

# „richtig einsteigen.“

Engaging Faculty and Central Units in Creating an Integrated First Year Experience



GEFÖRDERT VOM



Bundesministerium  
für Bildung  
und Forschung

# Initial Situation

- Bielefeld University traditionally did not have a first year programme.
- There were some isolated offers for first year students in some departments.
- Most of the existing offers were made by students and aimed for social integration.
- Changes in the general conditions led to the idea of creating a university-wide integrated first year programme.

# What Changed?

- The total number of people attending university is steadily growing. (Number of students at Bielefeld University in summer 2011: 16.826 students, in winter 2014: 22.279)
- At the end of the first year only around half of the students achieve the expected amount of ECTS-credits.
- Around 20% of the students achieve less than half of the expected ECTS-credits.
- In some academic subjects a high percentage of the students who failed to pass their exams at the end of the first semester doesn't come back for the second semester.

# How comes?

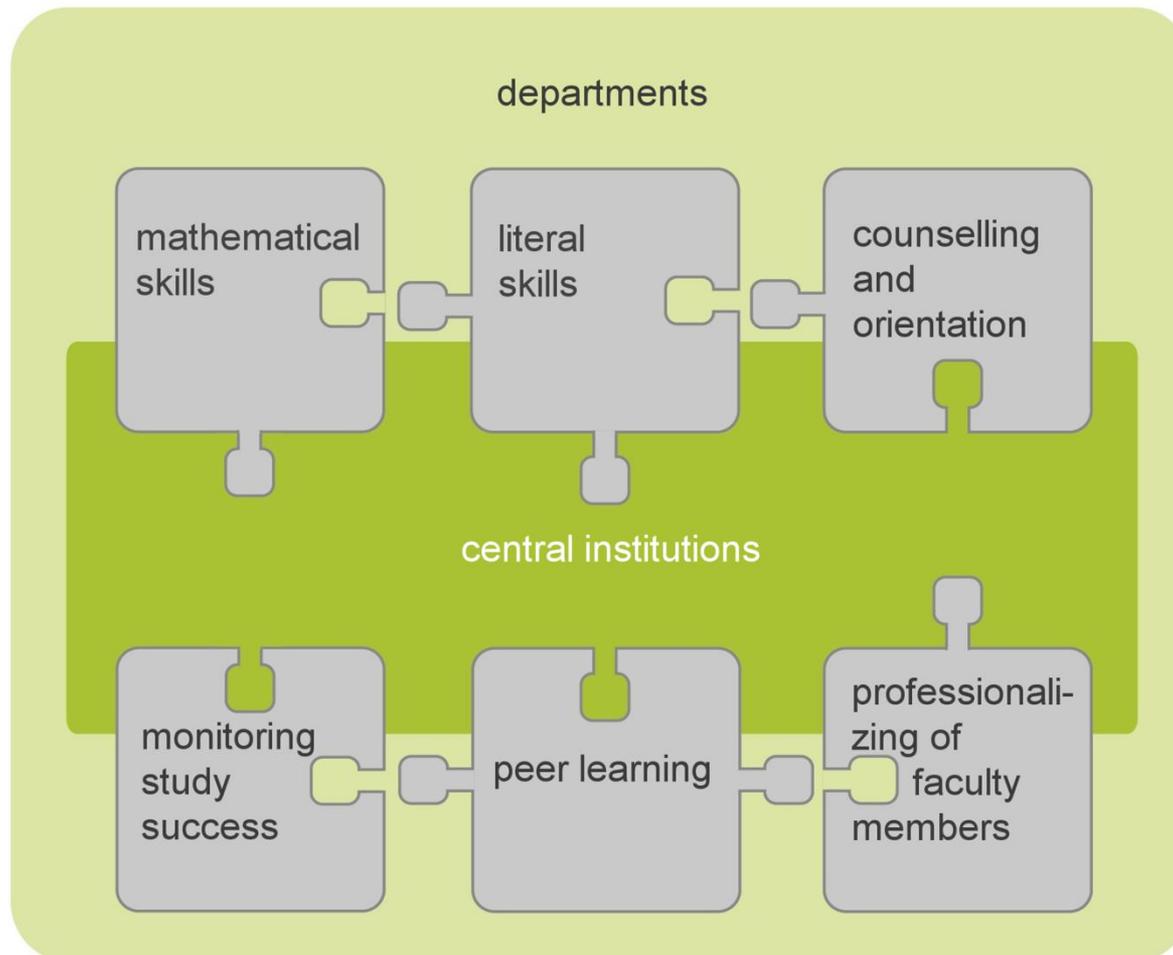
- Studies, student surveys and interviews with teaching staff indicate that students are lacking basic academic skills, e.g. in text comprehension, reflectivity or the application of mathematical operations to new problems.
- In subjects like maths, natural sciences, economics, sociology and psychology many students fail to meet the mathematical requirements of the first year. Teaching staff complain about students' decreasing mathematical abilities. Students are aware of their weaknesses but don't know how to overcome them.
- In writing-intensive subjects, students are unaware of their deficiencies and when they become aware of them they often feel that they missed their window of opportunity.

# The Challenges

- How to empower and motivate the students to overcome their initial study problems at university?
- How to avoid (additional) remedial lessons and isolated teaching of general academic skills aiming for sustainable and structural solutions?
- The responsibility is not only with the students: how to engage faculty members in the endeavour?

# Group Work

# Bielefeld's First Year Programme



# Literal Skills

Faculty members develop and implement new concepts for writing-intensive teaching during the first year. Studies show that whenever students write continuously with guidance and active (peer-) feedback they benefit in two ways:

- professionally, gaining a deeper understanding of the content and
- personally, acquiring reading and writing skills.

Students experience writing as a learning instrument.

## Participating departments:

Biology • Educational Science • History • Health Sciences • Sports Science • Philosophy • Law • Sociology • Linguistics and Literary Studies



# Mathematical Skills

Mathematics play a crucial role in many subjects and enable a successful start of higher education. For this reason, the mathematical skills of the first year students are strengthened in preparatory and introductory courses as well as in supplemental courses offered throughout the semester. The aim is to facilitate the application of mathematical methods in the disciplines.

## Participating departments:

Biology • Chemistry • Mathematics • Health Sciences • Physics • Psychology • Sports • Technology • Business Administration and Economics



# Counselling and Orientation

Specially designated counsellors for first year students are available as contact persons in the different disciplines.

These counsellors can help students with all things concerning their studies and social life.

In this way, students are oriented from the very beginning in order to allow for an effective learning experience in the long run.

## Participating departments:

Biology • Chemistry • Educational Science • History  
• Health Sciences • Linguistics and Literary Studies  
• Physics • Psychology • Law • Business  
Administration and Economics

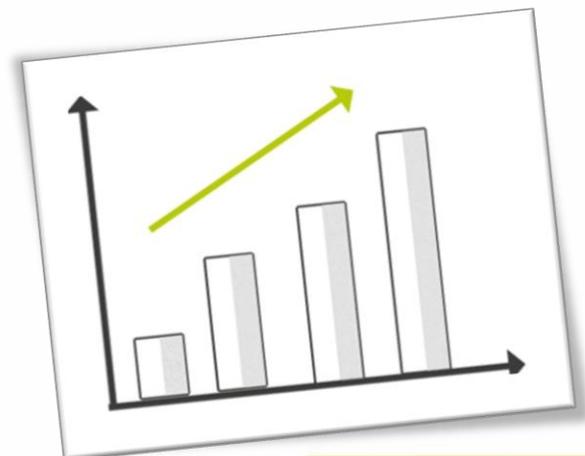


# Monitoring Study Success

Analyzing study courses and students' biographies reveal necessary actions and interventions enabling the university to react on different levels: from adapting modules to rethinking career possibilities on the level of individual departments or even the university as a whole.

The focus lies on the analyses of dropout rates, changes of disciplines or universities and the period of time spent in university.

Additionally, the university runs analyses on institutional and personal reasons for success or failure to actualize career goals.



# Peer Learning

The peer learning teams cooperate with a group of approx. 25 student tutors creating innovative services by students for students. These services can be situated either on a central level in the Centre for Teaching and Learning or directly in the different disciplines. Thus, students learn to assume responsibility for their own learning and they become more aware of their own strengths.

Peer learning contributes in an important measure to the social integration of the students in their academic communities.



# Professionalizing of Faculty Members

Study quality and success depend heavily on teaching quality. Professionally designed teaching enables students to achieve good learning results – and facilitates an effective entry in university life.

The continuous education courses and counselling offered for faculty members are being reviewed and extended with special attention to the needs of first year students.

Additionally, new concepts are created for the inplacement of new faculty members giving them systematic support when adapting to their new role and functions at Bielefeld University.



# Discussion

# Bielefeld's First Year Programme

