19 October 2010
Developing the quality of studying by means of audits
Recommendation for Germany, Austria and Switzerland

How can the quality of degree programmes best be secured and promoted at German, Austrian and Swiss universities in the future? The rectors’ conferences of the three countries have developed common guidelines for this.

They call for the traditional accreditation of individual degree programmes to be replaced by an institutional audit. In an audit, external assessors and evaluators establish whether the university has the facilities and resources needed for achieving the quality goals which it has set itself, especially in the field of teaching and studies. This is not limited to an examination and verification of the status quo, on the basis of minimum standards, but rather actively promotes the continuing development and advancement of the study opportunities offered. The audit also serves or promote reporting and accountability, thereby also providing an important basis for the state's trust in the autonomous introduction, continuing development as well as the closure of degree programmes by the universities. The current accreditation processes are criticised by the universities for being too expensive and bureaucratic.

The Federal Constitutional Court is currently examining the legal basis for accreditation. Given this background, the Senate of the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK) held today had exchanged opinions with the constitutional law expert, Professor Dr. Ute Mager from the University of Heidelberg. The Senate had already adopted recommendations for developing the accreditation system into an auditing system in June.

Trilateral Recommendation