

Teaching and Practice of Art and Science: The Applied Approach to Quality Development

di:angewandte

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As teaching is of great importance to the Angewandte, the university's approach to quality development has its roots in quality in teaching.

This approach aims at achieving the objectives as laid out in the Angewandte's vision statement by systematically providing the support of quality development procedures and instruments, thus assisting to further raise the university's profile.¹

Starting Points

1. Mode of Practice

Procedures at the Angewandte typically start out from artistic processes, not only in respect of teaching and the individual praxis of its artistic and scientific staff, but also regarding university management and staff members who work in planning, service and administration.

As a fundamental rule, artistic processes are unbiased as to their results and require great flexibility and reflection skills from all involved. This also applies to the handling of previously set goals, which may be queried and altered at any point in the work process. A generalized description of goals in studies and teaching or in research is sensible and necessary, however, at the same time there always needs to be room for individual development.

Therefore, the binding principles as set out by the university are continuously reflected upon involving actual problem cases, in order to ensure that these regulations provide support and motivation and not turn into regimentation tantamount to constraints.

2. Quality

In the artistic context of the Angewandte, quality is always seen as connected to processes of development and transformation, the endeavour for social relevance, international presence and excellence. Striving for quality is an integral part of each genuine artistic process; in this sense the claim to a high standard of quality is already embedded in art itself.

Quality is a factor undergoing continuous change. Consequently, the appropriate demands have to be reassessed in ongoing processes of reflection. The demands are defined by all persons involved in teaching and learning processes, they also arise from individual disciplines, the interaction of different disciplines and society itself.

The Angewandte deals with quality issues on a variety of levels: focussing in particular on conditions required for students' optimal artistic growth, optimizing prerequisites in respect of teaching and research for artists and scientists employed in-house, delivering substantial input towards developments taking place within the disciplines, or towards responsibilities which befit the university in view of challenges and issues facing society.

In all this, the Angewandte regards itself as an institution that is also subject to continuous development. The willingness to self-reflect and change thus plays an important role: for the whole university, that means for all its members – artists and scientists, students, general staff.

¹ cf. the Angewandte's current development plan: www.dieangewandte.at/mission

3. Vision and Strategic Goals

The Angewandte defined a guiding vision and strategic goals² that have since been updated and developed further every three years as part of the development plan – since 2005 in a self-governed manner and by including all institutes, divisions and departments. A culture of dialogue evolved during several repetitions of development planning: the Angewandte's rectorate, senate and individual departments interact in such a way that different perceptions, ideas and requirements are discussed constructively and are condensed into a consensual, long-term vision and specific development perspectives for the next years.

4. European Standards

In developing its own approach to quality development, the Angewandte referred to the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*³ and interpreted these in a way meaningful to the university's own context. In line with the introductory comments to the ESG, own paths were found where necessary.

5. Interim Résumé

Since the turn of the millennium, the Angewandte has not only developed from a more or less loosely knit and partly government-controlled institutional conglomerate of different faculties to a social framework with common goals⁴: also, by not simply implementing external requirements but regularly turning them into a subject for internal and open discussion first, it was possible to develop, a step at a time, a common culture and thus the necessary mutual trust which is the prerequisite for successful processes of development and change.

Understanding the university as a collaborative structure continuously progressing also facilitated the transformation from an introverted master class principle to a university that is open and actively co-created by its artistic departments.

Conceptive Basics

1. Quality in Teaching and the Teaching Evaluation Work Group

The systematic work on quality issues which began in 2006, started off in the area of studies and teaching. The rectorate's open invitation led to the formation of the Teaching Evaluation Work Group, who identified four areas of focus relevant to quality in teaching, and who subsequently presented the appropriate papers:

- „Teaching – Quality – Evaluation. An applied concept“ (2010) deals with quality at the level of teaching events and evaluation options appropriate to teaching formats of artistic subjects. In particular, four different procedures to fit different requirements are recommended which teaching staff can choose from.⁵
- „What Constitutes a Good Curriculum? An applied Position“ (2012) deals with quality criteria for curricula. By distinguishing between quality of structure and quality of process, it paves the way to the subsequent paper.
- „Infrastructure and Organization as a Focus of Quality Enhancement in Teaching“ (2015) investigates the interaction of teachers and persons responsible for organization and specifies the prerequisites for optimal cooperation as well as the relevant areas of focus to be worked on.

The papers are available under www.dieangewandte.at/qualitaet, they were and still are in each case the basis for widely supported implementation processes as initiated by the university leadership.

The fourth and final area of focus „Qualification and Teachers' Continuing Professional Development“ is currently being worked on.

² cf. Development plans of the Angewandte, download under www.dieangewandte.at/mission

³ cf. <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg>

⁴ cf. Carstensen/Hofmann: Qualität in Lehre und Studium: Begriffe und Objekte. in: Benz et al.: Handbuch Qualität in Studium und Lehre, Stuttgart 2008.

⁵ Details on the individual procedures: www.dieangewandte.at/qualitaet

2. Quality in Art and Research

Based primarily on the intentions stated in the Performance Agreement 2013-15⁶, initiatives to support and accompany art and research projects which at first mostly related to individual cases were now consolidated to the viable structure of „Research Field Angewandte“. The division „Support Art and Research“ developed a strategy for the support of artistic-researching work processes that forge a bridge from initiating/enabling via supporting to documenting art and research.⁷

3. Quality and International Issues

In view of the increasingly growing number of international cooperation ventures, quality criteria applicable to international partnerships were developed and passed by the rectorate⁸. These criteria allow for an accompanying evaluation to be used as the foundation for decisions regarding any new cooperation or (non-)continuation of existing ones.

To achieve intensification and institutionalization of international exchange, an Advisory Board⁹ of renowned artists and scientists has been set up.

4. Quality in Planning, Service and Administration

In addition to a monthly jour fixe, the heads of the eight divisions of planning, service and administration reflect on the status quo and potential for improvements during their annual offsite meeting. All of this regularly leads to development projects such as introducing and mentoring new staff members, or dealing with the legally required assessment of mental stress at the workplace¹⁰ in a manner that is both concise and unbiased as to its results. They also provide input such as contributions to the paper “Infrastructure and Organization as a Focus of Quality Enhancement in Teaching” (Teaching Evaluation Work Group, 2015).

⁶ download under www.dieangewandte.at/berichte

⁷ cf. Wissensbilanz 2013, S.52 ff., Download unter www.dieangewandte.at/berichte

⁸ www.uni-ak.ac.at/uqe/download/Q_Mobil.pdf

⁹ list of current members see www.dieangewandte.at/advisoryboard

¹⁰ cf. www.dieangewandte.at/weiterbildung

Objectives of the Applied Approach to Quality Development

The Angewandte decided not to develop a control system with a set of tight rules, as it was felt that this represented an unsuitable technocratic and bureaucratic top-down approach. With its own, specific approach the Angewandte uses the statutory requirement of setting up a “quality management system”¹¹ to push for achieving its vision¹² by implementing suitable measures.

The Applied Approach to Quality Development expects that – based on the crucial role and responsibility of each artist and scientist – **an in-depth and ongoing dialogue regarding vision, strategy, quality and implementation between them as well as with the university management** is necessary, in order to synchronize effectively the individual and institutional actions, thus meeting significant demands of the guiding vision. **The objective of the Applied Approach to Quality Development is to provide the structure for this dialogue and systematically encourage it to take place.**

The individual goals are:

1. Encouraging a Common Culture of Quality

The Angewandte regards its quality culture as a basic mindset shared by all members of the university, which is defined by individual responsibility, continuous reflection and development, plus an interest in participation. On the one hand, this culture is encouraged by creating the necessary scope for self-responsible actions, on the other hand by offering suitable formats for an ongoing exchange regarding goals, relevant developments and activities.

2. Supporting Individual and Structural Advancement

In order to support personal advancement as well as advancement for the university as a whole, suitable offers are developed and made available. Offers range from counselling and mentoring to further education, up to processes of organizational development.

3. Continuous Monitoring of Quality in Significant Work Areas

Persons at different tiers of the university who are responsible for quality in teaching and praxis have access to procedures and information enabling them to continuously check current quality. This situation assessment provides a factually sound foundation for further development.

4. Developing Vision and Perspectives as a Joint Task

By setting up suitable formats of communication and discussion, as well as creating transparent decision processes, all members of the university are able to contribute actively and on an equal footing to the advancement of vision and perspectives.

5. Developing the Quality Concept as a Joint Task

Based on the positive experiences gained from open discussion about quality in teaching, further updating of the Angewandte’s understanding of quality is carried out as broad-based as possible. At the same time, benefits and effects of the Applied Approach to Quality Development are also critically reflected.

¹¹ cf. § 14 University Act 2002

¹² cf. current development plan of the Angewandte: www.dieangewandte.at/mission

Implementation Principles

In the course of developing the Applied Approach to Quality Development, the following principles were found to be important prerequisites for a successful implementation process:

1. Procedures for Quality Assurance/Development to be in Accordance with Quality Culture

When changing structures and introducing or altering processes, the Angewandte takes care to apply such alterations in a way that they further the own quality culture, or – should external requirements prevent this – at least not jeopardize it.

2. Respecting and Encouraging Motivation and Responsibility at All Levels

The Angewandte regards itself as an open organization of experts and assumes an intrinsic motivation in members of the university that reaches beyond the work area of art and science.¹³ Artists and scientists themselves are mainly responsible for quality in teaching, research and art development. Staff members in planning, service and administration take on their share of responsibility for quality of structures and processes.

It is the responsibility of the university leadership to create the necessary leeway and flexible structures, to ensure and encourage continuous reflection and further development, and to provide the required procedures and basics.

3. Students as Co-Creators

Students can create their own study schedule and process of development against the background of defined study objectives in an open development environment and with the appropriate support of various teaching formats. They are not seen as customers of the university but as individuals responsible for the co-creation of their own educational process and its basic conditions.

4. Using the Characteristics and Strengths of a Small University

In line with the Angewandte's size and culture of communication, the university forgoes formalized procedures when possible and sensible. Communication that is low-barrier and informal allows for swift exchange and cooperation beyond predefined structures. Transparency for all interested parties is ensured, unless barred by objectively compelling reasons.

5. Defining and Reflecting on Areas of Focus on a Regular Basis

In order to keep an eye on procedures that have been recognized as significant for the further development of the Angewandte, as defined in its vision and strategy, reflection loops are set up to ascertain that these procedures are given ongoing attention. The reflection loops are designed to provide the persons responsible with support in planning, implementation, situation assessment and further development.

6. Dynamics

The Angewandte does not strive for a seemingly perfect (and thus static) system. The objective of all activities is to support the organization of the Angewandte and all university members in their ongoing reflection and further development.

Angewandte – University of Applied Arts Vienna, February 2015

¹³ cf. for example Altwater: Organisationsberatung im Hochschulbereich – Einige Überlegungen zum Beratungsverständnis und zu Handlungsproblemen in Veränderungsprozessen. in: Altwater et al. (hg): Organisationsentwicklung in Hochschulen, Goseriede 2007; Ada Pellert: Academic leadership and organizational culture. in: Bergan et al.: *Handbook on Leadership and Governance in Higher Education*. Berlin 2010; Kernegger: Brauchen Kunstuniversitäten Qualitätsmanagement? Oder braucht Qualitätsmanagement Kunstuniversitäten? in: *Jahrbuch Hochschulrecht 2014*, Graz 2014.