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**Title**

You can see the quality in front of your eyes : grounding academic standards between rationality and interpretation

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**Abstract**

This article considers the failure of theory to provide a workable model for academic standards in use. Examining the contrast between theoretical perspectives, it argues that there are four dimensions for which the academy has failed to provide an adequate theoretical account of standards: documented or tacit knowledge of standards; norm or criterion referenced grading; analytical or holistic judgement processes; and broad or local consensus on standards. It concludes that whilst a techno-rational perspective poorly represents the actual practice of standards in use, alternative, interpretivist accounts do not satisfy demands for reliability, transparency and fairness. It concludes by outlining an alternative framework for safeguarding standards: systematising a range of processes for learning about and safeguarding standards, particularly for new staff; reviewing the role and potential of documented standards; building staff awareness and assessment literacy; and establishing trust in standards by students and other stakeholders.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)