Quality Assurance and the Promotion of Excellence in the Swiss University System

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General remarks
General remarks

World Class Universities

1. Concise system of quality assurance
   - externally controlled accreditation
   - internal measures established by universities

2. Promotion of excellence
General remarks

Quality assurance

- costs vs. benefits
- regular reporting to the public \(\rightarrow\) confidence
- core business of universities: deliver quality (rather than prove its existence)
Accreditation procedure in the Swiss university system
Common convictions of all Swiss universities

1. Quality assurance is our own business.
   - quality assurance units established by the universities
   - quality assurance as a competitive factor

2. The cost of quality assurance has to be kept as low as possible.
Accreditation procedure in Switzerland

The Swiss Model: Principles

- In general: Accreditation is optional.
- Exception:

  Center for Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ)

  Quality assurance systems of the universities

  summary evaluation (every 4 years, compulsory)
Accreditation procedure in Switzerland

The Swiss Model: Principles

In case of positive evaluation by OAQ

→ no further accreditation of courses and programs compulsory

→ institutional accreditation
  (of autonomous universities)
Accreditation procedure in Switzerland

The Swiss Model: Principles

Center for Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ):

- independent public institution
- controlled by supervisory board
- with full autonomy
Audits

Procedure designed by political authorities.

Subjects of the audit:

- instruments / measures of quality assurance in a certain university
Accreditation procedure in Switzerland

Minimal standards for the quality assurance system of a university

1. The university has a coherent strategy of quality assurance, which is published and university-wide known.

2. The system includes all relevant aspects (research, education, central services) and is well integrated in the general strategy of the university.

3. The procedures are legally defined, responsibilities are correctly assigned.
Minimal standards for the quality assurance system of a university (II)

4. The university has established a system of systematic and comprehensive evaluations, checking all relevant fields of activity.

5. The university supports and fosters the personal and scientific development of academics, which includes academic career development and gender equality.
6. The decision making process of the university is based on a set of appropriate and robust information, both qualitative and quantitative.

7. Transparent information about procedures and outcomes of the measures taken is granted by the university; information about offered courses and delivered degrees is provided regularly.
Accreditation procedure in Switzerland

Quality Audit: Procedure

- self-evaluation report of the university
- peers visit the university
- final report, produced by OAQ
- political authority decides on publishing of results
- restart after 4 years
Promotion of Excellence at the University of Zurich
Focus on quality

- mission statement: commitment to academic excellence and the highest international standards
- UZH is no. 58 in overall SJTU ranking (26/29 in Life Sciences and medicine)
Promotion of Excellence at UZH

Staffing policy

Goal: Get the best candidates for academic and administrative positions
- important: composition of search committees
- attractive offer
- clusters of excellence as „magnets“
- involvement of the Executive Board
- good facilities

(ratio of successful appointments: almost 90 percent; almost 50 percent of professors from abroad)
Promotion of research

University Research Fund

1. strategic part

- promotion of inter-university and inter-faculty projects (centers of excellence)
- support for researchers when competing for national projects (National Centres of Competence in Research, NCCR)
- matching fund
Promotion of Excellence at UZH

Promotion of research

University Research Fund

2. competitive part

- academic career development (PhD students, postdocs)
- only criterion: quality
- problem: too many applications ➔ good projects have to be rejected
- support in competition for national funding
- competitive approach attracts additional private funding
Promotion of Excellence at UZH

Promotion of teaching

Award for good teaching

- financial support of external foundation
- changing focuses every year
- student survey → nomination by special committee → confirmation by Executive Board
Promotion of Excellence at UZH

Promotion of teaching

**Student surveys**

- part of systematic evaluation process
- new standardised survey on the quality of courses and teaching performances of academics
Promotion of Excellence at UZH

Evaluation process at UZH

– independent Evaluation Office
Evaluation process at UZH

- independent Evaluation Office

- main goals of the evaluation process:
  
  • improvement of quality in science and administration ➔ evaluation as a formative tool
  • data for medium and long-term strategic planning
  • basis for reporting to the public (accountability)

- important: evaluations on a high scientific level
Evaluation process at UZH: Procedure

**Informed Peer Review**
- self-evaluation report
- experts’ report
- comprehensive evaluation report written by Evaluation Office
- recommendations to Executive Board

**Follow-up Agreement on objectives**
- results of informed peer review
- Executive Board sets goals
- work out agreement
- Evaluation Office reports on implementation of measures

**Monitoring of implementation of agreement**
- 2 years after signing agreement
- Evaluation Office reports on implementation of measures

*Evaluation Office*
Evaluation: Main focuses of agreements

- intensification of research
- creation of profile
- academic career development
- improvement of cooperation
- clarification of organisational structures (administration)
- formulation of mandates
Promotion of Excellence at UZH

Evaluation at UZH: Experiences

- lot of work, time-consuming for all participants
- considerable benefits
  - acceptance of the procedure within the university
  - identity
  - communication and transparency
  - uncovering strengths and weaknesses
  - structure and development planning
Thank you for your attention.

For more information:

www.evaluation.uzh.ch