

# nexus projects 2010- 2020

PLA Learning Outcomes  
Vienna, 25.4.2023

Tilman Dörr, German Rectors' Conference (HRK)



Co-funded by  
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# German Rectors' Conference (HRK)



- members: 269 public and government-recognised universities representing >90% students)
- tasks:
  1. opinion-shaping and political representation
  2. development of principles and standards in the HE system
  3. services to HEI and the public

nexus I + II



# nexus I + II (2010-2020)

- 2010-2014:

  - nexus I - concepts and good practice in higher education

- 2014-2020:

  - nexus II - forming transitions, promoting student success

[www.hrk-nexus.de/projekt-nexus/information-in-english/](http://www.hrk-nexus.de/projekt-nexus/information-in-english/)

# nexus projects



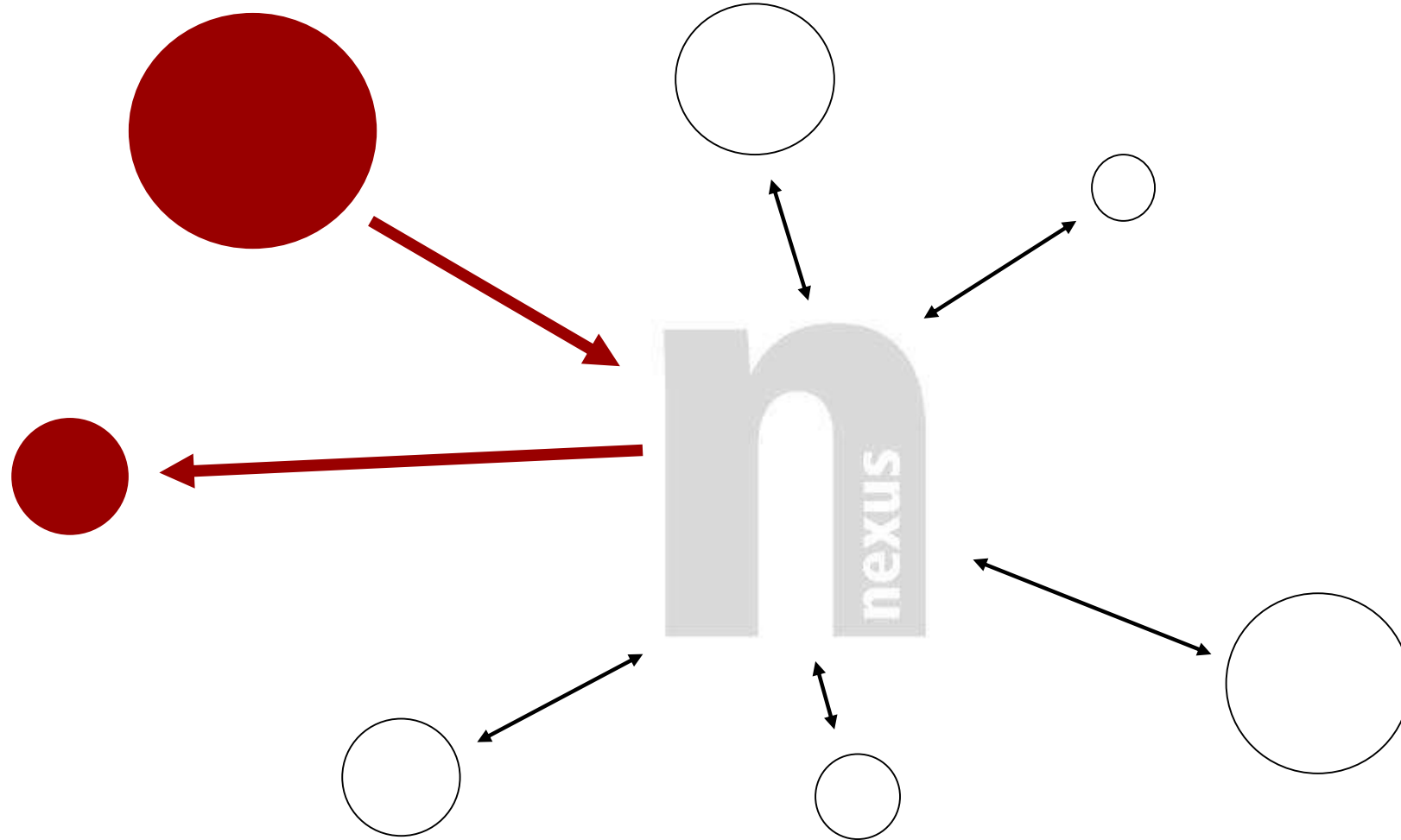
HRK German Rectors' Conference  
Project nexus

GEFÖRDERT VOM



Bundesministerium  
für Bildung  
und Forschung

# nexus projects



# nexus I



# Characteristics of the traditional study organisation model

- Orientation towards "normal" full-time students in attendance studies with compulsory attendance spread over the entire week
- Admission requirement was the regular university entrance qualification („HZB“) to ensure the ability to study
- Work experience was irrelevant for the degree programme
- Possible work activities of students were limited to semester breaks
- Model of consecutive degrees (BA/MA) predominant
- Professional activities only "worthwhile" after Master's degree (especially at universities)



# National need for reform

Need for reform in the German higher education system:

- Little structure and orientation in the degree programme
- Long study times and high dropout rates
- Lack of practical relevance
- Lack of internationality in education
- Lack of international compatibility of degrees
- Lack of quality assurance or development
- Rising student numbers
- Increasingly heterogeneous reasons and prerequisites for studying

# Challenges

- Further development of **teaching**:  
Consistent orientation towards learning outcomes and competences
- **Employability**: Improve practical relevance
- **Mobility**: transparent recognition procedures
- Greater **permeability** between vocational and  
and higher education: part-time study courses,  
more flexible curricula
- Improve **orientation for** first-year students:  
Information and advice



# nexus I: objectives

**Project objective:** To support HEI in continuing and deepening the study reform ("Bologna 2020") in two thematic fields:

1. Study quality
2. Opening HEI



# Study quality

- Professional modularisation; learning outcome and competence orientation
- Labour market relevance: Strengthening practical references
- Differentiation of the Master's degree programmes
- Diversity Management Bachelor's/Master's (in particular in Arts and Music Colleges, Law, Teaching Profession)



# Opening HEI

- Promote permeability to vocational education and training
- Facilitate recognition of international study achievements
- Create framework conditions for cross-educational and international recognition



# Measures and communication

## Measures

- Conferences, workshops and meetings
- publication of guidelines, handouts and brochures
- collecting, evaluating and disseminating expert opinions, surveys and studies
- information and counselling (on demand)

## Communication

- Dissemination of the project results
- press and public relations work
- Monitoring the implementation of reforms at HEI

# nexus II

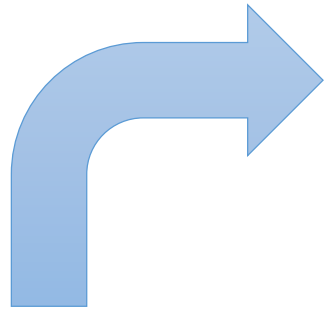


# "Study Reform 2020": Recommendations for action (2013)

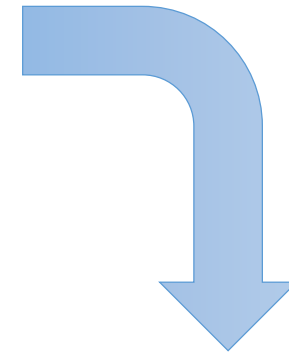
- Comprehensive introduction of Bachelor's/Master's degrees (exceptions: law, medicine, pharmacy, liberal arts)
- Improve mobility and recognition
- Flexible design of BA/MA programmes to enable individual educational biographies (not only consecutive)
- Employability of the polyvalent Bachelor
- Competence transfer through learning outcome orientation
- Using the diversity of student biographies as an opportunity
- Redesigning the study orientation phase
- Developing a culture of quality in the universities



# Orientation point "Student Life Cycle"

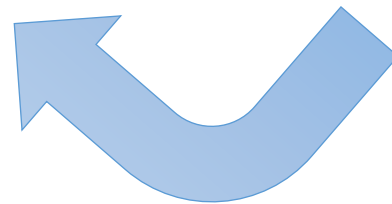


Transition to higher  
education: **study  
entry phase**

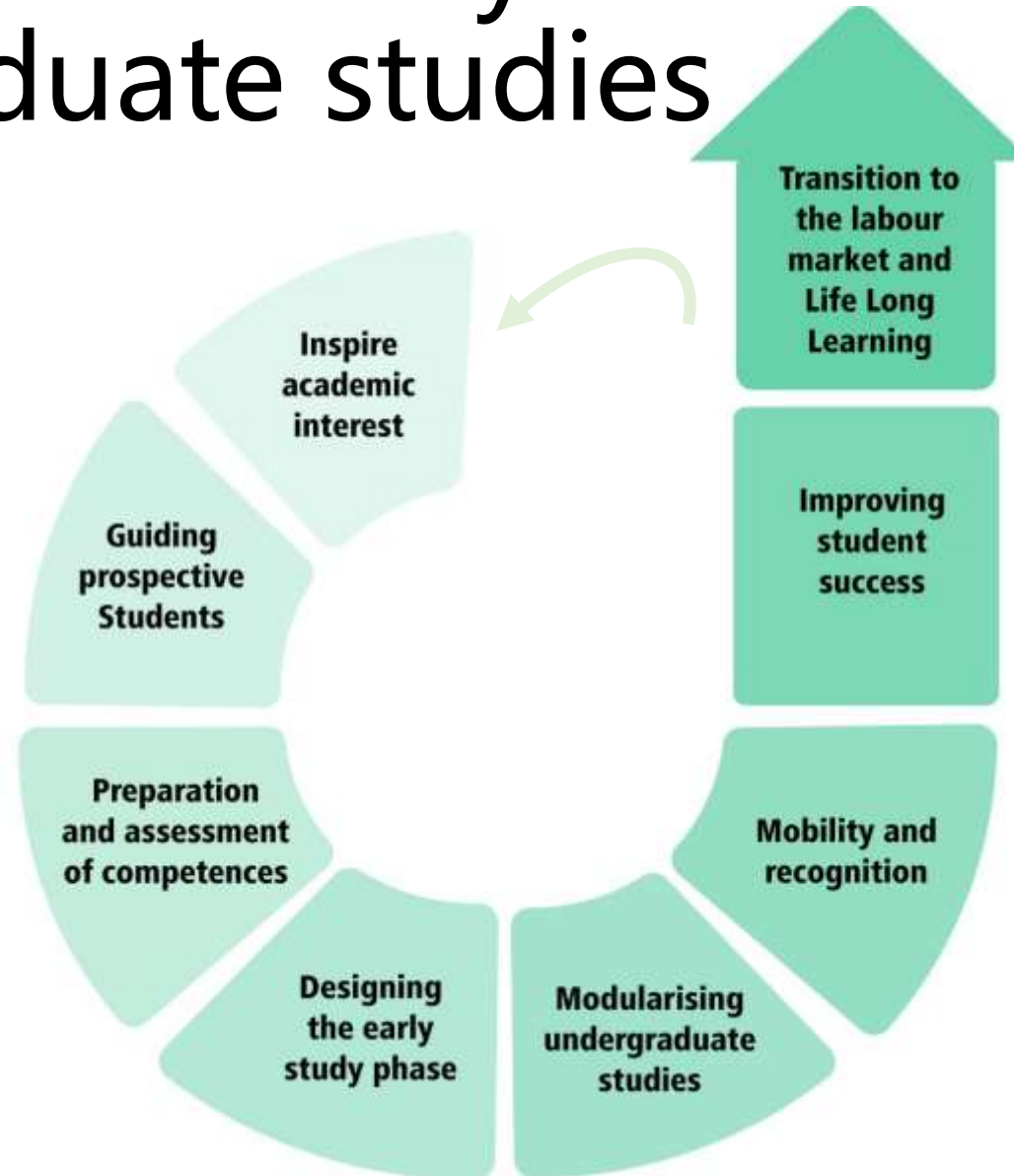


Transition to the  
labour market:  
**Qualification phase**

**Mobility** during  
studies:  
Recognition



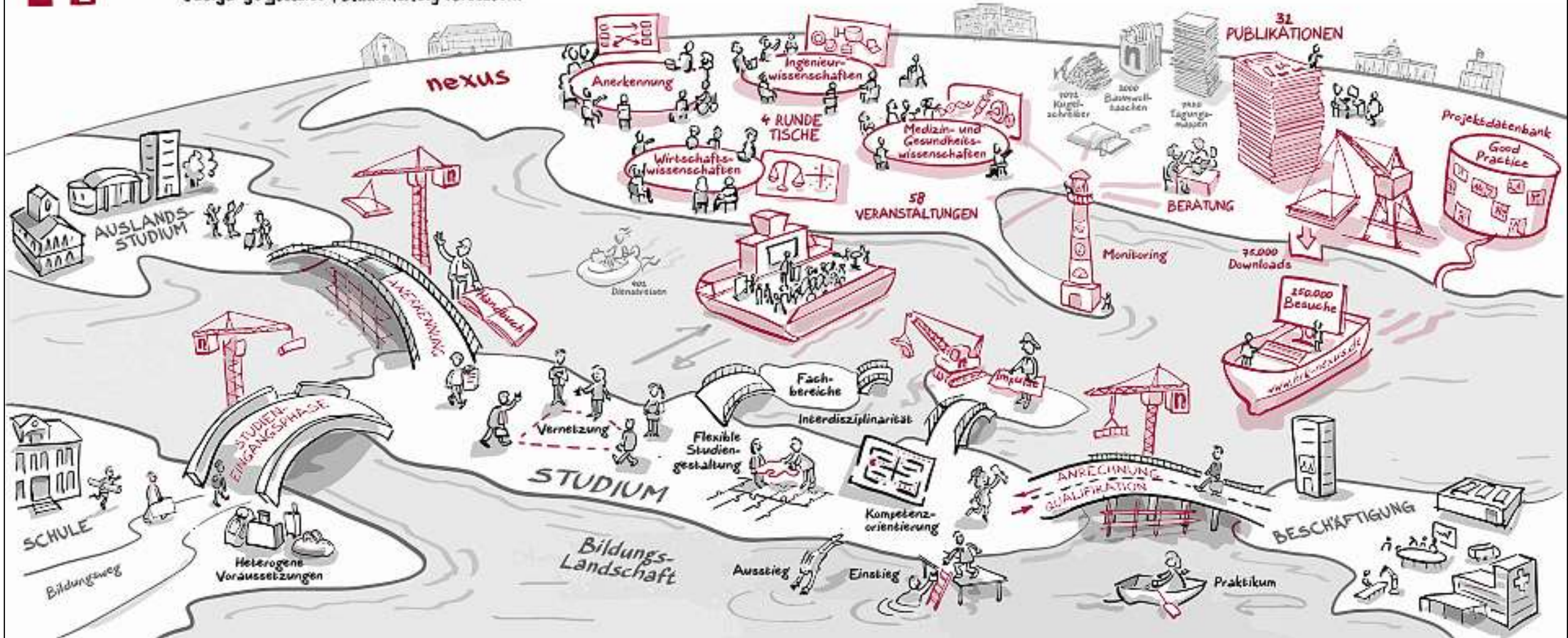
# The Student Life Cycle: Measures in undergraduate studies





# HRK Hochschulrektorenkonferenz

Projekt **nexus**  
Übergänge gestalten, Studienerfolg verbessern



# Project structure

**Cross-cutting themes for subject-specific round tables**

Study entry phase
Qualification phase

**4 Round tables  
15-20 experts**

Medicine & Health sciences	Economics	Engineering sciences
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Mobility during studies:
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**Project Advisory Board**

**Evaluation of the overall project**

# Thematic focus: Study entrance phase

Demand	Goals	Measures
<p>Increased need for counselling due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Heterogeneity of the students</li><li>▪ younger students</li><li>▪ Complexity of the study programmes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Promotion of activating teaching, learning and testing (research- and problem-based learning, service learning)</li><li>▪ Development of subject-specific forms of counselling</li><li>▪ Improving the success of studies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Needs analysis</li><li>▪ Networking of interested groups / transfer conferences</li><li>▪ Round tables: develop subject-specific concepts</li><li>▪ Dissemination of the results</li></ul>

# Thematic focus: Qualification phase

Demand	Goals	Measures
<p>Mediation between educational/scientific aspirations on the one hand and employability and labour market relevance of the degree programme on the other hand</p>  <p>Competence orientation of the study programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improving the polyvalence of the Bachelor</li><li>• New / redesign of study programmes and courses of study</li><li>• Promote subject-specific employability concepts</li><li>• Strengthening the practical relevance of studies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Further training events on subject-specific learning outcomes/catalogues of learning objectives</li><li>• Events for "employability" concepts appropriate to the type of higher education institution (key objective)</li></ul>

# Thematic focus: Recognition

Demand	Goals	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Removing obstacles to mobility</li><li>• Create legal certainty</li><li>• Observe accreditation rules</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improving the application of the Lisbon Convention</li><li>• Further development of criteria for good recognition</li><li>• Introduce institutional procedures</li><li>• Learning outcomes orientation in study programmes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information and training events</li><li>• Advisory and training services</li><li>• Survey</li><li>• Manual/Guide</li><li>• Expert opinion</li><li>• Overall: improve recognition</li></ul>



nexus I+II





# Activities

- Numerous conferences, workshops
- Recommendations from expert groups
- Good-practice database
- Blog
- Glossary
- Newsletter
- Public presentation in media
- Publications...

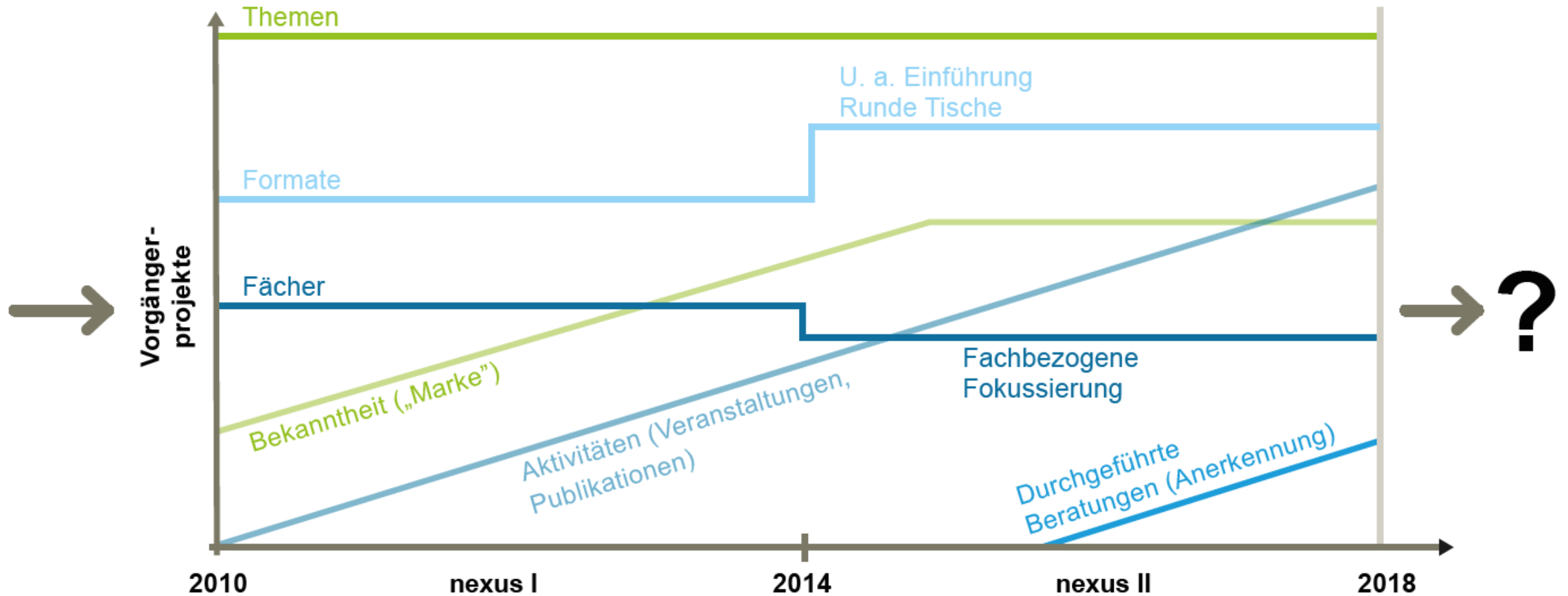


# Publications

- 18 expert reports
- 15 editions of „Impulses for practice“ („Impulse für die Praxis“)
- 10 handouts/recommendations
- 28 thematic brochures
- Various others:
  - Guidelines
  - Flyer
  - Survey results
  - Scientific publications



# Development of the nexus instrument portfolio



# Evaluation nexus - key results (1)

- nexus acted "as a **central exchange platform for** higher education stakeholders among themselves and with stakeholders outside higher education on issues of study reform".
- According to the experts interviewed, nexus has made a significant contribution to **objectifying the discussion** around the European study reform
- Contribute to the **acceptance of** the study reform at the universities by continuously addressing and addressing the issues of the study reform - especially the uncomfortable ones

# Evaluation nexus - key results (2)

- Through various formats and publications, nexus also succeeded in providing **orientation** on issues of study reform in the higher education system.
- In the area of competence orientation in study programme design and learning outcomes, nexus has been perceived as a **committed and competent topic driver and as an important player in** knowledge transfer. Through the work of the nexus projects, the principle of competence orientation has become better known and more manageable in higher education institutions.
- Despite the open approach and voluntary nature of participation, the projects have had a **strong impact on the** higher education landscape in their design and implementation.

# Current project



MODUS - Enhancing student mobility across educational boundaries through recognition (2020-2025)

[www.hrk-modus.de/en](http://www.hrk-modus.de/en)

Next conference: "Bilateral permeability: Designing flexible learning pathways together", 23 and 24 May 2023 in Essen (German only)

Save the date: International Conference "Recognition Culture in Higher Education. International Perspectives on Lifelong Learning and Student Mobility", 2nd week in November 2023, Berlin (English)

# Thank you for your attention!

Tilman Dörr  
Vienna, 25th April 2023

German Rectors' Conference

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Back up

# Need for readjustment after student protests in 2009/10

- Too high a workload and too many courses of study in school
- Too few elective options and inflexible study courses
- Not enough varied forms of teaching/learning
- Too many submodule exams and almost only written exams and oral exams
- Too frequent compulsory attendance
- Too few contact persons for students
- little support for mobility and recognition

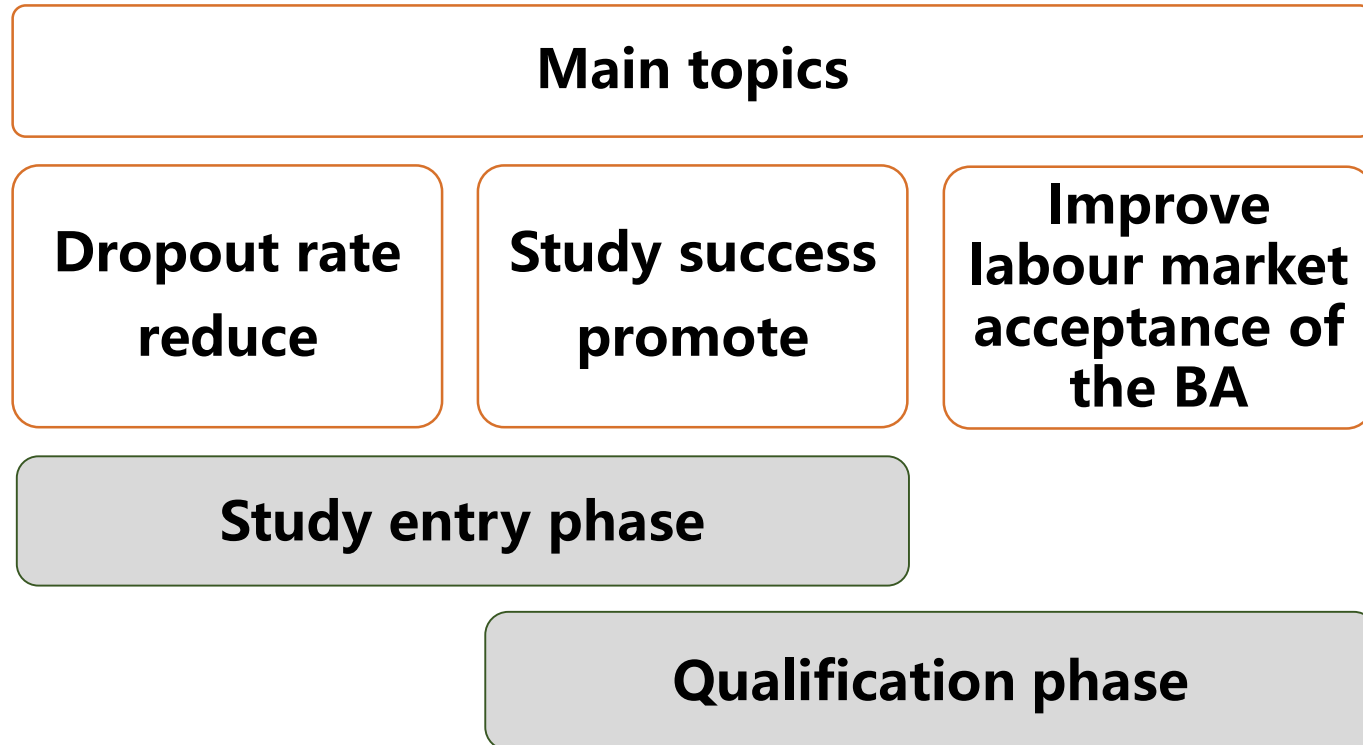
# Tasks of the universities

- Understanding the diversity of educational biographies as opportunities (models of different entry speeds, support for individual learning paths etc.)
- Create alternatives to classroom and full-time study
- Perceiving continuing education as a core task
- implement individual university profiles in a targeted manner
- Ensure transparency and quality of diversity
- Assume responsibility for framework conditions (services, counselling, coaching)

# Second National Bologna Conference (2011): Recommendations

- Further development of teaching quality
- Promote acceptance of the Bachelor's degree on the labour market
- Regulating the transition to the Master's degree more transparently
- Continue the dialogue of the universities with the students
- Facilitating the transition from school to university
- Promote part-time Master's programmes
- Dare to deal with diversity
- Simplification of the common structural guidelines of the Länder
- Promoting student mobility by improving the recognition of academic achievements

# Round Table Engineering



# Economics Round Table

## First focus topic

Transition to university / introductory phase of studies

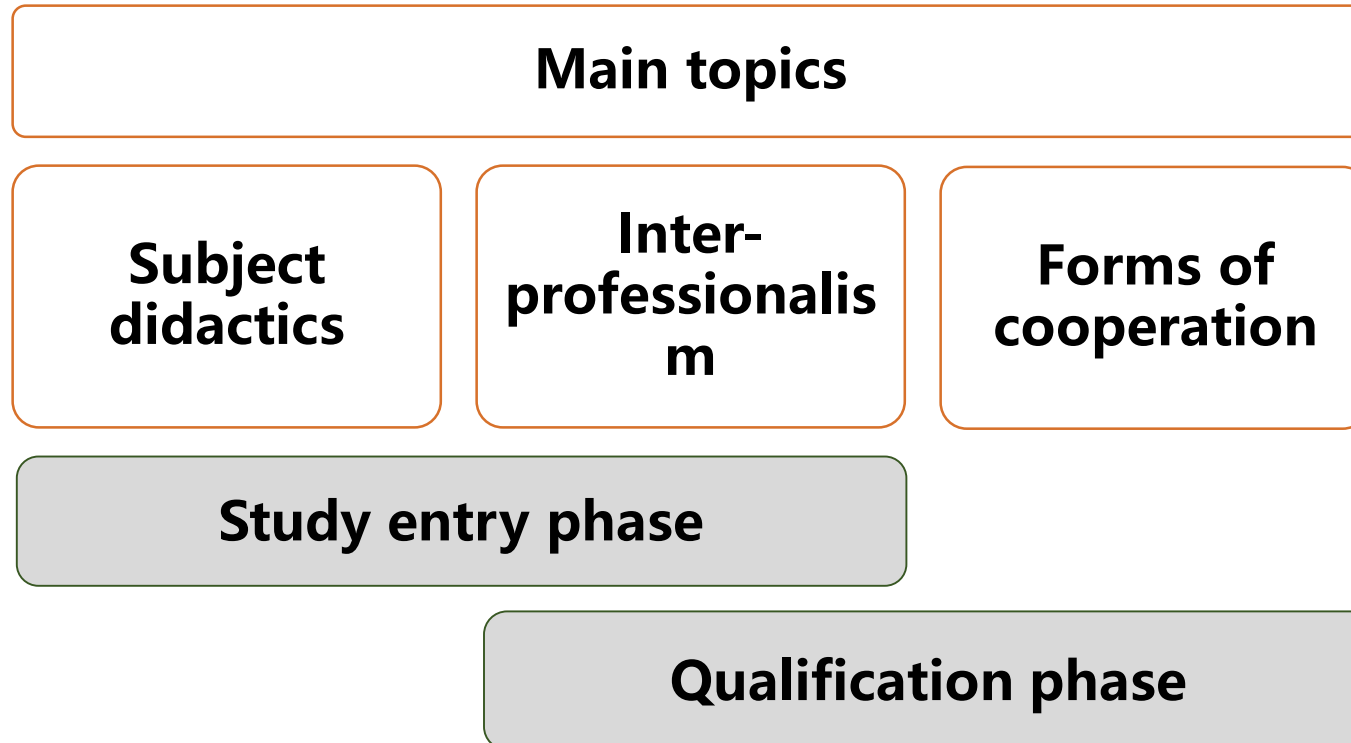
## Goals

- **Raising awareness of** the increased importance of the study entry phase
- **Supporting** higher education institutions in the development of a concept for the design of the study entry phase
- **Promoting** activating teaching and learning formats

## Measures

Creation of a common "Handout for the introductory phase of studies in economics".

# Round Table Medicine & Health Sciences



# Round Table Recognition

## Main topics

**International and national recognition  
(across universities or change of subject)**

**Level of  
knowledge of  
the Lisbon  
Convention in  
HEI**

**Institutional  
recognition  
procedures  
and  
recognition  
criteria**

**Learning  
outcome  
orientation**

Consideration of legal foundations and  
professional cultural aspects of recognition