

HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL

Meeting of 27 February 2020

**Different types of higher education institution:
Differences between ‘tier-one universities’ and ‘tier-one colleges’
and between ‘universities of applied sciences’ and ‘UAS colleges’
Higher Education Council Information Sheet**

1. On 18 November 2016, the Higher Education Council endorsed the reasoning and proposals put forth by the Swiss Conference of Rectors of Higher Education Institutions (swissuniversities) with regard to types of higher education institutions in its document entitled ‘*Merkmale der Hochschultypen: aktueller Stand der Diskussionen*’¹ (see attached). Drafted on 24 October 2016, this document provides an overview of the current state of discussions on the salient features that enable the three main types of higher education institution in Switzerland to be distinguished from one another. The Higher Education Council also decided on that occasion that there was no need to specify any further features of Swiss higher education institution. It then confirmed this initial position at its meeting held on 27 February 2020.
2. At its meeting of 27 February 2020, the Higher Education Council confirmed and retained the ‘narrow range’ criterion mentioned in the aforementioned swissuniversities document (no. 1 on the distinction between tier-one universities and tier-one colleges and between universities of applied sciences and UAS colleges):

‘A tier-one college or UAS college is characterised as such by its ‘narrow range’ whether it be in terms of the disciplines/themes covered, the qualifications awarded or both areas.’

3. In the interests of further clarification, the Higher Education Council specifies that in the areas mentioned in no. 2 of the swissuniversities document:
 - **‘Narrow range of disciplines covered’:**
The ‘narrow range of disciplines covered’ by a tier-one college or UAS college may be determined by a limited number of fields of study and areas of specialisation offered (based on the FSO’s SHIS Course Catalogue²).
 - **‘Narrow range of themes covered’:**
The ‘narrow range of themes covered’ by a tier-one college or UAS college may be determined by the fact that they are highly specialised in a given area of activity and heavily focussed on a specific occupational field (e.g. management training).

¹ https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fileadmin/swissuniversities/Dokumente/Empfehlungen_und_Best_Practices/20160925_Merkmale_der_Hochschultypen_StandderDiskussion.pdf

² See Federal Statistical Office (FSO) - Swiss Higher Education Information System (SHIS) – Course Catalogue

Tier-one universities: <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildungswissenschaft/nomenklaturen/fkatuni.assetdetail.7166845.html>;

UAS/UITE: <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildungswissenschaft/nomenklaturen/fkatfn.assetdetail.7767385.html>.

- **'Narrow range of qualifications awarded':**

The 'narrow range of qualifications awarded' by a tier-one college or UAS college may be determined by the fact that they do not necessarily offer the full range of possible higher education qualifications (e.g. offering only a Master's degree or PhD or only a Bachelor's and Master's degree).