

ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY

EVALUATION REPORT

June 2011

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of istanbul Bilgi University. The evaluation took place between March and June 2011.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme [IEP] is an independent membership service of the European University Association [EUA] that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture.

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international perspective
- · A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and the effectiveness of strategic management
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision making and strategic management, as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a 'fitness for (and of) purpose' approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does it know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 istanbul Bilgi University and the national and international context

The Turkish higher education sector is expanding rapidly. Candidates for the national university entrance examination have tripled since 1980 and now stand at over 1.5m. The participation rate of 39.2% in 2005 (including distance education) is planned to rise to 45.7% in 2015 and to 65% in 2025, when student numbers will reach nearly 3.4m. In a measure designed to expand the catchment, YÖK, the National Higher Education Council, has adopted the so-called 30+ policy, which allows citizens of over 30 years of age to apply for admission without being required to sit the national university entrance examination.

¹ See Bekir S. Gür, PhD, Abdullah Çavuşoğlu, PhD, Burhanettin Uysal, PhD, *The Future of Higher Education and Science in Turkey*, at www.educationdev.net/educationdev/Docs/Turkey Presentation.docx

The salient features of Turkey's Ninth Development Plan², which covers the period 2007-13, include boosting research and innovation, particularly in the private sector, increasing the number of researchers, and promoting collaborative research and technology transfer between higher education, business and industry. Priority is given to the fields of nano- and bio-technology, health science, energy, defence and space. In addition, policies concerning lifelong learning, employability and professional qualifications are to be developed in concert. The private HE sector will expand, while student contributions to cost-sharing will rise. The Plan envisages performance-based quality assurance systems operating at institutional level, together with administrative and financial autonomy established in line with principles of transparency and accountability. In addition, special emphasis is to be placed on foreign language acquisition.

Turkey is a signatory of the Bologna Process and has signed and ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention. In the face of the slow progress of its EU accession negotiations and aware of the importance of Turkey's geo-strategic position between Europe and the natural gas suppliers to the East, the current government has determined to raise Turkey's regional profile and to increase its influence. In this new perspective, and with the planned expansion of HE, the opportunities for international student and staff mobility and other collaborative activities will rise accordingly. Bilgi is well placed in this respect; it is an active participant in the ERASMUS programme and has been a member of the Laureate International Universities Network since 2006.

As a Foundation University, Bilgi operates on a non-profit basis in the growing non-state HE sector. In common with all Turkish universities, its autonomy is still considerably constrained by the regulatory practices put in place by YÖK. However, two relevant developments are in prospect. It is possible that YÖK, increasingly burdened by micro-managing 144 universities, may relax its centralised control. It is also possible that draft legislation to permit for-profit private universities will be introduced in the near future. At the time of writing (June 2011) a general election looms and the fate of these policy orientations cannot be predicted.

1.3 The Self Evaluation Process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a group of eleven persons, chaired by Prof Dr Beyza Oba and consisting of representatives of the range of Faculties and Schools, the Bologna Office, the Rector's office and the Students Union. The Students Union, however, chose to withdraw at an early stage. For reasons which are taken up later in this report (see in particular sections 3, 4 and 5), the group was unable to provide full answers to the key questions set out in para.1.1 above.

The Self-Evaluation Report nevertheless presented aspects of Bilgi's past and present situations in considerable detail and with some qualitative commentary. The group had conducted a SWOT analysis, the results of which were incorporated into the text; these constituted a frank appraisal made on the basis of the limited

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² Published by the Turkish Prime Ministry's State Planning Organisation, 2006

information available to it. Regarding the future, the Report could only be aspirational rather than programmatic.

1.4 The evaluation team (henceforth 'the Team')

The Self-Evaluation Report of istanbul Bilgi University, along with the appendices, was sent to the Team in January 2011. The visits to the University took place in March and May/June, respectively. Between the visits Bilgi provided additional documentation at the Team's request.

The Team consisted of:

- Professor Sokratis Katsikas, former rector of the University of the Aegean, Greece (chair)
- Mr Christian Hemmestad Bjerke, quality assurance expert, European Students' Union, Norway
- Professor Áine Hyland, former vice-president, University College Cork, Ireland
- Professor Dieter Timmermann, former rector of the University of Bielefeld, Germany
- Dr Howard Davies, EUA, Belgium (coordinator)

The Team expresses its particular thanks to former rector Professor Dr Halil Güven, who first requested that Bilgi be evaluated by the IEP, and to acting rector Professor Dr Remzi Sanver, who took office between the Team's two visits and maintained the commitment to IEP. Both extended a very warm welcome and made sure that they and all their colleagues were available for consultation and discussion. Professor Dr Beyza Oba, ably assisted by Selin Coşan, liaised with the Team throughout the whole evaluation process; they oversaw the drafting of the Self-Evaluation Report, organised the schedules of each visit, supplied supplementary documentation, and ensured – with the help of the efficient and courteous drivers, Orhan inceoz and Göksel Zengin – that the logistics were impeccable. The Team is very grateful to them. Finally, to all colleagues (internal and external) who kindly gave of their time and shared their insights and perspectives, the Team offers its warmest thanks and best wishes.

2. Mission and vision

Historically, Bilgi has a strong track record in the social sciences and in the humanities. From its foundation in 1996, it committed itself to the propagation of democratic values and human rights, to critical thought and to effective intervention in the social fabric of its multicultural environment. It attracted a cadre of highly qualified and opinion-leading academic staff from the radical intelligentsia. This ethos, epitomised by the controversial conference on 'Ottoman Armenians during the decline of the Empire', held at Bilgi in 2005, still prevails. The Team discussed the social science curricula with Faculty members and heard accounts of Bilgi's work with migrant Kurdish and Roma populations, as well as with the local indigenous poor.

The discussions soon revealed feelings of deep anxiety on the part of the staff committed to delivering the core elements of Bilgi's historic mission. Not only would recent developments – and notably the admission of Bilgi to the Laureate International Universities Network – deflect energies from addressing local and national problems, they also risked undermining Bilgi's reputation and damaging its recruitment potential accordingly. The anxiety of the staff was compounded by their uncertainty regarding the strategic intentions of the new management. The opening of a Faculty of Engineering and a School of Health Sciences and the discontinuance (permanent or temporary, staff did not know) of the degree programme in Political Economy and Social Philosophy suggested a shift in focus that had not been officially confirmed.

In the opinion of the former Rector and the Acting Rector, affiliation to the Laureate Network did indeed bring new dimensions to Bilgi's work: specifically, priorities set on internationalisation and on student employability, both of which were consistent with national and institutional commitments to the Bologna Process. These, however, did not imply the abandonment of the historic mission.

The Team also had the pleasure of meeting the Chair of the Board of Trustees, Mr Rifat Saricaoğlu, and four of his co-trustees. The Chair spoke frankly of a number of areas in which strategic decisions had to be made: whether to aim for inclusion in the top tier of Turkish universities, which would require the rapid development of a research capacity and a broadening of the course portfolio to include medicine; whether to expand elsewhere in Turkey; whether to consolidate on a single site in Istanbul. He stressed that three fundamental objectives were axiomatic: to be financially sound; to internationalise Bilgi's operations; and to demonstrate a high level of social responsibility.

The Team reached the conclusion that – at the level of Board of Trustees and senior management – there is indeed a clearly articulated vision of how Bilgi will evolve in the short and medium terms. This clarity nevertheless contrasts with the inability of the Self-Evaluation Report to specify 'how Bilgi must change in order to improve'. The team formed the view that such was the gap in awareness – and therefore also

of purpose – that the objectives formulated at the highest level, apparently realistic and achievable in their own terms, could not be delivered without prior discussion with, and the prior consent of, the academic community.

3. Strategic development

In the course of the Teams' two visits, it became apparent that no strategic plan is currently in force. This much was confirmed both by the Self-Evaluation Report, which provided no evidence of its existence, and by the Board of Trustees, which indicated that strategic planning had hitherto gone no further than the production of annual budget plans. Multi-annual planning is now under way – in the Board of Trustees – for the period 2012 to 2016 and a plan is currently being drafted. Unfortunately, by the date of the meeting mentioned above, it had not reached the stage at which it could be copied to the Team for information. The Team did, however, have sight of a list of its main headings; these appeared to delineate a business plan, rather than a full strategic plan focusing on mission-related considerations of course portfolio and of research.

As indicated in the preceding section, the Team was forced to conclude that strategic deliberations have hitherto been essentially top-down and characterised by a lack of transparency, both of process and of content. It found no evidence that the full range of constituencies had been consulted. It met with external stakeholders who uniformly expressed a willingness to participate in the development of strategy, but who had no apparent knowledge of ongoing discussions.

The intention of the Board of Trustees is to share the detail of the 2012-16 Plan with other parties, once it has been agreed by the Board. In the view of the Team, this mode of procedure – if indeed it is put into effect – would be pre-emptive and would risk undermining the morale and collective purpose of staff and of academic staff in particular. A more positive approach is taken by Bologna ministers, who 'fully support staff and student participation in decision-making structures at European, national and institutional levels'³.

- ▶ Bilgi must ensure that its vision and mission are shared by all internal stakeholders
- The strategic planning exercise must involve full participation and engagement of all stakeholders, internal and external

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³ See para.9 of the ministerial Budapest-Vienna declaration on the European Higher Education Area, at http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/2010_conference/documents/Budapest-Vienna_Declaration.pdf

4. Governance

The Team received from the Board of Trustees and from senior management clear explanations of the composition of the Board and of the structural, legal and financial interface between the for-profit Laureate Network and the not-for-profit Bilgi Foundation. In addition, the Self-Evaluation Report provided organisation charts of the management and academic structures, together with details of the composition and remits of the Academic Board, the Executive Board and the various boards established at Faculty level.

It was therefore with some consternation that the Team learnt of the existence – outside the formal governance structures – of a Management Committee, consisting of the Chair of the Board of Trustees and senior managers and exercising significant policy-making and executive power. It was difficult to avoid the conclusion that the operation of the Management Committee effectively excluded the properly constituted bodies from full and constructive involvement in the ongoing business of the University. At the very least, there is substantial room for improvement in internal communications between management and academic staff.

The Team also noted the relatively low level of formal student participation, as well as the even lower level of its actual participation, in the decision-making process. Attempts to remedy this have been made and continue to be made – in terms of student attendance at Board of Trustees meetings, initiatives at Faculty level, and a new on-line forum. At the same time, all the constituencies consulted by the Team were nonetheless sceptical of the students' capacity to move beyond the organisation of social activities and to assume a full role in the strategic planning and quality assurance processes. The Students Union representatives themselves, when consulted, said that they felt excluded; on the other hand, they did not offer a comprehensive and detailed critique of Bilgi's management style and governance structures. A considerable effort will have to be made by all parties if the vicious circle of disempowerment and apathy is to be broken.

The Self-Evaluation Report contained in annex the outline of a 'joint governance' model which promised the inclusion of a wider range of internal stakeholders in consultative and advisory roles, although not with voting rights. The Team welcomed reassurances that discussion of the model would not be discontinued.

- The discussion of joint governance should continue and be resolved
- Internal communication channels between senior management and other members of the academic community should be improved
- Decision-making processes must be made as transparent as possible
- ▶ Effective student representation at all levels of governance must be implemented
- Ways to regularise the operation of the management committee should be explored

5. Financial management

The Team is in no doubt of Bilgi's ability to attract an inflow of capital by donation and endowment. However, the 2010 budget indications which it received showed that 84% of the total outgoings were covered by income from tuition fees. This percentage is high. It suggests an excessive dependence which must, in the interests of the sound financial footing sought by the Board of Trustees, as well as in the context of the volatility caused by the rapid expansion of the Turkish HE system, be reduced by a diversification of revenue streams.

Unfortunately, the Team was not given sight of more than an outline of Bilgi's financial position. It understands that multi-annual full-cost accounting has not historically been Bilgi's practice. Taken in conjunction with the absence of a functioning Strategic Plan, it is therefore unable to express a view on the relative importance and interaction of financial and academic considerations.

Discussions with senior academic staff in the Faculties suggested that they found themselves in the same predicament. The small percentage (4%) of the overall budget which is devolved to Faculties is allocated on a historical basis and is prone to perpetuate inequities. It is not clear how strategic initiatives involving inter-Faculty resource commitments could be accommodated within this methodology. The funds assigned to major new developments, such as new Faculties and Schools, meanwhile, are attributed from above in a manner felt to be seriously lacking in transparency. On the evidence available, the Team is bound to endorse this view. It is clear that participatory governance of the kind envisaged by the Bologna Process cannot be sustained without transparency in financial management. It trusts that the 2012-16 planning frame will create opportunities for its introduction.

- ▶ The budget allocation process must be rendered transparent
- ▶ To reduce dependence on fee income, revenue streams must be diversified

6. Human resource management

The system of human resource management in Bilgi is complex. In the early days, personnel management was essentially a matter of payroll accounting, but, since the advent of Laureate, it has assumed a new designation and a significant role in strategic planning; the head of HR is a member of the Management Committee. The unit now consists of two departments: staff development and recruitment; and salaries. It deals with the employment conditions of administrative staff under new procedures which have been recently centralised. In this area national labour law prevails.

The Self-Evaluation Report gives details of the gender and age breakdown for administrative and academic staff. It identified no particular problem, except in respect of registered disabled employees, where the national minimum requirement is 3% and the Bilgi profile is 2%. However, the Team understands that this is an area in which the HE sector contests the appropriateness of the mechanistic application of quotas.

The HR department has no direct responsibility for the hiring and development of academic staff. This is the responsibility of the Rectorate – and it is the wish of the Rector that it should remain so. Job descriptions are prepared by heads of academic departments, in liaison with the Dean and the Rectorate; appointments are made in line with YÖK regulations. As regards support for the teaching staff, Bilgi gives financial assistance for conference attendance and sabbaticals, as well as to staff registered for higher degrees in other institutions. In part, this latter measure is to address YÖK's requirement that all new courses be staffed by at least three PhD-holders.

These forms of support for academic staff focus on the level of individual qualifications, as well as on research outputs and the collective high profile of the Bilgi professorate. They do not directly address teaching ability, for which there is no structured development programme. The Team understands that a performance review system is being contemplated and that it will use as performance indicators publications, student satisfaction surveys and the take-up of courses expressed in student numbers. Bilgi is in the process of setting up new quality assurance mechanisms (see section 11 below) and the Team considers that any new staff appraisal procedures must be embedded within them.

▶ Academic performance review, when introduced, must be aligned with quality assurance

7. Learning and teaching

The absence of an integrated institutional approach to support for learning and teaching has been mentioned above. The peer support cited by academic staff undoubtedly exists, but in the view of the Team this cannot be sufficiently comprehensive or systematic. The Team suggests that a centre for learning and teaching support, headed by a senior academic, should be established. However, this is not to suggest that academic standards are low. On the contrary, the Team met several groups of very satisfied students and noted the good completion rates and times to graduation tabulated in the Self-Evaluation Report. It also met – in every Faculty and School it visited – groups of very well qualified and highly motivated teaching staff.

Bilgi has organised a number of events to disseminate the practices and procedures recommended by the Bologna Process, while acknowledging that much remains to be done. Its own trajectory towards full implementation of student-centred learning has begun but is not yet completed. As a general rule, the conversion from teacher-centred instruction is expensive: it requires small group study, a rich range of learning resources, appropriate management information systems, a re-distribution of physical space, and new approaches to curriculum design. The Team looked in particular for the existence of competence-based curricula based on explicit learning outcomes. It was given a number of assurances, but these were not wholly substantiated by published course outlines nor by the on-line course catalogue. The Team understands that Turkey, as a signatory to the Bologna Process, is committed to full implementation of a learning outcomes approach by 2012.

The policy of Bilgi is to deliver all tuition in the English language (with the exception of courses in the Faculty of Law). This is a daunting challenge, which is being approached with considerable financial resource and pedagogic skill. The Team was impressed with the facilities and the level of provision afforded by the EAQUALS-accredited English Preparatory Programme and noted the commitment of the Writing Centre to on-course language support. And yet – the majority of the students encountered by the Team were those whose level of English-language attainment in secondary education was such that they were not required to enrol in the Preparatory Programme. These students reported frequent recourse to Turkish-language teaching, particularly in year 1 of the undergraduate courses.

These difficulties are experienced in many institutions. In Bilgi, there is no lack of awareness or of expertise. However, so close is the problem to the core of the mission that the Team recommends more rigorous enforcement, more intensive referral of students for continuing language support, and the raising of the minimum standard required to pass the Preparatory Programme. It may be, too, that Bilgi's partner institutions, particularly the University of Liverpool, will be able to assist with examples of good practice.

The apparently limited scope for developing inter-Faculty and inter-disciplinary programmes has been mentioned above (section 5). One possibility suggested to the Team was a combination of design and engineering. This, and others, offer opportunities to enhance student employability in an evolving labour market, to position Bilgi at the forefront of curricular innovation and, hopefully, to bridge the perceived gap between Bilgi's 'established' disciplines, those with the critical edge, and more recent arrivals.

Finally, the Team heard no sustained criticism of the standard of the physical facilities for learning and teaching. What it saw was of high standard. It received assurances that the equipment and space needed for the expansion of programmes in, for example, architecture, engineering and health science, would be forthcoming. It found universal awareness of the need for the comprehensive upgrading of all facilities, driven by the steep rise in student numbers year on year.

- A centre for learning and teaching support, headed by a senior academic, should be established
- ▶ Full understanding of the Bologna Process by all is essential; it must be fully implemented with appropriate human and financial resources
- The raising of the minimum requirements for passing the English language preparatory course should be considered
- ▶ The requirement to deliver courses in English should be more vigorously enforced
- ▶ Students with inadequate linguistic competence should be referred for further support
- ▶ Good practice in English language teaching should be developed in conjunction with partner universities such as Liverpool
- ▶ Physical facilities must be enhanced in line with projected student expansion

8. Research

Historically, Bilgi has had no strong focus on research. There are nevertheless significant levels of activity, both individual and collective, on which an effective strategy can be built – for example, by extending the individual award scheme for publications to a general support scheme for individual and collaborative research activities. Indeed, the overall quality of the academic staff suggests the existence of great potential, which appropriate incentives, support and resources can help fulfil. Given the importance of research performance in the Turkish national university rankings, it would appear that such an approach must be taken if Bilgi's aspirations to top tier status are to be satisfied.

The Team was reassured to find within the Rectorate a strong commitment to develop and articulate a research strategy and to embed it in the over-arching Strategic Plan. Such a strategy will be bound to address the currently low level of research funding and the low numbers of graduate students. Other issues will also be important: how to audit current productivity with a view to identifying research clusters which, in the context of Bilgi's development plans, will be able to gain sufficient critical and sustainable mass to become fully fledged research centres. More important still: how to ensure that research outcomes inform new course developments and invigorate teaching on existing courses, including at Bachelor level. This represents a real challenge, in view of the likely need for active researchers to have reduced teaching loads and for the shortfall in hours to be taken up by non-research-active staff. The Team considers that a new generation of research centres, if and when set up, should be internally quality assured, as well as by external funding bodies.

- ▶ A clearly articulated research strategy, developed in consultation with academic staff, must be an integral part of the Strategic Plan
- ▶ Efforts to expand graduate recruitment and provision should be continued and encouraged
- The existing research potential should be further exploited by increasing the level of research funding and by enhancing research support mechanisms

9. Cooperation with society, industry and business

The Self-Evaluation group considered that the outreach work to beneficiaries such as community groups, NGO's, prisoners and disadvantaged segments of the local population were effective, but that they were initiatives deriving from individual contacts rather than being institutionalised. The providers who met the Team, and who were based mainly in the Centre for Civil Society and in the Legal Clinic (this latter associated with the Faculty of Law), agreed that, while they attracted significant external funding and did valuable work, their internal profile was low.

The Team spoke with students from the Faculty of Architecture who were engaged in a project with a municipality on the Black Sea. It was due to meet a local government representative with other external stakeholders, but unfortunately this person was unable to attend. Discussions with the Head of Marketing suggested that the Bilgi brand, founded on critical social interventions, would be strengthened in line with the Board of Trustees' prioritisation of social responsibility. The Team welcomes this ongoing commitment to strong community engagement.

It also considers that, particularly in respect of relatively recent and new Faculties and Schools, there is a need to strengthen links with business and industry and to explore new sources of work placements, perhaps with the assistance of alumni. Employability is a major concern of both Laureate and the Bologna Process and it may be that international partnerships can also prove useful in identifying work placement possibilities.

Currently, as with community beneficiaries, contacts with professional bodies are personal rather than coordinated at institutional level. There are instances of Faculty involvement in continuing professional development, but on the whole the impression was given that both outreach and lifelong learning are add-ons which could be brought more into the mainstream of University affairs. The Bilgi watchword is 'Learning for life' and it is wholly consistent that the University should expand the existing activities of Bilgi Eğitim.

- Existing community engagement must be maintained, given higher visibility and used for competitive advantage
- Links with industry and business must be reinforced, particularly in view of the projected expansion in new academic disciplines
- ▶ Efforts should be made to promote employability, for example by involving alumni in the provision of work placements
- The scope for developing comprehensive lifelong learning provision should be actively pursued

10. Internationalisation

As noted above (section 1.2), government policy favours a stronger focus on regional involvement; indeed, YÖK has liberalised foreign student recruitment, to the point of actually subsidising it. Bilgi's participation in the Bologna Process and in the Laureate network gives it a strong platform for its intended expansion of activities in North Africa, in the Middle East and to the east of the Caucasus. Its commitment to doubling the percentage of its home students experiencing some element of foreign study, from 12% to 25% by 2016, whatever the overall student numbers might then be, is striking in its boldness. In its discussions, the Team found certainty that this would require a consolidation of the administrative infrastructure as well as extensive forward planning. The administrative team in the International Office is due to grow and to acquire new language skills; it is planned to relocate to Santral campus.

As in the case of research, the team considers that internationalisation should be an integral part of the Strategic Plan. Moreover, it should go beyond staff and student mobility to encompass joint curriculum development (such as has already been agreed with Liverpool), collaborative research and staff and student recruitment.

Mobility is dependent on recognition mechanisms – and the Team learnt with some consternation that Bilgi had fixed its ECTS values by multiplying US credits by a factor of 2 for undergraduate courses and 3.3 for postgraduate courses. To some extent, this expedient confirms the Team's view (see section 7 above) that Bilgi is only now embarking on the shift from teacher-centred to student-centred learning. ECTS credit is elsewhere based, not on staff contact hours, but on a combination of student workload and learning outcomes, neither of which have yet been systematically deployed in Bilgi's practices of curricular design and student assessment.

The mechanistic attribution of ECTS also suggests the existence of tension between the basic tenets of the Bologna Process and the American operational parameters favoured by Laureate. Their obviously convergent commitment to internationalisation is likely to be experienced by Bilgi as a challenge, rather than as a seamless synergy. Issues such as ECTS – and the fact that scholarship students are not eligible for Laureate mobility – pose problems that will have to be addressed in the strategic planning process.

- An internationalisation strategy that goes beyond student mobility and fully exploits the Laureate potential should be an integral part of the Strategic Plan
- ▶ ECTS must be implemented as indicated in the ECTS User Guide
- The policy of recruiting staff of high standing, including international staff, should be continued

11. Quality assurance

Quality assurance lies at the heart of the Bologna Process, since without it there can be no sustainable mutual trust between universities. The Team thus welcomes the appointment of a Vice-Rector charged with quality assurance responsibilities. The full support of the institutional leadership is a necessary condition for the creation of culture of quality assurance. The appointment is therefore an important step in a process of institutional change that is likely to be long and complex.

To the Team, a number of issues are clear. The first is that the work of the quality assurance unit will be greatly facilitated by the eventual setting up of an independent agency at national level. The *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education*⁴ list the principles and processes informing a strong internal quality culture, as well as the role of the external agency. Their generalisation in Turkey will give added impetus to the efforts made by Bilgi.

Secondly, as has been noted in connection with governance, there is significant scope for raising the intensity of student participation in quality assurance. The Team found widespread agreement that the existing system of on-line anonymous student evaluation is not working. It has, by common consent, lost credibility and urgently needs to be replaced. One possibility mentioned by staff is a return to the Boards of Studies which existed during the time of Bilgi's collaboration with the University of Portsmouth. Whatever solution is found, it is important that it be integrated with ongoing monitoring and periodic programme evaluation, in which students fully participate and to which an effective staff appraisal system is linked.

Thirdly, while – for reasons of institutional profile and student employability – it is important that Bilgi continue to seek appropriate international, national and sectoral accreditations, these should not be taken as a substitute for a vibrant culture of internal quality enhancement.

Finally, the Team recommends that Bilgi's formal quality assurance procedures also encompass its foreign – and particularly ERASMUS – partnerships, in anticipation of the possibility that some of these will be developed beyond mobility in the manner described in section 10 above.

- The Quality Assurance Unit must enjoy the full support of the institutional leadership
- An internal quality culture must be created, as indicated by the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- The value of QA processes must be demonstrated in such a way as to engage full student participation
- Periodic programme evaluation should be introduced for all programmes
- ▶ Accreditation by sectoral/international bodies should continue to be sought
- Foreign bilateral partnerships should be quality assured

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⁴ See http://www.enga.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20(2).pdf

12. Conclusions

Bilgi lives with the certainty that it must grow – although in precisely which legal and regulatory environment will not be wholly clear until after the impending elections. The existence of 30 foundation universities, not to mention the state universities, in the wider Istanbul region, guarantees that the environment will be competitive.

The growth imperative derives not only from the national determination to raise the HE participation rate, but also from the logic of Bilgi's current business model. New Faculties and Schools mean additional student numbers, while the need to build on a strong brand means the retention and further development of the existing course portfolio. This dynamic implies not only an expansion of the academic (teaching and research) and administrative staff, since economies of scale generally run counter to the patterns of expenditure required by student-centred learning, but also an expansion of the physical infrastructure. The high dependence on tuition fee income should not rise further; in any case, fee levels themselves are constrained by the competition factor. Diversification of revenue streams is thus essential.

This is Bilgi's situation as the Team has been led to understand it. Complexities abound. The growth in student numbers will be a mix of fee-payers, said to be in general of lower academic standard, and scholarship students – getting the mix right in such a way as to satisfy both academic and financial criteria will be challenging. Internationalisation, an apparently unambiguous vector of development, depends on the successful blending of Bologna Process and Laureate Network practice. Success in the competitive Turkish HE market will require that claims to excellence are backed by effective quality assurance procedures operating to national and European standards. The Team found that these problems, and others, were fully recognised by colleagues in Bilgi.

Most important in the eyes of the Team, however, is the prevailing disjunction between the clarity of vision at the level of the Board of Trustees and senior management and the perplexity and frustration manifested by many of the staff and students. The Team felt this to be a malaise which, if it were to deepen, would become seriously dysfunctional. The Team's reservations regarding governance and management style have been spelt out in the preceding sections of this report. So, too, have its suggestions as to what the remedies might be. It hopes that all Bilgi stakeholders will find them useful.

The Team's concerns, which are serious, should not obscure its view of Bilgi's undoubted assets: an inner-city campus of great potential, a distinctive and well established identity, significant opportunities for international networking in all aspects of its mission, and a very well qualified body of academic staff.

13. Summary of recommendations

- Bilgi must ensure that its vision and mission are shared by all internal stakeholders
- The strategic planning exercise must involve full participation and engagement of all stakeholders, internal and external
- ▶ The discussion of joint governance should continue and be resolved
- Internal communication channels between senior management and other members of the academic community should be improved
- Decision-making processes must be made as transparent as possible
- Effective student representation at all levels of governance must be implemented
- Ways to regularise the operation of the management committee should be explored
- ▶ The budget allocation process must be rendered transparent
- ▶ To reduce dependence on fee income, revenue streams must be diversified
- Academic performance review, when introduced, must be aligned with quality assurance
- A centre for learning and teaching support, headed by a senior academic, should be established
- Full understanding of the Bologna Process by all is essential; it must be fully implemented with appropriate human and financial resources
- The raising of the minimum requirements for passing the English language preparatory course should be considered
- ▶ The requirement to deliver courses in English should be more vigorously enforced
- Students with inadequate linguistic competence should be referred for further support
- ▶ Good practice in English language teaching should be developed in conjunction with partner universities such as Liverpool
- ▶ Physical facilities must be enhanced in line with projected student expansion
- A clearly articulated research strategy, developed in consultation with academic staff, must be an integral part of the Strategic Plan
- Efforts to expand graduate recruitment and provision should be continued and encouraged
- The existing research potential should be further exploited by increasing the level of research funding and by enhancing research support mechanisms

- Existing community engagement must be maintained, given higher visibility and used for competitive advantage
- Links with industry and business must be reinforced, particularly in view of the projected expansion in new academic disciplines
- Efforts should be made to promote employability, for example by involving alumni in the provision of work placements
- ▶ The scope for developing comprehensive lifelong learning provision should be actively pursued
- An internationalisation strategy that goes beyond student mobility and fully exploits the Laureate potential should be an integral part of the Strategic Plan
- ▶ ECTS must be implemented as indicated in the ECTS User Guide
- ▶ The policy of recruiting staff of high standing, including international staff, should be continued
- ▶ The Quality Assurance Unit must enjoy the full support of the institutional leadership
- ▶ An internal quality culture must be created, as indicated by the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- ▶ The value of QA processes must be demonstrated in such a way as to engage full student participation
- Periodic programme evaluation should be introduced for all programmes
- ▶ Accreditation by sectoral/international bodies should continue to be sought
- Foreign bilateral partnerships should be quality assured