

## Results of the HRK survey on teaching qualifications

### Abstract

The occasional assessment that engagement in teaching and studies is only second to that in research at universities must be revised. In 2020/2021, the HRK conducted a survey at the member universities on qualification offers for teachers. This snapshot was intended to map the role of qualification and continuing education, the offers and organisation of continuing education in higher education didactics and the aspect of the necessary qualification for digital teaching and learning formats in the wake of the Covid19 pandemic.

- The commitment of universities<sup>1</sup> to the continuing education of teachers is impressive. They attach great importance to teaching qualifications when it comes to filling professorships or other positions with teaching duties. At one third of the higher education institutions, there is even an obligation to participate in qualification offers.
- Almost three quarters of the universities offer teachers the opportunity for an informal exchange about good teaching. A wide variety of formats are mentioned here.
- Two thirds of the universities are organised in a network for teaching qualification or there is a nationwide centre dealing with this. About a quarter of these universities are in exchange with the Higher Education Forum on Digitisation (HFD). In addition, there are networks of individual types of universities or subject areas. At one third of the universities, there are exclusively internal offers.
- In terms of the range of topics covered by the teaching qualification courses, general higher education didactic courses such as planning teaching, activating teaching, examinations, problem-based learning are at the top of the rankings; closely followed by topics on online teaching, learning and examination formats and *blended learning*, which are relevant due to the Covid 19 pandemic.
- In view of the Covid 19 pandemic and the resulting shift to online teaching, universities have adapted their offerings quickly and flexibly. More than two-thirds of the universities changed their offerings based on systematic surveys of

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<sup>1</sup> Here and in the following, "universities" refers to those universities that participated in the survey.

teachers and students. An equally high proportion included individual feedback.

## Detailed representation

In 2020, the Presidential Board of the German Rectors' Conference agreed to carry out a survey at the member universities on qualification offers for teachers. The survey was to take into account the role of teaching qualification in appointment procedures as well as the offers and organisation of continuing education in higher education didactics. The aspect of the necessary qualification for digital teaching and learning formats in the wake of the Covid19 pandemic should also be included. The extended deadline for responses was 31 January 2021.

The response rate was 49%, 40% of the answers came from universities, 46% from universities of applied sciences/HAW and 10% from art/music colleges. A total of 132 answered questionnaires could be used for the evaluation, although answers were not available for all individual questions. In order to facilitate readability and to avoid fictitious inaccuracies, the percentages were rounded up or down to whole numbers. For a number of questions, multiple answers were possible, so that the percentage sum of the answers can be over 100.

The states of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia dominate in terms of participation, which corresponds to the number of universities in these states.

### Part 1 of the survey: General information and relevance of the teaching qualification

An obligation to participate in offers for teaching qualification even exists at 35% of the universities, 65% of the universities answer with "not applicable".

At the universities that make qualification compulsory, 45% of them target new and first-time professors respectively, and only secondarily experienced professors (22%). Doctoral students and student tutors are named as a participation group at 11% and 13% of these universities respectively. Due to the small number of cases, no reliable breakdown by type of higher education institution or organisational form of the offers is possible.

In contrast, universities attach importance to proof of teaching qualifications when filling professorships or other positions with teaching duties. It plays a role in appointments (70%), in the selection of

candidates (64%) and in tenure negotiations (30%). Only 11% of HEIs do **not** take teaching qualifications into account in these appointments.

In this aspect, a difference can be observed between the types of universities: Universities of applied sciences/universities of applied sciences place a higher value on formal proof in the pre-selection (33%) and in the appointment (35%) than universities (pre-selection 22% and appointment 26%). This presumably results from the fact that teachers at Fachhochschulen/HAW return to higher education after a professional activity outside academia.

Involvement in a network also reinforces the tendency to take demonstrable qualification into account. More than twice as many network universities (43%) as universities with internal offers (20%) stated that the evidence was relevant in the preselection process; in the appointment process it was 44% and 25% respectively. In the first step of filling a position, the advertisement, 26% of the universities of applied sciences/HAW already refer to it, compared to 17% of the universities.

71% of the universities offer teachers the opportunity for an **informal exchange** about good teaching in addition to structured qualification offers. A wide variety of formats are mentioned here. It is reported that the face-to-face formats have predominantly been transferred to online formats because of the Covid 19 pandemic.

The wide spectrum of formats ranges from closed days or days of teaching in the degree programme/subject area to workshops of different durations to "didactic hours", each of which is introduced with an impulse lecture. The linking with times intended as recreational breaks seems to be particularly beneficial; facilities such as the "didactic snack", the "didactic café" or the "didactic lunch" combine the possibility of a "break" with topic-oriented exchange. Most of these meetings have become firmly established, although the number of participants fluctuates.

Some universities also cite the exchange in (subject-specific) networks such as "Teaching to the Power of N" in this context.

## **2nd part of the survey: differentiation according to organisational form of the offers, target groups and formats**

At one third of the universities, there are exclusively university-internal offers. About two-thirds of the HEIs are organised in a **network** for teaching qualification, or there is a state-wide centre that deals with this. Participation in state-wide networks of one type of higher

education institution (47%) and those of several types of higher education institution (52%) is more or less balanced.

Among the HEIs that are organised in a network or through a nationwide centre, 44% are Fachhochschulen/HAW, 41% are universities and 12% are colleges of art or music. The distribution among the types of universities is comparable for those that have exclusively internal university offerings (49% Fachhochschulen/HAW, 40% universities, 7% colleges of art or music).

In relation to all case numbers, UAS/HAW and universities equally prefer the cooperation models (62% of the UAS/HAW are involved in a network, this also applies to 64% of the universities). 36% of the Fachhochschulen/HAW and 33% of the universities are involved in exclusively internal university programmes.

22% of the universities are in exchange with the Higher Education Forum on Digitisation (HFD). About 10% are (possibly additionally) involved in a nationwide network of a type of higher education institution, such as the "Netzwerk Musikhochschulen" (Network of Music Universities), which provides qualification offers for young academics, lecturers, but also for full-time teachers. The universities of teacher education in Baden-Württemberg have cross-university intervision groups; the universities of philosophy organise a reflection day on teaching at irregular intervals. More than 80% of the universities provide teaching qualification offers both internally and via the network.

At the HEIs that are neither integrated into a network nor cooperate with a state-wide centre, a "Centre for Higher Education Didactics" takes care of the coordination of the offers in 51% of the cases (balanced at Fachhochschulen/HAW and universities), at 20% a staff unit "Teaching and Learning" deals with it. In addition to these structures, other types of coordination are also used, so that several options are available at some universities.

In the overall view, all status groups are named as **target groups of continuing education** and are covered by the measures, both in the organisational form "network/centre" and in the offers organised exclusively within the university.

In a comparison of the two organisational forms "network / exclusively within the university", the target groups for the offers as well as their range only differ from each other by a few percentage points. Professors (98% network, 96% internal), first-time professors (79% / 80%) and newly appointed professors (82% / 87%) are clearly the focus. Lecturers (83% / 78%) and doctoral candidates (62% /

67%) follow suit. However, it should be noted that there are considerably more internally organised offers for student tutors (54%, network: 31%).

If one breaks down the data in a comparison of the two largest participation groups, universities and universities of applied sciences/HAW, there are in part great similarities, but in part also differences, which, however, are mostly due to the respective staff structure. At 100% of the Fachhochschulen/HAW and at 94% of the universities, professors are among the target groups of the offers. In contrast, only 18% of the Fachhochschulen/HAW mention junior professors compared to 92% of the universities. In the case of post-docs, the difference is also due to the staff structure at the different types of universities: only 25% of the universities of applied sciences/universities of applied sciences offer continuing education in higher education for this target group, compared to 87% of the universities. Doctoral students are targeted by 47% of the Fachhochschulen/HAW and 91% of the universities. The percentages for first-time professors (77% of Fachhochschulen/HAW, 87% of universities) and newly appointed professors (82% of Fachhochschulen/HAW, 91% of universities) are closer together. 82% of the Fachhochschulen/HAW and 79% of the universities count lecturers among their target groups. The greatest difference can be seen in the offers for student tutors: 30% of the universities of applied sciences/universities of applied sciences/universities of applied sciences provide higher education didactic offers for this target group, but 62% of the universities.

The focus is comparable across the organisational forms "network/exclusively internal" of the responding HEIs when it comes to the **range of topics** in the context of teaching qualification. General higher education didactic offers such as planning teaching, activating teaching, examinations, problem-based learning are at the top of the ranking (98% network, 94% internal); due to the Covid 19 pandemic, these are closely followed by media didactic topics, including online teaching, learning and examination formats and *blended learning with* 98% and 96% respectively. Overarching topics such as competence orientation are offered at 85% and 89% (network and university-internal) of the universities. Person-related topics such as personal attitudes and understanding of roles, conflict resolution, mediation are offered at 83% and 78% (network and university-internal) of the universities; faculty-specific topics at 41% and 50% (network and university-internal). Counselling for students also occupies a large space at 56% / 48%.

If one compares the thematic offerings of universities with those of universities of applied sciences/universities of applied sciences, the differences between the types of universities are insignificant (3% to 7%) in the general higher education didactic offerings, the overarching offerings and the media didactic offerings. There are greater differences in the faculty-specific topics, which are found in the continuing education programmes of 32% of the universities of applied sciences/HAW, but 64% of the universities. The difference is similarly high for personal topics (73% of the UAS/HAW, 94% of the universities) and student counselling, which is offered by 72% of the universities but only 47% of the UAS.

Workshops (92% network / 96% university-internal), seminars (70% network / 65% university-internal) and consultations, including collegial consultations (75% network / 78% university-internal) are the preferred **formats**. Multi-level certificate courses with basic and advanced modules are particularly popular among universities organised in networks or state-wide centres (75% network / 43% internal). Single-level certificate courses are offered by 33% (network) and 37% (university-internal) respectively. The formats training (61% network / 48% internal) and coaching (68% network / 54% internal) are also frequently used; in addition, working groups or temporary working groups are formed. Presumably, the larger number of facilitators active within a network allows for the use of more elaborate and changing formats.

## **Part 3 of the survey: Adjustment of offers due to the Covid 19 pandemic**

In view of the Covid 19 pandemic and the resulting **shift to online teaching**, universities have been quick and flexible in adapting their teaching qualification / higher education didactics offerings:

94% of the universities have made more higher education didactic offers for the transfer of courses into digital formats. Due to the acute demand, the focus is initially on offers for technical support and the use of the university's own or externally offered software. At 90% of the universities, this support is made available to the teachers. The technical aspect is accompanied by increased offers for media didactics, which 79% of the HEIs provide.

A closer look at the feedback in this field does not reveal any significant differences in the frequency of offerings depending on the type of higher education institution and the organisational form of the continuing education programmes. The urgent need of the teachers is taken up by the qualification offers of all types of universities in their own institutions or the networks or state-wide centres and is covered by supplementing or converting the continuing education courses.

The rapid conversion of teaching and studies also results in a **need for information in other fields, which is being taken into account**. At 18% of the universities, the number of offers on data protection is being increased, at 22% (the universities contribute about half here) on copyright issues. In these fields, it can be seen that the universities cooperating in networks or centres seem to be better able to meet the need: they each have about two-thirds of all offers on these issues.

A total of 26% of the universities open a higher number of offers on the legal situation for online teaching and examinations. No significant differences between the types of universities or organisational forms can be identified here. However, the HEIs noted that there are legally heterogeneous and even contradictory statements on the legality of using individual conferencing systems (e.g. Zoom, Webex, Teams) and that reliable university-wide or state-wide regulations would be desirable. In the context of the survey, it is also of interest how the Covid 19-related adjustments in the offer came about. More than two-thirds (69%) of the universities, regardless of type of institution and form of organisation, change their offerings as a result of systematic surveys of teachers and students. An almost equally high percentage (62%) include individual feedback. In addition,

discussion groups and working groups, often with student participation, contribute to further development.

Only about a quarter of the universities (24%, no significant differences) are seeing a **reduction within the range of** continuing education courses. The formats directly related to face-to-face teaching, such as voice training or body language, are particularly affected. It is pointed out that in many cases the "old" offers are being tailored to the new situation, so that when teaching university didactic competences, instead of examples in face-to-face teaching, the focus is now on those in online settings.

In the summer semester 2020, 89% of the universities will request **advice** on digitisation from teachers, and in the winter semester 2020/2021 the figure will be roughly the same at 87%. In the advisory service, subject-specific topics are increasingly addressed, and there is also the opportunity to individually expand the digital skills of the teachers (video editing, etc.). Comments suggest that a new need for advice has arisen over time: if the requests were initially aimed at technical support with digitisation, the focus has shifted to didactic quality with routine use.

**Coaching** will be offered by 73% of the universities in the summer semester 2020, and by 76% in the winter semester 2020/2021. This supply side mirrors the demand side through counselling (see above). Both the demand for counselling and coaching correspond to the values for universities in networks or with internal offers and across the types of universities, with slight fluctuations.

The overall picture of **cooperation within the universities** is equally consistent. The challenges posed by the Covid 19 pandemic are being met cooperatively. In 78% of the universities, there is closer cooperation on university didactics, in 92% on technical implementation, and in 58% on legal issues. In a number of universities, a "digitalisation task force" is being set up to pull together the threads and coordinate the most diverse measures.

At 44% of the universities, there is **cooperation with other universities on the** three above-mentioned topics; 45% of these are related to higher education didactic issues, 54% to technical issues, 46% to legal issues. The network of music colleges should be mentioned here, which is dependent on specific technical solutions for conducting individual artistic lessons and ensemble rehearsals in online mode. Information is available on cooperation between university



associations, on cooperation projects within a federal state and on cooperation in server capacities.

Cooperation with the competent ministries, on the other hand, is **not** closer in 44% of cases. If, then the competent authority is involved on legal issues (39%) or on technical matters (21%). In matters of higher education didactics, it plays a role in only 14% of the universities. It is reported back that enquiries about legal or technical problems are referred to the autonomy of the universities.

The **Higher Education Forum on Digitisation (HFD)** is receiving increased attention. The website provides information on good practice examples, offers exchange forums, podcasts and strategy advice. 50% of universities seek advice there (36% on didactics, 27% on technology, 18% on legal issues).

It is particularly impressive how many impulses from continuing education (beyond digitalisation) find their way into the degree programmes. From the numerous entries, some are listed here as examples:

- "Teaching concepts" from certificate courses and other further training are incorporated into degree programmes or serve as a fund of good practice;
- In the "snowball system", a network of peer learning among teachers is created;
- The focus groups on teaching are given greater weight;
- Working groups on hybrid teaching develop the entire degree programme in parallel to the individual courses;
- New impulses become the standard;
- Good practice databases provide conversion scenarios for standard teaching situations in many subjects;
- Teaching/learning platforms that were previously only used sporadically are consistently integrated into the studies;
- With the digital formats, a greater willingness to try out innovative teaching formats and later transfer them to the classroom is spreading;
- Curriculum workshops are becoming the norm.

Finally, the universities were asked for further comments. Some universities have made use of this opportunity and point out that the "Corona push" in higher education didactics must not fizzle out. What was first a necessity must now be turned into a virtue. Tried and tested digital formats should complement the events that

absolutely had to be held in person. A "digital pact for higher education" is urgently needed to create the necessary framework conditions.