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Organisation and Tasks
of the Leibniz Institutes' Scientific Advisory Boards

Within the Leibniz Association, quality assurance of scientific concepts and outcomes is of the greatest importance. It is achieved on three levels: by internal measures taken by the institutes themselves, through consultations and evaluations conducted by the Scientific Advisory Boards and User Advisory Boards, and through the Senate's external evaluations of Leibniz Institutes.

The Senate of the Leibniz Association expresses its gratitude to the Scientific Advisory Boards and User Advisory Boards for their significant contribution to effective and efficient quality assurance by providing unpaid, continuous and sustainable guidance to Leibniz Institutes.

Central tasks of the Leibniz Institutes' Scientific Advisory Boards

- The Scientific Advisory Board of a Leibniz Institute advises its management on developing its scientific concept and strategic planning, in building national as well as international collaboration, staff development and promotion of junior researchers, as well as quality assurance.

- It assists the institute's supervisory body in the acquisition of management staff and in important decisions on the future development of the institute.

- It issues comments on the draft programme budget and makes recommendations on the use of resources.

- It conducts an audit between two external evaluations to assess the overall concept as well as the scientific research, service and advisory activities of the individual work units.

Organisation and procedures

- Status and mission of the Scientific Advisory Board should be clearly defined in the organisational regulations of each Leibniz Institute.

- The chairperson of the Advisory Board is to be represented in the supervisory body of the Leibniz Institute in an advisory capacity.

Composition of the advisory board

- Members of the Scientific Advisory Board should be internationally-recognised, active scientists and academics from Germany and abroad who are able to exercise this role free from conflicts of interest.

- The composition of the board should reflect the scientific core areas and, if applicable, the user environment of the institute. Additional User Advisory Boards can be instituted if necessary.

Appointment procedures for board members

- Advisory board members are to be appointed by the Supervisory Board.

- The management of the institute and members of the Scientific Advisory Board or the User Advisory Board should be invited to make proposals for appointments of new board members.

- Depending on the size and scope of the institute's work, an Advisory Board is to comprise between six and twelve members.

- As a rule, the members of the Scientific Advisory Board or the User Advisory Board are appointed for a limited four-year term. It should be possible to re-elect each member for one additional term.

- To safeguard the wealth of experience represented on the Advisory Board for the long term, the board members' terms should overlap so that new board members can benefit from the expertise of seasoned members.

Board meetings

- The advisory boards of the Leibniz Institutes should meet at least once a year and record their findings and recommendations in summary minutes of the meeting. The board meetings can be conducted in German or English.

- Depending on the composition of the advisory boards, the minutes may be written in German or in English. As a rule, audit reports should be available in German. English is a good choice, however, if the external evaluation is to be conducted in this language, since the summary minutes of the board meetings as well as the audit report will become part of the written evaluation document as attachments.

Information on the audit

OBJECTIVE

The audit is to give the Scientific Advisory Board an overall impression of the Leibniz Institute. The objective is to provide the management as well as the supervisory body with guidance and recommendations for strategy and future development.

TIMING

The audit should be conducted at a point in time that is neither too soon after the previous evaluation nor too far ahead of the next external evaluation. If an external evaluation is scheduled early, only three or four years after the previous one, the advisory board is to accompany the Leibniz Institute according to the individual situation, which might mean that a comprehensive audit is not necessary at all.

IMPLEMENTATION

In preparing and conducting the audit, the advisory board should follow the basic principles for the evaluation of Leibniz Institutes (see 'Evaluation Procedure Basic Principles', Appendix 3).

- Leibniz Institutes should consult with the Advisory Board to provide basic information in the form of written documentation (if applicable, in electronic format).

- It is advisable to hold talks with the management and employees in the various work units to further elaborate on this information. Convenient formats are short presentations or poster sessions.

- Any evaluations of individual work units that have been documented at earlier advisory board meetings can be used and incorporated into the audit report.

- If the institute has a User Advisory Board, it is recommended to take its assessments into account, as well.

AUDIT REPORT

The Advisory Board should create an audit report that documents opinions and recommendations for the future development and implementation of the overall concept, strategic planning as well as the performances of the individual work units. For this purpose, the Advisory Board could follow the outline of the 'Guidelines for Creating an Audit Report' below.

The Advisory Board should first submit the audit report to the management, which will add any necessary comments, and then forward it to the Supervisory Board.

Guidelines for Creating an
Audit Report by the Scientific Advisory Board

1. General concept

[Assessment of the institute's overall concept and performance beyond subdivisions, development since the last evaluation and strategic work planning for the coming years]

2. Controlling and quality management

[Assessment of facilities, third-party strategy/status, publication strategy, organisational and operational structure and internal quality management]

3. Human resources

[Assessment of management's work, promotion of post-doctoral staff and doctoral candidates, indication on non-scientific staff, assessment of gender equality and work-life balance]

4. Cooperation and environment

[Assessment of collaboration with universities (especially with regard to joint appointments), with Leibniz institutes and other institutions, information on institute's status on its international environment, if applicable]

5. Subdivisions

[Assessment of performance as well as development and work planning for each subdivision]

The report should be four to six pages long.

These guidelines are based on "The Leibniz Association Senate Evaluation Procedure - Basic Principles, attachment 2: Items and Criteria for the evaluation of institutions in the Leibniz Association" (as amended on 27 November 2018; update of "Guidelines" on 15 May 2019).