

# Fostering Quality in University Continuing Education

**A multidimensional, impact-oriented quality model**

developed by

**Swissuni, umbrella organisation for University Continuing Education**

in collaboration with the

**Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (OAQ)**

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*Introduction*

# Swissuni - Swiss University Continuing Education

## Civil association:

- ⌘ Umbrella organisation
- ⌘ Continuing education units
- ⌘ Swiss research universities

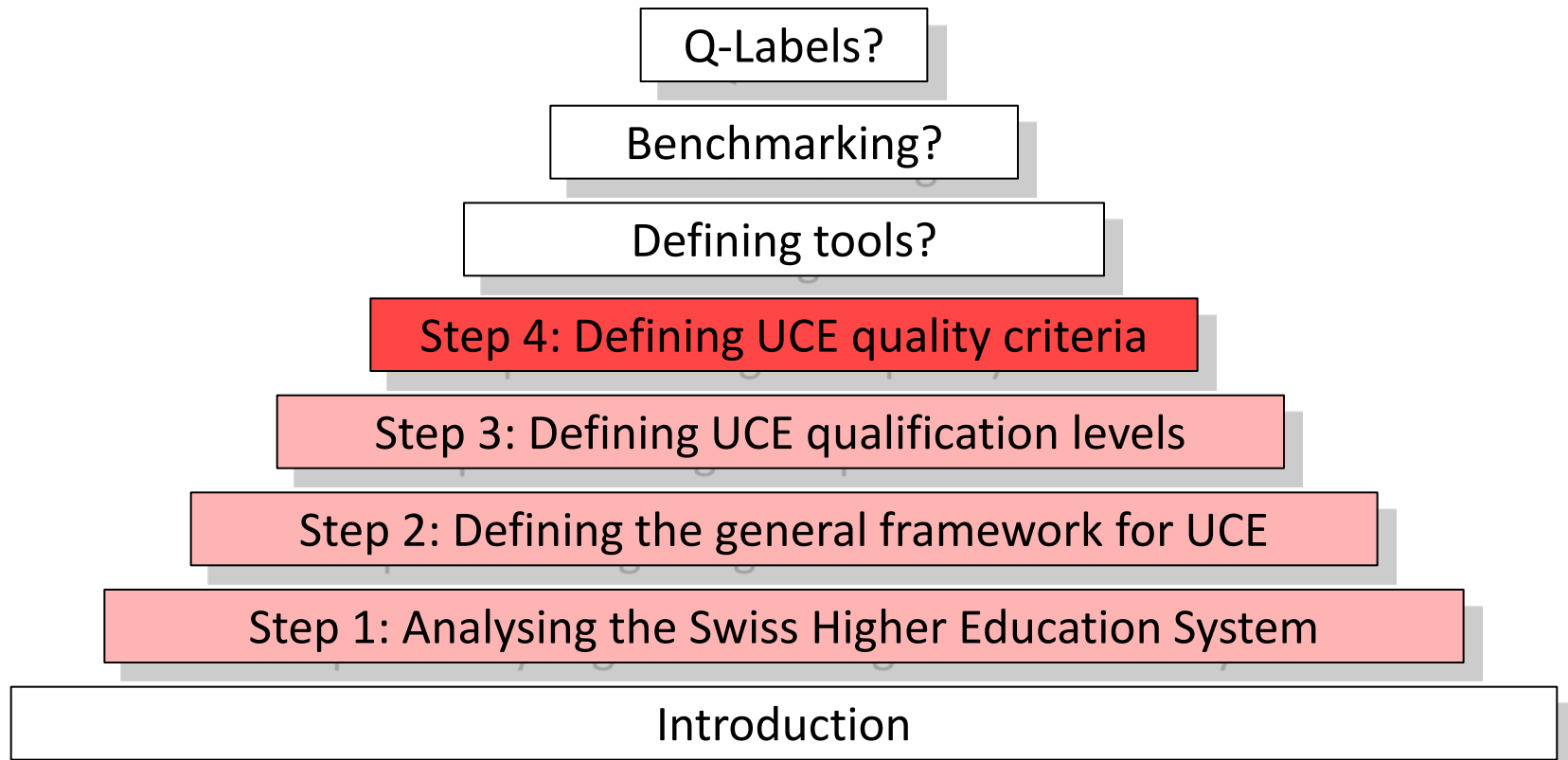
## Consequences:

- ⌘ Close to UCE practice
- ⌘ Relative autonomy
- ⌘ No decision making power
- ⌘ Influence by innovation and conceptual leadership

<b>Lobbying, networking, concept development</b>
Publicity and public relations
Lobbying
Networking
Inter-university cooperation
Bologna Reform in UCE
National qualification framework
Quality development
Exchange of good practice and tools

*Introduction*

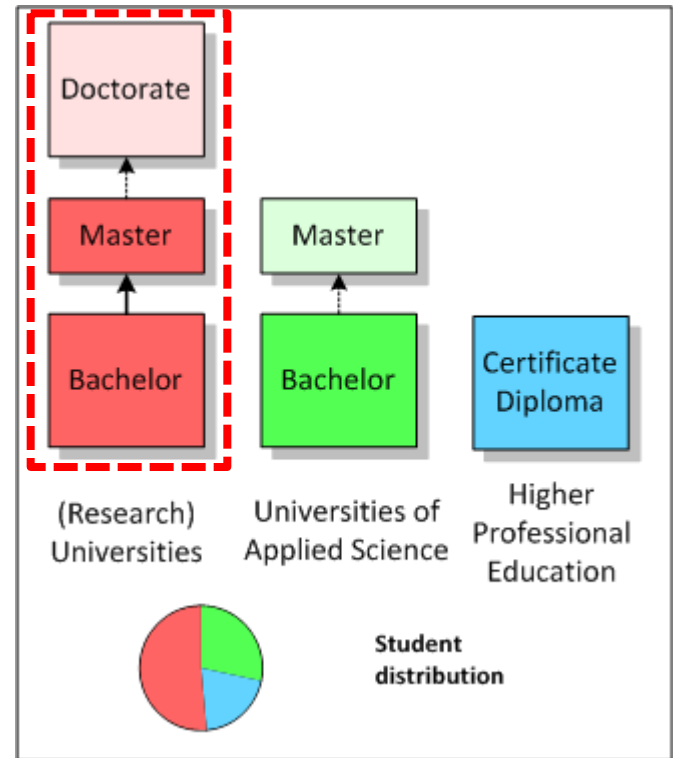
## Four steps towards UCE quality



Step 1: Analysing the system

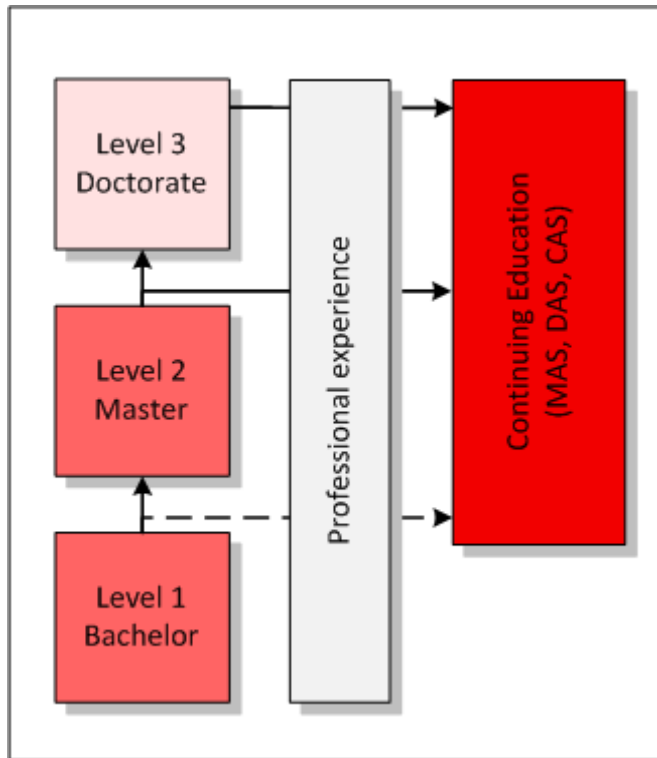
# The (research) university in the Swiss HE system

- ∴ 'Triple' higher education system
- ∴ Alternative career paths (e.g. for widening participation)
- ∴ Universities focus on comparative advantages and core competences academic standing and research
  - ∴ 6 of 12 universities belong to the top-200 (70% of the students)
  - ∴ High master rate: 90% of the university bachelors continue
  - ∴ High PhD rate



Step 2: Defining the framework

# Admission requirements, labels and credit points



### Step 3: Defining qualification levels

## National qualification framework: UCE descriptors

### Overview

- Four HE qualification levels (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate, UCE)
- UCE descriptors compared to master level descriptors
- Emphasis on problem-solving, management, innovation, professional identity

#### UCE descriptors

High level of specialization or **interdisciplinarity**

Research and **practice-based** knowledge

**Problem-solving** in complex environments

**Change-orientation** and **innovation** skills

**Professional identity, professional field**

**Management and leadership**

Communication and **negotiation** skills

**Autonomous** learning skills

*Step 4: Defining quality criteria*

## Approaches to UCE quality

- ⌘ General versus **UCE-specific**
- ⌘ Subject-oriented versus **generic**
- ⌘ Widening participation versus **elite**-development
- ⌘ **Enablers**-based and **results**-based (**multidimensional**)
- ⌘ Institution-oriented versus **programme**-oriented
- ⌘ Strategy-driven versus **culture**-driven
- ⌘ Assessment-oriented versus **development**-oriented

#### *Step 4: Defining quality criteria*

## Six particularities of UCE quality

- ❖ Stakeholders assess UCE quality in terms of **workplace performance, career and personal development**
- ❖ UCE deals with **rapidly changing needs, fragmented markets, expert client groups and heterogeneous teaching staff**
- ❖ **Innovation** is often more important than durability
- ❖ Programmes are often **unique and highly specialized** and defy any attempt at comparative **ranking** or sectoral **standardisation**
- ❖ Programmes must be **accountable to the client**, in the first place
- ❖ **Quality culture** and **personal quality commitment** are often more important than formal quality strategies and explicit standards



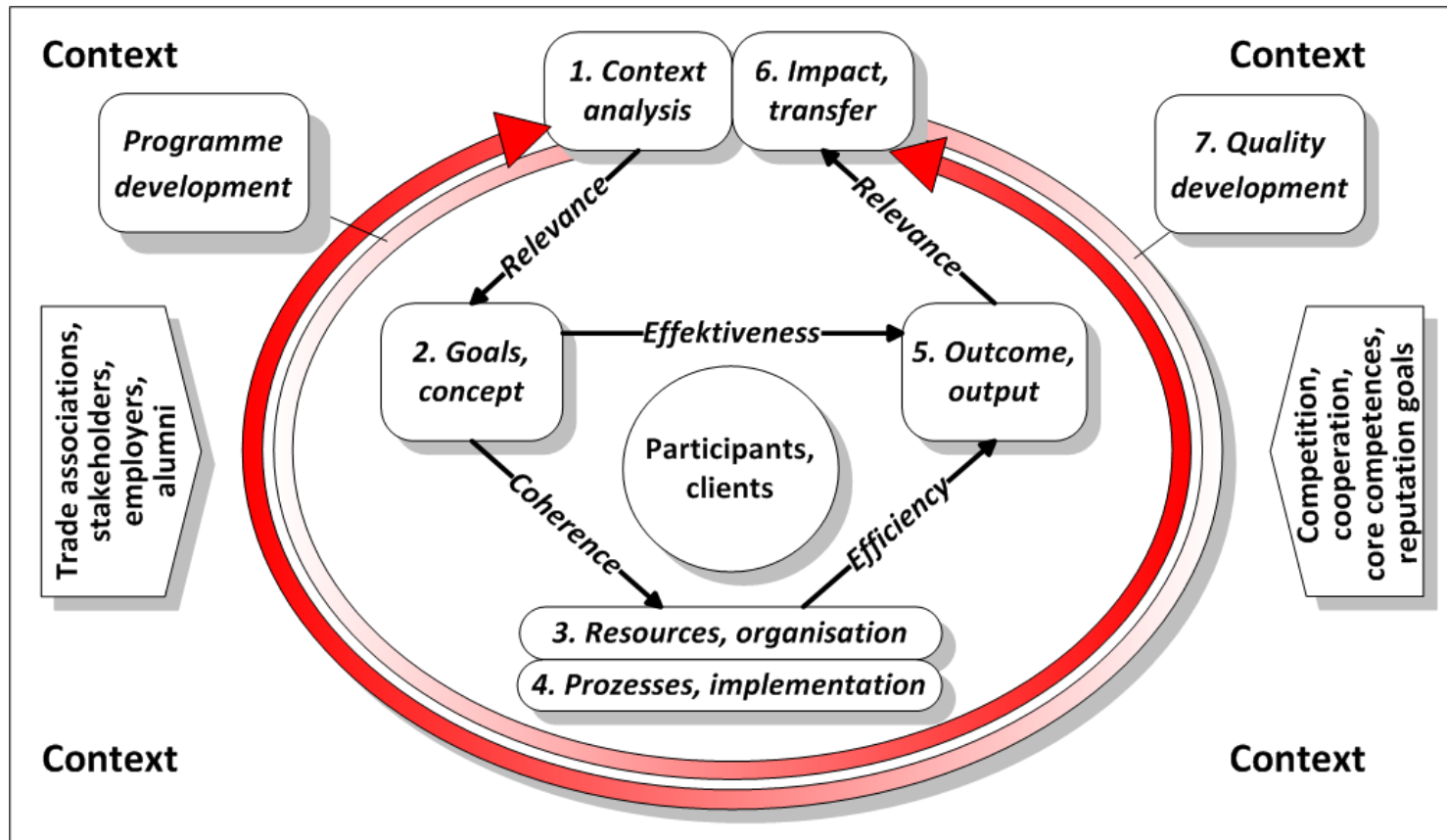
#### Step 4: Defining quality criteria

## Six principles for a UCE quality approach

- ⌘ **Impact orientation:** A UCE quality approach should emphasise impact and transfer
- ⌘ **Flexibility:** The quality criteria should be generic and easily adaptable
- ⌘ **Multidimensionality:** The quality approach should take into account all relevant aspects of the programme's life cycle combining input, process, outcome and impact criteria
- ⌘ **Client feedback:** A UCE quality approach should provide the participants with constant feedback possibilities.
- ⌘ **Stakeholder involvement:** All relevant stakeholder groups should be surveyed periodically and integrated actively in all phases of the programme cycle (as instructors, advisors or project partners).
- ⌘ **Constant quality improvement:** Quality assessment and programme planning should be closely interlinked. The focus should be on quality culture and personal commitment rather than on formal strategies and standards

*Step 4: Defining quality criteria*

# The quality development scheme



## Step 5: Defining quality criteria

# Dimension 6: Impact and transfer

### Keywords

Market value, reputation, transfer, long-term benefit, career, value of the degree, recognition

### Quality objective

Programmes are widely recognised by participants, alumni, employers and professional associations. They provide explicit added value for the participants in their professional practice and have a positive impact on their career.

### Evaluation criteria

- 6.1. *Participants and alumni confirm the positive impact of the competences acquired on their professional practice and/or career.*
- 6.2. *The programme is known to and recognised by employers and professional associations.*
- 6.3. *Professional associations, businesses, institutions and other interested organisations support the programme financially or otherwise.*
- 6.4. *The programme meets cultural, societal, social or economic needs.*

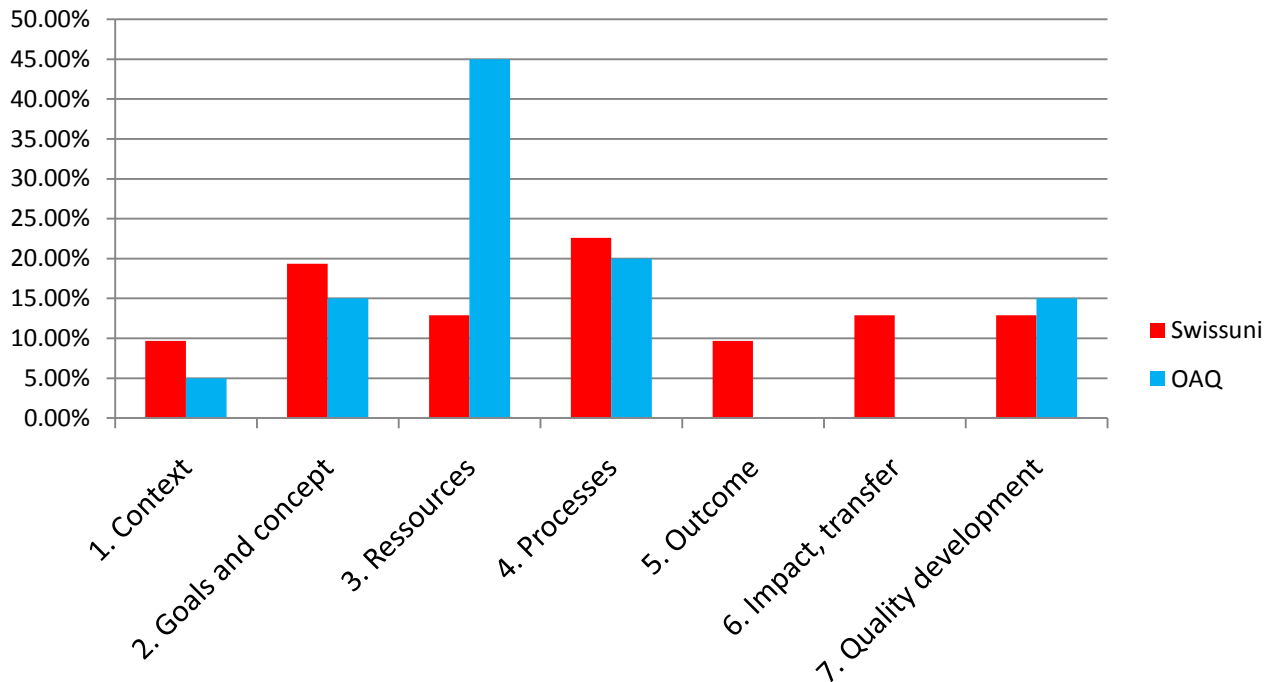
### Suggested sources of data

Survey of participants, alumni and employers, statements by professional associations and key individuals

Step 5: Defining quality criteria

# Quality criteria compared

- ⌘ **Swissuni:** quality development criteria for UCE programmes
- ⌘ **OAQ:** accreditation criteria for normal study programmes



*Conclusions and next steps*

## Conclusions

- ❖ **Impact-oriented, multidimensional** model for UCE quality **development** that follows the **lifecycle** UCE programmes
- ❖ Transferable to **other HE-systems**: every UCE type must assess results and take into account flexibility, stakeholder involvement, client feedback and constant quality improvement.
- ❖ New balance between **results and enablers**. Impact orientation also requires that **results** be accorded more weight than strategies, and ‘lived’ quality **culture** more weight than formal quality mechanisms.

# Thank you!

[www.swissuni.ch](http://www.swissuni.ch)

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