

Ankara University

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of a follow-up evaluation of Ankara University. EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) originally evaluated Ankara University in October 2005 with the report submitted to the University in November 2005. In August 2010 the University Rector, Prof. Cemal Talug requested that IEP carry out a follow-up evaluation.

The self-evaluation report of Ankara University along with the appendices was sent to the evaluation team in April 2011. The site visit of the evaluation team to Ankara University took place between 24 and 27 May 2011.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Fuada Stankovic, University of Novi Sad, Serbia (Chair)
- Alina Gavra, MA student, West University Timisoara, Romania
- Andy Gibbs, Edinburgh Napier University, UK (Co-ordinator)

Professor Fuada Stankovic was a member of the original evaluation team as was Professor Ivan Ostrovsky, who had to withdraw from the follow up evaluation team due to unforeseen circumstances.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme and follow-up evaluation process

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.

In line with the EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme as a whole, the follow-up process is a supportive one. There is no prescribed procedure, and it is for the institution itself to set the agenda in the light of its experiences since the original evaluation. The institution is expected to submit its own self-evaluation report, which will describe the progress made, possibly indicating barriers to change.

The rationale is that the follow-up evaluation can assist the institution in evaluating the changes that have been made since the original evaluation: What was the impact of the original evaluation? What use has the institution made of the original evaluation report? How far has it been able to address the issues raised in the report? The follow-up evaluation is also an opportunity for the institution to take stock of its strategies for managing change in the context of internal and external constraints and opportunities.

As for the original evaluation, the follow-up process is also 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 Ankara University and the national context

Ankara University has a strong position within the Turkish Higher Education System, regarding its perspectives in education, research, service to society and internationalisation. According to the Bologna National Analysis document (2009) regarding institutional structure, as of March 2006 there was a total of 93 Universities (68 state and 25 non profit foundations) in Turkey. As of 2008, there was 130 Universities (94 state and 36 non profit foundations) with a further increase to 166 by 2011. This significant increase in the number of universities has raised some challenges and increased competition. At the same time, amendments to the legal framework governing Turkish higher education have changed it significantly.

1.3 The Self Evaluation Process

The follow up self-evaluation process was undertaken by an eighteen-person team which included representatives from the academic and administrative units of the University, the President of the University's Student Council, five people from the previous self-evaluation team and the Academic Evaluation and Quality Development (ADEK) Committee team. The self-evaluation report addressed developments that have occurred at the University since 2005. It responded to observations made by the original IEP evaluation team, evaluated the University's capacity for change, and offered responses to the recommendations made in the IEP Evaluation Report.

The Self Evaluation Team reported that the University's 2005 participation in the IEP and its related self-evaluation work was the starting point of a process of sustainable quality improvement at the University. The University's participation in the IEP, together with the ADEK Regulations passed on 20 September 2005 that required universities to perform annual academic evaluations and quality development studies, made it easier for Ankara University to adopt quality improvement processes.

The University requested that the specific foci of follow up are:

- a) Internationalisation
- b) Science and Society
- c) University – Industry co-operation.

The evaluation team noted the synergy between the IEP process and the University's internal quality procedures and that there was a clear continuity in the period between the initial and follow up evaluations, demonstrated by a clear focus on the original recommendations, obvious positive responses in tackling the issues raised and a high level

of constructive self-reflection. Overall the Evaluation Team considered that this evidenced, at strategic level, an orientation towards a quality culture within the University. For this reason some comments and suggestions to build on these positive steps towards a Quality Culture are made.

The nature of the follow up evaluation is such that it cannot make comment on all of the University's operations nor revisit all of the issues raised in the original evaluation report. To this extent the follow up team have concentrated on the areas mentioned by the university, and have not looked in particular detail at those questions that the initial evaluation report raised and that have not been part of the on-going process of change.

1.4. Description of the University

Ankara University is the oldest university established by the Republic of Turkey. It has a total of 12 campuses, with seven in the capital city of Ankara and five in the districts surrounding the city. There are 14 faculties, 11 vocational schools/colleges, and 12 graduate schools/ institutes and 34 research and application centres.

It is one of the largest public universities in Turkey with a total student population of 44,514, with 2,514 students in associate degree programmes, 31,790 undergraduates, 9,179 graduate students, and 1,031 students in distance-learning programmes. The University employs 3,553 people in its academic staff, with another 5,565 administrative and other employees. There are also 433 research assistants from a total of 62 different Turkish universities who are involved in study in graduate programmes at Ankara University. Ankara University's budget (excluding revolving fund and other income) in 2011 is 438.5 million TL (€200 million).

As well as teaching and research the University seeks to make a strong and significant commitment to civil society and social responsibility.

1.5. Changes that have been made since the original evaluation

The current Rector and Rectorate Team took office in 2008 and with his team and ensured that the aims Strategic Plan, produced by the former Rector and his team, was realised with the involvement of the Senate and other stakeholders. The ADEK centre was established, introducing measurement and evaluation of services. The evaluation team learned that a clearer system of rewards and incentives for academic staff involvement in society activities and developments is planned, including criteria and extended promotion for such involvement. The Rector seeks to create an environment of democratic and participative management and this is reflected in election procedures for Deans, which exists beyond mandatory requirements for appointments at this level.

Advances in the research agenda (which are mentioned in more detail below) include the inauguration of four Advanced Research Institutes, establishment of a University base for International Research Committees and completion of a Technology Park. Considerable steps towards internationalisation have been taken (also mentioned in more detail below) as well as a stronger focus on local community developments.

The University budget has increased considerably over this period which is (according to the SER) primarily attributable to the improvements in the University's administration, strategy and policies.

The 2005 evaluation report highlighted constraints imposed by the Legal Framework. There has been some liberalisation of the Legal Framework which has led to greater autonomy regarding, for example, financial management and improved student involvement; however many bureaucratic regulations remain which adversely impact on university autonomy and efficiency.

2. Internationalisation

The 2005 evaluation team suggested that “The awareness of pushing internationalisation as a condition for mobility of students and staff should be strengthened as one of the basic ingredients of the Bologna Process.” The evaluation team considered that this had been taken on board amongst the many developments that have taken place as part of Ankara University’s efforts to systematically promote the University’s internationalisation. Since the previous evaluation in 2005 international activity has increased substantially with increased numbers of mobile students, researchers and teachers with increased financial support to these groups, greater numbers of staff engaged in co-ordination/support, increased international research co-operation, increased numbers of International students, introduction of some English language programmes and greater institutional and individual involvement in international committees, groups and organisations. An overall positive orientation, awareness and enthusiasm towards internationalisation were detected amongst the groups that the evaluation team met with.

Amongst the growth and enthusiasm, the evaluation team identified three main issues that the University may wish to consider. These are: the development of a focussed goal-orientated strategy, the co-ordination of the implementation of such a strategy, and ensuring a balance between strategy implementation, growth and capacity.

When discussing internationalisation, many staff members and groups articulated the need for internationalisation but did not emphasise any purpose. In some regards this reflects the general observation made by the 2005 evaluation team that moving towards an output orientation instead of input orientation is one of the most vital requirements (in all areas not just internationalisation). The continuance of this is evidenced by a focus, for example, on the numbers of agreements and contacts rather than active agreements and realised possibilities.

The evaluation team suggests that internationalisation is not a goal in itself but is a means to an end, be it *inter alia* developing global citizens, internationalising at home, raising profile or attracting international staff and students. To this extent internationalisation may demand a strategic plan for implementation but does not exist in isolation from the wider University strategy. For these reasons the evaluation team suggest that the University may wish to ensure the goals of internationalisation are clearly articulated within a strategy and communicated to key members of staff so that they can be embedded into the overall University strategy and in doing so recognise how internationalisation pervades all activity (teaching and learning, estates, recruitment, research, library provision, branding etc.), so that overarching goals and complementary actions can be developed.

Furthermore, internationalisation may have a number of discrete goals with different meanings for differing activities and geographic regions. A more output-orientated

approach may help differentiate regional strategies for differing regions (Europe, Asia, US) and different goals in co-operation with different regions. In this regard, the focus would be a drive towards a smaller number of active well developed agreements.

The University has responded to many of the suggestions made in the original evaluation as well as delivering on the aims that they set themselves at that time. These include: continuing university financial support for students, increasing the efficiency of Erasmus coordinators and running advertising campaigns. This investment has led to greater inward and outward activity. Coupled with this, the evaluation team met with several members of staff who were investing time and effort in developing internationalisation. The evaluation team could recognise the enthusiasm of these staff but could not easily understand the relationship between nor the co-ordination of the various activities and actors. The evaluation team met a number of individuals and groups each of which identified some responsibility for leading internationalisation.

Considering all of these developments as a whole, the evaluation team felt that there was potential for activity to exceed the capacity and suggest that the University ensures that it strengthens its capacity-building measures and regulates growth so that activity and capacity are balanced.

It would be helpful, in developing critical mass, to identify and bring together individual enthusiasts to develop practice and increase ownership across the institution and in doing so clarify roles, responsibilities and key tasks for individuals and functional units.

The evaluation team detected a mismatch in the preparation and use of English language within the University. A review and development of a policy regarding use of a second language may bring a greater coherence to an activity which was mentioned in the evaluation discussions as a source of frustration for both staff and students. The move towards compulsory English language learning in the preparatory year can be consolidated by greater use of teaching and learning in English in subsequent years and increased opportunities to practice speaking, as it is clear that at the moment not all Faculties could foster this kind of learning environment. Alongside this, a review of the existing measures in place to support English language learning for students may reveal some inefficiencies, for example spreading language learning over four years rather than intensively in one year.

Another current capacity issue relates to the availability and funding of Erasmus placements, for which demand outstrips supply. It may be unlikely in the short term that external funders will be able to increase available funding to the level required. To accommodate demand for study in countries other than Turkey, the University may wish to consider alternatives to Erasmus, such as internships, differing periods of study (both shorter and longer) and in non-Erasmus countries.

The use of international study weeks, summer schools and intensive programmes could further extend opportunities for a student international experience. Hosting such events would benefit students who are, for whatever reason, unable to travel abroad. Integrating overseas and home students can provide great opportunities to internationalise at home.

On this point, and a number of others related to internationalisation, the student body proposed a number of initiatives to the evaluation team which led them to conclude that the University would benefit from engaging with students in developing components of internationalisation strategy.

The suggested measures are made to refine further capacity-building measures to ensure critical mass and structural support and include language preparation of staff and students, online provision, library provision, maximising mobility, developing alternatives to Erasmus mobility and engaging with students in consultation and activity related to internationalisation.

3. Science and society

The evaluation team noted widespread commitment to this goal and continually improving and expanding development which was consistently demonstrated throughout the evaluation. There are numerous good practice examples which together provide a strong and unique University profile. These include activities undertaken by a number of schools as part of the Children's University project and included; Schools of Earth Science, Bright Ideas, Bug Fun, Water, Philosophy, Life Sciences, Sky Science, and Architecture, Human Rights Theatre. In addition the Continuous Education Centre (CEC) was established; University Scholarships offered in partnership with local organisations were developed and Open Days gave prospective students and wider society access to Schools and Centres. These all reflect a high level of contact with and contribution to society. Also there are a number of Social Responsibility Projects, including a vocational programme organised for women in jail and children in juvenile detention, and a programme offering dental health examination and treatment to students at a school for the visually handicapped. A number of research and application centres, including the Centres for Ankara Studies, Aging, Brain Studies, Development Studies, Child and Youth Literature, have been set up specifically to serve the community. The Faculty of Divinity gives People's Conferences each week. The University also plans to develop further concrete measures to cooperate with non-governmental organisations in the University's social service activities.

The inclusion of participation in social service activities as one of the criteria for academic promotion is a development which will help promote and consolidate these activities.

The development and work of the CEC particularly impressed the evaluation team. The model of outreach is a good model on which to base further work which the University has planned to on develop policies that encourage all units of the University to offer education, courses, conferences, and the like to all segments of society. Given that the University also organises programmes in collaboration with professional organisations, employers, non-governmental organisations, and other partners, upon request, the evaluation team suggests that there is potential to build on the work of CEC to develop an integrated model for Life Long Learning using Bologna tools such as a qualifications framework and ECTS to strengthen University, Industry and Community linkages and access to university.

Once again, the evaluation team noted an emphasis on inputs rather than outputs and little discussion of goals, targeting and results.

At strategic level work has been undertaken to institute an advisory/consultancy group consisting of local businesspeople, industrialists and influential citizens and key members of the University. This has not been established but appears to present an excellent opportunity to identify new and consolidate existing University/Industry links. The

University is encouraged to continue with this initiative as it can be a source of insight and ideas for continuous improvement in University services.

There is a balance to be achieved as the University seeks to develop simultaneously both locally and internationally. As well as ensuring that local industry does not feel neglected in favour of international investment there is a need for discussion within the University as to how these apparently (to some) conflicting aims of being local and global, as well as modern and traditional can be compatible. For example, the team met with staff, uninvolved in setting strategy, who strongly believed that teaching in English would mean abandoning the University mission and tradition of serving local and national needs.

4. University / Industry Collaboration

The University has implemented many of the suggestions and recommendations relating to research activities which were made in the 2005 Evaluation report as well as introducing a number of its own initiatives and activities. In particular the establishment of the Scientific Research Project Office (BAPRO) in order to offer efficient support related to national, international University projects.

As part of the University's projected strategic goals, BAPRO implemented the Research Database System (ARVIS). A separate Patent Support Division was also established within BAPRO and protocols were signed with relevant agencies. A positive start into the support of research activities will be the implementation of a self-monitoring system supported by an information management database.

The University has also taken steps to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and start-ups which can be realised through a number of established and developing collaborations such as Technopark and the district development consortium, OSTIM. A number of measures have been introduced within the University to promote interdisciplinary working and this will contribute to meeting industry needs. In addition, the University has established International and National research centres that will attract skilled research staff that will bring investment and an increase in research grants.

In doing this, the University should take all necessary steps to reduce delays, particularly in procurement. It is clear that the University has already reduced some bureaucratic delays but these are reported to still persist and should be addressed to avoid damaging competitiveness

A number of newly established graduate schools/institutes and research and application centres are playing an important role in promoting interdisciplinary activities between different faculties of Ankara University. These institutes include the Nuclear Science, Accelerator Technologies, Stem Cell Research, and Water Management. The research and application centres include Ankara Studies, African Studies, Development, Latin American Studies, Aging, South Eastern European Studies, Brain Study, Child and Youth Literature, and Political Psychology. Together these institutes and centres have considerable potential to build University – Industry, although the potential varies between each of these. The evaluation team could not see any means to differentiate and prioritise activities and thus a clearer strategy to prioritise activity and resources is required to differentiate between high profile national and international developments and smaller local initiatives, as well as addressing different industry sectors.

The team noted and encourages continuing efforts directed towards the encouragement of innovation and business startups through student incubation projects and other stakeholder involvement, which may also have the benefit of informing curricula content

and meeting market needs. Similarly further development and use of FP7 projects will match the stated aims of both internationalisation and science and society.

5. Quality Monitoring and Administration

The 2005 evaluation team recommended that “The University should continue with self-evaluation processes, employing already experienced and highly motivated teams in order to monitor developments and establish bigger qualitative changes in all relevant fields”. The follow up SER acknowledged that previous experience self evaluation had made it easier for Ankara University to adapt the sustainable quality improvement process. The SER also described the ADEK reporting system which consists of self evaluations of education, research, relations with society, and governance. The performance in these areas is measured and monitored by using several performance indicators in each activity field.

The evaluation team noted this continuous development of quality processes and were also impressed by the cohesion of the University group concerned with quality. Additionally both this group and the University self-evaluation group demonstrated high levels of critical self reflection and a clear awareness of the tasks, challenges and issues that lay ahead for them.

The group identified the burden for staff in collecting and submitting data and information and recognised that this could have a negative effect on implementing a quality culture. Plans to implement a Management Information System (MIS) which will be put in place during 2011 are anticipated to allow the University to overcome these difficulties. Additionally, there are, some difficulties relating to securing on time and in the proper form the data required for the systematic review of performance indicators for the University’s constituent bodies as part of the ADEK annual self-evaluation. This may, in part, be addressed by the MIS; however the group were considering how to address this issue further. Discussion with the group around the implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines raised the possibility of implementing a “traffic light” system whereby areas which evidenced a high level of compliance with quality processes, would benefit from a “lighter touch” in subsequent years thereby not only providing an incentive to comply but also freeing up resources to address areas that found compliance problematic and focus on areas which are less developed.

Under the new Law it became mandatory to issue administrative activity reports, strategic plans, internal inspection plans, investment programme monitoring and evaluation reports, and a mid-year fiscal status and expectation report. Whilst these are necessary legal procedures to ensure quality, the manner of implementation may be the means with which to introduce a Quality Culture. The ADEK group are commended for the obvious progress made in developing quality systems and are encouraged by the evaluation team to continue their activity in further developing a Quality Culture and building on these positive developments which evidence widening staff commitment.

Linked to this is a reminder that all members of staff have an Individual responsibility towards quality and this may be reinforced by a greater emphasis on performance indicators at departmental level, many of which are designed to improve efficiency so that staff may work smarter rather than harder.

The 2005 Evaluation team observed that “Ankara University students consider the university Student Council as partially formal, not effective and efficient enough. They prefer students clubs as a proper environment for the expression of their opinions and needs and discussing them. They also prefer individual contacts with the teachers and other academics to discuss all their needs. But apart from the relevance of the student-managed discussions in the students clubs it is absolutely vital for a constructive atmosphere between academics and students that matters related to teaching and learning are discussed and decided in the official bodies of the University.”

The evaluation team noted some developments in this regard. As well as being a member of several University groups and committees, the President of the Student Council also “has a non-voting position in meetings of the University’s Senate. Virtually all academic departments have student representatives who, at their department’s initiative, participate in meetings as non-voting members.” The evaluation team heard that this is not the case in all Departments and that students felt uninvolved from many aspects of University decision making, even though they feel their contributions would help to improve quality. The team recognises that in Europe it is now the norm to include students in University decision making and many benefits derive from this. Currently Ankara University is not a beneficiary of this input and the extension of participative management to include students more comprehensively would remedy this. Even though the law may not prescribe this, it can be done in other ways, for example Faculty staff voting for the appointment of Deans.

6. Conclusion

The evaluation team have reviewed evidence from a number of varied sources, both written and oral, and have taken into account the University's expected or desirable development to offer a dynamic analysis of their current understanding of strategic and quality developments in the institution, and conclude that:

- ▶ The University is committed to take its responsibility for Research, Teaching and Society seriously and is strongly reflected its activities, vision and mission.
- ▶ The strategic plan is commended and may be enhanced by the inclusion action plans and milestones to monitor progress.

The University SER identified that "Ankara University is aware of its developmental needs and the internal and external obstacles facing it. It has the potential and the will to actively overcome these impediments to its development, and is decisively crafting strategies that will enable it to do so."

The evaluation team share this view and also the confidence of the original Evaluation Team in the capacity for change of the University and in the capability of Senior Management to identify and lead the creation of strategies to meet the University vision and mission.

The Team thanks the Rector Prof. Cemal Talug and his team for the organisation of the evaluation, and hospitality, warmth and openness with which the process was conducted. Our thanks also go to all academic and administrative members of staff, students and other stakeholders who contributed to the evaluation in such an enthusiastic and constructive manner.