

Recommendations for Quality Development in University Continuing Education Programmes: the Swiss Example

A multidimensional and impact-oriented approach

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Five steps towards UCE quality

Similarities and differences

Step 5: To adapt accreditation criteria

Step 4: To define UCE-specific criteria

Step 3: To integrate UCE in the NQF

Step 2: To establish transparent UCE types

Step 1: To position UCE in the (Swiss) HE System

Introductory remarks: What is Swissuni? Why UCE quality?

Involved institutions

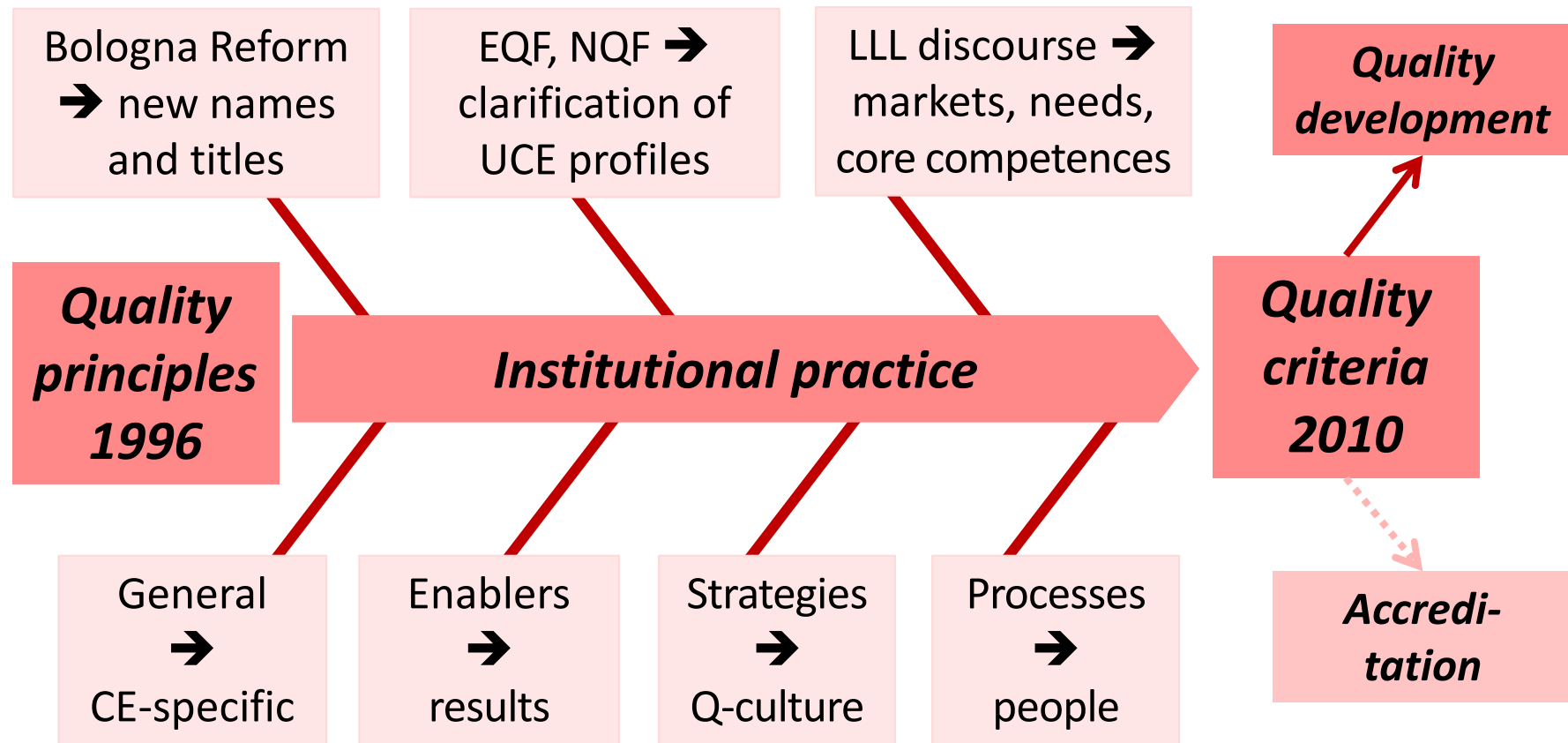
Swissuni – Swiss University Continuing Education

- ❖ Umbrella organisation of the **CE-Units** of all 12 Swiss (**research**) universities (RU)
- ❖ Civil association without any decision making power
- ❖ Influence through innovation and conceptual leadership

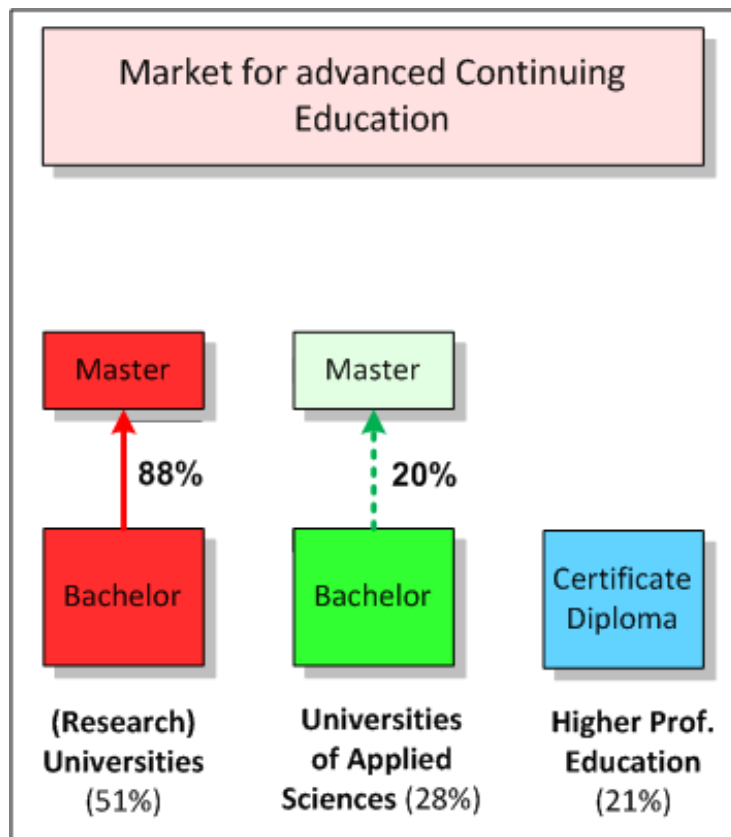
OAQ – Swiss Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance

- ❖ Independent body established by the federal and state governments
- ❖ Quality audits, institutional accreditation, programme accreditation

Why UCE quality?

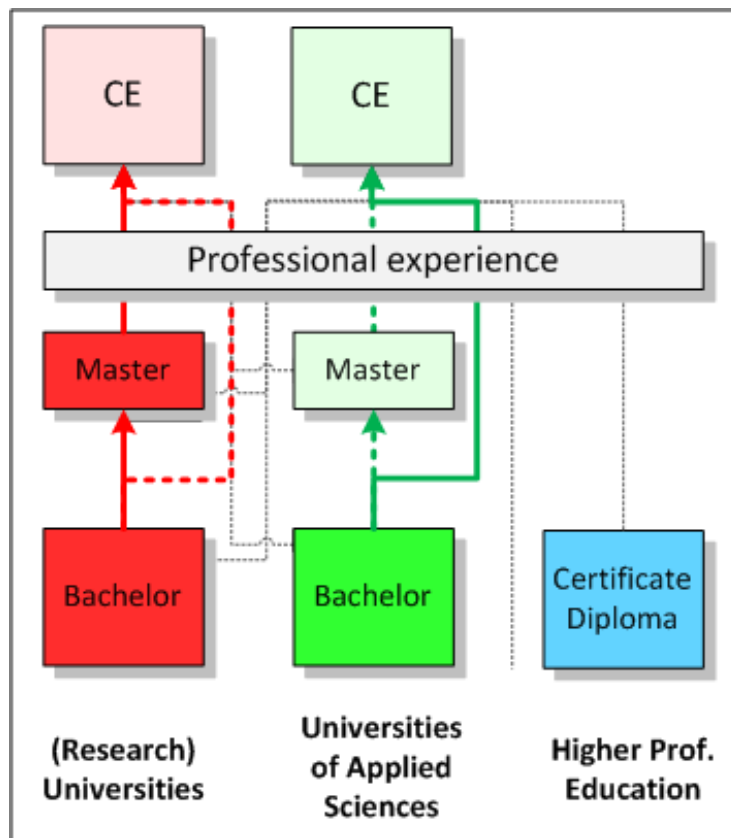


Step 1: Positioning the (research) universities in the Swiss HE system



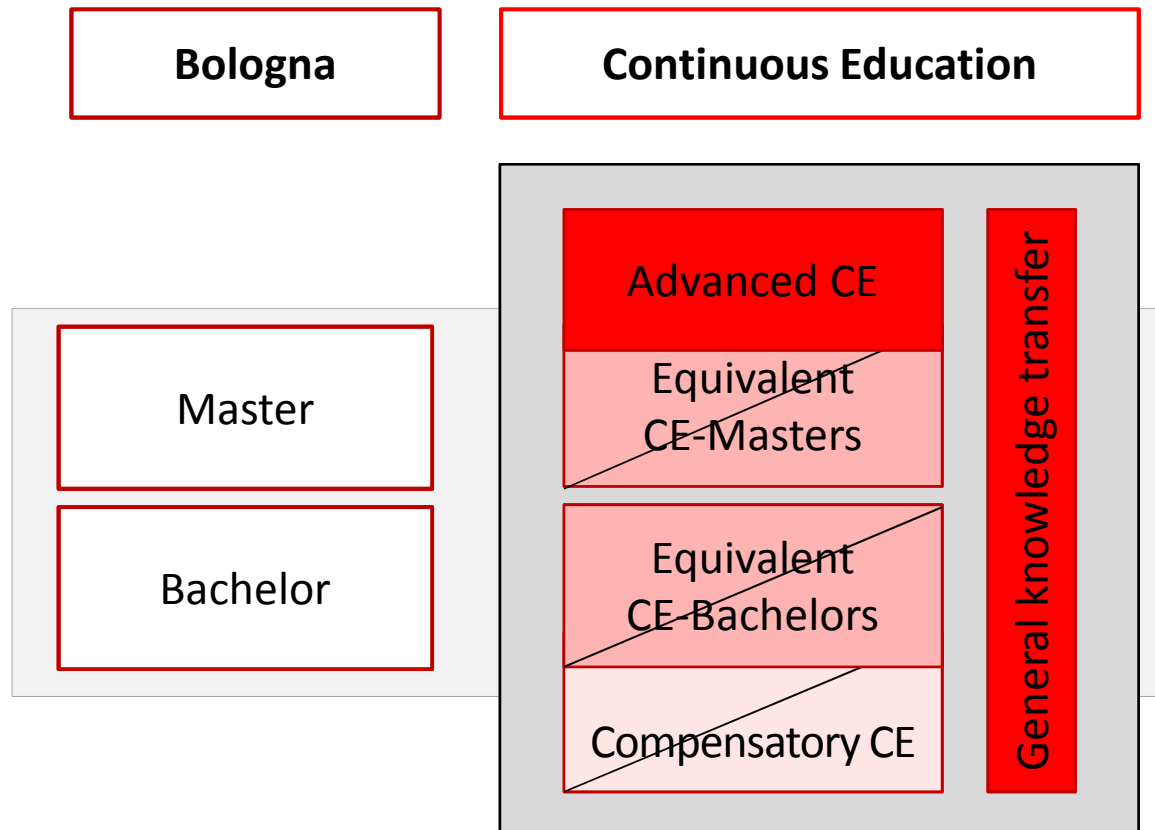
- ❖ Very strong professional education
- ❖ 'Triple' HE system (tertiary A & B)
- ❖ High master retention rate (88%)
- ❖ Big market for advanced CE
- ❖ Alternative career paths

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- ❖ Alternative career paths
- ❖ UCE focuses on its comparative advantages and core competences
 1. Academic elites
 2. Post master level

Step 1: Positioning the (research) university in the Swiss HE system



Step 2: Establishing 4 defined UCE types with attractive labels

Master of Advanced Studies
(≥60 ECTS; M + Work experience)

Diploma of Advanced Studies
(≥30 ECTS; M/B + Work experience)

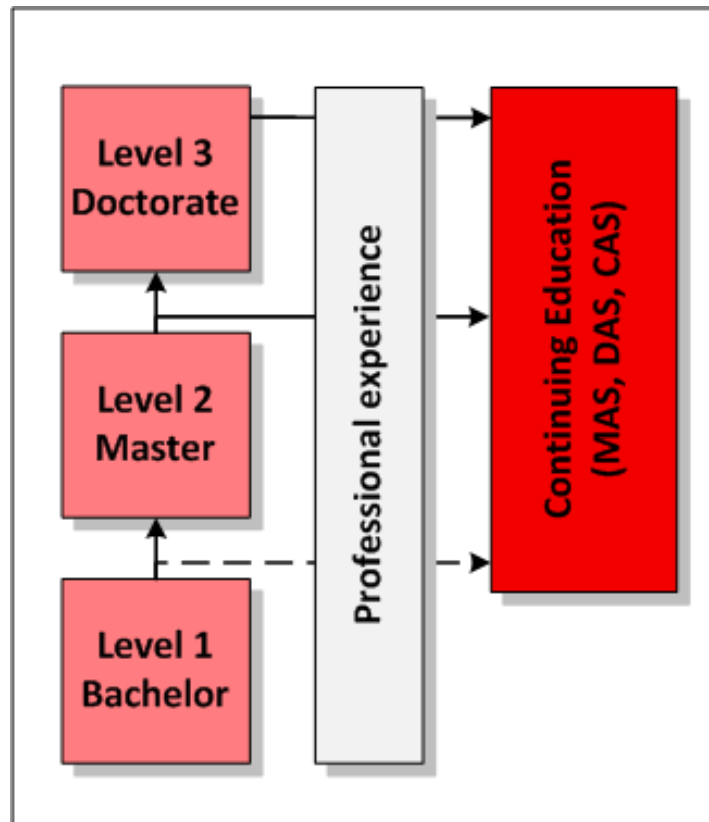
Certificate of Advanced Studies
(≥10 ECTS; M/B + Work experience)

Short Courses
(1-10 days, open)

Objectives:

- ❖ transparent offer (60 / 30 / 10 ECTS)
- ❖ admission (master + prof. experience)
- ❖ clearly distinguishable from normal master programmes (law)
- ❖ clear admission requirements (master + professional practice)
- ❖ attractive labels (legitimizing the high prices of CEP)

Step 3: Integrating UCE as independent level in the NQF (EHEA)



UCE Descriptors:

- ❖ Specialization or multidisciplinary
- ❖ Based on research and practice
- ❖ Solving of complex problems
- ❖ Management and leadership
- ❖ Change and innovation
- ❖ Communication and negotiation
- ❖ Professional identity
- ❖ Autonomous learning skills

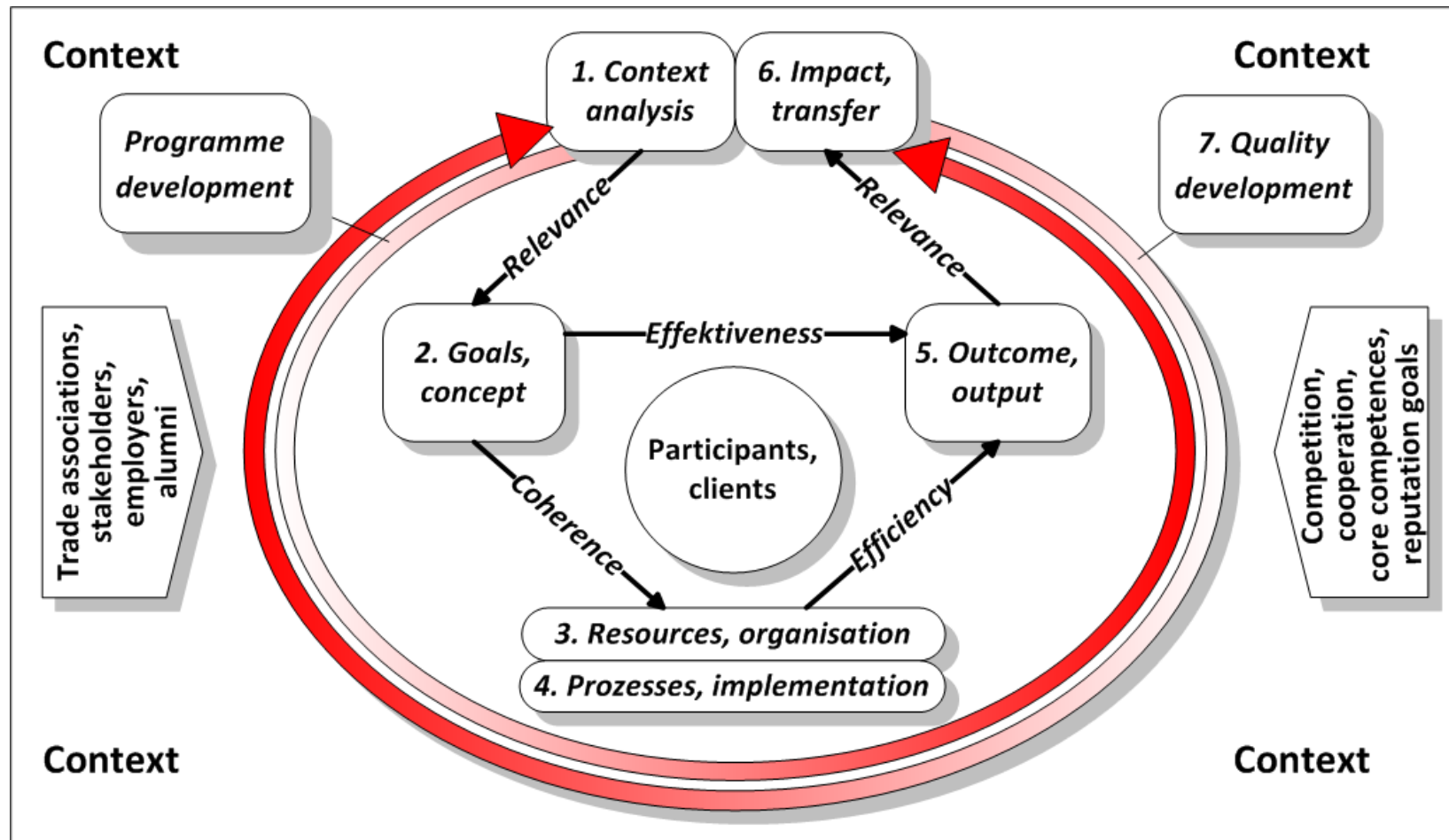
Step 4: Defining principles for a UCE quality approach I

1. **Generic:** unique, incomparable programmes
2. **Flexible:** rapidly changing needs, fragmented markets, expert client groups, heterogeneous teaching staff
3. **Programme-oriented:** decentralised, different needs
4. **Impact-oriented:** performance, career, personal development
5. **Multidimensional:** enablers and results

Step 4: Defining principles for a UCE quality approach II

6. **Improvement-oriented:** quality assessment and programme development
7. **Stakeholder-oriented:** active involvement
8. **Accountable to the client:** constant feedback possibilities
9. **Quality culture** and **personal commitment:** often stronger quality divers than formal strategies and explicit standards

Step 4: The quality development scheme



Step 4: Defining quality criteria: context analysis

Quality objective

Continuing education programmes are geared to the current and future needs and expectations of participants, employers and professional associations. They take into account the CE markets, the interests and core competences of the university and the socio-economic and cultural context.

Evaluation criteria

- 1.1. *The stakeholders are identified and according to the need involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the programme.*
- 1.2. *Programme managers identify their main competitors and potential partners.*
- 1.3. *The programme aligns with the mission and strategic direction of the institution.*

Step 4: Defining quality criteria: impact and transfer

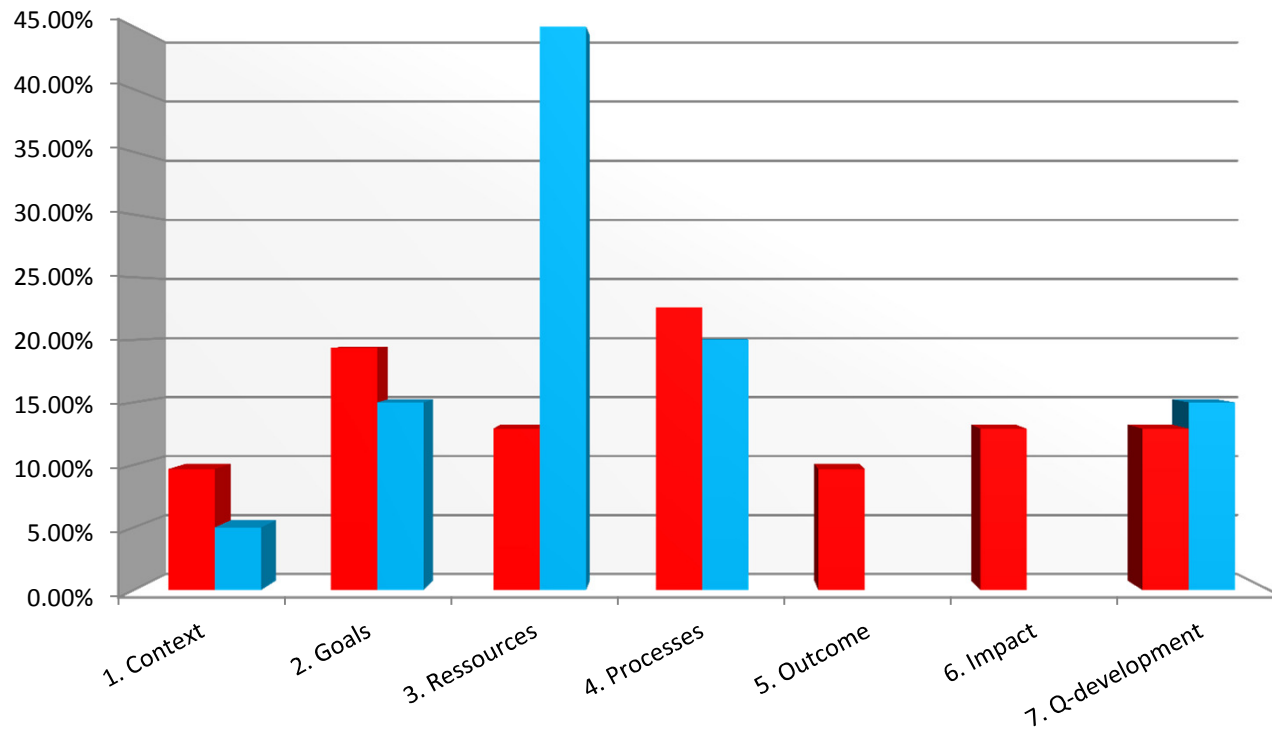
Quality objective

Programmes are widely recognised by participants, alumni, employers and professional associations. They provide explicit added value for the participants in their professional practice and have a positive impact on their career.

Evaluation criteria

- 6.1. *Participants and alumni confirm the positive impact of the competences acquired on their professional practice and/or career.*
- 6.2. *The programme is known to and recognised by employers and professional associations.*
- 6.3. *Professional associations, businesses, institutions and other interested organisations support the programme financially or otherwise.*
- 6.4. *The programme meets cultural, societal, social or economic needs.*

Step 5: Quality development and accreditation: standards compared

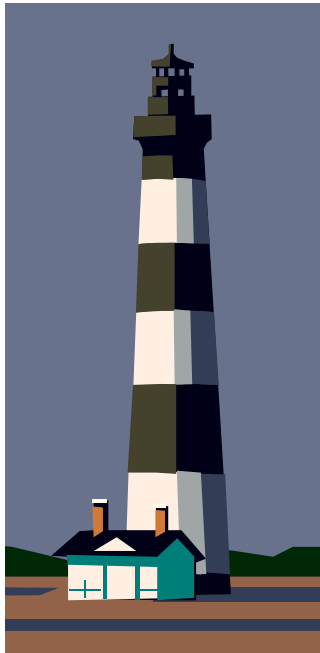


31 Swissuni criteria

16 accreditation criteria

Step 5: How to transform goals into requirements?

Visions, goals



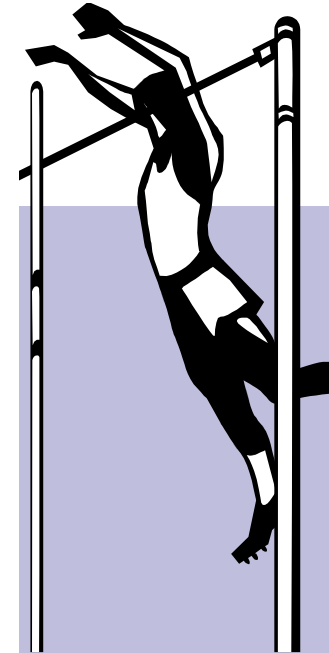
31 criteria

1. Audit: To check if the programme management applies the criteria

2. Gradual fulfilment: To reduce the degree of fulfilment of the criteria

3. Achievable set: To select only a few achievable criteria

Requirements



16 criteria

7 + 9

Comparative conclusions: Many similarities

1. Description of CEP characteristics
2. Flexibility and adaptability
3. Emphasis on stakeholder involvement
4. Focus on quality development
5. Bottom-up methodology (programme management)
6. Quality development cycle
7. Close link between quality assessment and programme development

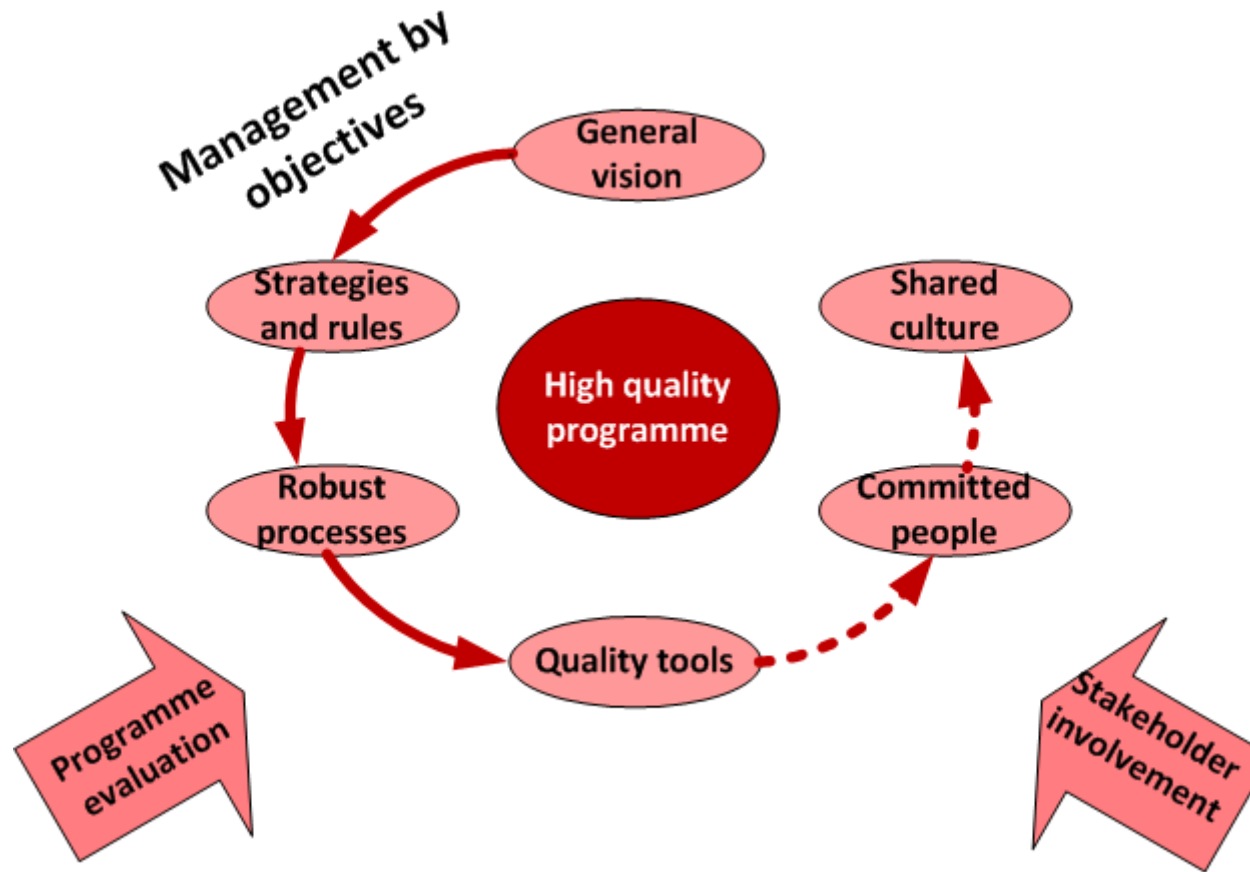
Comparative conclusions: Some differences

1. A strong national UCE framework
2. Clearly defined target groups (alumni and academic elites)
3. Little emphasis on the institution (decentralised structure)
4. Quality cycle less abstract and closer to programme cycle
5. Distinction between outcome and impact (focus on impact)
6. Based on standards rather than questions
7. No process development levels

Different approaches to make quality happen



Different approaches to make quality happen



‘Management by objectives’ approach:
 emphasis on strategies and processes

Different approaches to make quality happen



Different approaches to make quality happen



'Management by results' approach: may be combined with 'management by objectives' or 'management by people' approaches

Thank you!

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