Data, and Figures¹

Applications for accreditation of study programmes must cover data to the following points

4.1 Reasons for the implementation of this study programme

- reason for the introduction of the study programmes (e.g. innovation, regional requirements, international cooperation)
- objectives, coverage, and profile desired for the study programmes
- contribution of the concept to foreseeable developments in the sciences and the employment system
- employment qualification of the study programmes and the conclusion duly desired and regarding the goal of the study programme - the preparation for professional activities, which require the application of scientific knowledge and methods - plausible for the conclusive concept of the study programmes in itself.

4.2 Structure of the study programme and technical (content wise) requirements

- subjects and methods which can be obtained, learning- and social competencies (specialized disciplinary and trans-disciplinary knowledge)
- occupation-preparing study units
- structure and duration of the study
- conditions for admission (in particular for master courses of studies) and
- transitions to other study fields (permeability)

¹ Based on a decision of the German Accreditation Council about the “Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany” from April 35, 2005, Bonn

- modularity of the study programme
- linkage possibilities with other disciplinary and/or specialized qualifications
- test procedures: performance control and credit points for achievement; kind of performance records; termination of work
- didactical concepts and intended teaching methods
- part-time -, evening and weekend study and other ones, internships in practical fields, study forms
- inclusion of remote study elements and new media
- connection/demarcation to existing/conventional courses of studies
- connection/demarcation to courses of studies the neighbouring fan at the respective university, in addition, neighbouring universities, and if necessary co-operating universities abroad
- connection to the scientific fields of emphasis at the applying university and - if applicable - co-operating universities
- integration of research into the study process
- practice orientation and internships and their integration into the study process
- internationality course of studies/foreign study

4.3 Personnel, financial, and spatial equipment

4.3.1 Academic staff

- personnel equipment for the study programme in the university
- number and composition (professors, assistants, practitioners, full time/part time persons employed as academic and technical-administrative staff)
- statements about the qualification of the teaching staff
- planned numbers of freshmen and ratio between teachers - students
- advanced training for the teaching staff, staff development programme, university didactics

4.3.2 Equipment for teaching and research

- premises: lecture-rooms/halls, seminar area, laboratory facilities
- library
- EDP facilities
- financing (means for auxiliary workers, special and investment means, funds raised from third parties)

Requested with this is a formal explanation of the university about the willingness to secure spatial facilities, equipment and financial resources.

4.3.4 Quality Assurance Measures

- Services: information, advice for studies, consulting hours, support by tutors and mentors, communication, e.g. accessibility of Internet, library, and other facilities
- internal/external evaluation during the study programme
- evaluation of results, including the practical relevance (e.g. by graduate surveys, whereabouts studies, occupational path analyses)

4.3.5 Co-operation referred to Study Programme

- range and kind of co-operation with other universities, research and training units outside of universities and the surrounding economy and abroad, and Alumni networks
- contractual regulations of this co-operation
- if necessary: intended double degree programmes with co-operating (national and foreign) universities

5. Procedures and Composition of the Group of Experts for the Accreditation Process

On justified request of a university and with the agreement of the responsible ministry of the state concerned the accreditation agency can accredit study programmes.

- For the preparation of its decision the accreditation agency orders temporally specialised peer-groups composed of consultants with scientific and professional experience as well as their chairmen.
- Consultants can be suggested by universities, university groups, research establishments, science organizations and professional associations/companies or other relevantly proven organizations.
- The group of consultants can recommend
 - an accreditation,
 - an accreditation with certain obligations or
 - a refusal of the application.
 to the accreditation commission of the agency due to an examination of the submitted application and after a site visit at the applying university. If necessary supplemental documents have to be used.
- The accreditation commission decides on an accreditation due to the decision of the group of consultants provided with the report and in accordance with the criteria decided upon and published by the Accreditation Council and for the accreditation of study programmes in the time of the filing of an application based on the valid version.
- The accreditation agency provides on this basis an answer, in which she expresses either
 - an accreditation, or
 - an accreditation with certain obligations, which must be fulfilled within a defined time phase or a
 - denial/refusal of the accreditation.

Rejecting answers have to be justified. If rough offences should take place over a certain quality in question, a revocation of the accreditation is at any time possible. The decision of the accreditation agency over the request is communicated to the applicant in writing and will be published afterwards.

The costs for the accreditation have to be born by the applying university.

6. Known Criteria for Accreditation

Basis for the evaluation of the quality of study programmes with the goal of the accreditation are clear and reliable data to the courses of studies. The accreditation for Bachelor and Master Programmes must consider itself both to intensification of diversification in study

programmes in the field of Higher Education and high quality requirements in a growing international competition of universities.

The accreditation stands under the premises:

- to secure quality
- to prove that the programme can be studied within time
- to offer variety
- to create transparency.

In order to guarantee national and international comparability and thus student mobility, the accreditation should use general formal and technical criteria as a base. These are to be used also in the accreditation procedures which can be accomplished by the accreditation agencies. The procedures include "peers review". The participation of professional experienced peers for the investigation is indispensable.

6.1 Criteria for Study Programmes in Tiers with the Degrees Bachelor and Master

Referring to §19 HRG (Federal Higher Education Framework Law) graduate courses of studies with the degrees Bachelor (BA) and postgraduate courses with a Master (MA) degree at universities and professional schools are to be offered. BA courses of studies obtain a first professional qualifying degree and have an average period of study of at least three or at the most four years. MA courses of studies obtain a further professional qualifying degree and have an average period of study of at least one and at most up to two years. Consecutive courses of studies with the degrees BA and MA amounts to the average period of at most five years of study.

At least the following criteria for an accreditation of study programmes have to be considered:

- requirements for the quality and internationality of the curriculum with consideration of study contents, study process and study organization as well as performance records, test structure and test subjects; modularisation, credit point system and ECTS (European Credit Transfer System)
- employability of graduates due to a course of studies with plausible conclusive concepts in itself regarding the goal of the study and the preparation for professional activities
- estimation of the foreseeable developments in possible professional fields
- personnel potential of the university and/or the universities involved and if necessary different cooperating mechanisms
- material resources: e.g. spatial capacities, apparatus and laboratory equipment
- for master courses: first professional degree and if necessary further conditions for admission;
- transition possibilities between conventional Diploma and Magister courses of studies and tiered courses of studies.

7. The application for Accreditation of the MAHE Programme at U Kassel

7.1 Description of the MAHE-Programme

The Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work (WZ I) together with the Faculty of Social Sciences at Kassel University is offering a new international Master Programme in Higher Education.

Foreign and German students who already have attained a BA degree (or equivalent) in Social Sciences, Education, Law or Economics are invited to take part in the programme which aims to prepare for professional careers in the field of higher education (e. g. institutional research, career services, international relations, accreditation, evaluation, transfer services, departmental development or decision-making at the central level) as well as for careers in higher education research.

Postgraduate students aiming for the PhD degree in the field of higher education research will also be accepted. In this case single inquiries for the specific details of the PhD programme at the WZ I are recommended.

The programme starts annually in October with an introduction week and the first one-week module. Altogether 13 one-week modules are offered in the course of one year. It is also possible to apply for individual modules.

Students are expected to be present for the modules. This requires 13 weeks of presence in Kassel in one or one and a half year. The majority of the modules will be taught in English. Students who do not speak sufficient German to follow classes will be able to complete the programme exclusively in English.

Structure of the programme

The programme can be completed in one and a half or in two years. Students can apply for recognition of up to a quarter of the credits acquired in the modules if they have previous study experiences closely related to the themes of the programme.

Eight weeks of practical work placement will be obligatory, be it as a member of a research project team or as an assistant in one of the relevant units of university administration and related agencies.

During the last six months of the programme students are expected to write their Master thesis and defend it in the framework of an examination colloquium. For the degree (M. A.) "Master of Arts in Higher Education" altogether 120 credits have to be earned.

Themes and modules of the programme

The programme is divided into seven themes, most of which consist of more than one module. Depending on their interests and career choice students will be offered a certain degree of choice. The following themes are on offer:

1. Introduction to Higher Education

Research and Development

- Topics and objectives of higher education research
- Basic concepts of higher education research

2. The Higher Education System

- Structural development of higher education
- Higher education, the state and society

3. Knowledge and Society

- Higher education and work
- From higher education to employment
- Students in an international perspective

4. Teaching, Learning and Research

- Curriculum development and didactics
- Research planning and development
- Bachelor and Master programmes
- E-Learning and new media
- Work place analysis in higher education

5. Higher Education Management, Organisation and Decision Making

- Decision-making in higher education
- Governance
- Change management in higher education

- Gender change management

6. Evaluation and Internationalisation

- Evaluation outcomes and research
- Research management
- Internationalisation in higher education
- International mobility of students
- Higher education policies and planning

7. Empirical Research Methods

- Data collection and analysis I
- Data collection and analysis II

7.2 The application for accreditation of the study programme for Higher Education

7.2.1 Composition of the Peer Group

The Peer Group consisted of several scientists and practitioners from to the different fields covered in the application of the department for Social Sciences. Responsible for the part of the application of the MAHE-programme was Prof. Dr. D. Müller-Böling from the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHE) in Gütersloh, an economist with a background as Rector of the University Dortmund. Also a member of the Peer group was a public servant from the German Federal Parliaments office, responsible for internships there.

7.2.2 The application itself: Table of contents (full length was 41 pp.)

1. Institution

- 1.1. General information about the department
 - 1.1.1. Short description of the department
 - 1.1.2. Study programs, courses and conclusions
- 1.2. Equipment and facilities
 - 1.2.1. Budget for teaching and research 2004 (attachment 5)
 - 1.2.2. Space, rooms
- 1.3. Support of teaching and studying
 - 1.3.1. EDP supply
 - 1.3.2. Library/literature supply
- 1.4. Students and Graduates in the department
 - 1.4.1. First-year university students inside (attachment 6)
 - 1.4.2. Students in courses of studies and semesters (attachment 7)
 - 1.4.3. Graduates (attachment 8)
 - 1.4.4. Staff-student ratio 8
 1. Staff-student ratio for the entire department
 2. Staff-student ratio for the Magister sociology
 3. Staff-student ratio for the teaching professions social customer
- 1.5. General information about the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work (WZ I)
 - 1.5.1. Short description of the WZ I
 - 1.5.2. Research budget of the last five years
 - 1.5.3. Funds from third parties received during the last five years (attachment 12)
 - 1.5.4. Personnel
 - 1.5.5. Space
 - 1.5.6. EDP supply
 - 1.5.7. Library/literature supply

2. Study program of the Master course of studies in "Higher Education/university research and organization"

- 2.1. Fulfilment of the structural requirements of the state
 - 2.1.1. Study structure and study duration
 - 2.1.2. Conditions for admission and transitions
 - 2.1.3. Academic Degree
 - 2.1.4. Modules and Credit Points
- 2.2. Reason and educational objectives of the study program
 - 2.2.1. Reasons for the establishment of the program
 - a) statements for the demand under students perspectives/interests
 - b) positioning of graduates and adjustment to job market
 - c) international orientation and co-operation partners
 - 2.2.2. Educational objectives
 - 2.2.3. Practice orientation and employability
- 2.3. Curriculum
 - 2.3.1. Kind of teaching provisions
 - 2.3.2. Structure of the curriculum
 - 2.3.3. Relationship of taught hours and self-instruction
 - 2.3.4. National and/or international orientation
 - 2.3.5. Teaching methods
 - 2.3.6. Evaluation forms for module examinations and tests and termination of work
- 2.4. Co-operation
 - 2.4.1. University- internal co-operation
 - 2.4.2. External co-operation with partner universities and/or partner institutions
- 2.5. Personnel involved in the study program
 - 2.5.1. Academic personnel (attachments 1, 2 and 11)
 - 2.5.2. Administrativ/clerical personnel
 - 2.5.3. Staff-student ratio
 - 2.5.4. Staff development programmes
- 2.6. Quality assurance measures
 - 2.6.1. Evaluation and monitoring performance during the study
 - 2.6.2. Evaluation of study success

3. Appendices:

- 3.1. Examination rules with module manual
- 3.2. On its meeting on 3 December 2003 the department/faculty decided upon this accreditation application and the examination rules for the master in Higher Education unanimously. The senate has decided positively in its meeting on 5 May 2004.
- 3.3. A positive statement of the responsible Ministry was supplied later.
- 3.4. Attachments:
 - Scientific personnel (attachments 1, 2 and 11)
 - Teaching imports and exports (attachments 3 and 4)
 - Budget for teaching and research 2004 (attachment 5)
 - First-year university students (attachment 6)
 - Students in courses of studies and specialized terms (attachment 7)
 - Graduates (attachment 8)
 - Standard Curriculum Values (attachment 9)
 - Description of modules (attachment 10)
 - Bio-data of responsible teaching persons for the module and supporting persons in the master course of studies in Higher Education (attachment 11)
 - Overview of funds available from third parties for the last five years in WZ I (attachment 12)

8. Result(s) of Accreditation of the MAHE Study Programme

8.1 Peer groups report after a site visit about the Master course in Higher Education

Programmes for the subject of a scientific discipline 'university research' in Germany are only in practice in an early stage of development. Appropriate courses of studies are altogether still fairly new. They require on the one hand a considerable amount of inter-disciplinarity, on the other hand profound insights into the subsystem science and/or university. The distinction of application orientated and research-oriented provisions within the master course can be considered here altogether as meaningful. On one hand the collection and analysis of international developments within the field of tertiary education, on the other hand the acquisition of management-oriented expertise are fields which can be obtained independently. In the second field already first provisions at the Administration University in Speyer, at the University of Oldenburg as well as at the Universities of applied sciences Osnabrueck and Bremen are existing in Germany. The Kassel course of studies is national without competition and with its research orientation internationally competitive.

2. The course of studies in the context of the university

By its many years long research work of WZ I (Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work) and its international recognition the University of Kassel can refer to experiences of many years and recognized high expert's assessment. The raised fund from third parties are considerable and its involved scientists have been writing numerous relevant publications.

3. Educational Objectives

For the strong interdisciplinary approach to the subject of research on Higher Education the disciplinary connection to a generally more trans-disciplinary oriented faculty for sociology is convincing. The modules offered for this programme give a good basis for a research-oriented discussion about the rapidly changing international university and science system. Central questions within this area are taken up in a convincing way and will be taught by internationally recognized scientists. At an justification of the educational objectives in view to questions of research on Higher Education there is to that extent no doubt; just as at the suitability of the scientists involved for the provision of appropriate expertise. The course of studies has three substantial shaping elements in the presented conception:

- strong research orientation,
- great range of inter-disciplinarity, and
- consistent internationality.

These three elements, for which there is no competition in Germany, should be still more strongly propagated in the formulation of objectives and for target group attraction. It should be still more strongly clarified in the target group addresses, why and how systematic knowledge gained by Higher Education research can help decision makers at universities. On the other hand it should be made a more carefully use of consistently formulations toward "management" with individual modules, in the sense of this clear shaping because the profile of the course of studies might be not seized correctly with this heading.

4. Curriculum

A total amount of 120 Credit points is intended. This results from subtracting the minimum requirement for a Bachelor degree of 180 Credit points from 300 CP as necessary. Within the intended 120 CP 78 CP are acquired by the modules (in each case 6 and/or 3 with partial modules) with their respective study-accompanying examinations. 12 CP are acquired by the internship of 8 weeks in connection with a report. Professional experience can replace the intended internship. Problem here is that the objective of practical application of the research-oriented provisions within the study programme steps into the background; therefore this regulation should be applied only in rare cases. The remaining 30 CP are acquired with the

master thesis (25 CP) and in addition a due colloquium (5 CP). Each module requires one week attendance time, one week pre-study and two weeks reinforcement and achievement test. These are according to application 160 hours, for which 6 CP are assigned. That corresponds however to only 5.33 CP, since a CP according to framework regulations of the KMK requires 30 hours; in the module manual the information was given also about 180 hours.

Due to the factual expertise met in the WZ I, the adherence to scientific standards is ensured. The international network of the study programme is exemplary. In each case the instruction language should be completely English. The connection to the practice of university research is given to a considerable degree. The connection to the practice of university planning/design/organisation is however of only indirect nature. This should be clarified for the target group.

5. Teaching methods

The teaching methods are altogether appropriate. Aspects of virtual teaching are described somehow briefly.

6. Study organization (including internships)

The study organization is convincing.

7. Organization of Tests and Examinations

The organization of tests and examinations is convincing due to the submitted examination regulations.

8. Resources

Material resources are essentially sufficient for the considered program. Altogether the existing personnel capacity for the indicated study program is sufficient. However a CNW of 1,1113 cannot be regarded as particularly favourable for a sociological master course of studies. In addition, group sizes of 30 persons are generally justifiable, the number of training meetings is comparatively visible, so that high self learning activities must be accepted with small expenditure for supervision.

9. Quality Assurance

Study success is to become secured by an intensive support of the students both with the support of written material as well as by the general university advisory service. This appears also necessary, in particular because of the high portion of foreign students, which - surely rightfully - is expected. Besides that evaluations have to take place alongside the instruction hours as also via an appropriate institution on the level of the university. Surveys about graduate whereabouts are planned. Due to the assessment of the scientific expertise the WZ I can be counted here on qualitatively high level.

10. Final (and summative) Accreditation Recommendation

The accreditation is recommended.

Some additional recommendations (not obligations):

- The course of studies is not carried last content-wise and personally very strongly by the person of Prof. Dr. Ulrich Teichler. University and Department are requested to ensure the high level institutional and personnel capacity also after his leaving.
- Within the study programme on Higher Education the term "management" should be used somewhat more reservedly.
- The triad of research orientation, internationality and inter-disciplinarity, singular for Germany and internationally, is competitive and should be placed more strongly into the foreground.

- It is to be made more clearly visible that with the term internationalization not only Europe is meant
- The department and the university should make precautions that in view of the expected personnel changes the continuity of the course of studies is ensured.

8.2 WZ I Statement

(Partial) text for the statement of the department 05 about the Peer Group's report in the context of accreditation of the sociological Bachelor and Master courses of studies:

- The statement and the recommendations regarding the master course of studies "Higher Education are to be welcomed.
- To point 1 and point 3 it is to be agreed that the course of studies has its special strength in the qualification of a scientific new generation. The course of studies has beside that the specific goal to qualify for professional work in Higher Education related institutions. Also the future university researcher has to be dependent on high practice knowledge, and the professionals in Higher Education profit from the knowledge and the methods of university research. Mutual fertilization is important. Indeed: "management" is not the central topic of the course of studies, but only one of many topics.
- The possibilities for the development of virtual teaching will be explored during the next years.
- The computation of the workload for each module to cover six Credit points (point 4 of the report) is going to be specified considering the fact that the workload for six Credits covers 180 hours. This is fulfilled by a preparation to the extent of 40 hours, an attendance time of 40 hours and a reinforcement time of 100 hours.

8.3 Comments by Department 5

The department included the a.m. WZ I statement into her own statement.

8.4. Accreditation

At the end of May 2005 the Dean of the Department for Social Sciences and the Director of the WZ I received the preliminary information from ZEvA (by telephone at the end of May 2005) that the MAHE programme was accredited without any obligations.