

# **QUALITY MANAGEMENT AT PFORZHEIM UNIVERSITY / BUSINESS SCHOOL**

**Ulrich Jautz**

Pforzheim University, Business School, Germany

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

We have had to reorganize our diploma programs into bachelor and master programs in line with the Bologna Process. In addition to the demographic development, the increase in competition with private universities and new learning opportunities, the need for accreditations and the fight for third-party funding and business aid money, European universities are faced with a change like never before and upcoming new challenges.

Pforzheim Business School itself faces a specific challenge: we are aspiring towards international accreditation awarded by the US-American agency AACSB<sup>1</sup>. In order to gain this accreditation we have to fulfil 20, in part very strict standards. So far about 555 Business Schools have already been accredited, of which 96 are located outside the United States. Currently there are three business schools in Germany which have gained accreditation with another four still in the accreditation process.

We are on the right track with regard to our accreditation process. This year in March our accreditation plan was accepted and now we are implementing it– we expect to complete the accreditation in 2010.

To face the upcoming challenges and the competition with other business schools we have developed a concept of quality management and introduced a lot of measures to improve our quality and our standards. In this article we want to give you an overview of several measures initiated.

## **2. OVERVIEW OF SEVERAL MEASURES INITIATED**

### **2.1. Standardized course descriptions**

We have created comprehensive standardised descriptions for courses and modules. Every description consists e.g. of the specific learning goal, course content, literature, and the course workload. This information is available on our homepage and in a print version. In general we make available all relevant information on our homepage, so that everyone, even people outside our business school, has the opportunity to look for information, to find the relevant documents and contact partner.

---

<sup>1</sup> Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

## **2.2. Guidelines for academic writing and research**

We have developed and published compulsory and standardized guidelines for academic writing and research, e.g. for the evaluation of presentations.

## **2.3. E-learning community**

We have created an e-learning-community with the intention of offering a communication and discussion platform to students as well to professors and assistant professors. In addition they have the opportunity to make learning materials available, use the mailing lists or the electronic evaluation.

## **2.4. Didactical training of professors**

With regard to the appointment of new colleagues we attach great importance to their didactical capabilities, e.g. through guest lectures. To facilitate their start at the business school a new colleague will be given a mentor. Further measures are the opportunity to have a consultation with the didactic representative or to attend specific workshops. Another innovation is the “teaching prize” awarded for very good teaching performances.

## **2.5. Maintaining the research aspect of teaching**

We attach great importance to the applicants’ research focus in the appointment process. Research activities are supported by mentors and the Institute for Applied Research. We support our professors by giving them time for a sabbatical (possibly every five years, on full pay). For upcoming research projects we will decrease the professors’ teaching workload. An incentive system for the preparation of research publications has also been introduced.

## **2.6. Ensuring the practical relevance of teaching**

To become a professor at our business school an applicant needs to have had 5 years or more practical experience. Many of our colleagues still keep in touch with business operations, e.g. by spending their sabbatical in a business environment or working there alongside lecturing at the business school. Furthermore we support them in doing case studies or organising workshops in cooperation with different companies. Moreover students can write their thesis in cooperation with companies. Every year we grant an award for the most successful cooperation with a company.

In addition to this we regularly invite national and international guest speakers and guest professors from companies, the field of science and other universities. To show our students what to expect we offer excursions to companies, associations, agencies as well as to law courts.

## **2.7. Internationalization**

We have a network of more than 50 partner universities worldwide. Many of our students want to spend a semester abroad, so we assist them by providing them with a

special guide. Another component is our Institute of Foreign Languages through which we want to improve the language skills of our students. They have the opportunity to learn different languages like English, Spanish and French at different levels. Furthermore we offer an International Study Program with a lot of courses held in English. Our students can gain a language certificate if they attend courses in English which add up to 30 credits.

### **2.8. Regular evaluation of professors and alumni**

In 2005 we introduced an evaluation policy. Since 2007 every lecturer and every course has been evaluated at frequent intervals through a standardized questionnaire. In additional regular surveys of our alumni are conducted with the aim of getting a better and more realistic view and estimation of their career opportunities and their career development.

### **2.9. Introducing a mentoring concept**

We take care of our students throughout their whole time at our university. At the beginning of their studies we offer introductory lectures and workshops (e.g. Introduction to academic work, a presentation workshop, intercultural competence, team work). Up until the fourth semester we offer mentoring tutorials in small groups headed by a professor. For the future we are planning to found a “career-centre” for facilitating career entry (e.g. application workshops). In addition an alumni concept has been initiated in order to keep in close contact with our alumni.

### **2.10. Early warning system**

Our university has developed an early warning system with the intention of detecting “students with problems (a student that has fewer credits than the specified amount)” as soon as possible and supporting them so that they are able to complete their studies successfully. This is done through a constant analysis of the students’ examination results. If this situation occurs, the student will be given written notice and a compulsory consultation with the head of the degree program. The student has to develop a study plan detailing how he/she will gain the necessary credits and has to talk about this with the head of the degree program.

### **2.11. Outcome Assessment**

To monitor how and to what extent our students have achieved the defined learning goals and necessary key skills we have developed our own system of control.

### **2.12. Regular exchange of experiences and opinions within our council**

At frequent intervals there are meetings like the “team leader meeting”, the faculty board meeting, meeting of the committee for study matters, the student committee and the committee for tuition fees. Additionally we regularly offer different workshops, an e-learning platform and conferences.

### 3. RESULT

This was just a small selection of the measures we have initiated to show how we are developing our quality management to improve our quality and our standards. Our process of quality management is still being developed and will not be completed for a long time yet. There are many challenges which still lie ahead of us.

#### **Abstract**

*The content of this article was contained in the welcoming speech at the 29<sup>th</sup> Scientific Symposium in Osijek, 15.–17.10.2008. It describes the need for quality management and how quality management at Pforzheim University /Business School has been developed. This article wants to give an overview about several measures initiated, e.g. ensuring the quality of teaching, guidelines in different areas, a mentoring concept, internationalization and evaluation.*

**Key words:** <quality management>, <accreditation>