Aspects quality assurance - Personal viewpoints and observations
Selected aspects with regard to German experience

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Contents

1. Qualification Frameworks
2. Quality, Quality Assurance and University
3. Frameworks and politics
4. Conclusion

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1. **Qualification Frameworks**
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Qualification frameworks: Key ideas

◆ The EQF aims to relate different countries' national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework.

◆ Core of the EQF concerns eight reference levels describing what a learner knows, understands and is able to do – *'learning outcomes'*.

◆ Easier comparison: transparency and synergies

◆ Lifelong Learning

◆ *Policy : recognize employer needs and modernize educational system, related to Quality Assurance*

German NQF structure

Level indicator			
Structure of requirements			
Professional competence		Personal competence	
Knowledge	Skills	Social competence	Autonomy
Breadth and depth	Instrumental and systematic skills, judgement	Team/leadership skills, involvement and communication	Independence/ responsibility, reflectiveness and learning competence

◆ Quite common structure

◆ Not quite clear between „Bildung" and „Ausbildung"

Learning outcome (LO) and curricula

- ◆ **Different time scales for learning outcomes**
    - – Single lecture or module
    - – Set of modules / years of study
    - – Completion of a degree programme
- ◆ The longer the time scale, the harder to measure
- ◆ If difficult to measure, then there is a risk
- ◆ Esp. political manipulation

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Quality and quality assessment

◆ Quality only definable with respect to *goals*

◆ Judging **Quality** or ***Quality improvement***, that is **Level** or ***Level Change***?

◆ Obscured relation between *input* and *output*
– Student quality
– Money

Hochschulzugänge RLP

Konsekutive Master

Weiterbildungsangebote wie Master
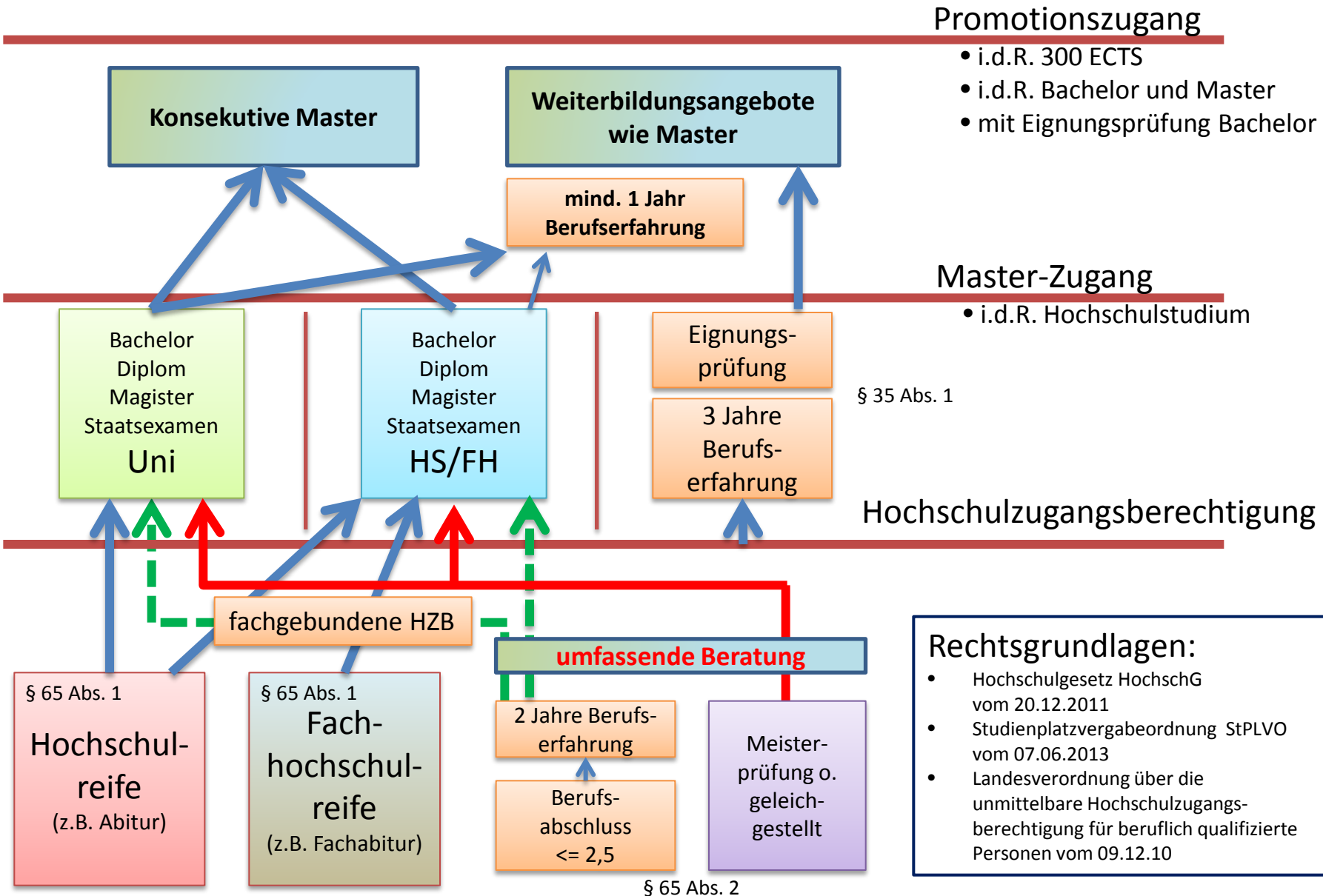
Promotionszugang

- i.d.R. 300 ECTS
- i.d.R. Bachelor und Master
- mit Eignungsprüfung Bachelor

mind. 1 Jahr Berufserfahrung

Master-Zugang

- i.d.R. Hochschulstudium

Bachelor
Diplom
Magister
Staatsexamen
Uni

Bachelor
Diplom
Magister
Staatsexamen
HS/FH

Eignungs-prüfung

§ 35 Abs. 1

3 Jahre Berufs-erfahrung

Hochschulzugangsberechtigung

fachgebundene HZB

umfassende Beratung

§ 65 Abs. 1

Hochschul-reife
(z.B. Abitur)

§ 65 Abs. 1

Fach-hochschul-reife
(z.B. Fachabitur)

2 Jahre Berufs-erfahrung

Berufs-abschluss
<= 2,5

Meister-prüfung o. gleich-gestellt

§ 65 Abs. 2

Rechtsgrundlagen:

- Hochschulgesetz HochschG vom 20.12.2011
- Studienplatzvergabeordnung StPLVO vom 07.06.2013
- Landesverordnung über die unmittelbare Hochschulzugangs-berechtigung für beruflich qualifizierte Personen vom 09.12.10

Aspects of quality assurance I

- ◆ Tools: Accreditation + further attempts on institutional level (learning/teaching)

- ◆ Organisational structure of accreditation
  - – Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK), is the permanent body of the ministries of the 16 German federal states
  - – National accreditation council that accredits
  - – agencies who, in turn, carry out the programme accreditations

German Accreditation System

Das deutsche Akkreditierungssystem
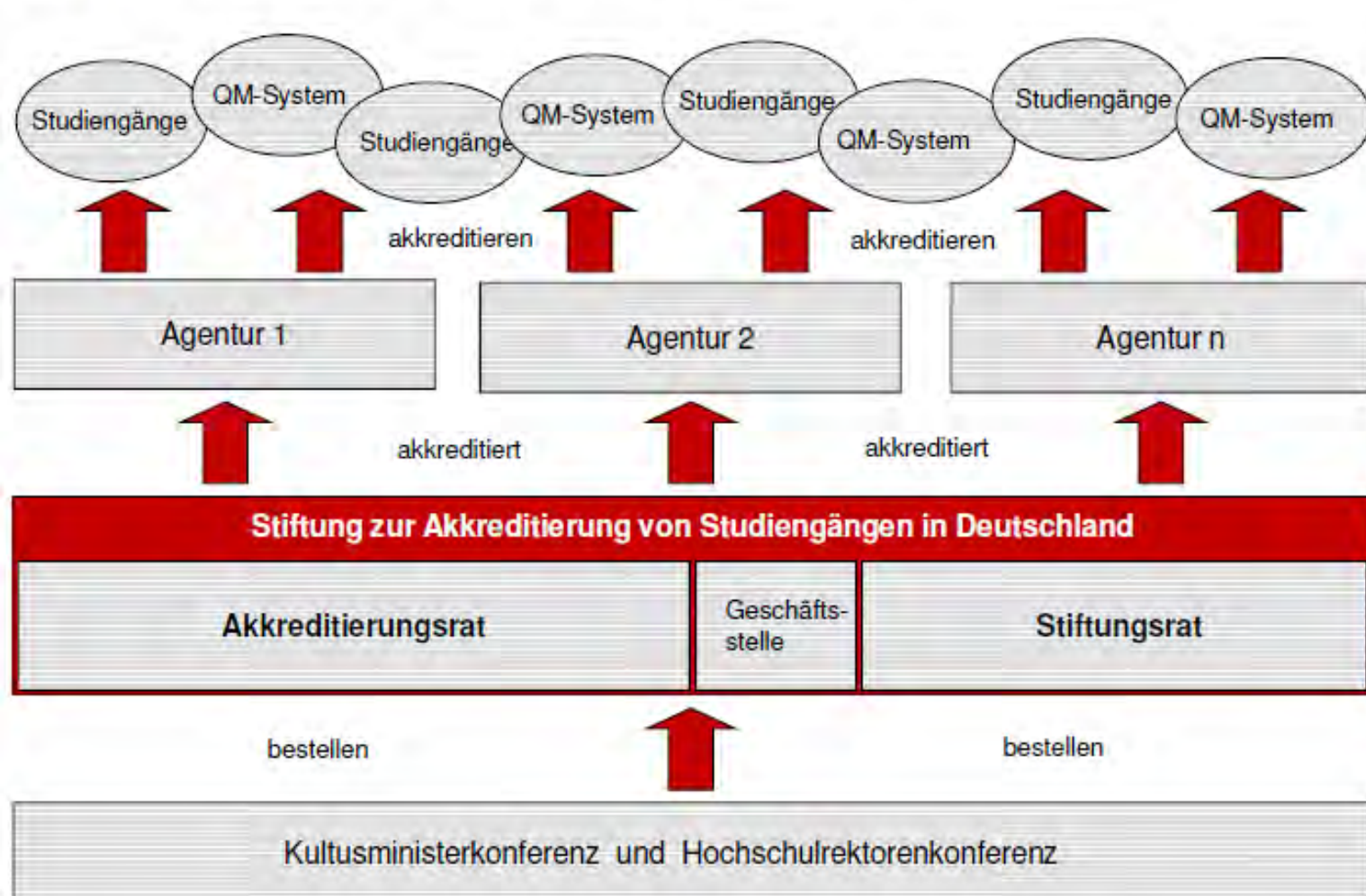
Accredited program data base

Aspects of quality assurance II

- ◆ **Major changes in study Programs**
  - – BA/MA instead of Diplom or Staatsexamen
  - – Modul examinations instead of Vordiplom/Diplom
  - – Modul descriptions with learning outcomes
- ◆ **core elements of qualifications framework**
  - – workload, level, outcomes,
  - – competencies/skills and profile in relation to the degree awarded

Remarks on Learning outcomes

◆ Learning outcomes are a *joint production*

◆ *Soft aspects are important*

◆ Different levels: subject, module, specialization, speciality, area of study

◆ Currently, I observe more or less reformulations of learning requirements

◆ Essential problem: measurement of learning outcome

◆ Long term goal cannot be examined reliably

◆ *But required* by accreditation bodies, and QF

Remarks on External Accreditation

- **Personal experience**
  - as member of 2 German accreditation agencies (FIBAA and ZEvA)
  - And as member of an accredited University
- **Extreme preparation**
- **Small peer groups of accreditors: University, Fachhochschule, Students, Practice**
- **Questionable in the state university system**

Remarks on:
Internal QA: Evaluation by students
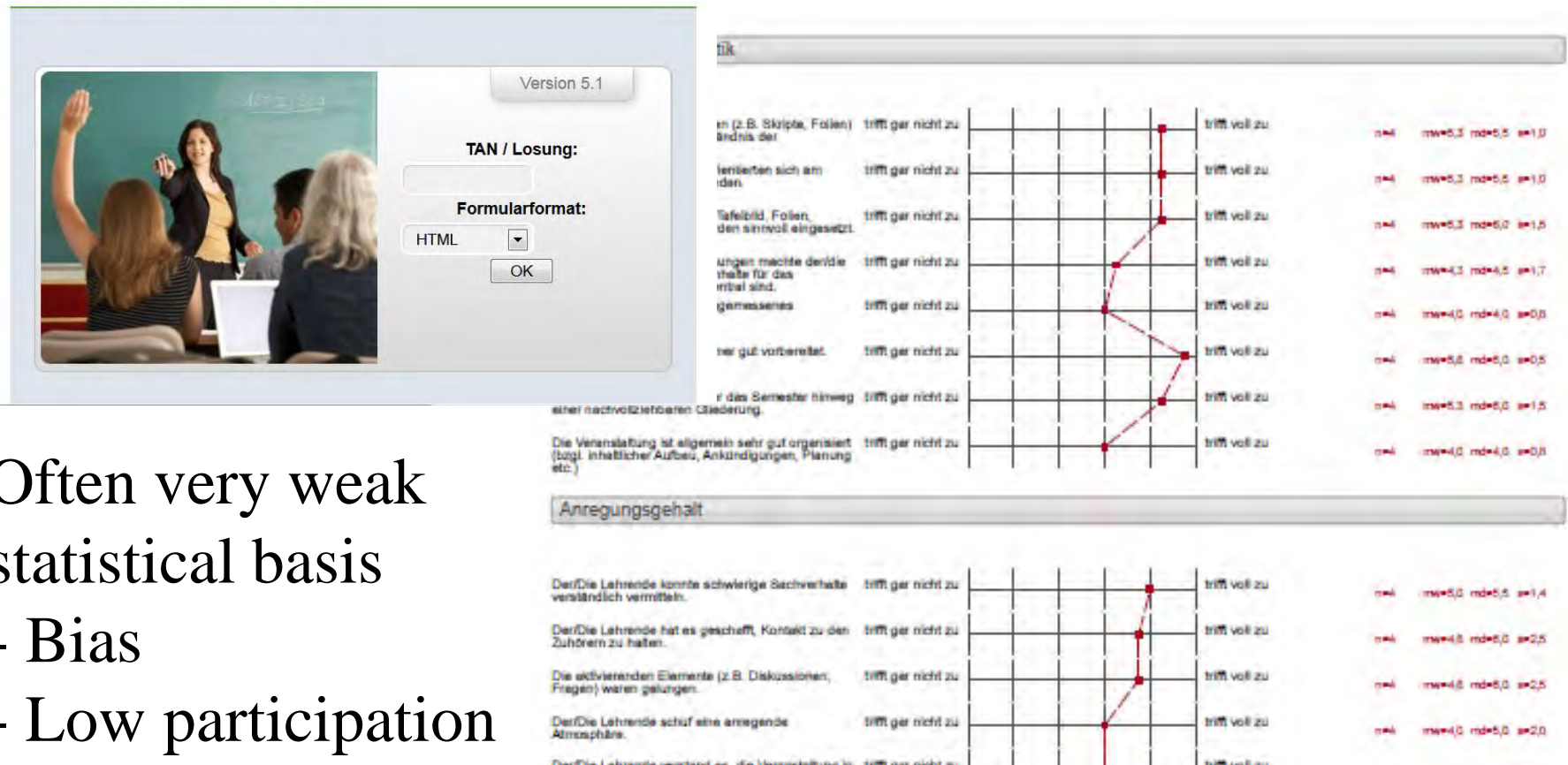
Often very weak
statistical basis
- Bias
- Low participation

Aspects of quality assurance III

◆ Stakeholders involved in accreditation

– Universities

– Employers/practitioners

– Students

◆ Involvement of employers/practitioners

– Support HEI development

– Improve fit of demand and supply

– Curricula development

– But may not always have positive impact on „Bildung" (general education)

ENQA sets Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance

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Stakeholders in Quality Assurance

ENQA > Work & Policy Areas > ENQA & The Bologna Process > Stakeholders

COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

- ◆ Students
- ◆ Employers
- ◆ Unions
- ◆ HEI
  - – Not only universities
- ◆ Stakeholders do have different interests

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance I

- Essentially a controlling instrument
- Controlling requires planning, that is, goals
- Who sets the goals based on what interests?
  - Cut/redistribute budgets?
  - Steer teaching and research?
  - Distribute/dilute qualifications for short term profits of pressure groups?
- Quality cannot be defined without goals

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance II

- increasing interest in quality and standards, reflecting both the rapid growth of higher education and its cost to the public and the private purse

- Consumer protection vs. improvement of HEI

- Fundamental principles should permeate
  - interests of students as well as employers and society
  - improve the education available to students
  - central importance of institutional autonomy, tempered by a recognition that this brings with it heavy responsibilities
  - help to justify HEI institutional autonomy

- What is the meaning of „improvement"?

Humboldt, Freedom, and the German University Model

◆ 19th century, objective of universities evolved from teaching the "regurgitation of knowledge" to "encouraging productive thinking".

◆ **Freedom essential** to German model, as opposed to French model those days

◆ Rüegg asserts that the German system is responsible for the development of modern research university because it focused on the idea of "freedom of scientific research, teaching, and study"

We should keep freedom!

Smarter (as we were …?)

A view from Koblenz students

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Political aspects of qualification frameworks I

- ◆ Frameworks do have political implications
  - Universities vs. Fachhochschule
  - Right to grant Doctoral degrees
  - Status of non-university degrees like Meister, Techniker
  - Right to access further levels of education
  - Correspondance to salary tarif levels
  - Freedom of teaching and research
  - Disagreement of the level of „Abitur"

Political aspects of qualification frameworks II

◆ Who will decide on these issues?

◆ Actual developments in the politics of higher education show, that important classification may not reflect actual qualification, but rather different political wishes

◆ If so, it is likely that universities and their students will suffer

Who are the relevant stakeholders?

- EU parliament „development of individuals, competitiveness, employment and social cohesion in the Community "

- Currently I observe strong focus on employability

- Need to clarify relation between „Bildung" and „Ausbildung"

Promote long term view!

◆ Most important are long term qualifications which are not easily maesureable, e.g. by exam

◆ Measurement procedures (like accreditation) may (will!) influence outcome

◆ Ignore short term aspects of labor markets

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Conclusion

◆ Think clearly about long term goals

◆ What are the true goals of „quality assurance"?

◆ Be aware of political and distributional impact of definitions of „quality"

◆ Care needs to be taken with regard to more general societial goals, esp. „Bildung"

◆ Keep freedom as the essence of productive thinking alive

Thank you very much for your attention