

## Report

### Support for an Alternative Procedure

### Site visit to the Nürtingen-Geislingen University of Applied Sciences

Template Version 02 – December 23, 2022

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University	University of Business and the Environment Nürtingen Geislingen (HfWU)
Other universities participating in the alternative procedure	Furtwangen University (HFU) Stuttgart Media University (HdM)
Additional information, if applicable	Support in the course of accreditation based on trust pursuant to § 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	November 10, 2023

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## **1 Implementation of the Alternative Procedure at HfWU**

### *First and second meetings of the Quality Advisory Board*

Following an extended planning phase, the alternative procedure was implemented for the first time at the university in 2022. During the implementation phase, the members of the university's Quality Advisory Board agreed to hold two meetings of the Quality Advisory Board each year. The Quality Advisory Board, established for this process, began its work of continuously reviewing and evaluating the university's quality management system on an annual basis with its first regular meeting on July 13, 2022.

The main focus of the first meeting was the university's annual report, as well as the key information contained in the report regarding the internal accreditation processes of the degree programs that underwent internal accreditation during the reporting period. During the second meeting of the Quality Advisory Board on March 21, 2023, the individual steps of the internal accreditation process for the degree programs were discussed. Based on the documentation provided by the university for this purpose, a description of the implementation of internal accreditation, and discussions with university representatives, the Quality Advisory Board assessed the extent to which the relevant criteria of the StAkkVO were met.

Since full compliance with the criteria could not be established for all areas, the Quality Advisory Board formulated the following recommendations:

- The survey component of the process—which currently incorporates the student interviews, the quality portfolio, the Advisory Board's evaluation grid, and the most recent internal accreditation decision—should be based on a broader data set by also involving faculty members (for example, through a faculty survey).
- The quality portfolio could be streamlined. To this end, discussions should be sought with the program directors to define who needs what information, when, and for what purpose. While annual monitoring of the status of implementation of the requirements and recommendations from the accreditation process appears sensible, the advisory board members question who needs the information from the “Advising” and “Communication” sections of the report and for what purpose.
- The process could distinguish between successful and less successful degree programs in order to conserve resources through tailored approaches. To assess whether degree programs are performing well, key performance indicators should also be explicitly consulted.

- On the one hand, the program advisory boards should experience appreciation from the university through direct contact with university leadership, and on the other hand, they should be prepared even more thoroughly for their role. In this context, the Quality Advisory Board notes that the program advisory boards would benefit from support from the QM, as this could give them greater confidence in evaluating the subject-specific accreditation criteria. If necessary, a strengths-weaknesses analysis could also be used to encourage the advisory boards to engage more purposefully with the degree programs. The Quality Advisory Board would like to revisit the subject of the subject-specific advisory boards' self-image and the support provided to the advisory boards by the degree programs at a later date.

#### *Third meeting of the Quality Advisory Board, site visit by the evaluation team*

The third meeting of the Quality Advisory Board took place on June 20, 2023, in a hybrid format at the university. During the meeting, the Quality Advisory Board focused, among other things, on the university's internal "semester representative" system with regard to student involvement in the university's internal quality management system.

The Accreditation Council's review panel participated in this meeting in an observational capacity as part of the on-site visit to assess the implementation of the alternative procedure at the university. In the course of this, the group also received all documents for the Quality Advisory Board meeting. This included minutes from the most recent Quality Advisory Board meetings, evidence of compliance with previously issued binding recommendations or suggestions for the further development of the internal QMS, as well as preparatory documents for the third meeting of the Quality Advisory Board.

#### *Evaluation*

The evaluation team rated the preparation for the meeting and for all subsequent discussions as very good. All necessary documents, such as the agenda, the minutes of previous meetings, and the documents relevant to meeting preparation—including information on the implementation of the recommendations issued by the Quality Advisory Board—were available in advance. The evaluation team also rated the conduct of the Quality Advisory Board meeting as expressly positive. The agenda was followed precisely, and time management regarding the items to be discussed was appropriate.

In the assessment of the review panel, the university is currently still in the process of establishing and refining its QM system within the framework of the Alternative Procedure. Overall, it can be noted that this is still a relatively new system, as all parties are only just gaining experience with the processes and their

Feedback has been gathered. It is encouraging to note, however, that the Quality Advisory Board has quickly established its own working methods and has already shifted from annual to biannual meetings in order to better manage its workload. In addition, the Advisory Board has expressed a desire for the university's internal quality management team to participate in the meetings. This is seen as a way to streamline the process, as it allows Advisory Board members to directly address any questions or concerns that arise.

Preparatory documents with the relevant attachments are made available to the members of the Quality Advisory Board in a timely manner prior to each meeting. A positive aspect is the list of recommendations and suggestions for further development issued by the Quality Advisory Board, which is continuously maintained by the university. This list contains the following information:

- Recommendations of the Quality Advisory Board,
- planned internal university measures (including those by the internal coordination group),
- next steps (implementation) (including, where applicable, scheduled committee meetings), and
- feedback to the Quality Advisory Board.

Other university committees are also regularly involved in the process. At the request of the Senate, a joint meeting of the Senate and the University Council is organized annually to discuss, among other things, the measures taken by the university to further develop the internal QM system. Overall, the review panel assesses both the concept of the alternative procedure and its implementation at the university as well-thought-out and convincing.

There are only two areas where the alternative procedure does not yet appear to be fully developed. With reference to the expert opinion on the accreditation of the alternative procedure (see p. 22) regarding the separation of assessment and advisory functions and the associated need to clarify the role of the Quality Advisory Board, the expert panel views maintaining the independence and impartiality of the Quality Advisory Board over time as a challenge. Since the issue of clarifying the Quality Advisory Board's role was already a component of the accreditation decision or a condition imposed within this framework, the expert panel assumes that the university will establish corresponding regulations and monitor them throughout the accreditation period.

Cooperation with other universities in the consortium also has potential for development. To date, this has focused on the general aspects of the Alternative Procedure. Given that the university is currently still in the implementation phase of the processes and thus at an early stage of the procedure, this observation is

evaluators. While cooperation between the universities within the framework of the Alternative Procedure is provided for in the concept, it appears that such collaboration and intensive exchange will only make sense once practical experience has been gained. Consequently, no implications for the accreditation system as a whole can be identified at this time.

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

Continued support from the Accreditation Council is essential, particularly given the limited experience available. This becomes especially evident when considering the early stage of the process's implementation. As previously mentioned, it is currently difficult to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the process. Therefore, it is recommended that the review of the process implementation be considered at a later date, possibly by involving the panel of experts, to enable a well-founded assessment.

It is of crucial importance that the university builds up a real-world experience base that can serve as a foundation for discussions and evaluations. It would be advisable to hold a further exchange via videoconference between the Accreditation Council and the university in the fall of 2024. Monitoring based solely on documentation cannot fully capture all on-site events, which could be particularly crucial during the initial implementation phase. A decision on how to structure the monitoring for the remaining accreditation period could be made following this exchange.

## **3 Recommendations of the evaluators**

The Quality Advisory Board should place greater emphasis on collaborating with the two other universities accredited under the Alternative Procedure—or, more specifically, with their respective Quality Advisory Boards—and strive to maintain regular communication as the procedure progresses.

## **4 Support**

### **4.1 General Information *Description of the support process, including dates***

The on-site visit took place on June 19 and 20, 2023, in person at the Nürtingen-Geislingen University of Applied Sciences for Economics and the Environment. It included an observational

participation in the third meeting of the Quality Advisory Board as well as three rounds of discussions with representatives of the Quality Advisory Board, the university (representatives of the Senate, the University Council, the students, and the Coordination Group of the Alternative Procedure), and the accreditation agency evalag, which is represented in the Alternative Procedure.

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

*Statute / State Statute 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 Faculty

- Prof. Dr. Stefan Zahradnik, Dean of the Department of Economic and Social Sciences, Dean of Studies for Public Management, Nordhausen University of Applied Sciences
- Prof. Dr. Phillip Schorn, Vice Dean for International Affairs, Faculty of Society and Economics, Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences

b) Representative from the professional field

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

c) Student representative

- Milan N. Grammerstorf, Bielefeld University: Economics (M.Sc.); Law (State Examination)<sup>1</sup>

#### **4.4 Supervision by the Accreditation Council (Section 34(5), second sentence, MRVO)**

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

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<sup>1</sup> At the start of the accreditation process for the Alternative Procedure, Mr. Grammerstorf was not a member of the Accreditation Council. Due to his role as an expert reviewer, he therefore does not participate in the Accreditation Council's votes regarding the Alternative Procedure.

#### 4.5 Support provided by the Secretariat of the Accreditation Council

- Ketevan Becker

### 5 Data Sheet

#### Support Data

Date of the on-site visit:	June 19–20, 2023
Accreditation granted on:	March 31, 2023
Groups of people with whom interviews were conducted:	Members of the Quality Advisory Board;  Internal Coordination Group of the university;  Members of the Senate (including students); Members of the University Council; Representatives of the agency (evalag)
Documents submitted for the evaluation:	Preparatory documents for the Quality Advisory Board meeting Minutes of past meetings Adopted Rules of Procedure of the Quality Advisory Board Overview of the recommendations issued to date by the Quality Advisory Board University Annual Report 2022 (including appendices) as well as the university's evaluation and QM statutes