

# Quality Assurance in Higher Education – Experiences in Germany

Dr. Anke Rigbers  
Banja Luka, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2010

# Structure

- Background of external quality assurance in higher education
- **evalag** and its competencies
- External quality assurance in Germany
- Experiences with the implementation of quality assurance procedures

# **Background of External Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

## General Background

- Quality and quality assurance are long-lasting topics!
- Since the 1960s massification of education
- Growth and increasing complexity of HEI
- Differentiation of research and study subjects
- Changes in the relationship of HEI and society

## Background - „Culture of Mistrust“

- At the end of the 1980s special focus of politics and the public on higher education and achievements in teaching and research
  - in the 1990s: new procedures of quality assurance – assessment of lectures, evaluation, teaching reports
  - since 2000: focus on systematic and comprehensive enhancement and assurance of quality (quality management)

# Background - Reforms in Higher Education

- Increasing autonomy of HEI
  - changes in (corporate) governance
  - budget (increased financial scope, diversified revenues)
- Organisational development of HEI – institution-building
- Legal requirement to establish quality management
- AND: national / international competition of universities

## Background – Bologna-Process

- Change of study and degree structure (bachelor, master) combined with the introduction of programme accreditation
- Establishment of accreditation agencies (since 2000)
- No additional financial support of HEIs
- Since 2008 two options for accreditation:
  - programme accreditation
  - system accreditation

# **evalag and its Competencies**



# evalag – Centre of Excellence for Quality Assurance and Development

- Founded in 2000 as a foundation under public law
- In 2008 reorientation of the foundation
  - new statutes
  - new council
- October 2009 – accreditation as a new field of activity
  - new statutes
  - new bodies (accreditation commission, appeals commission)

# Activity fields

## Evaluation

Range of foci i.e.

- teaching
- research
- management
- comparison of subjects
- formative evaluations

## Institutional Quality Assurance

Support of HEI to build up their internal QA system

- audit of existing QA mechanisms
- project management
- support of centres for QA

## Accreditation

Accreditation of

- study programmes
- internal quality assurance systems

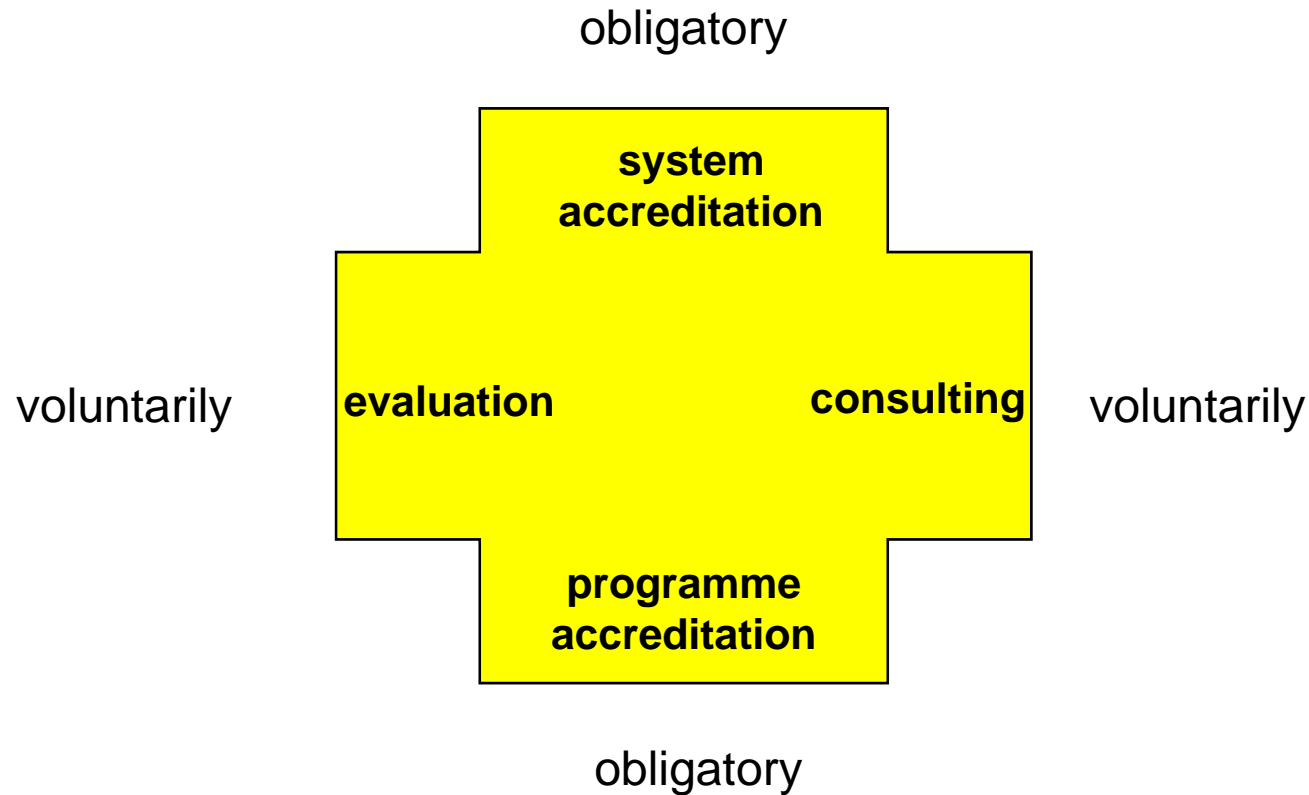
## Promotion of science

Promotion of scientific organisations i.e.

- management of peer review for the selection of research grants

# External Quality Assurance in Germany

# External Quality Assurance



# Comparison of External QA Procedures

	<b>Programme accreditation</b>	<b>System accreditation</b>	<b>Audit of institutional quality assurance</b>
<b>since</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Objective</b>	<b>minimum standards for ensuring high quality of study programmes</b>	<b>Appropriateness of a QA system for ensuring high quality of study programmes</b>	<b>stock-taking of internal QA systems, recommendations for further development</b>
<b>Focus</b>	<b>study programme</b>	<b>Internal QA system in teaching and learning</b>	<b>Internal QA system of a HEI</b>
<b>Legal status</b>	<b>requirement for all study programmes</b>	<b>requirement of HEI, replaces progr. acc.</b>	<b>voluntary</b>
<b>Legal consequence</b>	<b>accreditation decision for the programme</b>	<b>accreditation decision for HEI</b>	<b>none</b>

# Criteria of Programme Accreditation

1. Qualification objectives of the study programme concept
2. Conceptional integration of the study programme in the system of studies
3. Study programme concept
4. Academic feasibility
5. Examination system
6. Facilities
7. Transparency and documentation
8. Quality assurance and further development
9. Study programmes with a special profile demand
10. Gender justice and equal opportunities

# Programme Accreditation Procedure

1. Admittance



2. Preparation of a documentation



3. Appointment of a peer group



4. On-site-visit



5. Decision



about 6 to 9 months

# Criteria of System Accreditation

1. Qualification goals
2. Management systems in teaching and learning
3. Internal quality assurance system
4. Reporting system
5. Responsibility
6. Documentation



# System Accreditation Procedure

1. Admittance



2. Preparation of a documentation



3. First on-site-visit



4. Second on-site-visit  
(feature random sample)



5. Programme  
random sample



6. Decision and  
Follow-up



about 12 to 18 months

# Audit of Institutional Quality Assurance

- 2007:  
Development of key points for quality assurance in higher education
- Since 2008:  
**evalag** implemented six audits (and three internal assessments)
- Objectives of the audit:
  - Stocktaking of existing quality assurance
  - Recommendations for further development
  - Examination of requirements of system accreditation

# Procedure of the Audit

1. Elaboration of the self-report



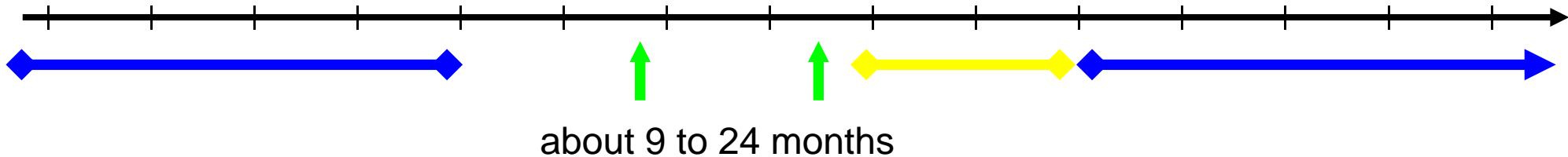
2. Two site visits



3. Elaboration of the audit report



4. Follow-up



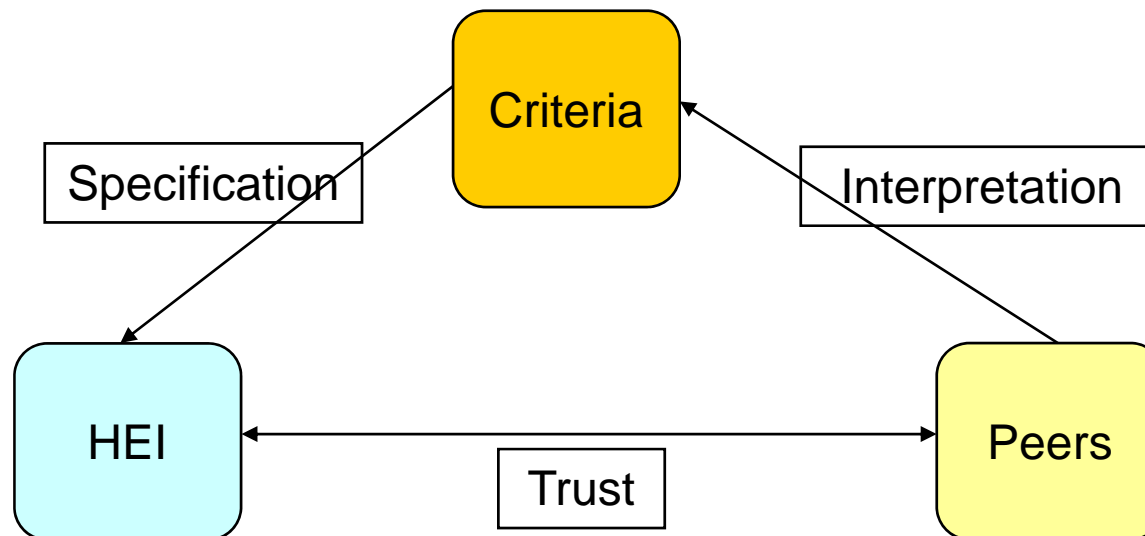
about 9 to 24 months

# **Experiences with the Implementation of Quality Assurance Procedures**

## General Experiences

- Internal as well as external quality assurance is a „learning system“
  - Start small with clear objectives, criteria and procedures.
  - Develop objectives, criteria and procedures together with all stakeholders in a transparent way.
  - Apply the criteria and procedures impartial and professional.
  - Look for a continuous improvement of criteria and procedures.

# Application of Criteria of QA



## Requirements of Criteria

- Criteria should encompass all relevant features of HEI.
- Criteria should have a general phrasing – to be applicable to all HEI.
- Phrasing has to attend to a balance between specificity and abstraction.
- Interpretation and application to specific settings must be possible.

## Competencies of Peers

- Expertise in higher education (teaching, research) and higher education management (leading positions)
- Expertise in (general) quality assurance
- Integrate the student perspective
- Professional impartiality - no conflict of interest
- Personal integrity



# Peers and Peer Groups

- Fulfillment of required competencies
- Experience in peer review
- Briefing of peers
  - specific: relevant information about the institution and the procedure
  - general: criteria of quality assurance, their relevance and interpretation
- Peer group
  - Developing a common understanding of criteria

## Experiences – Internal Challenges of HEI

- Establishment of quality assurance is a long-term project!
- It needs a leadership with a vision, precise and accepted quality aims and a unequivocal communication practice!
- Start with / incorporate existing instruments, procedures and the expertise of HEI members!
- Combine the technical, cultural and political perspectives!
- There is up to now no best way how to involve members in an adequate way – attend to the „institutional culture“

## External Quality Assurance in general

- All procedures require an appropriate balance of control and consultation.
- As a learning system external quality assurance (criteria, procedures) needs to further develop according to the challenges of the higher education system.

**Thank you  
for  
your audience**