

## Report

### Support for an Alternative Procedure: Site Visit at the Stuttgart Media University

*Grid Version 02 – December 23, 2022*

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University	Stuttgart Media University (HdM)
Other universities participating in the alternative procedure	Furtwangen University (HFU) University of Business and Environment Nürtingen Geislingen (HfWU)
Additional information, if applicable	Support in the context of accreditation based on trust pursuant to Section 6(4) VoAAv; cooperative procedure

Program-based procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>
System-based procedure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Initial accreditation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reaccreditation No. (Number)	
Approval pursuant to § 3 VoAAv dated	September 29, 2020
Trust accreditation on	March 31, 2023
Report No.	1
Report dated	August 9, 2023

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## **1 Implementation of the Alternative Procedure at the HdM<sup>1</sup>**

### *First Meeting of the Quality Advisory Board*

Following an extended planning phase, the Alternative Procedure was finally implemented at the university in 2022. The Quality Advisory Board established for the procedure held its first regular meeting on July 27, 2022, marking the start of its work to continuously review and evaluate the HdM's quality management system on an annual basis.

The main focus of the first meeting was the internal accreditation procedures within this system. Based on the documentation provided by the university, a presentation on the implementation of internal accreditation, and discussions with university representatives, the Quality Advisory Board assessed the extent to which the relevant criteria of the StAkkrVO were met.

Since it was not possible to determine that the criteria had been fully met in all areas, the Quality Advisory Board formulated three binding mandates:

- The university's internal quality criteria applicable to internal procedures had to be adopted by the university senate.
- Regulations regarding conflicts of interest had to be implemented for the voting on internal accreditation decisions in the Senate.
- When composing the audit commissions used in the procedures, which consisted of external and internal experts, potential conflicts of interest involving deans' office members who might be represented there had to be taken into account.

The Quality Advisory Board supplemented these terms of reference with two recommendations for the further development of the quality management system. On the one hand, it proposed strengthening the strategic component of quality management; on the other hand, it called on the university to "demonstrate even greater sensitivity and consistency in addressing the issue of gender equality in the future than has been the case to date." (Minutes of the 1st meeting of the Quality Advisory Board, p. 9)

### *Second Meeting of the Quality Advisory Board, On-Site Visit by the Review Panel*

The second meeting of the Quality Advisory Board took place on June 21, 2023, in person at the university. During the on-site visit, the Accreditation Council's evaluation team

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<sup>1</sup> This accompanying report supplements the expert opinion on the alternative procedure dated November 25, 2022.

attended this meeting in an observer capacity regarding the implementation of the alternative procedure at the HdM. In the course of this, she also received all documents for the Quality Advisory Board meeting. This included the minutes of the last Quality Advisory Board meeting, evidence of compliance with the previously issued binding work assignments and of how the recommendations were addressed, and finally the consultation documents for the key topic to be discussed at the second meeting: “University Strategy in the Context of Quality Management.”

The review panel rated the preparation for the meeting and for all subsequent discussions as very good. All necessary documents, such as the agenda, the Teaching Mission Statement, the HdM’s guiding principles, and evidence of the implementation of the binding work assignments, were available in advance.

The conduct of the Quality Advisory Board meeting was also rated positively by the review panel. The agenda was strictly adhered to and was appropriately structured in terms of time management with regard to the items to be discussed.

The meeting proceeded without any problems despite the last-minute absence of the Quality Advisory Board chair. The vice-chair stepped in to lead the meeting.

During the presentation of the first agenda items (“Report from the University,” “Review”) by the Vice Rector and the QM Department, the evaluators had the impression that the HdM was taking on too large a role here. This was explained in the follow-up discussions with the absence of the Chair of the Quality Advisory Board and therefore did not reflect the usual procedure.

The Quality Advisory Board then discussed the measures implemented by the university following the previous meeting. This led to a detailed discussion on ensuring impartiality in the HdM’s internal accreditation decisions. The board assessed the tasks it had assigned as fulfilled: The quality criteria were adopted by the Senate, an impartiality concept for internal accreditations was developed and impartiality rules were incorporated into the QM concept (each approved by the Senate), and a new provision regarding the participation of Senate members was incorporated into the audit guidelines and the QM concept and approved by the Senate.

The next key topic, “University Strategy in the Context of Quality Management,” was well prepared and was thoroughly discussed during the meeting. To this end, the Quality Advisory Board held a roundtable discussion with university representatives (members of the deans’ offices, deans of academic affairs, and members of administrative departments).

During this discussion, the Quality Advisory Board exchanged views with university leadership and faculty on the following topics, among others:

- The transition to an SAP campus management system as a self-service offering for students.
- The establishment of Bachelor's program Business Psychology as an interdisciplinary program.
- The new guiding principles of the HdM, which were developed with the participation of all stakeholder groups at the university.
- Process design, e.g., through checklists from the Quality Management Department: This is considered very useful by the faculty.
- Newly designed informational materials for first-year students, which students find very helpful.
- The impact of ChatGPT on student research projects and the university's approach to this issue.

The evaluators had the impression that the Quality Advisory Board consistently engaged in discussions with stakeholders from various departments on an equal footing and was aware of its role as an advisory and oversight body. The discussions with the various stakeholders were made very lively by active questions and suggestions from the Quality Advisory Board.

In the separate discussions held by the review panel with the Quality Advisory Board and representatives of the university following the Quality Advisory Board meeting, it was suggested that student representatives should also be invited to participate in the discussion of key topics. According to a comment from the university administration, however, this proves difficult due to the relatively short length of time students spend at the university; nevertheless, the administration is striving to find a solution to this issue.

While the involvement of students from outside the university is ensured through membership on the Quality Advisory Board, the review panel believes that the involvement of HdM students in the work of the HdM Quality Advisory Board should be more systematic. Corresponding provisions in the regulations (statutes, bylaws, etc.) should generally be in place, even if it is foreseeable that implementation will be difficult.

Upon inquiry by the review panel, the Senate and the University Council stated that they felt well-informed about the work of the Quality Advisory Board. The process of continuous auditing by the Quality Management department was viewed positively by the Senate and University Council members present; in particular, "the continuity of the audit is valuable, as the fluctuations (points of criticism) are becoming smaller" (quote from a Senate member).

*Findings already derivable from the implementation of the alternative procedure*

According to the assessment of the expert panel, the alternative procedure at the Stuttgart Media University, the Nürtingen-Geislingen University of Applied Sciences for Economics and the Environment, and Furtwangen University has convincingly demonstrated (at least for the procedure at the Stuttgart Media University examined here) that this “third way” is capable of providing new impetus for the accreditation system alongside the established forms of program and institutional accreditation. This can be demonstrated in the present process on two levels.

First, the concrete joint approach of the participating universities is both innovative and sensible. A QM system was successfully implemented that systematically integrates quality management in teaching with the universities’ processes. Through the continuous review of the specified quality criteria in line with the universities’ requirements and the appropriate selection of topics—including the possibility of “resubmitting” individual topics or criteria at the annual meetings of the quality advisory boards within the accreditation cycle—a clear shift emerges toward a “tailored” understanding of QM that moves beyond the rough eight-year cycles and approaches a Total Quality Management approach familiar from industry—at least in the area of teaching. A positive aspect of this is that it can promote the further development of a “culture of quality” at universities.

The on-site visit in Stuttgart also demonstrated that the intended dual function—verifying the criteria on the one hand and, on the other, the HdM Quality Advisory Board’s self-concept as an advisory body—works in practice. Networking among the Quality Advisory Boards can lead to an overarching process of regular reflection on *best practices*. This establishes a building block for securing the new approach. The new QM approach is, therefore, designed for high continuity—one of its most important aspects. An example of this is the HdM’s argument that, through the continuous support of the QM Advisory Board, it aims to create the opportunity to question developments in a timely manner and avoid “heading in the wrong direction” for too long. Equally convincing is the assessment that accreditation-related peaks in workload—referred to by the HdM as the “magnitude of the fluctuations”—can be mitigated compared to the efforts required for system accreditation—and this applies to all parties involved in the QM process. However, it should be noted that this continuity also leads to a greater number of participants overall and thus to higher costs.

Secondly, and in a sense at the meta-level of accreditation, it becomes apparent that it makes sense to provide universities with the legal framework for developing their own,

new QM approaches. This provides the diverse higher education landscape with room for maneuver that goes beyond a rigid adherence to the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation and the Model Statutory Ordinance in their respective state versions. The experts welcome the flexibility created by this. Even with this first alternative procedure at the system level, a convincing alternative has emerged.

## **2 Proposals for the structure of further monitoring by the Accreditation Council**

The expert group proposes to the Accreditation Council that the Alternative Procedure at the HdM initially be monitored further based on the documentation.

Like the other two universities participating in the alternative procedure, the HdM plans to conduct its own mid-term evaluation for the fourth year of the alternative procedure's implementation. The inter-university coordination office will be involved in preparing the mid-term evaluations. It would be desirable for the Accreditation Council to observe the mid-term evaluation at the HdM, if necessary with the participation of individual representatives from the review panel; should a joint event be held to evaluate the results following the mid-term evaluations at the respective institutions, the Accreditation Council could participate in this event as a supplement or alternative.

## **3 Recommendations from the reviewers**

- The Quality Advisory Board should within its its meeting also hold regular discussions with student representatives.

## **4 Support**

### **4.1 General Information**

The on-site visit took place on June 21, 2023, in person at the Stuttgart Media University. It included observing the second meeting of the Quality Advisory Board as well as three rounds of discussions with representatives of the Quality Advisory Board, the university, and the accreditation agency evalag, which is involved in the alternative procedure.

## **4.2 Legal Basis *State Accreditation Treaty Model***

*State Regulation / State Regulation European*

*Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*

*Rules of Procedure for Alternative Accreditation Procedures (VoAAv)*

*Agreement on the Implementation of an Alternative Accreditation Procedure dated September 21, 2021*

## **4.3 Expert Panel Support**

### a) University professor

- Prof. Dr. Christine Süß-Gebhard, Department of Computer Science and Mathematics, East Bavarian University of Applied Sciences Regensburg
- Prof. Andreas Teufel, Dean of Studies, Computer Science, Faculty 4, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Digital Media Design, Bremen University of Applied Sciences
- Prof. Dr. Dr. Christian Werner, Executive Director, University of Applied Management (participation based on written materials)

### b) Representative from the professional field

- Dr. Frank-Peter Ritter, Senior Manager at Bayer AG / Auditor

### c) Student Representative

- (represented during the individual site visits to the universities HFU and HfWU cooperating with the HdM in the alternative procedure; see the relevant monitoring reports)

## **4.4 Supervision by the Accreditation Council (Section 34(5), Sentence 2 MRVO)**

- Prof. Dr. Christine Bescherer, Ludwigsburg University of Education
- Prof. Dr. Holger Burckhart, University of Siegen

## **4.5 Support provided by the Accreditation Council's Secretariat**

- Ulf Schöne

## 5 Fact Sheet

### Support Information

Date of the on-site visit:	June 21, 2023
Accreditation granted on:	March 31, 2023
Groups of people with whom interviews were conducted:	Quality Advisory Board Representatives of the Senate Representatives of the University Council Internal Coordination Group Representatives of the Agency (evalag)
Documents which for that submitted for	Meeting materials for the Quality Advisory Board meeting: Minutes of the meeting on July 27, 2022: HdM QM Concept Structure and Development Plan QM Guideline on Quality Standards QM Guideline for Internal Accreditations Mission Statement on Teaching Modularization Concept Academic administration documents for the degree program "Media and Business Psychology" (B.Sc.)