

Expert Opinion

**Accreditation of the Alternative Procedure at
the Technical University of Nuremberg (UTN)**

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Universities	Nuremberg Technical University (UTN)
Additional information, if applicable	Accreditation of trust pursuant to Section 6(4) VoAAv
If applicable, academic unit	

Program-specific procedure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
System-based procedure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Initial accreditation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reaccreditation No. (Number)	-
Approval pursuant to § 3 VoAAv dated	12/05/2023
Evaluating Institution	Accreditation Council Foundation
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0 List of Abbreviations

BayStudAkkV	Bavarian Study Accreditation Ordinance GrüKo Founding Commission
QEG	Quality Expert Group
StaRs	UTN School of Students and Young Researchers
StaRs SC	StaRs Steering Committee
TNAV	TU Nuremberg Organizational Regulations
TNG	TU Nuremberg Act
VP-AIA	Vice President for Academic and International Affairs (Founding Vice President for Academic Affairs and International Affairs) ¹

¹ In the future: Founding Vice President for Education and International Affairs (VP-EduInt).

1 Proposed Decision of the Expert Panel on the Equivalence of the Alternative Procedure to the Procedures under Art. 3, Sentence 1, Nos. 1 and 2 of the State Treaty

The alternative procedure is suitable for ensuring the quality of studies and teaching in accordance with the criteria set forth in Parts 2 and 3 of the MRVO, analogous to procedures for program accreditation and system accreditation. It meets the requirements of Article 3, Paragraph 2, Sentence 1 of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation.²

met

Not met

² This implicitly ensures the quality of study and teaching in a manner analogous to program accreditation procedures, as well as fulfilling the requirements under Article 2 of the State Treaty on Study Accreditation and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

2 Results of the evaluation

2.1 Brief Profile of the University

The decision to establish the Technical University of Nuremberg (UTN) was made by the Bavarian State Government in 2017. After the concept for establishing the university, presented by a structural commission, received a positive evaluation from the Science Council, the Bavarian State Parliament passed the “Act on the Establishment of the Technical University of Nuremberg” (TU Nuremberg Act – TNG) in December 2020, which governs the structure of the university during its development phase. It was subsequently supplemented by the “Regulation on the Establishment of the Technical University of Nuremberg” (TU Nuremberg Establishment Regulation – TNAV) issued by the Bavarian State Ministry of Science and the Arts. The official establishment of UTN took place in January 2021. The structural and spatial development of the university is scheduled to be completed by 2030.

The university is organized into departments headed by department chairs, with the aim of fostering ongoing collaboration among faculty members across departmental boundaries. Currently, the university has two departments: the Department of Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence³ and the Department of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences⁴. Academic operations began in the winter semester of 2023 with the launch of the “Artificial Intelligence and Robotics” (M.Sc.) program, which enrolled ten students. The “Human and Artificial Intelligence” (M.Sc./M.A.) program began operations in the winter semester of 2025/26. By the end of the development phase, the university plans to establish three additional master’s programs and, starting in 2027/28, a bachelor’s program. At the time this report was prepared, approximately 80 students were enrolled in the two programs.

The university has adopted a teaching and learning concept that, drawing on Learning Experience Design, is geared toward enabling students to have individualized study and learning experiences, with learning-oriented “assignments” intended to replace traditional forms of assessment. Interdisciplinarity, internationality, and digitality are to be the defining characteristics of the entire study program.

Within the Bavarian higher education landscape, the state has assigned a special role to the UTN. It has been tasked with “independently developing and establishing its governance structure by the end of the founding phase” (Self-Report, p. 25); in doing so, it may also deviate from the establishment of customary university bodies, such as the Senate and the University Council

³ Formerly: Department of Engineering.

⁴ Formerly: Department of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

. Through this experimental character and by testing alternative committee structures, the UTN should ideally be able to serve as a model university for other institutions of higher education in the state.

2.2 On the Conduct of the Evaluation Process

The agreement between the university and the Accreditation Council Foundation regarding the implementation of the alternative procedure originally provided for an on-site visit to review the concept of the alternative procedure and, following the Accreditation Council's successful accreditation of the alternative procedure, an on-site visit to review its implementation.

The first on-site visit by the review panel took place on June 17 and 18, 2024, in Nuremberg. While the review panel recognized the concept of the Alternative Procedure, as presented in the self-documentation and during on-site discussions, as thoroughly innovative and promising, However, in light of fundamental gaps in the design, the review panel did not feel able to issue a final recommendation to the Accreditation Council regarding the accreditation of the Alternative Procedure.

The concerns raised included, among other things, the absence of overarching processes, insufficiently binding regulations, and inadequate differentiation between the processes of the cumulative system assessment, the rolling audit, and the concept audit. The review panel recommended initially postponing the accreditation decision until after the on-site visit scheduled for 2025 to assess the implementation of the alternative procedure, so that the identified concerns could be clarified and, if necessary, addressed.

In its statement of November 24, 2024, the university supported the assessment group's proposal to postpone the decision on the accreditation of the alternative procedure until after the second on-site visit.

The Accreditation Council accepted the reasoning of the review panel and decided at its 123rd meeting to extend the evaluation process.

The second on-site visit on October 15 and 16, 2025, took place on the basis of self-documentation extensively revised by the university, as well as redesigned and newly created documents governing the alternative procedure. In the meantime, the university had also conducted the program audits for the degree programs "Artificial Intelligence and Robotics" (M.Sc.) and "Human and Artificial Intelligence" (M.Sc./M.A.), which were the subject of evaluation by the review panel during the second site visit.

The review panel had access to the complete documentation of the concept audits conducted, including the follow-up assessment of individual criteria required by the Accreditation Council. Based on the submitted documents, the experts concluded that a complete review of the criteria of the BayStudAkkV had been carried out. The program audit itself has since been further developed; the changes are viewed positively by the expert panel (see Chapter 2.5).

With regard to the alternative procedure as a whole, the review panel also reached a consistently positive assessment following the second site visit. It considers the issues originally identified to have been fully resolved.

This report builds upon the interim report on the initial site inspection and supersedes it. As a text intended for a diverse readership, redundancies between the descriptive presentation and the critical evaluation of the alternative procedure have been retained in order to accommodate different reading purposes.

2.3 Concept of the Alternative Procedure

The alternative procedure at UTN consists of two main components that, on the one hand, complement each other, but on the other hand can also stand on their own. An overarching system-related component, the “Iterative System Audit”⁵, is supplemented by a program-related component, the “Rolling Audit.” The Alternative Procedure is thus oriented toward both the program and the system.

As a university in the process of being established, UTN does not yet have a complete quality management system in place during the initial phase of its development. This system is to be finalized by 2030, in parallel with the university’s academic expansion. In this context, the alternative procedure is intended to provide support, particularly through the element of iterative system audits.

This component of the process is intended to ensure continuous quality assurance of the processes, instruments, and other elements of quality management to be established, with regard to their implementation and in relation to the criteria relevant for system accreditation as set forth in the Bavarian Study Accreditation Ordinance (BayStudAkkV); Over the accreditation period, as the individual elements are introduced, they will be cumulatively and iteratively assessed to determine whether they meet the criteria, so that, as a minimum outcome, the equivalent of a system accreditation process—albeit more in-depth and extended over time—has been completed.

⁵ Formerly “cumulative system assessment” in the application for approval to implement the alternative procedure.

As part of the rolling audit, a biennial cross-sectional review of individual criteria under Parts 2 and 3 of the BayStudAkkV is conducted across all UTN degree programs by a permanent external review panel, the “Quality Expert Group.” Over the course of the eight-year cycle, the program criteria are thus to have been reviewed and evaluated in their entirety. Reporting is conducted on an ongoing basis in a comprehensive report.

A preliminary concept audit complements the rolling audit and also serves as its prerequisite: Newly developed degree programs are first accredited through an internal accreditation process, in which all criteria of a degree program are reviewed based on a concept audit workshop with the Quality Expert Group. This ensures that the degree programs reviewed in the rolling audit already have accredited status. Both audits are also subject to review in the iterative system audit.

The following section first describes the procedure of the Iterative System Audit as well as the procedure of the Rolling Audit, including the Concept Audit, and then outlines the participating bodies and institutions that play a role in the Alternative Procedure.

2.3.1 Procedure of the Alternative Process

Iterative System Audit: Continuous and Cumulative Review

The iterative system audit is designed to conduct a step-by-step review of the system over the eight-year accreditation period, with the final outcome being at least equivalent to an external system accreditation. This also means that, by the end of the system assessment, all criteria for system accreditation should have been reviewed at least once.

The iterative system audit is closely linked to the development of the quality management system. Tools and processes should then be reviewed as part of the system assessment to determine their suitability and alignment with the relevant criteria once they have been developed and, as a rule, have been used in practice at least once. To this end, the university has defined a multi-stage process for the development and implementation of quality assurance instruments, comprising a development phase, a consolidation phase, and an operational phase. The evaluation of the instrument during the consolidation phase takes place—provided a criterion relevant to system accreditation is affected—within the system audit. Development is needs-based, meaning, for example, that a tool is only designed and implemented when it is required for the university’s further development. The intertwining of development and review creates a close link between quality development and quality assurance. The system audit thus takes on a formative role in the development of the quality management system.

The needs-based approach to establishing the quality management system also means that the timeline for addressing the individual criteria over the accreditation period is, in part, flexible and must be adjusted during the course of the system audits. The university has submitted a schedule for reviewing the criteria over the accreditation period that takes all relevant criteria into account, but it also announces that it will supplement this schedule in accordance with the development of the quality management system. Individual criteria are thus reviewed repeatedly, but overall, the review of all criteria remains ensured.

As documentation for managing the iterative system audit, the university has submitted procedural rules, a process diagram, the timeline for addressing the system accreditation criteria, and an excerpt from the digital quality management manual.

In response to the feedback from the review panel following the first on-site visit, the university has further developed the system audit in one fundamental aspect. Whereas process responsibility for the iterative system audit previously lay with the StaRs QM team and the UTN Founding Commission, it is now distributed among additional bodies. While in the old system audit concept, the assessment and decision regarding compliance with the individual system accreditation criteria of the BayStuddAkkV were carried out by the external members of the Founding Commission, these two tasks are now separated in the revised system audit. A separate committee was created for the evaluation: the Quality Expert Group (QEG), a permanent panel of experts that is also responsible for the evaluations in the Concept Audit and the Rolling Audit.

The QEG reviews selected system accreditation criteria once a year in accordance with the schedule established for the system audit. The assessments of compliance with the criteria are documented in a cumulative report (“Cumulative Report for the Iterative System Audit”), which is updated throughout the duration of the alternative procedure. An optional additional annual meeting of the QEG serves to review the overall system; the results of this meeting are recorded in a Q-Report, which provides an overview of the status of the quality assurance system’s development and quality progress since the last Q-Report.

Compliance or non-compliance with the system accreditation criteria is determined by the external members of the Founding Commission based on the QEG’s evaluation and, where applicable, a statement from the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Teaching, and International Affairs (VP-AIA), who make “equivalence decisions” in this regard. The decisions are prepared by the QM Group of the Founding Commission. If the external members of the Founding Commission assess a criterion as not met or only partially met, they impose conditions. Compliance with these conditions must be demonstrated within a period of twelve months, although

an extension of the deadline is possible in exceptional cases. The external members of the Founding Commission verify whether the deficiencies have been remedied.

The rules of procedure for the iterative system audit define an appeals and mediation process that also applies to the conceptual audit and the rolling audit. Any member of the university may file a complaint against an equivalence or accreditation decision. The process initially provides for an initial mediation meeting between the complainant and the body that made the decision. The StaRs QM Team and the Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship (VP-RIE) mediate during this meeting. If this meeting fails to produce a resolution, a second mediation meeting is held, in which the university president is also involved in the mediation. If this second meeting is unsuccessful, an external mediation commission is appointed, composed in the same manner as the QEG (see Chapter 2.3.2).

Concept Audit: Preliminary Stage of the Rolling Audit

The concept audit is one of two procedures for the internal accreditation of UTN degree programs, with the rolling audit serving as the second procedure. The concept audit constitutes the necessary preliminary stage to the rolling audit, as this is intended to ensure that the degree programs included in the rolling audit already possess accreditation status. This is intended to prevent gaps in accreditation.

At the same time, as was already evident in the iterative system audit, this demonstrates UTN's intention to combine quality development and quality assurance, since the program concept audit is ideally an integral part of the program development process. After the program has been developed by the program coordinators, the VP-AIA initiates the concept audit process. When commissioning the QEG to evaluate the new program, the VP-AIA also decides whether additional external reviewers will join the QEG as guests.

In consultation between the program coordinators and the StaRs QM team, external experts from the QEG are invited to a concept audit workshop, during which the concept is presented "in a manner analogous to the presentation of a research proposal or research paper at a conference" (Self-Evaluation Report, p. 52). In addition to the external reviewers and the program directors, the founding chairs and the university's students also participate in the workshop. In preparation for the workshop, the external reviewers receive documentation on the program to be established as well as drafts of the program's organizational documents. Together with the presentation of the concept, these form the basis for a discussion

between the external experts and the program coordinators. In addition to the criteria of the BayStudAkkV, the evaluation will also assess the consideration of UTN-specific thematic areas: interdisciplinarity, internationality, and digitality.

Prior to the workshop, the impartiality of the external reviewers is verified; for this purpose, they are provided with “Guidelines on Impartiality in Review Procedures at UTN,” which are based on the relevant HRK criteria regarding the impartiality of external reviewers.

The outcome of the review is a report by the external reviewers, which is edited by the StaRs QM team and contains not only assessments of compliance with the criteria of the BayStudAkkV but also recommendations for revising or further developing the degree program. The program directors have the opportunity to revise the degree program based on the workshop and the reviewers’ report. The procedural rules for the concept audit also stipulate that they may submit a statement within four weeks of receiving the evaluators’ report, specifically addressing the recommendations and any proposed conditions from the QEG. If the program directors do not wish to follow a recommendation, they must provide justification.

In the program audit, the StaRs Steering Committee makes the accreditation decision. Prior to the actual accreditation meeting, a preparatory meeting of the StaRs Steering Committee takes place, which serves both to train the committee members and to facilitate their exchange with the program coordinators. The Steering Committee receives the QEG report and the statement from the program directors in advance of the meeting. If the Steering Committee plans to deviate significantly from the QEG’s recommendations, it may request that the program directors submit a further statement.

Prior to the meeting, the impartiality of the members of the StaRs Steering Committee is verified. Members who are involved in the development or teaching of the degree program do not participate in the meeting and do not have voting rights. The procedural rules for the program audit contain detailed provisions regarding the appointment of alternate members.

At its accreditation meeting, the Steering Committee then makes the accreditation decision, whereby accreditation may be denied or granted with conditions. A period of twelve months is granted for fulfilling the conditions, and compliance is reviewed by the StaRs Steering Committee. Accreditations are granted for eight years. Two years after accreditation, the program is included in the rolling audit.

The internal accreditation decision and the report are then forwarded to the Accreditation Council Foundation so that the program can be entered into the database of accredited programs. This process for publishing the accreditation decision has so far only been described in the self-report (pp. 50–51), but not yet in the procedural rules for the concept audit (nor in the regulations for the rolling audit); this should be addressed.⁶

The documents structuring the rolling audit procedure include the procedural rules adopted by the Founding Commission, “Procedure for the Internal Concept Audit of New Degree Programs,” a process diagram, and a template for the accreditation report.

Rolling Audit: Continuous Cross-Sectional Evaluation

A defining feature of UTN's teaching and learning concept is the interdisciplinary nature of its degree programs. This is also reflected in the structure of the curriculum. Some of the modules offered are cross-disciplinary; they can be taken in various degree programs. In these modules, students are expected to work on joint projects that transcend the boundaries of their respective degree programs. The rolling audit is tailored to this distinctive feature of UTN and is intended to provide the university with a needs-based form of reaccreditation for its degree programs. UTN also expects this accreditation process to foster a deeper exchange among the degree programs and to support continuous quality development of the programs.

To do justice to the curricular interconnection of the degree programs, they should not be accredited individually, but rather collectively over an eight-year cycle through a cross-sectional assessment of individual criteria. The individual partial evaluations or audit rounds take place every two years, with each partial evaluation reviewing a selection of criteria from Sections 2 and 3 of the BayStudAkkV. In addition to the criteria in Sections 3 through 16 of the BayStudAkkV, the rolling audit will also assess how the UTN's key themes—internationality, interdisciplinarity, digitality, sustainability, and diversity—are reflected in its degree programs. Recommendations from the conceptual audit will be continuously followed up on during the successive audit rounds.

⁶ The database entries for degree programs that have already been internally accredited are available in the Accreditation Council's database.

All formal and subject-specific criteria are then evaluated over the course of an entire eight-year cycle. Repeated evaluation of individual accreditation criteria is possible at the initiative of the Quality Management Group of the Founding Commission.

For the purposes of the rolling audit, the university's degree programs are grouped into clusters of three programs each. When the rolling audit is conducted for the first time, the programs are grouped based on the date of their introduction; that is, programs launched around the same time are clustered together. At a later stage, once all currently planned degree programs have been established, the plan is to implement a content-based clustering. For the first complete audit cycle, the two already implemented master's programs will be grouped with the third master's program planned for 2026 to form Cluster 1; Cluster 2 comprises the bachelor's program and the two master's programs to be established between 2027 and 2029; Cluster 3 contains the degree programs from the final development cycle from 2030 to 2031.

Each partial evaluation comprises several procedural steps. It is initiated by the VP-AIA, who determines which criteria will be reviewed in which audit format and who commissions the QEG to conduct the evaluation. The self-documentation required to prepare for the evaluation is the responsibility of the StaRs QM team, the program coordinators, and the VP-AIA.

This preparatory phase is followed by the actual audit conducted by the QEG. This may take the form of a workshop that follows the format specified in the planned concept audit. However, the possibility of other audit formats is reserved; this also depends on consultations with the QEG, which will be established in the first quarter of 2026. Based on the submitted documents and the audit conducted, the QEG provides its expert assessment of the status of compliance with the selected criteria of the BayStudAkkV as well as the internal quality dimensions. Its findings will be recorded in a structured report that will be updated throughout the entire cycle of the rolling audit, so that by the end of the process, an accreditation report is available that covers all relevant criteria of the BayStudAkkV.

Both the program directors, the VP-AIA, and the student body may submit their own comments on the assessment results within a four-week period. The external members of the Founding Commission (plus the permanent external student guests) decide, based on the QEG's report and the submitted comments, whether the assessed criteria have been met. In the event of a positive "quality decision" (see Section 3.1 of the Procedural Rules for the Rolling Audit), recommendations may also be issued, the implementation of which is monitored in the subsequent audit rounds

. Conditions must be fulfilled within a period of twelve months; verification is carried out by the external members of the Founding Commission. If it is determined that the conditions have not been met, accreditation is revoked.

Significant changes are first preliminarily reviewed by the StaRs QM Team. If a change relevant to accreditation occurs, the Founding Commission decides whether the significant change is covered by the existing accreditation.

After successfully completing the eight-year cycle, the Founding Commission awards the Accreditation Council's seal to the degree programs. The decision and the cumulative report are then forwarded to the Accreditation Council for entry of the accreditations into the database of accredited degree programs.

The documents structuring the rolling audit process include the procedural rules adopted by the Founding Commission, "Procedures (and Regulations) for the Rolling Audit of Existing Degree Programs," a process diagram, a report template for the cumulative evaluation, and a timeline for the rolling audit covering the period from 2027 to 2037. The first audit round in the rolling audit is scheduled for 2027. The university plans to evaluate the rolling audit two years before the end of the eight-year audit cycle in order to either make changes for the next audit cycle or seek a transition to an external accreditation format.

2.3.2 Committees and Institutions Involved in the Alternative Procedure

Founding Commission

The Founding Commission is the central governing body of UTN during its establishment phase. As such, its primary functions are those essential to guiding the university's development. It is entrusted with the responsibilities that, under Bavarian higher education law, would otherwise be assumed by the extended university administration, the Senate, and the University Council at other universities.

The status and responsibilities of the Founding Commission are derived from the "Act on the Establishment of the Technical University of Nuremberg" (TU Nuremberg Act – TNG) and the supplementary "Regulation on the Development of the Technical University of Nuremberg" (TU Nuremberg Development Regulation – TNAV). In addition, the university's Basic Regulations of January 19, 2022, contain provisions regarding the university's governing bodies, which also apply to the Founding Commission.

According to Article 3, Paragraph 3 of the TNG, the Founding Commission comprises the following members (as quoted):

- “1. the Founding President as Chair,
2. the Chancellor,

3. the Founding Vice Presidents,
4. the Founding Chairs of the departments,
5. the university's women's affairs officer,
6. one student representative with voting rights, one student representative with an advisory role,
7. one representative of the research staff with voting rights, one representative of the research staff with an advisory vote,
8. one representative of other staff,
9. four external members, particularly from regional and international academia and business, including two women and two men."

Pursuant to Article 3(4) of the TNG, the external members are "nominated by the voting members of the Founding Commission referred to in paragraph 3, sentence 1, nos. 1 through 8, and appointed by the Minister of State for a term of five years." With regard to the tasks of the body originally envisaged by the TNG, they have only an advisory role.

The tasks of the Founding Commission within the Alternative Procedure involve subsequent additions made during its development; these entail the allocation of voting rights to external members, while internal members do not have voting rights in decisions pertaining to accreditation. To ensure that the Founding Commission, in its special role as an accreditation body, represents the student perspective alongside the perspectives of faculty and professional practice, two student guests—delegated by the Bavarian State Student Council (BayStuRa)—will be permanently invited to the Founding Commission.

In the alternative procedure, the Founding Commission assumes two key functions: It serves as the decision-making body in both the iterative system audit and the rolling audit. In the iterative system audit, the Founding Commission is also responsible for ensuring the completeness of the criteria review over the eight-year audit cycle. In the rolling audit as well, the Founding Commission not only decides on the fulfillment of the BayStudAkkV criteria during the biennial audit rounds, but also, at the end of a cycle, on compliance with the criteria in the overall review.

The Founding Commission is responsible for awarding the Accreditation Council's seal. It is also the decisive body in addressing significant changes relevant to accreditation and in reviewing compliance with conditions.

As already outlined above, only the external members of the Founding Commission and the external student guests are entitled to vote on all accreditation decisions. Decisions are made by a simple majority. The external members elect a chairperson from among themselves with a double vote to prevent deadlocks in decision-making. Section 3 of the UTN's Basic Regulations governs the working procedures of the university's committees, including those of the Founding Commission.

Following the initial site visit, the university developed a plan for onboarding new committee members, which also includes the external members of the Founding Commission. The aim is to familiarize new members with the unique characteristics of UTN as a university in the process of being established, as well as with the university's teaching and learning approach and its quality management system.

QM Group of the Founding Commission

The QM Group is a working group of the Founding Commission tasked with "supporting the development of UTN's quality management system and examining it in depth" (resolution of the Founding Commission dated July 30, 2025). To this end, it reviews quality management documents and discusses them with the VP-AIA and the StaRs QM Team. It also proposes QM topics for discussion at the Founding Commission's meetings; in the iterative system audit, it prepares the equivalence decisions of the Founding Commission.

All internal and external members of the Founding Commission may participate in the working group; new members of the Commission are informed of this opportunity at the start of their membership.

Quality Expert Group

The Quality Expert Group was established as a permanent external review panel based on feedback from the reviewers following the first on-site visit during the review process of the Alternative Procedure. Its task is to assess compliance with the criteria of the BayStudAkkV in the iterative system audit, the concept audit, and the rolling audit. To this end, it prepares the evaluation reports required for each respective procedure and proposes conditions and recommendations for addressing deficiencies or promoting quality development.

At its core, the QEG consists of five members, including three representatives from academia, one representative from professional practice, and one student member.

A second student member may be appointed as a guest and serves as a substitute for the regular student member. The QEG may be temporarily supported in its evaluation mandate by additional external experts if the VP-AIA deems this necessary from a technical standpoint.

Nominations for potential members of the QEG may be submitted by UTN professors; student members are recruited through the Student Accreditation Pool. The Executive Board decides on the appointment of members. The impartiality of potential QEG members is verified prior to their appointment; the university bases this on the relevant HRK criteria for the appointment of reviewers. Membership typically lasts three years, with one possible extension. If student members leave due to the completion of their studies, the vacant position is filled immediately.

The establishment of the QEG was decided by the Founding Commission on July 30, 2025. By the end of the first quarter of 2026, the members of the QEG are to be appointed so that they may then carry out their duties in the Alternative Procedure.

StaRs Steering Committee

The StaRs Steering Committee is the governing body of the UTN School of Students and Young Researchers (StaRs) at UTN and the central decision-making body for all decisions concerning studies and teaching that do not have to be made by the Founding Commission (e.g., bylaws). Pursuant to § 2 (1) of the General Study and Examination Regulations (ASPO), its members authorized to conduct examinations constitute the university's Examination Board.

Within the alternative procedure, the StaRs Steering Committee is the body that makes accreditation decisions for new degree programs during the program concept audit. Members who are involved in the teaching or design of a degree program to be accredited do not have voting rights in its accreditation.

According to § 6(3) TNAV, the committee consists of “the founding chairs, a student representative, a representative of the research staff, and a representative from the business sector with a background in education and research.” The VP-AIA serves as chair.

StaRs QM Team

The StaRs QM Team is responsible for establishing and implementing quality management as well as for program development. It supports the stakeholders in the alternative procedure in

carrying out their tasks in the iterative system audit, the rolling audit, and the concept audit.

The StaRs QM Team is a subunit of the UTN School of Students and Young Researchers. It currently consists of two full-time positions. The QM Team receives additional support from the Digital LEAD Lab, which is responsible for course evaluations, and the StaRs assistant position.

(Founding) Vice President for Academic Affairs, Teaching, and International Affairs (VP-AIA)

The Vice President for Academic Affairs, Teaching, and International Relations is primarily responsible for the university's quality management. Within the alternative procedure, she performs a variety of functions. She is a member of the Founding Commission and chair of the StaRs Steering Committee, and is thus involved in the iterative system audit, the rolling audit, and the concept audit.

Presidium

Strategic decisions regarding quality management are made by the Executive Board. In the iterative system audit, the Executive Board sets the agenda for the meetings of the Founding Commission. It is also responsible for inviting external experts to these meetings as needed.

2.4 Findings on alternative approaches to external quality assurance

As previously noted, UTN has effectively and successfully utilized the time between the first (summer 2024) and the second site visit (fall 2025) to implement the original expert recommendations, further develop, refine, and stabilize the alternative procedure approach, and significantly clarify the self-report. Since the preparation of the first report (2024), the framework has thus been developed while largely retaining the fundamental initial elements and levels of the procedural approach. Accordingly, the findings described in the 2024 report (regarding alternative approaches to quality assurance) largely retain their validity and can be reaffirmed here. Therefore, this section is structured similarly to the corresponding section of the earlier report, repeats some of the earlier statements, but also includes refinements and additions.

In particular, this section addresses the specific, innovative elements of the system-oriented alternative procedure at UTN and reflects on the essential differences and the resulting expanded insights compared to

conventional external system accreditation procedures. Furthermore, the concept of trust accreditation is addressed as an overarching aspect. Several sections of this report (in particular 2.6 “Proposals for the Design of Support for the Alternative Procedure”) provide recommendations for the implementation of this concept in the present procedure. Furthermore, this section is intended to offer suggestions for the further development of this concept and its application in future accreditations of alternative procedures by the Accreditation Council.

Insights from the innovative procedural elements of the UTN approach

The establishment, implementation, and evaluation of the UTN's QM system rest on various shoulders. Different stakeholders and bodies assume different roles and functions in this process. The structure of the QM system aims, from the very beginning—that is, interwoven with the establishment of the university itself—to define and embed a culture of quality at UTN, to which the bodies and structures to be established will align. Since this culture of quality is intended to guide not only degree programs in the narrower sense but the entire university, the approach of a system-oriented alternative procedure is pursued, which essentially distinguishes between the three procedural levels of iterative system audit, rolling audit, and concept audit, with the first two standing out as particularly specific and innovative, so that they will be briefly discussed below.

Iterative System Audit: In the system accreditation process, the effectiveness of the university's internal quality management system is assessed every eight years by an accreditation agency commissioned by the university—the agency itself verifies compliance with the formal criteria, while a panel of experts appointed by the agency assesses compliance with the substantive criteria. In the alternative procedure evaluated here, compliance with the formal criteria (pursuant to Art. 3(3) StAkkStV and § 23(1) nos. 3 and 4 BayStudAkkV) and the subject-specific criteria is assessed at the program level (rolling audit), while compliance with the system accreditation at the system level (iterative system audit) in collaboration between internal quality assurance stakeholders and external support (permanent Quality Expert Group, external members of the Founding Commission) and is spread over the eight-year period. It is noteworthy that only the external members of the Founding Commission have voting rights for decisions within the framework of the Iterative System Audit (and the Rolling Audit). From the perspective of the review panel, the Iterative System Audit approach has the following advantages and serves as a model for a quality management development process (meta-process) that meets the applicable requirements

that meets accreditation requirements while also taking into account the dynamic nature of a university's development:

- The system evaluation can take into account the requirements and key milestones in the development and establishment of the university, thereby strategically supporting the development of UTN.
- The burden on the university resulting from the evaluation of the performance of its internal quality management system is evenly distributed over the eight-year period, thereby allowing for an in-depth examination of formal and subject-specific criteria with the involvement of external expertise (QEG).
- The iterative system audit allows for a step-by-step and reflective development of the QM system with a more balanced allocation of personnel for both conceptual tasks and the implementation and execution of the designed processes and instruments.
- The various QM committees have more time at their disposal, allowing them to engage more deeply with the quality management system and its step-by-step development and fine-tuning.
- The members of the various quality management committees oversee the development of both the UTN and the quality management system, ensuring that the system reflects the university's organizational principles and that all university components can continue to develop in an integrated manner.
- While the university must demonstrate compliance with a requirement within one year during the system accreditation process, after which the process is concluded, the various QM committees can conduct repeated reviews to determine whether the criterion continues to be met.
- This iterative and multi-stage evaluation of the QM system allows for a controlled and quality-assured development of the QM system, as feedback on compliance with the criteria can be obtained on an ongoing basis and regular feedback on the structure of the system and the design and implementation of its components can be gathered.

The panel of evaluators expects fundamental insights into the extent to which the iterative system audit approach can prove effective in, on the one hand, ensuring compliance with the criteria of the BayStudAkkV to a comparable degree as the system accreditation process, and on the other hand, guaranteeing the adaptability and developability of the QM system in a manner suited to the dynamics of a university's development. During the second site visit, the evaluators developed great confidence that the UTN can succeed in this "balancing act" and see in the approach described by the UTN

The iterative system audit approach also holds potential for the further development of the accreditation system, as it will likely need to take greater account in the foreseeable future of the demands posed by the dynamics of transformation processes at universities—and thus also of the flexibility and adaptability of the quality management system. Furthermore, the evaluators expect that the process will provide insights into how a culture of quality can be developed at an early stage when establishing a new university and an associated QMS, in harmony with the necessary formal administrative structures to further support and promote this culture of quality.

Rolling Audit: Although the iterative system audit forms the core of the alternative procedure under review here, the rolling audit should also be addressed at this point, as this not only combines the two levels of the concept audit and the iterative system audit in the present procedure, but can also be generalized as a new approach to a conceptual link between program-based and system-based QM. Especially against the backdrop at UTN of the gradual development of a completely new curriculum that takes into account the university's overarching goals (here in particular interdisciplinarity, internationality, and digitality, which are referred to as the “cornerstones of the UTN,” as well as the desired learner-centered approach), the rolling audit approach can (also) be considered exemplary. The traditional approach of examining all relevant criteria each time a new degree program is introduced is contrasted by the rolling audit with the alternative approach of examining individual criteria across the entirety of all (currently) existing degree programs. Through this holistic examination, the overarching requirements and goals can be assessed beyond the criteria relevant to accreditation. The evaluators therefore also consider this approach to be particularly innovative and coherent, as it demonstrably places greater emphasis in the evaluation on the interrelationships among degree programs, and it is precisely through this that the overarching goals of interdisciplinarity and the integration of AI across all programs can be rigorously pursued.

Findings Regarding Structures and Decision-Making Authority

The review panel considers the StaRs Steering Committee, the StaRs QM Team, the Founding Commission (including the QM Group), and the Quality Expert Group (QEG) to be key players in the QM system under development, lending it an innovative character.

The StaRs QM Team designs and coordinates the processes within the UTN's QM system. It designs the tools and processes and implements them in collaboration with the other stakeholders involved. In addition, the QM Team is involved in program development.

The StaRs Steering Committee is the central body of the UTN School of Students and Young Researchers, responsible for the area of studies and teaching at the UTN. In quality management, the StaRs Steering Committee makes decisions within the framework of the concept audit.

The Founding Commission serves as the central decision-making body of the UTN and performs the functions of the Senate and the University Council. Its composition corresponds to that of an accreditation body. It is responsible for decisions regarding the establishment and modification of new degree programs, as well as—within the framework of the UTN's quality management system and solely by the votes of the external members—accreditation decisions.

In addition to the decision-making authority thus vested in the group of external members of the Founding Commission, further external (advisory) expertise is incorporated through the permanent Quality Expert Group. The QEG accompanies the procedures at all three system levels (Iterative System Audit, Rolling Audit, and Concept Audit) and primarily supports the fulfillment of the subject-specific and content-related criteria.

The UTN Executive Board makes all strategic decisions regarding quality management.

From the perspective of the review panel, this structure offers the following advantages and can accordingly provide new ideas for other procedures:

- While in the system accreditation process the institution is not required to report on how it has addressed the recommendations until the next system accreditation cycle in eight years—and the matter may then be discussed with different evaluators—it is reasonable to assume that in the alternative process under review here, the various channels of communication between the founding commission and the other stakeholders regarding the recommendations will remain in place, and that the handling of the recommendations will thus be clarified more quickly and productively.
- It can be expected that the mutual exchange between stakeholders at the strategic and operational levels will lead to improvements in the system being sought more naturally, pursued more continuously, and decided upon more swiftly, thereby strengthening the overall further development of the system.

The panel of evaluators expects fundamental insights into the extent to which the chosen distribution of tasks and responsibilities—and in particular the strong role of external committee members—ensures compliance with the criteria of the BayStudAkkV at least as effectively as the system accreditation process, and furthermore

further development of the system, both during the university's start-up phase and beyond.

“Benefit of the doubt” in the accreditation of a university in the development phase

Already during the first site visit to UTN in the summer of 2024, the evaluators gained the impression that UTN not only pursues a very modern and innovative approach in its overall structure, but that the alternative procedure to be evaluated here includes innovative elements that meet the requirements of a university in the process of establishment in a unique way and, in particular, appropriately address and reflect the specific goals of UTN. It should also be emphasized once again at this point that the review committee had already developed great respect for the outstanding achievements of the UTN founding team during the initial site visit. This positive attitude was confirmed and further reinforced during the second site visit.

In this regard, it was always clear and evident to the review team that for UTN—as a university in the process of being established—an alternative procedure makes sense, one that allows for the phased and integrated development of all components of the university, from structures and decision-making processes to the profile in research and teaching and the QM system, thereby ensuring that a comprehensive system “from a single source” will emerge. Thus, modularity, flexibility, scalability, and adaptability represent essential requirements that the alternative procedure must fulfill.

For the review panel, this gave rise to the challenging task of finding an appropriate trade-off in the evaluation of the alternative procedure to be accredited with regard to the following questions:

- Which elements of the QM system must already be fully developed and described as a kind of foundation?
- To what extent can room be allowed for future expansion with new elements or the dynamic adaptation of the QM system?
- To what extent must/can there be meta-criteria for the process of further development/change of the QMS that ensure that future adaptations and expansions lead overall to improvements in the QMS and not to setbacks in quality assurance?

In addressing these trade-offs, the expert panel underwent its own learning process between the first and second site visits, culminating in the final, positive assessment of the UTN alternative procedure presented in this report.

The reservations described in the 2024 report were essentially attributable to the fact that (at that time) the QM components of the lower two procedural levels (concept audit and rolling audit) did not yet appear fully mature, complete, and consistent, and furthermore, it was not (sufficiently) clear within what framework (“guardrails,” meta-criteria) the further design of the QM system at the upper level (then “Cumulative System Assessment,” now more aptly termed “Iterative System Audit”) was to take place. This generated (in addition to clearly described points of criticism) uncertainties as well, since the inherent flexibility, expandability, and adaptability of the proposed procedure meant that, to a certain extent, uncharted territory was being entered in the field of accreditation.

The evaluators therefore greatly appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this innovative step forward. Furthermore, the evaluators highly value the fact that the university has addressed and implemented the points of criticism and suggestions outlined in the 2024 evaluation report in such a way that a supplemented, refined, and, above all, well-rounded evaluation could be presented, in which the evaluators perceive (and appreciate) the lower two procedural levels (concept audit and rolling audit) as a solid and stable foundation for the upper level (iterative system audit), which reflects the inherent dynamics of the university’s development. Thus, since 2024, not only has the component of incorporating external expertise been strengthened through the introduction of the Quality Expert Group (QEG), but many of the elements originally included have been improved, expanded, and coordinated with one another, resulting in a consistent and “well-rounded whole.”

In the opinion of the evaluators, there is now a solid foundation for the dynamic elements of the process. Furthermore, during the site visits, UTN representatives were able to demonstrate very convincingly that not only does a strong culture of quality already exist at UTN, but that appropriate measures are also being taken to maintain and strengthen this culture as the university continues to expand, particularly with regard to the onboarding of new staff and the admission of larger cohorts of students (scaling).

Thus, the review panel sees an appropriate balance between a stable foundation/framework and room for dynamic development, so that the trade-off mentioned above can be appropriately resolved and the university can be granted the necessary leap of faith (as raised by the review panel in the original 2024 report) for the further development of the QM system.

As an insight into alternative approaches to external quality assurance, it can be inferred from this that a university in the process of establishment (in this case, UTN) should be granted the possibility of a dynamic component within the QM system. The Accreditation Council could, if necessary—beyond the further monitoring of this process (see Section 2.6)—discuss whether overarching criteria

could be developed for such dynamic components, which would assist evaluators in similar future procedures in appropriately resolving the trade-off described above. However, it is rather doubtful that comprehensive lists of criteria can be developed for this purpose, meaning that evaluation teams would need to be given (more) leeway for the intuitive assessment of elements of the (alternative) procedures presented. Instead, approaches (guiding questions?) could emerge from the learning processes of the various review teams that guide the evaluation in an alternative process and lead to consistent decision-making practices.

Furthermore, it is foreseeable that the flexibility, scalability, and adaptability of the QM system are of particular importance not only for universities in the process of development. Modern universities today face a variety of pressures for change and associated transformation processes (e.g., the digital transformation of the sciences), which also (necessarily) impact the QM system. The question arises as to whether these dynamics are adequately reflected in the guidelines for the accreditation of alternative procedures and also for institutional accreditations, or whether a continuous increase in flexibility (including) within the accreditation system itself is required.

2.5 Summary Quality Assessment

Introduction

Since 1991, UTN has been the first public university in Germany to be established from scratch. Among the goals of this new institution are⁷:

- Rethinking the university to address aspects of the system that have long been in need of change,
- to be a model in many areas and foster a culture of learning from mistakes,
- research-led teaching methods and rapid feedback to students for all degree programs and courses with the goal of inspiring students.

To this end, the State of Bavaria enacted new legislation (TNG, TNAV), which provides UTN with the necessary freedom to achieve these challenging goals. This includes, among other things:

- the right for students to propose new degree programs,
- the transfer of the functions of the Senate and the University Council to a founding commission, at least on a transitional basis.

⁷ A comprehensive overview of the university's objectives is available on its website.

UTN was founded in 2021 and has been in the process of development ever since. During this time, the first academic departments and the administration were established. To ensure robust quality management, work began in parallel on the development of a Quality Management System (QMS), which is the subject of this alternative procedure. Due to current circumstances, the present QMS can currently cover only part of the intended comprehensive QMS, as the other areas (e.g., Quality Expert Group – QEG) are still under development. For this reason, the alternative procedure was chosen.

“UTN aims to establish a QMS that comprehensively ensures the quality of studies and teaching, continuously develops it further, and implements improvements that are actually noticeable for teaching operations, for the quality of degree programs, and for students.” (Self-Report, pp. 12–13)

This second self-report focuses on the alternative procedure, the further development of the QM system, and the development, documentation, and establishment of processes and structures, e.g., the rolling audit and the iterative system audit.

“UTN deliberately applies the alternative approach holistically at the system level—and not just at the program level. [...] UTN’s quality management system is designed to be iterative, multi-stage, and learning-oriented. This is due to the university’s unique founding circumstances [...].” (Self-evaluation report, p. 32)

The self-evaluation report details how QM concepts and processes are developed, consolidated, and transitioned into routine operations in three phases. In this context, it is particularly important to UTN to design processes in such a way that innovations in teaching and learning concepts can be continuously incorporated. Roles, committees, and functions are clearly defined and outlined for this purpose. The central question is always: “How can teaching and learning processes be designed so that students can achieve the competency-based learning objectives?” (Self-evaluation report, p. 14)

In the opinion of the evaluators, the various guiding principles and processes provide a solid foundation for establishing a comprehensive quality management system. The rules of procedure and the process description for the iterative system audit outline the process by which the QM system is to be further developed and extended to other parts of the university (beyond teaching and learning). Chapter 5 of the self-report explains how the alternative procedure, including the QM system (reflection method), is to be further developed.

Impressions during the site visit

The evaluators had a very positive impression of the organization of the on-site visits. All interviewees were well-prepared and gave the impression that they “live” the core ideas of the UTN; the shared

“spirit” was clearly evident. All interviewees were open in their responses. The overall impressions during the site visit left a very positive impression on all evaluators.

In the opinion of the evaluators, UTN is pursuing a highly innovative approach. In addition to innovative teaching and learning concepts, this also includes new organizational structures, such as the elimination of traditional faculties and chairs. This flat organizational hierarchy is intended to promote interdisciplinary exchange. As a result, program development and course design follow a top-down approach. The evaluators consider this approach sensible and are curious to see whether these flat hierarchies and the model for curriculum development and refinement can be maintained and put into practice even as the organization continues to grow rapidly.

All individuals involved in the on-site visit share a vision for the further development and consolidation of processes and structures in the coming years. All key positions necessary for establishing a quality management system have been filled by qualified personnel. The university administration is involved in the processes of the alternative procedure and quality management in general and is fully informed of the details. The successful collaboration with the external members of the Founding Commission is also to be regarded as positive. Thus, the Founding Commission ensures rapid decision-making during the current founding phase of the UTN. In this regard, the UTN as a whole, but also within the Founding Commission, relies on student participation and student input.

By combining the functions of a senate and a university council, the Founding Commission also represents an innovative approach to university governance. This is supported by the Ministry. Thus, the UTN could serve as a model for other state universities within and outside Bavaria.

The need to clarify individual concepts, instruments, and processes, as noted during the initial visit, was addressed with concrete examples. This applies to the Alternative Procedure, the Concept Audit, and the Iterative System Audit. The summary evaluation, including the aspects that the review panel believes should be addressed, is presented below, grouped according to these three categories.

The Alternative Procedure

Given the experimental nature of the UTN, the alternative approach generally represents a sensible option. The approach of a holistic quality management concept, which is being developed experimentally and reflects the university's innovative character, was convincingly presented at all levels. The experts viewed the use to date and the further development of QM instruments and structures (e.g., QEG) positively.

UTN has begun to clearly structure and document the overarching processes for the design and further development of instruments. The recommended QM handbook has been created and is continuously updated online. It defines and documents both the criteria and selection processes for the continuation of a QM instrument, as well as regulations in the event of premature termination of the alternative procedure. In this context, a concept for the onboarding of external members of the Founding Commission was also developed and implemented. It was ensured that the mandate of the members in the key committees (Founding Commission, StaRs Steering Committee, QEG) is legally sufficiently secured. In addition, a staffing plan was developed that enables the successful implementation of the alternative procedure—consisting of a concept audit, rolling audit, and iterative system audit—in the medium term.

The Iterative System Audit

The procedural rules of the iterative system audit and the visualization of its process are presented transparently. Given the unique situation in which UTN finds itself, the idea of a step-by-step development and continuous improvement of a quality management system is to be regarded as a sound concept. For this reason, the reviewers strongly welcome its further refinement and implementation and have re-examined it in comparison with the first report.

The effective, comprehensive, and results-oriented implementation of the planned QM measures requires detailed planning (see schedule in Appendix 5). The core processes and the personnel responsible for recording, systematizing, and compiling process-relevant parameters are defined. Formal QM decisions are clearly outlined in process descriptions. The sequence and planning of the decisions underlying the process are explained. A general procedure for complaint management has been defined.

Sufficient rules have been established to ensure the impartiality of the external experts.

According to the Ordinance on the Establishment of the Technical University of Nuremberg (TNAV), the term of office for members of the Founding Commission may not exceed two years. An efficient “onboarding” of new members and the transfer of knowledge are ensured.

Evaluation of the redesign of the concept audit

The university has fully implemented the recommendation to revise its internal decision-making processes and has further developed both the procedures and the rules of procedure for the concept audit. Significant progress is particularly evident in internal quality assurance, for example through the introduction of clear processes for selecting and appointing external reviewers, which are now enshrined in the procedural rules (see Appendices 3, 4, 5, and 6 to the self-evaluation report). Overall, the university thus has a coherent, documented, and effective process for the initial accreditation of degree programs, which ensures the development and quality assurance of study and teaching.

The establishment of a Quality Expert Group (QEG) as an external review panel, as decided by the Founding Commission, was viewed as extremely positive. It ensures a significantly greater separation of review and decision-making than at the time of the first site visit and also ensures the appropriate integration of external expertise as well as transparent documentation of the procedures.

In addition, the processes involved in the program concept audit for new degree programs were clarified and refined. The procedural rules described in the appendix to the self-evaluation report define not only the objectives and terminology used in the internal program concept audit, but also the responsible bodies and the sequence of the entire process, culminating in accreditation by the StaRs Steering Committee. Processes for handling significant changes to degree programs and regulations regarding the withdrawal of accreditation in the event that compliance with requirements is not established have now also been defined.

The review of the criteria of the BayStudAkkV is now anchored as part of the expert report in the internal accreditation procedure. The template for the expert report also complies, as of today, with the Accreditation Council’s resolution regarding the publication obligation for system-accredited universities. In this way, the university ensures that the relevant legal and formal requirements, particularly those under the BayStudAkkV and the State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation, are systematically incorporated into internal procedures.

Given the currently manageable number of cohorts and degree programs, the university’s approach can only be evaluated to a limited extent; however, the results to date suggest a positive assessment. The degree programs reviewed comply with

accreditation standards, and the measures reflect a shared understanding of quality assurance that is supported by all participating bodies.

Rolling Audit

The rolling audit is presented in detail and described in full in the appendix to the self-evaluation report. The processes of the rolling audit are clearly defined. This applies, among other things, to the decision-making framework of the Founding Commission. In each individual audit, the Founding Commission decides on compliance or non-compliance and, if necessary, on conditions to be met.

Quality Expert Group (QEG)

The implementation of a QEG is welcomed by the review panel. This provides an alternative solution for the long-term involvement of external reviewers. This takes into account the UTN's unique position regarding program development as well as teaching and learning concepts.

Recommendation for the expansion of the monitoring and reporting concept

Furthermore, it became clear that the importance of systematic monitoring is firmly embedded in the university's overall understanding of quality and is actively practiced by the responsible stakeholders. In view of the planned and desired expansion of the range of degree programs, it therefore makes sense to further develop a monitoring and reporting concept coordinated with all relevant stakeholders and to support this with a standardized process visualization. Such a visualization provides clarity, contributes to the consistent application of criteria, and—especially as complexity increases—facilitates a scalable overview of development statuses, decision-making pathways, and quality assurance processes.

Conclusion

The review panel evaluates the basic concept of the alternative procedure very positively. It takes into account, in a transparent manner, the specific needs of UTN in the accreditation of its degree programs. The rolling audit can help to incorporate the unique features of the degree program concept into the accreditation process and support the implementation of the associated requirements. When implemented appropriately, the iterative system audit ensures that the quality management system is developed in a targeted manner along the

This process is conducted in accordance with the criteria of the BayStudAkkV, which will significantly facilitate the path to reaccreditation in the form of a system accreditation. The link between quality assurance and quality development, which is repeatedly emphasized in the Alternative Procedure, can also provide impetus for other universities. Furthermore, the successful implementation of the Alternative Procedure could yield valuable insights into the potential for further development of the accreditation system.

Compared to the first site visit 15 months ago, the missing process descriptions and models regarding the overarching processes for the development, testing, and implementation of quality management procedures and instruments are now in place. The implementation of internal review procedures (e.g., concept audit, rolling audit, iterative system audit) as well as the introduction of the QEG are also sufficiently and legally bindingly regulated. Established standards in accreditation, such as those regarding the independence of quality assessment (e.g., substitution rules in the event of a conflict of interest), are taken into account. The documentation for the alternative procedure (e.g., documents for the preparation of external evaluators and new committee members) as well as the documentation of the alternative procedure (e.g., process descriptions and online QM manual) are now available.

Following the revision and improvement of the alternative procedure, the review panel can issue a clear accreditation recommendation.

2.6 Proposals for the Design of the Monitoring Process for the Alternative Procedure

The goal of monitoring the Alternative Procedure is, on the one hand, to assess the extent to which the Alternative Procedure has been adequately implemented. On the other hand, monitoring is intended to ensure that insights regarding alternative approaches to external quality assurance are incorporated in order to contribute to the further development of the accreditation system.

Therefore, the expert group proposes monitoring the Alternative Procedure at UTN on two levels. To verify the adequate implementation of the Alternative Procedure, the Accreditation Council should, in due course, be granted *access to key documents* (minutes, draft resolutions/resolutions, bases for decision-making, Q-Report) *in the form of a report*, thereby gaining insight into the implementation of the Alternative Procedure.

In addition, the review panel expects to gain insights into the extent to which the alternative procedure can set new standards in quality assurance. This concerns, among other things, the rolling audit and the potential it offers to contribute to a holistic view of degree programs, the consistent development and enforcement of quality criteria, and the implementation of a culture of quality. With regard to the iterative system audit, important

insights into the extent to which a quality management system can be continuously monitored and further developed with a focus on key areas over the course of the audit.

Equally, important insights for the accreditation system could emerge from the fact that UTN, following a “start-up” philosophy, not only allows for change and flexibility regarding the stakeholders in the quality management system but also consciously employs them. Finally, it could be highly illuminating to understand not only how the UTN’s strategic development shapes its quality management system, but also, conversely, how quality management influences the strategic development of the UTN as a young and still-growing institution, and which stakeholders, processes, and tools specifically facilitate this. Conclusions drawn from this would be of the utmost interest in order to fundamentally view quality management in studies and teaching not merely as the fulfillment of predetermined criteria, but as a strategic process for the further development of a university, while also taking into account interfaces with other core processes such as research, appointment policy, diversity, and others.

From the perspective of the review panel, it might be useful to involve representatives of the Accreditation Council *on-site as observers in discussion and decision-making processes*, with representatives of the review panel also being included. For example, the first audit round of the rolling audit for the degree programs “Artificial Intelligence and Robotics” (M.Sc.) and “Human and Artificial Intelligence” (M.Sc./M.A.) in 2027. Observing these sessions could help UTN analyze and refine the process so that it can be applied to an increasing number of degree programs. In addition, initial insights could be gained regarding the extent to which the biennial review of a selection of criteria is suitable for all degree programs, or whether repeated or more frequent reflection on selected criteria may be necessary. This could provide guidance for the work of the QEG and the Founding Commission in further developing the system.

Furthermore, it is conceivable to use *a dialogue format tailored to* specific occasions (e.g., a kind of “fireside chat” or roundtable) to reflect, together with representatives of the Founding Commission, the QEG, and the StaRs Steering Committee, on the interplay between the development of the UTN and the development of their own quality management system. This could also provide important insights for universities that, while not in the start-up phase, are nonetheless facing fundamental strategic and organizational changes. Ideally, this dialogue format should *take place multiple times* over the course of the support period to allow for detailed discussion and in-depth exploration of concrete development steps, milestones, associated challenges, and insights.

. Ideally, such “*workshop reports*” would be well-suited to sharing these experiences and insights with the professional community, thereby providing other universities with starting points and ideas for innovative approaches to quality management.

These are suggestions from the review panel. However, UTN is expressly encouraged to propose to the Accreditation Council, from its own perspective, priorities, timelines, and measures that would make the review process beneficial for UTN as well.

3 Review Process

3.1 Procedural Flow and General Notes

The review process included the following dates:

- May 22, 2024 Preparation of the reviewers
- June 17–18, 2024 Initial on-site inspection
- July 5, 2024 Follow-up meeting of the expert panel
- August 8, 2024 Finalization of the preliminary report
- December 12, 2024 Interim decision by the Accreditation Council
- October 15–16, 2025 Second on-site inspection
- December 5, 2025 Finalization of the report

Starting in 2026, annual monitoring will be conducted by the Accreditation Council.

At the request of the panel of evaluators, the university submitted a presentation on the development of the UTN during the first site visit.

At the request of the panel of evaluators, the university provided access to the QM manual on the university's intranet during the second site visit. An excerpt from the QM manual was made available to the evaluators following the site visit.

3.2 Legal Basis

State Treaty on Study Program Accreditation

Model Statute / Bavarian Study Program Accreditation Statute - BayStudAkkV European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

Rules of Procedure for Alternative Accreditation Procedures (VoAAv)

3.3 Review Panel

a) University Faculty Members

- Prof. Dr. rer. pol. habil. Anja Geigenmüller, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Ilmenau University of Technology (Spokesperson for the Panel of Reviewers)
- Prof. Dipl.-Inf. Dr. Stefanie Lindstaedt, Founding President of IT:U – Interdisciplinary Transformation University Austria, Linz

- Prof. Dr.-Ing. Norbert Ritter, Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics, Computer Science, and Natural Sciences, University of Hamburg
- Prof. Dr. Dr. Dr. Carsten Röcker, Deputy Director and Member of the Executive Board inIT - Institute for Industrial Information Technology, Ostwestfalen-Lippe University of Applied Sciences

b) Representative from the professional field

- Dr. Frank-Peter Ritter, Lecturer & Auditor (Chemistry & Business Administration)
- Jan Hauer, Team Manager at EXXETA AG (for the second site visit)

c) Student Representative

- Florian Puttkamer, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz: Chemistry (M.Sc.)

3.4 Accompaniment by the Accreditation Council (Section 34(5), Sentence 2 MRVO)

- Prof. Dr.-Ing. Hans-Joachim Bargstädt, Bauhaus University Weimar, Chair of the Accreditation Council
- Prof. Dr. Burkhard Schmager, Ernst Abbe University of Applied Sciences, Jena

3.5 Support provided by the office of the Accreditation Council Foundation

- Adriane Janosch
- Ulf Schöne

4 Data Sheet

Accreditation Data

Approval by the science authority:	November 6, 2023
Approval by the Accreditation Council:	December 5, 2023
Agreement between the university and the Accreditation Council:	April 9, 2024
Receipt of final self-documentation:	April 22, 2024
Date of the first site visit:	June 17–18, 2024
Date of the second inspection:	October 15–16, 2025
Initial accreditation on: <i>For reaccreditation</i>	-
Evaluation pursuant to § 9 VoAAv on: <i>For reaccreditation</i>	-

Groups of people with whom interviews were conducted:	University administration, QM, students, Founding Commission, StaRs Steering Committee, faculty, representatives of the Bavarian Ministry of State for Higher Education and Science () Science and the Arts
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5 Facilities

This report on the accreditation of the alternative procedure will be supplemented by additional reports as part of the monitoring of the alternative procedure.