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**Abstract**

Governance is a means for realising institutional goals and in an ideal world should enable the institution to respond to the demands of the political environment by regulating its internal affairs accordingly. In the case of universities, not only is that environment increasingly differentiated but so also is the ability of universities to access it. Changes in state funding arrangements, accountability mechanisms, the contribution of the private sector, and the public definition of university education have placed numerous and varied pressures on institutions. Yet there is a studied reluctance by institutions to accept that their ability to respond to these pressures is equally variable, that they should tailor their ambitions to their capacities, and that their internal governance should be adapted using the principle of fitness for purpose. In the main, this is because the dominant ideological themes of higher education do not support the idea of distinct university functions of equal status. Rather, they encourage the erroneous belief that all universities are homogeneous in their functions ? or, at least, that all have the potential to be homogeneous. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)