

Teaching Strategy

of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

approved at the Senate meeting on November 5, 2010

Introduction

Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU) started the intense process of developing a mission statement and a strategy concept very early on.

In the field of learning and teaching, this process applies to the following areas in particular: course structures, quality standards, student advising, funding options, e-learning, university didactics as well as regional and international cooperation.

With the transition to Bachelor's and Master's programs of study and the requirements this brings with it, JGU decided to develop and enhance the existing concepts by taking account of additional considerations that affect the specific structure and ongoing development of learning and teaching. The following proposals shall apply to all courses and not merely to those recently introduced.

The starting point and basis for this teaching strategy is JGU's self-imposed commitment as outlined in its mission statement, to the effect "that students should have access to a high-quality course variety, an attractive social and cultural environment, and clear and transparent structures designed to help promote academic success." Building on this, JGU sees it as its duty to provide its students with high-level academic and artistic qualifications as well as to impart social and methodical skills and values. JGU values the commitment of students who help support the University outside their own study courses.

JGU also aims to support students individually, to help them develop on a personal level, and to promote the issue of gender equality in all aspects of learning and teaching.

The following teaching strategy proposals can be divided into three central aspects:

- A. Specific Features of Teaching at JGU (relating to research, professional, interdisciplinary, and international aspects alike);
- B. Structural Requirements (management systems, course structures, range of subjects, and organization);
- C. Sustainable Promotion of Quality and Quality Assurance (human resources development, enhancements of teaching and learning processes, development of incentive schemes as well as structures and measures of quality assurance).

A. Specific Features of Teaching at JGU

1. At the heart of JGU's strategic approach and of related concepts and measures is the desire to maintain the **unity of research and teaching**, while ensuring that courses remain focused on professional needs. Thus, JGU regards research and teaching as of equal importance and as complementary and mutually enriching elements. The University caters for both through differentiated course structures and through a variety of functions within individual course sections. Based on a three-tier course structure in the form of Bachelor's, Master's, and postgraduate courses, the combination of research and teaching is achieved in different forms and intensities: Bachelor's courses are meant to particularly focus on the development of research skills and to impart basic principles of academic work and scientific methods. Research Master's programs usually have an explicit emphasis on method and content or require participation in research projects. Continuing Master's programs focus on the special requirements of the working world. Finally, postgraduate programs open the way to excellence in research.

Measures:

- Necessary for the acquisition of **research skills** are facilities that allow students to practice, to make and to correct errors, and to reflect on the knowledge gained. Related to this is the effort to improve faculty-student ratio and to design the curricula in a way that sufficient time is available for reflection and active acquisition of course contents. With regard to the faculty-student ratio, JGU will soon be making use of the possibilities afforded by the introduction of the so-called "Bandbreitenmodell" (spectrum model), while at the same time advocating in the political arena the introduction of a financing concept that meets the requirements of teaching and learning. As part of the re-accreditation of programs of study, particular focus will be placed on the proportion of reproductive and creative skills gained and the related course content as well as on the students' workload. We do this in order to be able to combat any developments that might undermine the guiding principle of the unity of research and teaching. To provide for the acquisition of research skills, it is necessary to ensure that senior university teaching staff is also involved in Bachelor's courses.
- The courses of studies at JGU are also **focused on professional needs and potential demand in the working world**. This focus is supported by a diverse range of practical and orientation options, such as the well-established JGU job and internship fairs and the University's Career Service run by its Student Advising and Information Center, which provides a wide range of advice and supportive measures for gaining qualifications (e.g. spring and fall universities). JGU also offers a variety of events at different levels that are incorporated into the curriculum together with additional supporting events to promote the acquisition of key qualifications. These primarily include JGU's General Studies program "Studium generale," the General Postgraduate Program, and the Office of Gender Affairs and Equal Opportunity, which are all involved in the communication and impartation of so-called soft skills. With relevant differentiation according to the basic focus of the individual courses, particular attention is paid to the aspect of professional orientation as part of the initial accreditation and re-accreditation of courses, making use of the results of regular graduate and employer surveys as important test

indicators. These surveys are intended in particular to assess the short-term and long-term effects of the JGU degree programs and courses on professional orientation and skills. JGU also intends to take part in so-called service learning projects and will thus establish relationships with non-profit organizations.

- The **close link between Research Master's programs and research issues** calls for course programs designed to offer a structured overview on the current state of research and to provide for the incorporation of research projects in Master's degree programs. Here, JGU is striving to establish an appropriate link between Master's and postgraduate courses and the existing JGU Research Centers and Research Units, the Gutenberg Academy for Young Researchers, and other cross-disciplinary options for young scholars.
2. With regard to its broad range of subjects and its comprehensive university status, JGU sees excellent opportunities for **interdisciplinary cooperation in research and teaching**. Being a comprehensive university, Mainz University is able to offer courses at interfaces within as well as between individual subject areas. Because JGU offers courses in mathematics and the natural sciences, medicine, the humanities, cultural and social sciences, and music and the arts, there is a good deal of potential in this respect, and this type of collaboration at various course levels represents a key characteristic of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.

Measures:

- By establishing core research fields in research and a range of interdisciplinary courses (e.g. mutual methodological training), JGU intends to promote interdisciplinary cooperation at all three qualification levels of teaching. In future, particular emphasis will be placed on **courses at the interface between natural sciences, the humanities, and social sciences**.
 - The potential of individual subject areas, particularly of small academic disciplines, is exploited as efficiently as possible by linking them with major subjects in combined or integrated programs of study. This stands for special chances in the process of profile building. JGU also emphasizes collaboration in the field of teaching to make even better use of existing opportunities. This is particularly true of cooperation in the teaching of linguistics, cultural studies, and translation studies at the two campuses in Mainz and Gernersheim (see also: Potential of E-Learning, section 9).
3. In the field of teaching, JGU is well-known for its extensive participation in international collaboration projects as well as in student and teacher exchange programs. The number of international students at Mainz University and the extent of the University's involvement in ERASMUS programs are far above the German national average. The topic of internationalization in teaching is also at the core of an internationalization strategy that is currently under development and will put this into concrete terms.

Measures:

- JGU is developing an internationalization strategy that will identify existing focuses and build on them, and which will also evaluate the potential for additional or concentrated international collaboration and define binding criteria for this area.
- The development of the internationalization strategy is linked with an assessment of how far the relevant support options available need to be restructured with regard to content and organization.
- Within the framework of the certification and accreditation of courses of study, particular emphasis will be placed on international exchange programs and on the establishment of the relevant curricular scope. Options for integrating semesters studied abroad into the JGU course of studies will be increasingly important with regard to re-accreditation. The aim of this approach is to enhance the flexibility of course structures and thereby facilitate the integration of study periods abroad.
- JGU also supports collaboration in the field of cross-border structured courses that are recognized in the participating countries. Particular stress here is placed on bi- and tri-national study courses with dual qualifications such as the Integrated French-German Study Program Mainz/Dijon.

B. Structural Requirements

4. In terms of the size of its student body, JGU is one of the largest universities in Germany. Currently, the University counts more than 34,000 students enrolled in one of its ten departments, its School of Music, or its Academy of Arts. JGU is a **comprehensive university** and offers a wide range of courses. In addition to the Faculty of Catholic Theology and Protestant Theology and the Faculty of University Medicine, there are three faculties concentrating on the field of the natural sciences, i.e. the Faculty of Physics, Mathematics, and Computer Science, the Faculty of Chemistry, Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Geosciences, and the Faculty of Biology. Moreover, there is the Faculty of Law, Management and Economics, the Faculty of Social Sciences, Media, and Sports, the Faculty of Philosophy and Philology, and the Faculty of History and Cultural Studies. The integration of the specially constituted Faculty of Translation Studies, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies in Gernersheim, the Mainz School of Music, and the Mainz Academy of Arts is unique in Germany. This wide-ranging differentiation of disciplines calls for the individual subject frameworks to be made more concrete and adapted in several subject respects. The following guiding principles for teaching have been defined for this purpose. With regard to the transition to Bachelor's and Master's degree programs, JGU has pledged to act in accordance with its comprehensive university status. Mainz University is striving to ensure long-term stability of its broad range of studies by way of clearly differentiated course structures. Moreover, the University will use the new courses on offer to break new ground. Particular emphasis is to be placed on interdisciplinary cooperation.

Measures:

- The range of courses on offer also includes a large number of courses providing qualifications for teaching at secondary school level. JGU feels obliged to offer high-quality teacher training courses which focus on academic aspects as well as on teachers' professional needs. Therefore, the University offers practical course elements. JGU is promoting closer cooperation between the subjects relating to teacher training that has already been put in place with the establishment of the Teacher Training Center. The University will also expand and secure this cooperation by means of research-based subject-related training.
- Due to its wide range of courses and its status as the largest university in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate and one of the largest German universities, JGU always receives a large number of student applications. One of JGU's central development tasks is to create a balance between its broad range of courses and grown structures on the one hand, and the level of student demand on the other, since the two do not always correspond. The following strategies are designed for this purpose:
 - Maintenance of courses of study with low student numbers which, however, show particular potential due to outstanding research and networking with other subjects;
 - Appropriate expansion of courses for which the number of applications consistently exceeds the number of places available;

- Maintenance and/or expansion of numbers of study places in the natural sciences, because these graduates are in high demand on the job market. This is to be supported through even closer cooperation with schools, strengthening of teaching methodology, and measures to reduce the number of university dropouts. Particular attention in this respect is to be placed on increasing the number of women studying in the broad field of the natural sciences.

5. **Course structures** at JGU are based on differentiated models for Bachelor's, Master's, and postgraduate courses. These are applied in accordance with the various subject needs and framework conditions. Large subject units usually offer single course programs that are to be complemented by a range of elective modules from other subjects. Moreover, JGU also provides integrated courses of study involving several subject areas. The goal of these programs is to maintain the diversity of subjects at JGU and to create the opportunity of strengthening subject contexts and breaking new subject ground through integration.

Furthermore, the ever-changing lifestyles and living conditions of students also require course structures that go along with these circumstances. Many students have to work to finance their studies. Others gain an insight into their future profession at an early stage through internships which surpass the compulsory practical training of their studies. In light of these facts, it remains the responsibility of the University to adapt the structure of the courses of study to the changing requirements and living conditions of students today.

The differentiation with regard to Master's courses aims to help maintain subject diversity and identity, while offering a high level of compatibility both with Bachelor's and postgraduate courses.

Moreover, JGU also regards the development and implementation of continuing Master's programs as one of its central obligations. Continuing Master's programs meet the needs of our modern knowledgeable society and the high level of flexibility required in the working world. They are characterized by a marked professional focus and relevance to practice.

Measures:

- JGU is committed to developing models that provide an uninterrupted transition from Bachelor's to Master's courses and make possible the creation of close structural links between Master's and postgraduate degree programs. The postgraduate courses themselves are designed as interdisciplinary courses with an in-depth focus on subject-specific aspects and they are to provide for sufficient crossover between individual course sections (including 'fast track' options).
- Mainz University is planning a strategy for the development of continuing degree courses that both fit in with the range of subjects offered at JGU and also meet the requirements of the professional world.

- JGU is designing an increasing number of courses as part-time courses and will promote the block seminar concept as well as measures to encourage independent learning and self-study (including e-learning).
6. The proper organization of teaching structures is essential to ensure academic success. The key criteria here are the coordination of teaching content and performance requirements among the teaching staff in individual courses, the professional organization and management, the appropriate scheduling of lectures and courses as well as the availability of relevant information. In the context of the Bologna Process, there has been a shift with regard to the significance of the organization of teaching in that courses of study and research focuses have gained added weight as structuring elements and have taken their place alongside the previously prevalent system of structuring by subject, institute or department, and faculty.

Measures:

- With the implementation of student counseling offices, an integrated course and examination administration system, and the definition of responsibilities at different levels of teaching and course organization, JGU has made significant steps towards professionalizing the organization of its teaching. JGU is promoting the ongoing advancement of its student advising offices and is supporting those in charge (faculty managers and course managers, subject managers, departmental student advisors, relevant contacts in service institutions such as the Student Advising and Information Center and others) through a variety of measures (e.g. time-frame models, time corridors to take exams, compulsory registration deadlines for courses and examinations, standardized process definitions in the course and examination management, etc.) in order to improve the quality of planning and taking courses.
- JGU regards extensive advisory service for students as a key factor for academic success. Given that demand for and access to advisory services vary widely among students, JGU supports different forms of advisory services on both the central and the course-based level and consistently strives to expand them.
- The option of appointing two vice deans per faculty, as specified in the new University Act, can be used by the University's faculties to appoint a dean of learning and teaching coordinating this very field. This will usually be associated with a reduction of the individual's teaching load.
- JGU is in the process of creating the Gutenberg Teaching Council (GTC) that will be the analog of JGU's Gutenberg Research College (GRC). The Gutenberg Teaching Council is meant to provide for interdisciplinary exchange and help develop teaching and learning at JGU. It will promote individual excellence in teaching, address interdisciplinary issues within its field, and advise the University administration and committees. The GTC will also help young researchers to gain experience of teaching at other universities, particularly abroad. Special release options such as a sabbatical semester will allow teaching staff to systematically dedicate their time to aspects and projects that are aimed at improving teaching skills. JGU will also provide outstanding teaching staff from other universities with the opportunity to participate in the work

of the Gutenberg Teaching Council for a defined period of time. The precise tasks and structures of the GTC are outlined in its separate organizational rules.

- JGU also offers a wide range of options for communicating teaching-related issues. In the context of the Bologna Process, JGU holds an annual evaluation conference designed to reflect on reforms and quality assurance measures in the field of learning and teaching. Furthermore, JGU provides information on new developments in the field of teaching in the form of newsletters and/or a teaching magazine and is offering workshops and advanced training events on different aspects of university teaching.

7. At JGU, **management tasks in the area of teaching** involve actors at different levels. Herein it is essential that all the relevant groups at each level are sufficiently involved, while maintaining the necessary efficiency in management processes. The basic principle of good teaching is individual responsibility for structuring one's own courses and processes relevant to teaching, both on the part of the teaching staff and the students. Just as important as personal and individual responsibility is a joint responsibility of all participants for the management and optimization of teaching and learning processes. This joint responsibility lies with the individual subjects and faculties.

Measures:

- The new course structures and the introduction of the modular course system in particular require extensive agreement and cooperation with regard to issues relating to teaching. JGU supports measures that aim at improving relevant structures. This includes measures such as the establishment of regularly scheduled cross-subject and interdisciplinary meetings in the form of round table discussions for all involved in university management, the administration, and the university faculties. The decision on the forms of exchange to be beneficially employed lies with the person responsible for the area.
- To facilitate management processes, relevant information must be collected and made available. JGU is committed to making sufficient and high-quality information in the field of teaching and learning available to all relevant persons.
- In accordance with the University Act, JGU has established subject committees for learning and teaching that have an equal representation structure in the University's ten faculties, its School of Music, and its Academy of Arts. It is the task of these committees to advise the faculty units on the structure and reform of courses of study and on securing the courses on offer and the organization of teaching. These subject committees for learning and teaching are to be upgraded by the appointment of a dean of learning and teaching to head them. They need to be meaningfully coordinated with the committees and units of the various subjects and faculties with regard to the tasks and competences involved. It is also possible to establish committees for learning and teaching on the level of individual courses or groups of courses below the level of entire faculties.

C. Sustainable Promotion of Quality and Quality Assurance

8. JGU considers measures for **staff development** to be an opportunity for the sustainable improvement of teaching potential. This extends to continuing education measures, e.g. with regard to professionalizing the selection of personnel. In the appointment procedure of academic staff, special attention is to be paid to teaching competence. Measures to promote staff development must take into account the principle of the unity of research and teaching and must ensure that there is sufficient competence in both areas at all levels.

Measures:

- JGU promotes structures that enable the academic staff to participate appropriately in both research and teaching. Posts that are exclusively for teaching or for research should form an exception and will need to be appropriately justified. JGU therefore regards posts for "teaching professors" as acceptable in individual cases and for a limited period of time, but not as a permanent appropriate option. In cases of extensive teaching requirements (e.g. teaching posts for special duties), flexible options are to be created that facilitate increased crossover between research and teaching. This might take the form of a reduction in the teaching load in accordance with defined criteria and for a limited period of time with subsequent evaluation of research performance.
- Within the framework of the Gutenberg Teaching Council, JGU encourages its academic staff to take up temporary teaching appointments at other universities in order to gain new experience and to promote the exchange of teaching experience on a national and international level.
- JGU aims to employ a suitable proportion of teaching staff with various qualification levels and functions on all courses of studies (ratio between professors, teaching staff, and associate lecturers). Wherever possible, young researchers should be allowed to take part in teaching activities whatever their employment status.
- JGU promotes the participation of its teaching staff in courses on university didactics of all qualification levels. The medium-term goal is to enable all staff involved in teaching, in particular young researchers, to obtain the Rhineland-Palatinate Certificate in University Teaching. Participation in university-level teaching programs will gain increasing importance in target agreements made with university staff when they are initially appointed. JGU also promotes the creation of models for further improvement of teaching at university level.
- In addition to considering teaching competence in appointment procedures, which is a basic requirement set out in the Charter of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, JGU recommends that the prospective teachers - in addition to their standard lecture on relevant research topics – give a presentation to be assessed by students and teaching colleagues alike.

9. For JGU, the Bologna Process represents not merely the reform of course structures, but also an opportunity to actively reflect on teaching and learning processes. This puts a new emphasis on the student perspective. It makes clearer the link between the transfer of subject matter and knowledge and the acquisition of skills. This view allows a differentiation of teaching into knowledge transfer, explicatory and functional areas, the application of acquired skills, and learning through discovery. JGU responds to these requirements at different levels of teaching practice, the development and conceptualization of teaching as well as the further education of academic staff.

Measures:

- The courses offered by JGU place equal emphasis on acquiring knowledge and acquiring skills. The accompanying quality assurance and certification process for each course program monitors to what extent this is implemented.
- Innovative teaching projects should also place emphasis on model experiments that focus on the perspective of the learner.
- In the teaching of soft skills and key qualifications, JGU has adopted a multiplier training model and aims at curricular integration. This approach is based on the assumption that the imparting of appropriate competences and skills is facilitated even better within the context of specialized academic content.
- JGU views the various e-learning options as excellent potential for extending the range of courses offered. E-learning can be adapted to different types of learners, but it does not question the value of classroom teaching. Differentiation is important, both with regard to courses and with regard to the setting of respective tasks. In addition to the continuation of existing courses, JGU perceives the development of e-learning courses as a great opportunity for better integration of the courses offered at both campuses in Mainz and Gernersheim.
- JGU promotes the development of flexible teaching and testing methods to adapt teaching to individually different approaches to learning.
- Courses that promote diagnostic skills and the ability to cope with heterogeneous teaching requirements are to be implemented in order to provide JGU's academic staff with improved teaching skills.
- In the context of teaching and learning processes, JGU views its students as participating actors. Where possible, they should be integrated into the discussion of extending the spectrum of teaching forms and methods and of the relevance of learning processes in peer groups. With this in view, JGU promotes various forms of student participation in teaching processes (e.g. tutorials, etc.) and - where possible - provides postgraduate students with the opportunity to gain teaching experience.

10. JGU perceives a need for special programs or **incentive systems for the promotion of learning and teaching**, similar to those already implemented in the field of research.

Measures:

- JGU uses a system of performance-based remuneration. It has established a comprehensive set of criteria for this purpose anchored in its Charter. In principle, this system promotes an appropriate level of participation in research as well as in teaching, but also allows for individual priorities.
 - JGU is promoting different measures for the further development of teaching and improvement of study conditions. These include a program for the promotion of innovative teaching concepts as well as teaching awards and prizes for exceptional dissertations and seminar papers.
 - Excellence in teaching, which as a rule has to be substantiated by the Rhineland-Palatinate Teaching Award, will also be rewarded by the Gutenberg Teaching Council in the form of a sabbatical semester, which can specifically be used for gaining additional skills in the field of teaching.
 - The fact that equal emphasis is placed on research and teaching is also underlined through appropriate forms of documentation (newsletters, magazines, etc.).
11. JGU has traditionally placed high value on the elements of **quality assurance and quality development**. As a result, JGU's quality management system has been honored, among others, by the Donor's Association for the Promotion of Sciences and Humanities in Germany and the Heinz Nixdorf Foundation. Within the framework of the system accreditation model, JGU has already realized significant steps that are documented in the Manual for Quality Assurance and Quality Development.

Measures:

- JGU perceives quality assurance as a task on its very own authority and continues to develop its quality assurance system at all levels of activity.
- JGU has put in place the infrastructure necessary for continuous quality assurance and promotes the development of a sustainable quality culture at all levels of activity. In the field of teaching and learning, regular joint conferences with the various actors (faculty management, course management, subject managers, students) are planned.
- JGU will continuously develop survey tools with the aim of increasing the validity as well as the value of the surveys undertaken as part of the quality assurance process.
- With regard to the use of various tools for quality measurement and quality assurance, the JGU subjects and faculties are guided by the Manual for Quality Assurance and Quality Development

that applies to the establishment and continuance of courses of studies. This specifically requires a definition of how the survey results (course surveys, alumni surveys, course entry surveys, study progress and stress analyses, etc.) are to be applied which might take the form of in-depth discussions between teachers and students, offers of coaching and continuing education as well as other forms of intervention. The subjects and faculties are to put in place binding regulations for handling evaluation results that conform to the requirements of the JGU Quality Manual and that are differentiated with regard to their respective structures and individual procedures.