



13th European Quality Assurance Forum

Broadening the scope of QA

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Call for contributions: paper submission form

Deadline 24 July 2018

Please note that all fields are obligatory. For a detailed description of the submission requirements and Frequently Asked Questions please consult the Call for Contributions.

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Short bio (150 words max):

Harald Scheuthle works in the unit for quality management and organisational development in the central administration of the University of Würzburg. He is in charge of conducting study programme audits and carries out organisational development project in the central administration. Prior to this position he worked in the field of quality assurance for evalag, a German quality assurance agency, the European University Association and the University of Greifswald. Harald holds a graduate degree in political sciences from the University of Constance (Germany) and Rutgers University (USA).

If there are several authors, please copy and fill in the fields for each author and indicate who is the corresponding author and who will be responsible for presenting the paper at the Forum.

If you are submitting a paper or workshop proposal, please do not register for the event online until the results of the selection process have been announced. Each selected paper and workshop at EQAF 2018 will benefit from one reduced fee, which will be applied through a special registration process.

During the Forum, the full text of all papers presented at the Forum as well as the associated Powerpoint presentations will be published on the Forum website. If you do not wish your paper to be published, please indicate so here. This has no consequences on the selection of the papers. Please however note that all Powerpoint presentations will be published, regardless of whether the full paper is published.



Proposal

Title:

Looking beyond standard QA: organisational development for the university administration

Abstract (150 words max):

After having established an integrated QA system for teaching & learning, the University of Würzburg now focusses on quality assurance for its science support services of the central administration. The initiatives carried out by the administration usually require the change of structures or processes. Therefore, in the wake of a major support infrastructure project, the unit for quality management designed a support approach for organisational development for the central administration. The approach uses three main tools, namely institutional analysis, project management and process development which are now tested and implemented in nearly all initiatives carried out by the administration to upgrade its support services for teaching & learning and research. The paper presents the approach used by the University of Würzburg and illustrates with three current projects, how the instruments were designed and applied.

Has this paper previously been published/presented elsewhere? If yes, give details.

Text of paper (3000 words max):

1. From QA in teaching & learning to QA in administrative services

The University of Würzburg, founded in 1402, is one of the oldest universities in Germany. As a traditional university, it offers the full range of scientific fields from theology, law, social sciences and humanities to medicine and the sciences. For its 29.000 students the University of Würzburg offers more than 250 study programmes. The University of Würzburg is a research-intensive university focussing especially on the life sciences and sciences.

In the last years the University of Würzburg established its integrated QA system for teaching & learning for which it received the system accreditation in 2018. The system centres around two main processes: the study programme life cycle and the student life cycle for which the responsibility for quality is shared between the four levels module, study programme, faculty and university.

The study programme life cycle provides processes for the establishment, operation and monitoring of a study programme. Besides a yearly information-monitoring-reporting cycle, the QA system features an eight-year evaluation cycle, with an audit of each study programme.

The student life cycle provides instruments for the faculties to gather information on the different stages of the student life cycle that allow the faculties to react with targeted activities. The system provides instruments such as a survey for first year students, course evaluations, statistics on student progress and study durations, and alumni surveys. The integrated QA system is currently used to systematically monitor, assess and improve the quality in teaching & learning and strengthen its quality culture.

Whereas QA processes in teaching & learning are well established and accepted, the University of Würzburg now focusses on improving the support processes provided by the central administration with its seven departments for the core functions (human resources, finances, student administration, etc.) and five staff units. Whereas the support services of the administration got more diverse and require the expertise of several administrative departments, the focus of each department seems to concentrate on the own department without attaching appropriate importance to the comprehensiveness of the processes. Furthermore, many of the new tasks provide new infrastructures



for a modern university administration or require more flexible organisational structures in order to meet the needs of the university. Experience with these new tasks is, however, not widespread in the administration.

Therefore, the university decided to upgrade the quality of its administration in order to better meet the current requirements. The QA unit received the mandate to design appropriate approaches as it had on the one hand the methodological know-how and due to the end of the system accreditation and the creation of new positions in the unit the required resources to do so.

In the field of teaching & learning, the focus of quality assurance lies in designing and operating a quality management system with periodic cycle of standard processes. Apart from designing and implementing the system as such, the QA unit assumes responsibility in performing specific processes in the system on a regular and ongoing basis.

In the administrative field the challenges are to cope with new requirements. Therefore, the administration needs to find appropriate structures and processes to address these requirements which may be either ongoing or temporary. The general objective for QA is to improve the quality of support services. In the current stage at the University of Würzburg this includes both needs assessment and design and implementation of structures and processes. As these tasks may differ depending on the issue to be solved and are one-time or temporary tasks, the traditional QA methodology, which gears towards establishing a recurring quality loop, does not seem to be the methodology of choice. Therefore, the QA unit chose organisational development as a main approach as it provides flexible tools which are targeted to implementing change which may be detected by QA instruments.

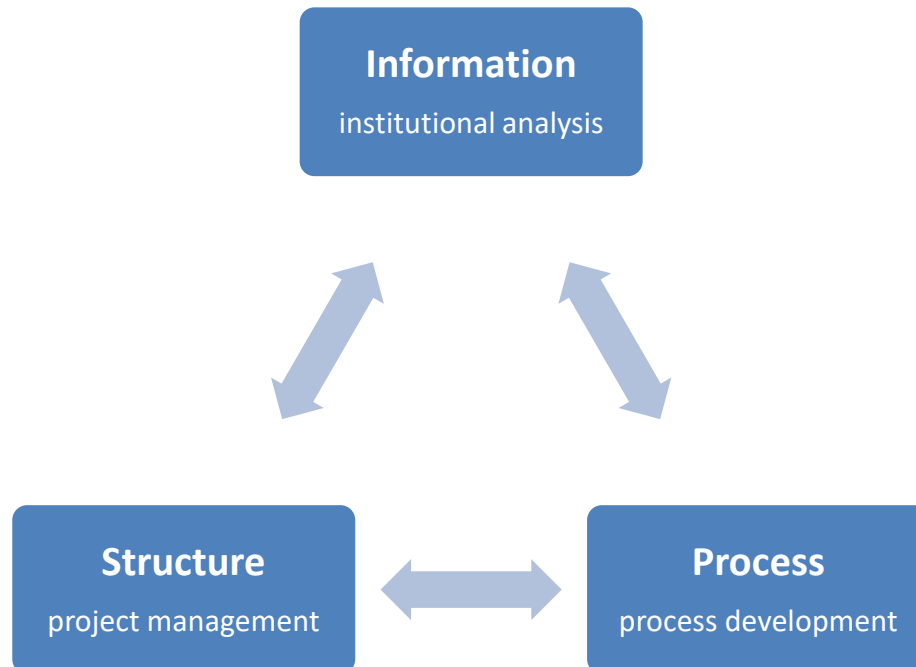
With the new task, the QA unit was renamed in 2015 “quality management and organisational development”. Besides support functions in quality assurance for teaching & learning the unit now also provides organisational development, mainly for the central administration and supports or carries out projects in or with participation of the central administration. As an administrative unit, the unit reports directly to the chancellor but is as well connected to the Vice President for quality management and organisational development who coordinates all major structural projects within the university. This shows the importance the University of Würzburg devotes to the modernisation of its support structures for teaching & learning and research.

2. The University of Würzburg toolkit for organisational development

The QA-OD unit developed a toolkit for organisational development. The toolkit does not constitute a fixed toolbox with standard instruments that can be applied to any type of problem. It is rather a set of guidelines that can and need to be used in a flexible way. Many of the tools were developed on the job, namely during the implementation of the system accreditation and the introduction of the new campus management system, which is shortly depicted below. In many cases, the transitions between two instruments may be smooth. The design and use of these instruments is a work in progress and reflect on the one hand the need for change and the willingness to change in the administration.

The organisational development of the University of Würzburg centres around three main action lines for which the QA-OD unit provides tailored services to improve the quality of administration.

Organisational development at the University of Würzburg



1. Information: Decision making requires structured information which is provided by institutional research tools.
2. Structure: Collaboration between administrative departments and faculties outside of standard processes require structures and rules which are provided by project management tools.
3. Process: Upgrading processes to meet the needs of a modern administration require analytically designed processes which are provided by process analysis and development tools.

Institutional research

Systematic and analytic information is a prerequisite for appropriate decision making. Whereas information and data for the main activities of the university as teaching & learning or research is widely available, information on – often specific – aspects of the administration may not be available.

In order to gather and to analyse this kind of information, the QA-OD unit introduced three services, first, the organisational analysis, second, business intelligence and, third, regular monitoring reports.

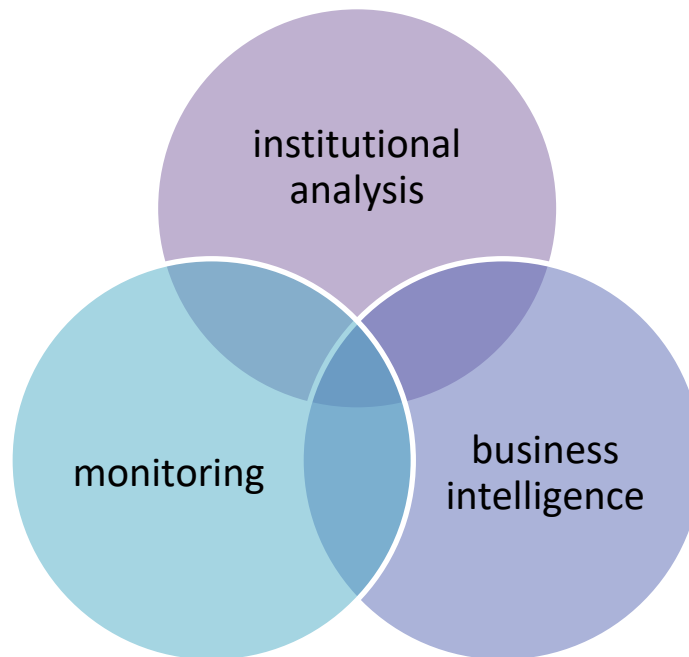
The organisational analysis is a structured analysis of an organisational unit. It provides information on its structure, tasks, resources, processes, output, etc. and analyses this with regards to a specific issue. It serves as a basis for organisational decisions.

As part of its activities, the QA-OD unit processes data on the university i.e. by carrying out surveys or by implementing data-driven projects. On the basis of these activities, the unit provides business intelligence for the university board by analysing this information and preparing reports presented to the board and the university.

The monitoring reports are regular reports that provide structured information and predefined key data in order to monitor the progress of reports or the effectiveness of activities. The reports are usually designed by the QA-OD unit and then prepared by the competent department.

All three tools provide and analyse information not available elsewhere in the university in order to improve the information basis for decision making.

Institutional research



Project management

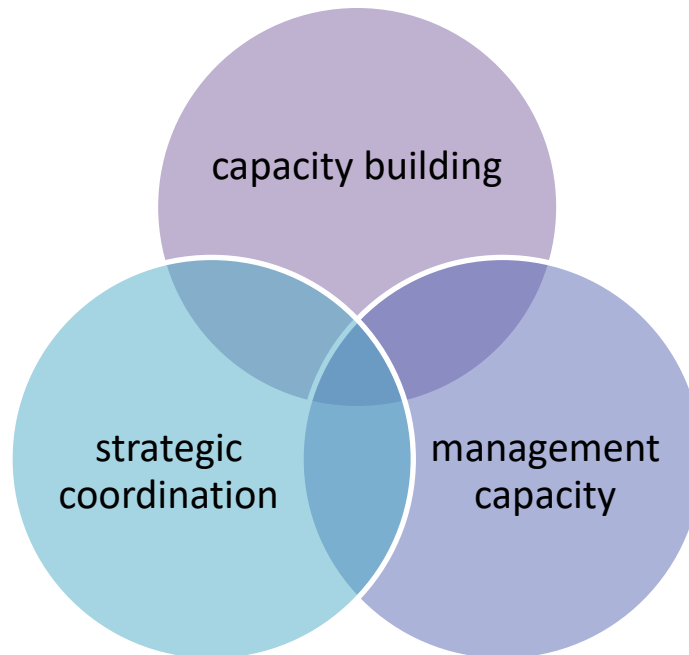
Many of the new initiatives put forward involve the cooperation of several administrative departments or need to be designed using the know-how of different departments. As their duration is usually limited, a project is a suitable structure. As the implementation of projects has not been a standard process in the central administration in the past, not all employees have project experience.

An important objective was therefore, to introduce the project structure as a standard way of implementing new initiatives in the administration. Thus, capacity building in project management and support for projects was a main task for the QA-OD unit. This led to the creation of the project office – located within the QA-OD unit – as main coordination unit for all administrative projects. The project office provides information on project management, coordinates activities, supports project managers and provides planning tool and templates. These activities are supported by a newly designed human resource development, which was built up on recommendation of the QA-OD unit and which provides project management trainings which are now a prerequisite for new project managers.

A second main pillar of project management is the introduction of a coordination group for all projects. The group is the strategic coordinator of all bigger projects at the university, which regularly oversees the project activities, advises the project manager and facilitates cross-departmental coordination. The members of the coordination group are department heads and members of the university leadership.

Besides providing information on project management, the team members of the QA-OD unit also coordinate and manage projects themselves. Especially, if projects are not clearly located in one of the administrative departments or if several departments are involved in a project, a “neutral” project management may have advantages, as a single department may not spare the resources needed to manage the project or a neutral project management may ease collaboration and exchange between departments.

Project management

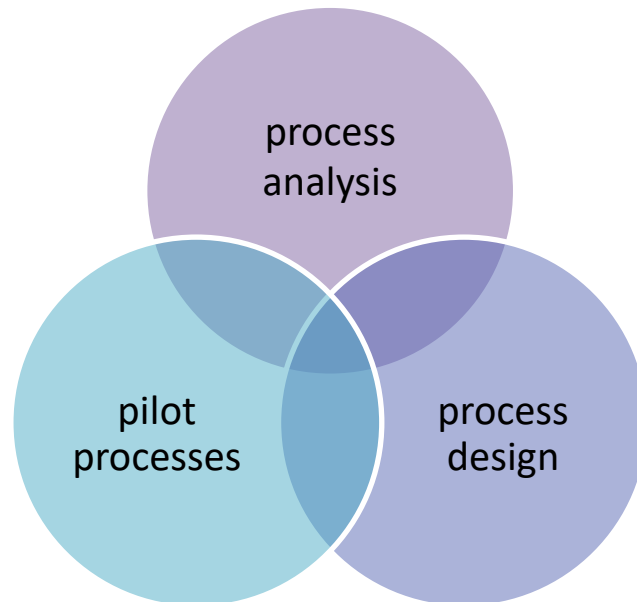


Process development

The QA-OD unit supports the administration by analysing and designing complex processes, especially those that involve several administrative departments or the administration and the faculties. The process analysis starts with an analysis of the current state of a process followed by the design of the target state in cooperation with the involved employees. If needed, the newly designed process will be implemented in cooperation with the departments involved.

Projects at the University of Würzburg can be an occasion to design new specific processes, needed for a project. Such project-related processes can serve as a pilot process that will be tested within a project to be adapted and implemented in other parts of the administration.

Process development



3. Examples of organisational development

The University of Würzburg is actively implementing its organisational development approaches for about three years and is working with them in several different projects. The following examples show, how the organisational development approach is used and how its application helped to design and refine the tools.

Campus Management System

Organisational development was piloted in one of the biggest initiatives of the University of Würzburg in the recent years, the change of its campus management system. The university is currently upgrading its campus management which comprises student registration, administration of examinations, study programme management, etc. to a new software. A project structure was chosen to implement the new software because besides several administrative departments all faculties are involved in the process.

The project serves as a good example, how the three OD approaches are used. As one of the first big projects carried out by the administration, the need to introduce project management and planning tool became obvious quickly, as the complexity of the task challenged the original plans. Therefore, a project structure with several subprojects, each managed by a subproject manager and weekly meetings, was introduced. A coordination group that meets every other week monitors the project progress and advises the project manager in taking the crucial decisions. Ongoing planning proved to be vital for the project progress and sensitised the administration for the importance of project management. Once project progress stagnated, it proved to be beneficial to be able to revert to additional resources from the QA-OD unit that could on the one hand analyse the problems at hand and to provide additional workforce to bring the project plan back on track.

From the beginning of the project, process development was an essential part as all administrative processes had to be analysed and transformed to both the requirements of the university and the setting of the new software. Institutional research became an important part in some phases of the project. The coordination group commissioned the QA-OD unit to collect and analyse specific



information in order to prepare crucial project decisions. The information needed to be collected in different departments and analysed regarding to the needs of the coordination group. Thus, the project served as an example for the need of organisational development and a pilot to test and refine the instruments.

As the campus management system of a university is the direct link between both teachers and administration and student and administration, it is a crucial part for the quality of teaching and learning. Well-designed processes and smooth operation of the interface between pedagogical tasks and the less popular but still necessary administrative tasks leave more time and energy to both students and teachers to concentrate on the essential learning process.

Company medical services

With the retirement of the current head, the university's medical service got to the attention of the chancellor who commissioned the QA-OD unit to inform him about possible options for the future of the medical services. Medical services in companies are required by law in Germany and provide preventive examinations for work positions exposed to certain health risks as well as general health prevention services for the entire company. At the University of Würzburg medical examinations are mainly required for students and scientists working in bio-medical labs.

As a first step, the QA-OD unit performed an organisational analysis of the current medical services and analysed the information gathered in order to deduct recommendations for structural and process changes. The organisational analysis and its discussion provided three main recommendations which are now being implemented. The first recommendation concerned the organisational structure within the central administration. In order to improve cooperation between the actors responsible for health prevention, the medical services joint the staff unit for occupational safety, which is in charge of the technical aspects of work security. This is expected to lead to better cooperation of the university's activities in health prevention and work security.

The second recommendation was to set up an administrative advisory committee to support the university medical officer in administrative and organisational issues. The members of the council are the chancellor and the heads of the departments for finances and human resources, the work security staff unit and the QA-OD unit. The third recommendation was to reassess the internal processes of the medical services. This will be done as next task for the medical officer with support of the QA-OD unit.

The case of the medical services showed two main challenges for the administration. First, there was no department within the administration responsible to deal with changes in the medical services and second, there was no structured information available on the current situation and operations of the medical services. The QA-OD unit could serve as a resource pool to provide the necessary resources to coordinate the project. With the organisational analysis and the following information enquiries, that collected and analysed relevant information from different departments in the university laid the ground for the following decisions.

On the one hand, as medical services are required by law in order to reduce health risks at the work place and on the other hand in order to improve health of all university members by preventive measures, the medical services indirectly enhance the quality of the university's research & development and teaching & learning as well as the university as a work place.

Teaching Quality Pact

The University of Würzburg runs a project funded by the Federal Teaching Quality Pact to improve the student experience especially in the first years of studies by a range of different measures. The implementation of the project, which is managed by the Vice President for Teaching & Learning, involves all faculties and several departments of the administration. In order to ease and streamline cooperation and coordination between the different actors in the project and in order to improve the effective use of the project funds, the QA-OD unit provides the project management. In addition, as in other major projects, a coordination group was installed.



As the project management was installed after the start of the project, the first step consisted of a thorough process analysis and a design of new processes in order to assure smooth coordination between project participants. A second essential step was to implement a reporting and monitoring system, on the one hand for the subprojects to monitor the project progress and results and on the other hand for the financial resources in order to monitor the spending progress. This provides the Vice President the necessary information to adjust the project activities if needed.

The project shows again the importance of project management in conjunction with information on project activities in order to effectively manage activities. With these organisational development activities in place, the project could already increase its financial effectivity and thus increase the output of its activities which in turn contributed to an improved quality of the learning experience for students.

4. Conclusion

The examples show the different kinds of projects carried out in the central administration and how the toolkit provided by the QA-OD unit could be used in flexible and customised ways to support the service quality of administrative services. It shows that the triangle of information, structure and process are crucial starting points to assess, support and change the work of the administration.

All the activities and projects carried out so far – although being carried out by the central administration – show as well, that there is a direct link and effect on the core activities of the university: teaching & learning and research. Thus, organisational development serves as a suitable approach to develop the quality of the administration and enhances in the long run the quality of the entire university.

Organisational development also affected the organisational culture of the administration. Whereas the administration used to work – as a traditional university – in traditional ways, the last years showed the need to change and improve cooperation between departments. With the first project being carried out, the acceptance of the organisational development approach grows and prepares the foundation for a more flexible organisational culture. Such a culture will provide the basis for an administration providing the infrastructure and the services for a university in a fast-moving environment.

Discussion questions:

Could the presented approach of organisational development work in your institution?

Which other forms of organisational development could be useful to initiate change in an organisation?

How can the administration be included in an integrated approach to support teaching & learning and research?

Please submit your proposal by sending this form, in Word format, by 24 July 2018 to QAForum@eua.eu. The file should be named using the last names of the authors, e.g. Smith_Jones.doc. Please do not send a hard copy or a PDF file.