

Evaluation des Departments für Angewandte Genetik und Zellbiologie 2021



Executive Summary

Für das vom Rektorat beauftragte und von der Stabsstelle Qualitätsmanagement begleitete Verfahren zur Evaluation des Departments für Angewandte Genetik und Zellbiologie (DAGZ), das mit März 2020 eröffnet wurde, konnten, entsprechend den einzelnen Fachdisziplinen des Departments, ausgewiesene Expert*innen von Universitäten in Bonn, Gent und Utrecht gewonnen werden.

Zu Beginn des Verfahrens, das den Anforderungen des UG 2002 sowie einer Reihe internationaler Standards entspricht, erstellte das Department auf Basis eines Fragebogens sowie departmentspezifischer Kennzahlen einen Rückblick auf die wesentlichen Leistungen der letzten 5 Jahre in den Bereichen Strategie, institutionelle Rahmenbedingungen, Forschung, Lehre, Personal und Third Mission; darüber hinaus wurden Zukunftsperspektiven entwickelt. Dieser Selbstevaluationsbericht wurde neben einer Reihe weiterer Unterlagen den Gutachtern zur Verfügung gestellt. Im Rahmen ihres Besuchs im März 2021, der online durchgeführt werden musste, führten die Peers Gespräche mit dem Rektorat, der Departmentleitung, den Institutsleiter*innen sowie Vertreter*innen des Mittelbaus, Doktorand*innen, nichtwissenschaftlichen Mitarbeiter*innen und Studierenden, auf deren Basis ein Evaluierungsbericht erstellt wurde. Diesem Bericht folgte eine schriftliche Stellungnahme des Departments und ein abschließender Workshop mit dem Head of Peers.

Die Ergebnisse der Evaluation in Form von Einschätzungen und Empfehlungen wurden von den Peers folgendermaßen zusammengefasst:

The evaluation panel observed an overall high standard of research in the DAGZ. The research achievements and the quality of the publications have contributed to a very good reputation of the scientists, with some being internationally recognized leaders in their respective research fields. The department has steadily published the research findings in peer-reviewed international journals. The scientists have been able to attract considerable external funding and they have been successful in training young researchers over the evaluation period. Despite the general high quality of the research the quality of research and the research output is heterogeneous across the different research groups. It is important that research projects address functional analysis and causal relationships and do not stay on a descriptive level. The research would benefit from small groups actively seeking scientific co-operations to form larger units with common research topics. The excellent technological skills in some research groups could be utilised to further strengthen science in the DAGZ and to create visibility within the university. It is important to encourage and facilitate a multi-level scientific approach, including co-operations with units outside of the DAGZ which focus on more applied research questions.

To maintain the good quality of research sufficient funding opportunities need to be made available for basic research. The peers suggest structural discussions between research groups, the department and the university on the most appropriate ways to ensure the highest quality of research and to encourage networking and strategic planning of research. Multi-group grants might be suitable instruments to foster coherent research strategies and collaborations between research groups within the BOKU and on the national and

international level. Incentives and appropriate coaching and training infrastructure should be in place to encourage young researchers to apply for highly prestigious grants. In general, the research environment of all institutes allows for good research performance. The quality of the infrastructure in terms of experimental equipment is good and in some cases excellent with the exception of the plant growth facilities which urgently need to be completely re-organized and renewed. Access to state-of-the-art plant growth facilities is an essential prerequisite for competitive research in plant science. It is also necessary to regularly replace out-dated equipment to maintain an attractive research environment. Predictability and transparency of research careers needs to be supported by the department and the university. Clear career perspectives need to be developed. Future challenges include how to implement a transparent and realistic tenure track system and how to secure funding for careers of young principle investigators. Although recruiting of scientific staff within the university has been very successful in several cases, international and nation-wide recruitment should be encouraged on all levels including postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers and faculty staff. Restricting staff recruitment to the university/department may potentially lead to a lack of innovation and creativity and make science within the DAGZ internationally less competitive and attractive in the long run.

Teaching of the DAGZ is centrally important for the BOKU, as the DAGZ provides basic teaching in molecular biology which is not only the core teaching of the DAGZ but it is also essential for departments with an applied research direction. The teaching appears to be well organized and highly appreciated by the students. Support systems such as doctoral programmes exist. It needs to be ensured that in most cases students have a study and research plan and that their progress is assessed at strategic intervals. A problem seems to be in some cases to distribute the teaching in a way that also young principle investigators can participate to get the necessary teaching experience for their habilitation.

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