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Struggling with perception of tracer study results within the university: a never ending story?

Experiences from University of Kassel

1. KOAB – Graduate Survey Cooperation Project

2. University of Kassel – Facts & Figures

3. How do we report and distribute our results (in Kassel)?

4. Problems of distribution…?

5. Examples of other HEIs

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KOAB

- Cooperation between HEIs & INCHER-Kassel

- About 60 HEIs with ~100.000 graduates p.a.

- Different types of HEIs (traditional „old" Universities vs. modern Universities of Applied Sciences)

- Quality management & Research

Graduation → **First Survey** → **Second Survey**

after 1 – 2 years   after 3 more years
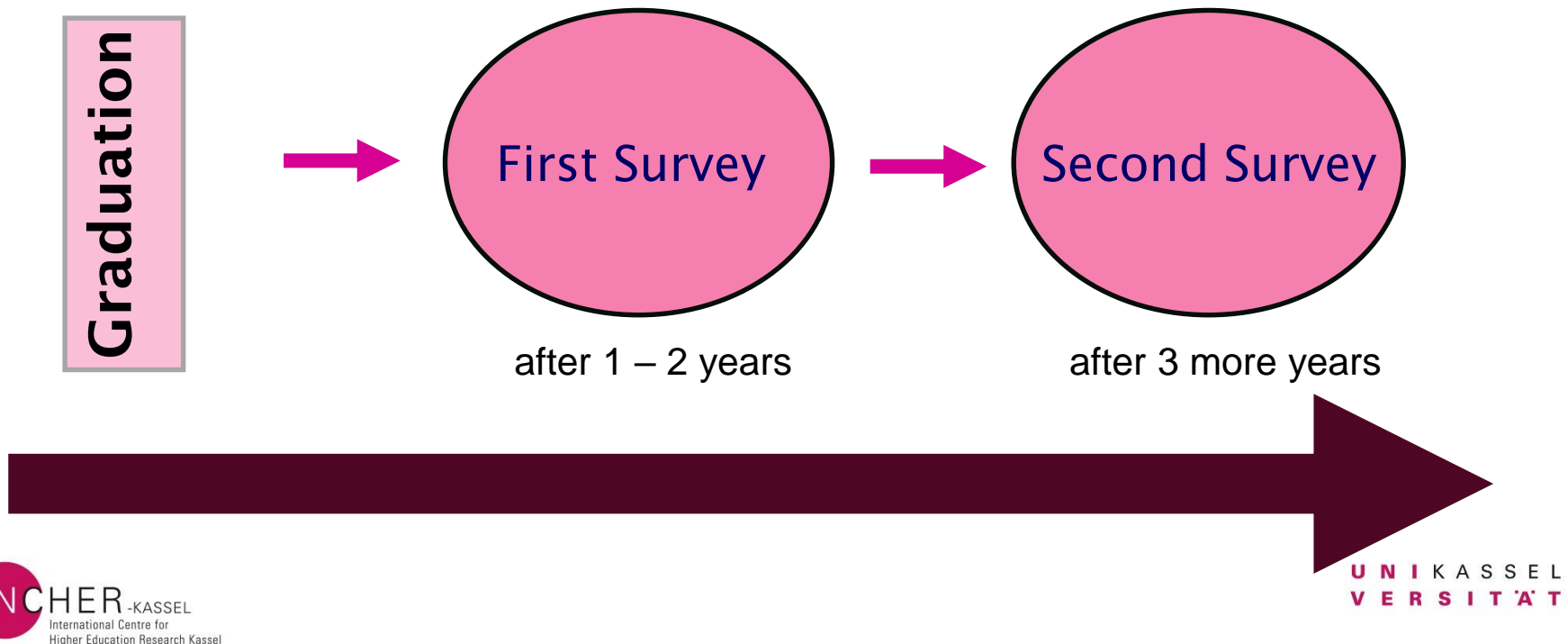
KOAB: HEIs are partners in a Joint Research Project

➢ Joint research
- HEIs and INCHER-Kassel develop the core questionnaire and the methodology together
- Every HEI has its own questionnaire
- Every HEI publishes the results of the own tracer study
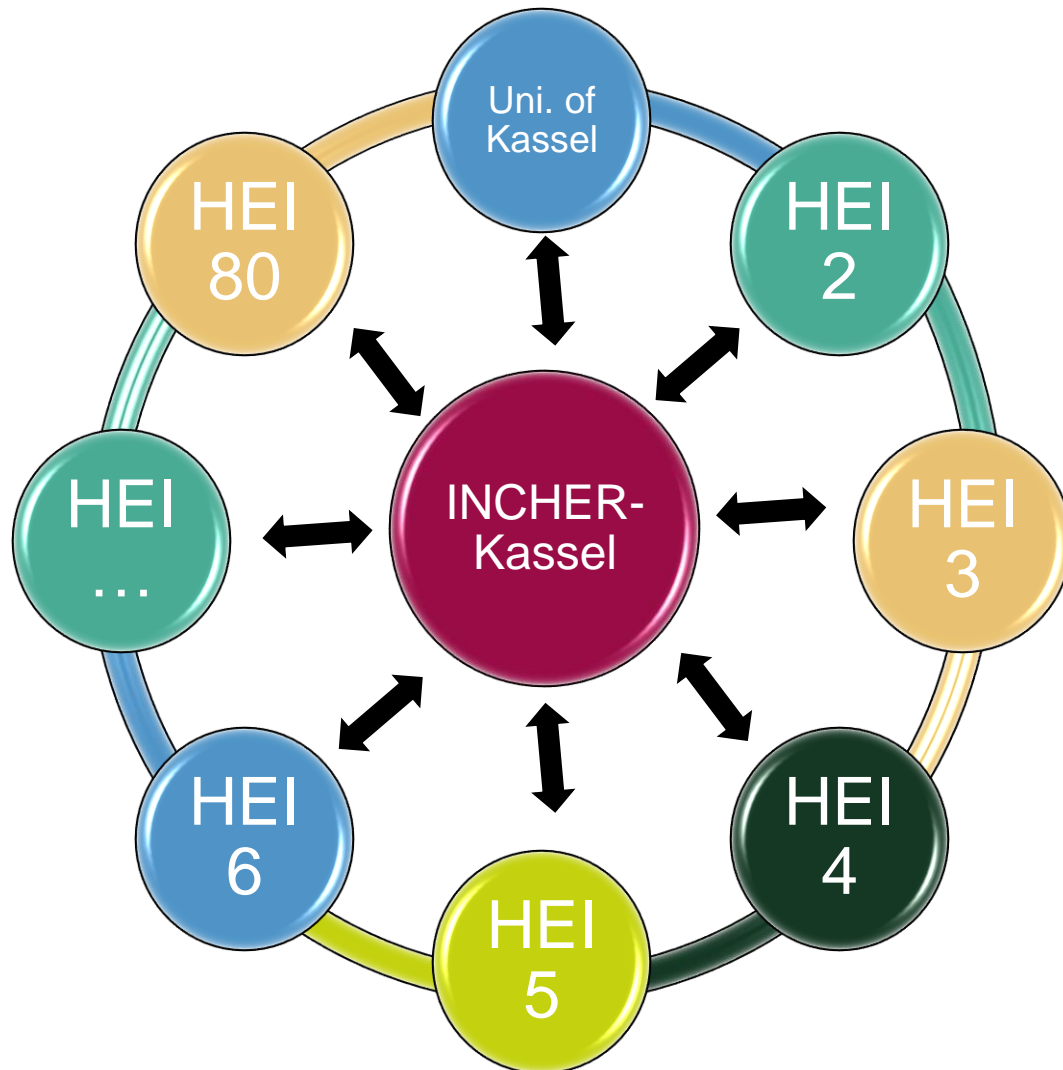- INCHER-Kassel publishes general results

➢ Service
- Central data processed by INCHER-Kassel – joint data base
- Every HEI gets customized table reports (about 500 pages)
- Benchmarking according to the needs of the HEIs – no ranking

➢ Workshops
- INCHER-Kassel provides training for HEI staff
- 4 workshops per year
- 1 conference per year

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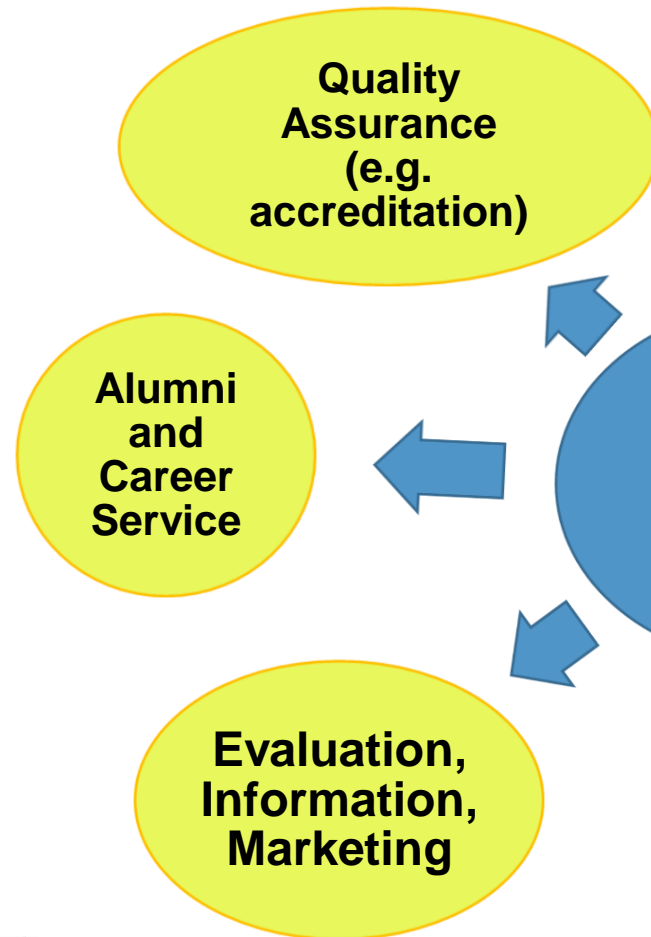**KOAB: The New Type of Graduate Surveys: the Network Approach (KOAB)**

## KOAB: Institutional graduate surveys in a network approach

- All graduates from one HEI (full survey)

- Combination of a national monitor and a feedback instrument for HEI (e.g. for accreditation procedures)

- Relevant for individual institutions (reports for individual institutions, study program level breakdown of results)

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KOAB: The Bridge Concept – Institutional Development and Research
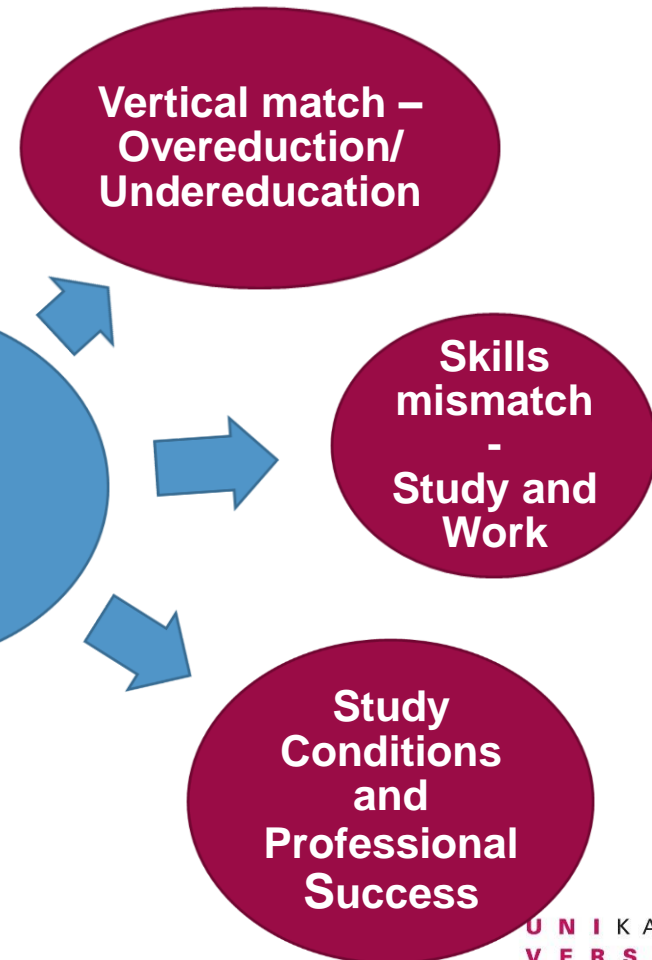
University of Kassel: Facts and Figures

- Established in 1971 with a modern concept (focus on practical skills within study programms)

- 24.000 students & about 3.500 graduates p.a.

- About 3.500 staff

- 11 faculties („full university" except of law and medicine)

- 11 % international students

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University of Kassel: Tracer Study

- Started in 2006 with the 2007/08 cohort

- Annualy conducted

- About 3.500 graduates p.a. in the first survey & about 800 graduates p.a. in the second survey

- Online questionnaire in german and english, own questionnaires for teaching degrees and for PhDs

- Up to 4 reminders sent by letter and/or email

- Strong effort on reaching all graduates (check the address data)

- Reponse rate ~ 50 % (first survey), ~ 80 % (second survey)

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University of Kassel: Results

- Annual general report (short & simple)

- Annual table reports for each faculty (by study programmes)

- „Special" table reports on demand (e.g. by gender, by mobility, ….)

- Short summary (about 10 pages: overview on general results) will be published online (for external use, www.uni-kassel.de/go/unikab)

- Presentations (e.g. Dean of Teaching Meeting…)

- Articles in regional newspapers & scientific journals

Perception depends on

- Attitude of the faculty and the administration

- Statistic skills of the receiver

- Willingness to measure „quality" of study and teaching by (quantitative) evaluations

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University of Kassel: Problems

- Not all are interested

- They don't read the reports or can't interpret the tables

- Faculties' staff has a high fluctuation

- They only need figures for official reports

- Study programmes with few gradutes can't be evaluated

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University of Kassel: Why do we have problems?

- Some people are not interested (because of lack of internal motivation for tracer studies)

- All faculties are forced to participate (may result in lack of internal motivation for tracer studies)

- Faculties with no culture of evaluation don't accept the methods

- Missing staff within the faculties

- Missing interest within service centres

- Some results are used for political reasons by the adminstration; „bad" results will sometimes be concealed

- Results/Reports address mostly staff of the university, not the students or graduates themselves

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How other HEIs in KOAB distribute their results I

- Internal presentations for administration & faculties

- General & special reports (for internal and external use)

- Publications in internal journals

- Publications in scientific journals

- Articels in (local) newspapers and journals

- Publications published online (for external use also)

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How do other HEIs in KOAB distribute their results II

Way of Use	Uni 1	Uni 2	Uni 3	Uni 4	Uni 5	Uni 6
Special Reports (Administration)	X		2x			
Attached to QS/QM (in the future)	X	X	X		X	X
Accreditation	X	X	X		X	X
Advertisement / External presentation	2x	2x	2x			X
Service Centers (e.g. Career Service)	X			2x		2x
Special reports (Faculties)	X	X		3x	X	
Usage of date for academic research		X		X		
Benchmarking (Ranking, Comparison in future)		X	X	X		X
Frequency of Use	7	7	7	7	3	6

How do other HEIs in KOAB distribute their results III

Structural setting of tracer study projects

- Institute (e.g. for statistics) / department or faculty / administration department

Staff

- Working time varies from about 10 % up to 100 % for tracer studies

- Some have statistical skills, some are administrative staff, some are reseachers (with different topics)

→ All this has an impact on the way of distribution of tracer study results

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What can we do to improve the perception?

- HEIs can invest in human and financial resources

- Results should be reported quickly and often

- Reports should be adapted to target group

- Including the stakeholders (faculties, administration, students, graduates, service center…) increases commitment

- Reports should have specific topics and questions (to be interesting)

- Critical or provocative interpretations can increase attention

- …

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