



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme

ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY

EVALUATION REPORT

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Istanbul Aydin University: Evaluation Report

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the institutional evaluation of Istanbul Aydin University (IAU), Turkey, which was undertaken in 2013, in the period from March to October. The report was written and edited in October 2013, under the chairmanship of the team chair and upon review and consensus by all members of the team.

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 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 The self-evaluation process

At Istanbul Aydin University, the self-evaluation process was coordinated by Prof. Zafer Aslan and a team composed of academics from different departments of the university. The self-evaluation report along with the appendices was sent to the evaluation team in February 2013. The team recognises the enormous work that the self-evaluation team has invested in the process of reflection that preceded the report. It became clear in many

interviews that there had been long and very engaged discussions on the strengths and weaknesses of the institution, on its potential and possible future directions. Committees and sub-committees organised more than 20 periodic meetings a week, according to the self-evaluation report.

The initial self-evaluation report, however, did not entirely reflect the great work that preceded it as well as one could have wished due to imperfect presentation and linguistic flaws. Here and there the presentation was somewhat disjointed, sometimes passages from marketing texts of the institution were included (rather than self-reflections of the institution as intended by the IEP) or excerpts from local or European guidelines (e.g. in section 5.3 on p.26), while in some cases passages had little to do with the headings under which they were presented.

In the course of the evaluation the team did get a clear picture, on the basis of subsequent conversations with the university and additional information received before the second visit.

During the first visit the use of English as the language of evaluation often allowed only a minority of interviewees who mastered English well enough to actively participate in the interviews. For the second visit, a simultaneous translation was organised so that more efficient conversations were possible. Certainly in view of the international aspirations of the university a broader competence of the English language among students and staff is desirable. Therefore the team recommends that the effectiveness of English teaching should be reviewed and that (more) English language coaching opportunities should be made available to teachers and researchers so that they gain effective access to international peers, benchmarks and discussions.

The evaluation team also experienced some difficulties in getting the usual institutional key data, presented in clear tables and graphs. Although the university did what it could to make up for these deficiencies the team concluded that professional support for data creation and monitoring is an area that needs further improvement to allow for reliable quality assurance.

1.3 The evaluation team

The visits of the evaluation team to IAU took place from 20 to 21 of March and from 7 to 9 of October 2013, respectively. In between the visits IAU provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation, answering some open questions which the evaluation team had submitted to IAU upon the conclusion of the preliminary visit, and in preparation of the focus areas for the final visit.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Dr Sijbolt Noorda, President Emeritus of the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, team chair
- Prof. Carmen Fenoll, former Vice-Rector at the University of Castilla-la Mancha, Spain
- Prof. Noel Whelan, Vice-President and Dean Emeritus, University of Limerick, Ireland
- Ms. AncaMargineanu, Student, University of Bucharest, Romania
- Dr Sybille Reichert, Director of Reichert Consulting for Higher Education, team coordinator

The team would like to thank the university, in particular its founder and President, Dr Mustafa Aydin, the Rector, Prof. Dr Yadigar Izmirli, and Prof. Zafer Aslan as coordinator of the self-evaluation team, for the dedication, openness and flexibility with which they conducted the evaluation. Since this was the first international evaluation that the university had undertaken, it presented a challenge to the university which it faced with great engagement and meticulous attention.

2. Istanbul Aydin University and the national context

2.1 The legal context for foundation universities

A 1981 law enabled the establishment of foundation universities by not-for-profit foundations. The number of these higher education establishments keeps growing, as is its ratio to state universities.

In comparison to state universities, foundation universities enjoy a greater degree of freedom in structure, administration and financing than public ones. At the same time, there are a number of external controls built into the system, with the aim of protecting the public and assuring quality standards. Like state universities, the establishment of a foundation university has to be approved by the Turkish Higher Education Council (YÖK) and passed by Parliament. YÖK must also approve the appointment of their rectors and deans. YÖK also sets the number of students that can enrol in each undergraduate programme. Furthermore, foundation universities are subject to the quality assurance principles and regulations set by YÖK, which subjects foundation universities to annual external reviews. They must also comply with the academic requirements determined by YÖK.

Otherwise, with respect to governance structure, foundation universities are autonomous. The team learnt that only the board of trustees is mandatory. They also have their own budget allocation mechanism and can set tuition fees. However, financial support from the state is only granted if certain criteria are met. Thus there is a legal requirement to provide scholarships for 15% of the students in order to get state financial support.

In comparison to public institutions, foundation universities have the advantage of being able to offer more competitive salaries to academics.

2.2 Istanbul Aydin University

Istanbul Aydin University was founded in 2003 by the Anatolian Educational and Cultural Foundation (hereafter the foundation), under the leadership of Dr Mustafa Aydin, as Turkey's first foundation vocational school. In 2007 it expanded its offer to first and later second and third cycle higher education programmes, adding Master and doctoral programmes in 2010. The vocational and higher education offers are organised in two separate organisations, which are also experienced as two parallel institutions by the academics. The continuing existence of the Anadolu BIL Vocational School (ABMYO) as a separate entity protects the profile and institutional brand of the vocational school. IAU's teaching offer, which is strongly professionally-oriented, is organised into nine faculties and three vocational schools. Growth has been rapid with student numbers rising from around 8000 in 2008 (SER, Table 1 in Annex "Figures") to 15,620 in 2011-2012, 21,159 in 2012-2013 and 26,806 in 2013. The rapid growth poses a great challenge to the institution and potential threat to the quality of provision since the number of teaching staff has not increased accordingly, as many of the interviewed

members of academic staff emphasised. However, some faculty representatives reported that the situation has been improving recently. From the data provided, it seems that student-staff ratios have not improved significantly, amounting to between 44 and 50 students per full-time academic staff member (or 31 students per part- and full-time academic staff), i.e. a lot more students per staff member than at professionally-oriented higher education institutions in other European countries¹. It should be added that these figures vary significantly from one programme to the other.

In recent years, IAU has been emphasising the establishment and expansion of research activities. These have been organised in eleven research centres with research infrastructure for its Master and PhD students and academic staff. All research is applied, often developed in close cooperation with the relevant business sector and providing solutions for their innovation needs. The business partners are also called “solution partners”. Its close relations to various business sectors and the responsiveness of its programmes and research to business needs, strongly defines IAU’s institutional mission and corporate identity.

The annual budget of IAU amounts to €83.6 million of which 0—0.44% comes from public sources. The income of IAU derives mainly from student tuition (92.6%), i.e. private sources. Around 30% of all students receive partial or full scholarships. There is some other income from private sources, e.g. companies and foundations for services and products such as health services, media studio and production services or academic services to businesses. While IAU does not possess a major endowment from which interests would sustain the annual expenditures, the foundation does support investments in infrastructure with an annual amount of around five million TRL (€2 million).

2.3 Institutional culture of IAU

The evaluation team was impressed with the institutional coherence and strong entrepreneurial spirit which could be experienced at many occasions at IAU. Of course, this entrepreneurial energy is very strongly connected with the personality, charisma and vision of the President but it could also be felt in other groups and initiatives.

Connected with the entrepreneurial atmosphere, and just as striking perhaps, is IAU’s omnipresent pragmatic and problem-solving approach. The evaluation team was impressed by the quick responses to problems that had been identified, some of which were solved or addressed in the period between the two site visits. They also heard many reports of similar quick responses from students and staff. It seems that IAU leadership and services are used to trying to solve problems in a practical way with short response times.

Another salient institutional feature of IAU is its untraditional and responsive attitude to external demands and developments. IAU does not just wish to be open to society but is actually responsive in many of its programmes and new initiatives. Recently, this could be

¹“Education at a Glance” Data comparison of OECD (2011) [http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2013%20\(eng\)--FINAL%2020%20June%202013.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2013%20(eng)--FINAL%2020%20June%202013.pdf)

seen, for example in its approaches to starting a new school of dentistry, where it undertook extensive international benchmarking and started with modern teaching approaches, with students working with patients early on in their training and benefitting from interdisciplinary perspectives. It is also planning the creation of a medical school and a medical teaching hospital.

While in great admiration of the energy and dynamic developments which could be observed during their visits, the evaluation team would also like to add a cautionary note concerning the risks connected with the great speed at which IAU is expanding. Such high-speed development often hampers organic growth and may undermine sustainability. It seems that currently, the university and its programmes are in need of a phase of quiet development and organic growth. Thus IAU has to be careful not to run ahead of itself. The most important parts of IAU need time to establish and build on their strengths before expanding in too many different directions.

3. Vision, aims and long-term strategy of Istanbul Aydin University

IAU's vision is to respond closely to the Turkish labour market needs and to contribute to its innovation in different economic sectors by providing qualified graduates with innovation and leadership skills. In particular, these skills should include, according to IAU, information technology and foreign language skills as well as a sense of social responsibility. Hence, IAU has invested considerable means in building up technologically modern student learning facilities. Offering up-to-date infrastructure is one of the assets with which IAU positions itself in the rapidly expanding and increasingly competitive Turkish HE market.

IAU seeks to be responsive to the innovation needs of the business sector with which it cooperates closely, both in its teaching programme development and offer of internships as well as in many cooperative research projects which help businesses find innovation solutions.

As a long-term goal, IAU leadership aims to be among the first five universities in Turkey and, within the next decade, among the 500 top international universities. IAU also has the long-term goal to further develop internationalisation. By 2015, i.e. in just two years, it targets to have 1,500 international students, quite an increase from the current number of 840 in addition to 67 Erasmus students in 2013. IAU would also like to increase the number of foreign academic staff, without further precision. For documenting the current situation, the self-evaluation report and additional material provided state the number of 33 Erasmus incoming staff in 2012-2013.

The SER mentions (p.1) that the university has issued a strategic report on the above-mentioned and more detailed institutional goals and that its executive board has developed methodologies to reach these goals. IAU had developed a first strategic plan in 2008, following the national framework for such plans as set out by YÖDEK, the Commission of Academic Assessment, and has undertaken a more in-depth strategic planning process of IAU in 2010. This included the participation of the members of the board of trustees, executive managers, deans, directors, academics, quality board members and external stakeholders, and resulted in a second strategic report in 2012. In the process of reviewing the first strategic plan in the last two years, a wide range of meetings were organised both internally and with external partners, which helped prioritise goals. The SWOT analysis presented in the self-evaluation report is based on the SWOT analysis undertaken as part of that strategic development process. In response to its analysis, 29 goals were formulated, of which 14 were prioritised.

A more recent attempt to set up a more functional and effective institutional quality management system based on the strategic planning, which covers assessment of education, training and research activities and administrative services, was initiated in 2012. This initiative aims to set up a strategic management system at the institutional level. As a first step, a comprehensive self-assessment covering 10 areas with 183-assessment topics was

conducted. The self-assessment results revealed 97 strong areas and 86 areas for improvement and based on these, 25 strategic aims have been identified.

To determine whether goals or objectives are achievable, 500 issues were identified which are to be addressed in order to achieve the goals.

While the evaluation team has not had the opportunity to read the whole strategy report, some of the key goals as well as the SWOT analysis were presented in the SER. In general, it seems that IAU has been developing three different layers of largely separate institutional profiles which are not yet organically linked.

These different institutional profiles consist of:

1. The original vocational school, which is strongly responsive to regional business demands and its need for a well-trained labour force. IAU is well on its way there and has established a national model which many institutions are beginning to emulate.
2. An institution that trains academic graduates for the Istanbul region, with applied research and a strong professional profile. To establish this second profile is a challenging job and IAU is in the process of addressing the various obstacles. So far, IAU's activities still seem too far spread out, with too many programmes, and with a somewhat insufficient staff profile. But IAU seems to be well on its way to recognising what it takes to improve and sustain programme quality in academic teaching and learning.
3. A research university profile, including the aspiration to become a world-reputed research university classed among the top 500. It seems to the evaluation team that, in the current state of play, this goal appears out of reach, as the current staff profile, research budgets and facilities would not allow IAU to reach this goal within the next five to seven years, as it ambitions to.

Even though IAU seems to be able to respond quickly with respect to expanding its physical infrastructure, it is still caught in the tension between the rapid growth of student numbers and the limited ability to obtain full-time staff (part-time can be found easily, so it seems). If one has to rely to a large extent on part-time staff or on a small number of permanent staff with international research qualifications, this is not conducive to the quality of academic development especially with respect to research capacity.

While IAU is trying to attract more full-time staff, and has increased salary levels, the evaluation team feels that IAU should focus even more strongly on quality development in the years to come. The evaluation team would recommend offering fewer programmes, concentrate on quality development and on building research capacity within these programmes, with more experienced staff, instead of widening the programmes on offer and entertaining ambitions in fundamental research.

When asking institutional representatives about how the goal of becoming an internationally ranked research university could be reached, the evaluation team has found the answers still a little vague. Should IAU target such a goal, the institution's leadership would need to be fully aware of the core features and costs of these so-called "world-class" universities are, especially in terms of research capacity and resources, hiring conditions, research infrastructure and maintenance needs, as well as research training conditions (see section 5 below). Moreover, since top researchers tend to want to be in a congenial environment where they are surrounded by other top researchers, it is notoriously difficult - much more difficult in research than in teaching - to build such international research environments from scratch.

While it is clear that an international orientation in teaching and research is vital even for national and regional competitiveness and that IAU could play an important role in expanding such competitiveness, the evaluation team felt that such international orientation should not be confused with an international ranking among the top 500 universities, which are purely measured in terms of fundamental research achievements, regardless of regional impact of teaching quality and applied research projects.

It seems to the evaluation team that the goal of being internationally ranked in the top 500 research institutions is clearly beyond IAU's current excellent achievements with respect to producing a business-facing, socially responsive university that develops in close communication with its local and regional environment. The evaluation team would thus recommend that IAU may want to rethink these goals and may want to build its international profile in a way that connects more closely with its past successes and business-facing mission; in other words, deepen and build upon its present profile rather than playing in another field in a premature way.

4. Quality assurance and development

Quality is a vital aspect of any HEI, especially at a young developing institution which is setting its own standards and is building its own reputation to sustain its future attractiveness. Thus quality is not just important inside the organisation but also for its reputation. At IAU there is a strong commitment to quality in both senses.

If the overall quantitative ranking goals seem unrealistic, IAU has otherwise shown great awareness of its own strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in its internal quality assurance discussions. The institutional development goals which IAU has formulated in its strategic report — a list of 29 institutional development goals and 14 prioritised goals were included in the SER — clearly point to the potential for development and are linked to IAU's current strengths.

While IAU shows strong commitment to quality concerns it is still in the process of building up reliable processes to underpin its quality assurance. Similarly, whereas IAU seems quite advanced in its analysis of strengths and weaknesses, it is just beginning to develop methodologies and action plans to address the areas that are in need of improvement.

The team learnt that, in Turkey, there is no independent agency to undertake, coordinate or review quality assurance at higher education institutions, apart from the elaborate system of institutional and programme accreditation to ensure minimal quality thresholds. It is up to individual institutional initiatives to determine how individual institutions develop their own internal quality assurance, apart from the minimal supervision mentioned above. IAU has taken very committed steps to establish its institutional quality assurance system. It founded the internal quality board ADEK in 2012 in order to address its quality-related concerns systematically and coordinate its quality assurance processes and communication, as an attempt to set up an effective institutional quality management system for education, training, research and administration. ADEK, which addresses a wide range of QA issues in 183 different assessment areas, also accompanied the IEP self-evaluation process. The list of strengths and weaknesses laid out in the self-evaluation report covers an impressive range of issues, from very fundamental to more technical ones (SER, p.23-24). The team also learnt that there has also been a prioritisation of IAU goals on the basis of participants' judgement. Some very important recommendations have emerged from the SWOT analysis, for example, the recommendation that the heavy teaching load could be alleviated through a prioritisation i.e. reduction of teaching programmes so that the staff would not be overloaded (SER, p.24). Also the recommendation that one should avoid rapid expansion if it undermines quality standards seems vital to the evaluation team. It is not quite clear how these valuable internal reflections are interpreted at executive level and the importance they have with the top decision-makers. These recommendations are currently being considered by the university leadership.

In addition to ADEK, there is also a Bologna quality board that has been addressing quality and transparency of the teaching offer, such as the definition of learning outcomes. The team

understood that this body would also be the one to address the issue of how to foster and assess competences among students. In addition to the Bologna board, representatives for quality have been appointed for the different programmes.

The evaluation team believes that the current range of quality assurance bodies and representatives is in need of integration and clearer definition of respective responsibilities. For instance, the creation within IAU of a central coordinating Quality Assurance Council/Board should be considered.

From the efforts invested in the internal quality review as well as from many interviews, the evaluation team could see that quality assurance and development is a genuine and central concern of the institution and it is pursuing it with concentrated engagement. To what extent the analyses and recommendations that have been developed in the course of the internal quality review and strategic process will be implemented will depend on leadership decisions, coherent policies, clear responsibilities and adequate investments in the coming years.

5. Institutional decision-making and governance

Decision-making and governance is strongly regulated by national legislation and agencies in Turkey. As a foundation university, IAU is governed by a strong leadership composed of the President and board of trustees, which is the highest decision-making body at IAU, in accordance with the law on foundation universities. The rector and Senate operate in this context and are thus close to the highest decision-making bodies of the university.

The board of trustees consists of seven members and is chaired by the president of the board. It is responsible for the university budget and the university's financial and institutional strategies as well as for appointing the rector.

While the university describes the position of rector as the head of all academic decision-making, it is not clear to what extent this also involves academic strategy. The university's description of the rector's tasks suggests a more managerial rather than strategic function: The Rector is responsible for:

- directing staff to facilitate improvement in learning outcomes in all academic units,
- providing necessary social services to students,
- managing security precautions for the campus,
- planning and managing education-teaching, research, and extension activities, in accordance with national development plans, principles, and objectives,
- supervision or the assignment of supervision.

The governance structure, the evaluation team believes, is good for visionary action and dynamic development, and thus strongly depends on the visions, sources of advice and information of the President. Obviously, IAU is benefiting from the dynamic and visionary qualities of its founder and his choice of internationally attuned advisers. The dynamic development thus generated is only sustainable, however, if it is also linked (1) to shared values, ownership and commitment throughout organisation, especially among its leading academics, and (2) to effective managerial capacity throughout the organisation, but particularly at academic leadership level, so as to ensure that the organisation as a whole can give full effect to it and can interact with it proactively in the ongoing future development of IAU.

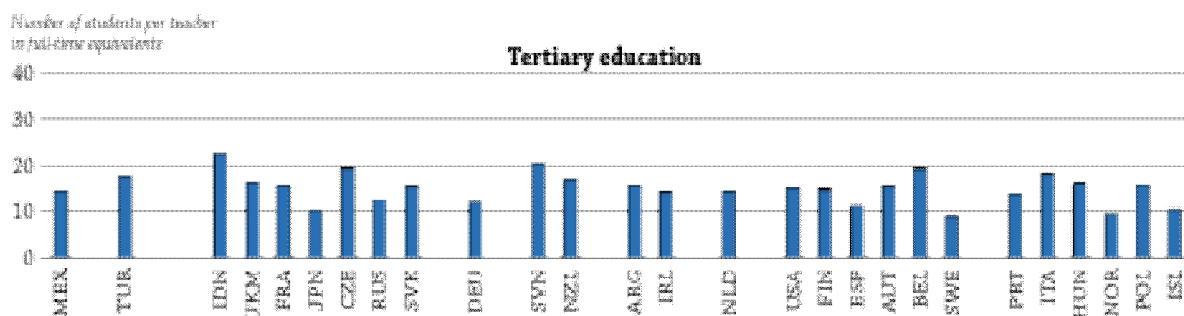
From the interviews, the evaluation team received the impression that students were heard and their problems addressed in so far as they addressed teachers, deans or the President as individuals, with individual concerns. However, they seemed to play no significant role in the institutional deliberation processes or quality development processes.

Given the very engaged student body and their high personal and even financial investment in their education at IAU, the university may want to consider including students more systematically in the institution's quality development and internal deliberations on continuous improvement of higher education at IAU.

6. Teaching and learning

6.1 Student numbers and framework conditions

Having first focused on the vocational sector after its foundation in 2003, IAU has started expanding into full-length undergraduate programmes in 2007-2008, although these involve only the minority of students. Of the 21,293 students enrolled in 2012-2013, roughly half are enrolled in the associate degree or vocational programmes (9436 at ABMYO and another 1054 in the other vocational schools). In addition to four-year programmes, there are 1600 students in Master programmes and 134 PhD students. With 529 full-time and 184 part-time academic staff members, student/staff ratios amount to 53 students per full-time staff member on average (or 27 per student if one includes part-time members of teaching staff according to SER, Table A1.3). This means that even if one included the part-time members as full-time equivalents (which they are clearly not) these student-staff ratios would still be much higher and therefore more disadvantageous to students (and teachers) in comparison to the average of European universities or other higher education institutions, as the annual “Education at a Glance” Data comparison of OECD (2011) shows:



Countries are ranked in descending order of students to teaching staff ratios in primary education.

Source: OECD, Argentina, China, Indonesia: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (World Education Indicators Programme), Table ECL2. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eq2011).

Please refer to the Reader's Guide for list of country codes for country names used in this chart.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/988934613911>

While institutional representatives pointed out that efforts are being made to improve this situation and that these numbers vary greatly from one programme to the other, the overall average does not seem to have improved in the last three years, if anything it has deteriorated, as the table provided during the second site visit showed (from 44 students per full-time staff or 31 per total academic staff in 2011-2012 to 49 students per full-time staff or 34 per total academic staff in 2013-2014).

In addition to big class sizes, teaching staff also have to handle a heavy teaching load in terms of class hours, which amount to 20 hours on average. If one also includes preparation, grading and basic communication time, this would not leave any time for counselling students

nor for research within a 40-hour week at least. Many members of the academic staff thus reported that research has to be done during free time and that this has also been communicated to them. Recently however, some academic staff members were freed of some teaching duties if they had been successful in acquiring research project money from external sources. Nevertheless, with respect to the teaching environment, it remains unclear how more extensive student counselling would be able to take place in such teaching conditions. Also, it is not clear to the evaluation team how IAU can realise its more ambitious goals of fostering leadership skills in its students and the individualised or team coaching attention that this would imply in such full classrooms, with so little teacher time per student.

As mentioned above, teaching facilities and IT infrastructure seemed very modern, especially the campus information system which gives access to all relevant information on courses, course material, locations and all other data connected to a given student or teacher and is greatly appreciated by everyone. Library facilities seemed modern although some complaints were voiced concerning the availability of books and journals.

6.2 Teaching methods and competence development

In its self-evaluation report, IAU provided information on teaching and learning goals but very little on teaching methods and teaching innovation. The SER mentioned some core competences that it seeks to develop: IAU strives to help its students develop the innovation skills and leadership potential needed by the Turkish labour market. IAU claims to foster leadership skills, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit, critical thinking skills, social responsibility and the readiness to adapt to changing demands. However, the team could not gain any understanding, through the SER or the interviews, on how these competences are promoted or assessed. Clearly, IAU has been dedicated to fostering IT and English language skills, but development with respect to the other competences does not seem to be pursued or monitored systematically. Even with respect to English language skills, which IAU clearly fosters systematically, it became obvious that the effectiveness of such training is still in great need of improvement.

The evaluation team recommends paying more thorough attention to competence development and the teaching methods needed to underpin it, and to develop methods of assessment which allow teachers and students to recognise teaching and learning success in terms of such competence development and learning outcomes. Moreover, IAU should ensure that teaching conditions such as class sizes and teaching load of academic staff allow such competence development.

IAU seems to have been very systematic and successful, however, in its orientation to the needs of external stakeholders. This is reflected in a wide range of internship opportunities for students, in the curricula as well as in a growing number of cooperative research projects with businesses. As a key component of IAU's teaching profile, students have practical on-site training one day a week. IAU cooperates closely with thousands of businesses, so-called

“solution partners” to provide these opportunities and to facilitate entry into the labour market upon graduation. The practical on-site training is related to their study programmes, fully integrated into the curricula and weekly student course schedule and is compulsory for short-cycle programmes and vocational schools as well as for Bachelor students. In the interviews, students also reported how much they appreciated these opportunities to be introduced to relevant labour markets, as well as the improved job prospects connected with this arrangement. In most programmes, with a few exceptions, labour market entry amounts to well over 80% of a graduate cohort. In interviews it was reported that IAU also uses its partnerships for the innovation of its curricula.

The evaluation team greatly commends the systematic attention which has been given to work-related and academically integrated placements and the close cooperation with external partners which IAU maintains for that purpose. This is clearly one of IAU’s unique qualities and should be looked after and developed further as a great institutional asset and is also unusual in the Turkish higher education landscape. Students emphasised in interviews how much they appreciated these opportunities and the employment prospects.

6.3 Teaching infrastructure

IAU takes pride in providing state-of-the-art infrastructure including teaching and learning infrastructure. Providing up-to-date infrastructure is also an integrated part of IAU’s mission to provide education that is oriented at high standards. The evaluation team saw the up-to-date technology with its online and distance teaching facilities as well as its teaching labs. Teaching staff can also rely on a common IT platform with all relevant campus information and course material, namely IAU’s Education and Training Information System (ETIS) where all relevant teaching information including an ECTS information package can be found. With the help of this platform, IAU would also like to increase its online teaching offer, with the aim of having 10% of its lectures online, without losing quality. In the interviews, it was emphasised that such online courses would still be accompanied with extensive counselling support, which the evaluation team greatly commends.

6.4 International student mobility

To facilitate access to international mobility for its students, IAU has paid great attention to creating international transparency regarding its teaching programmes through ECTS and compliance with the Turkish Qualifications Framework. The institution was awarded the ECTS Charta and Diploma Supplement labels in 2012. These state-of-the-art transparency tools should further facilitate student mobility. In 2013-2014, 140 IAU students studied abroad and IAU hosted 840 students from abroad. IAU has received students from a wide variety of countries especially in the Middle East and Asia and expects to expand its international student mobility rapidly.

International students seemed to be content with the facilities and integration into campus life. However, the team was reported that, in several occasions, the information on the course offer and its conditions (e.g. offered in English) appeared as inaccurate (See 9. Internationalisation for more on this topic).

6.5 Distance education

With its excellent distance and online learning facilities, IAU offers three distance education programmes, a graduate programme in e-business and two associate programmes in tourism and hotel management and in computer programming, all of which were accredited in 2008-2009. In addition, there are 35 evening education programmes offered.

6.6 Curriculum development

It has not become clear to the evaluation team how IAU develops its teaching programme portfolio. While IAU emphasised its close contact with the business sector, the evaluation team remained unclear as on how IAU ensures that the professionally oriented programmes offered are sufficiently supported by the basis disciplines that would be needed to provide relevant foundations, both methodologically and in terms of breadth and width of knowledge. IAU may want to consider not extending its offer over such a wide range of disciplines but concentrating more on groups of programmes in disciplines that mutually reinforce one another. For example, if considering that IAU has been particularly active in energy economy and food technology, a possibility would be to ensure that the underpinning science and engineering disciplines are also strongly represented at IAU. While being demand-driven is clearly part of IAU's mission and profile, it may also want to underpin the programmes with sufficient academic disciplinary substance to ensure high quality standards.

6.7 Student selection

In Turkey, admission to higher education is centralised and based on a nation-wide examination administered by the Student Selection and Placement Centre (ÖSYM) every year. The centre was established in 1974 and affiliated with the Council of Higher Education in 1981. According to the rank of their results, students can choose among the universities, with the best universities thereby receiving the most qualified students.

In the beginning, IAU was not able to be selective. However, the team was told that qualification levels have been improving in recent years. Recently, IAU has been trying to attract the more highly ranked students by offering them full scholarships if they choose IAU. Yet, academic staff in some faculties complained about the qualification levels of their students, in particular at the Master level.

6.8 Student services and support structures

In the interviews, it appeared that teaching staff and students were generally content with student services, support structures, and campus life. IAU offers a wide range of student associations or clubs (91 according to the SER) and extra-curricular activities, which is clearly seen by the institution and its students as one of its assets. Many of the extracurricular activities were also engaged with socially relevant concerns.

7. Research

Building research capacity has been a key strategic concern of IAU in recent years. Unlike the already well-established offer of its vocational school and four-year higher education programmes, IAU's research activities are still in the early phases of development. Originally, the idea of expanding the research base was meant to underpin the educational offer since the IAU leadership rightly believed that the transition from a vocational school to a higher education institution with full first-cycle and some second-cycle provision would need the establishment of research activities to allow for a more theoretical training base for students. In particular, research-based cooperation with industry was needed as a basis for training that would respond more adequately to its innovation needs.

Up to now, IAU has only devoted a small proportion of its annual budget to research: 0.02% of the budget was devoted to research in 2011-2012, amounting to €167,280. This figure appears low to the team, if considering IAU's own goals in terms of research. However, IAU is very keen on expanding its research capacity and has been increasing investments in research infrastructure and in personnel time. From 2008 onwards, IAU has been investing in research infrastructure. IAU has established a techno centre to train technical personnel for industry and to support research and university and business researcher cooperation, with 12 labs in a wide range of fields (mechatronics, mechanics, food engineering, chemistry, modular electronics, automotive, textile, microscopy, genetics, and civil engineering). Current and finished projects have attracted a rising proportion of external funding by the Istanbul Development Agency or business partners, as well as some grants allocated by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), although the proportion of the latter is still small. The evaluation team only had a brief tour of the techno centres and they cannot make any judgement on its efficacy but commend the idea of expanding the close cooperation with IAU partners in such a complex.

At the moment, research at IAU is understood primarily as industry testing, technical analysis or problem solving, which is a valuable type of applied research, following the model of University of Applied Sciences, with an emphasis on certain priority areas.

IAU also established a Scientific Research Programme and Project Office (BAP) in 2012 which helps researchers and service providers to find partners and resources, e.g. for research theses. Furthermore, research active staff with third party grants are now benefitting from reduced teaching loads.

The evaluation team finds the new research support programme and the use of incentives for research (bonus, reduction of teaching load) very positive stimuli for research production.

In general, the interviews and information provided gave the impression to the evaluation team that considerable energy and significant funds had been invested in research infrastructure and support services in recent years. The team could witness that the lab

spaces looked modern and well-equipped. IAU may consider seeking external peer advice for evaluating their own research agenda and success with regard to research equipment, environment and performances in subject areas.

While research infrastructure and equipment are important success factors for research capacity, these only constitute one part of the success equation.

It seemed to the evaluation team that sufficient thought and money had not yet been invested in the hiring policy, and researchers' working conditions need to build up IAU's research capacity, even though these are key requirements for enabling research success. Given the current teaching load and hiring criteria which have been entirely geared toward teaching activities, it is not surprising that academic staff cannot be very research-active as yet. On average, academic staff currently conduct less than half a research project per person per year according to the SER (Table A5.1), and with a total of 94 international research articles in 2011-2012 (51 in SSCI/AHI and SCI registered journals, as indicated in Table A5.3) the internationally oriented research publication record is low. While IAU underlines that the research production has risen considerably from 302 in 2010 to 409 publications of different types in 2011-2012, the number of academic staff has also risen during the same period. For now, the current research volume, both in absolute terms and in relative terms (research articles per staff) cannot compete with internationally oriented universities elsewhere in Europe. The evaluation team would like to emphasise once again that the low research volume is also linked to the small number of academic staff in relation to the number of students and, most of all, to their very high teaching load. Research becomes something one does after a full work week of teaching and student support, the average lecture load being 20 hours not counting the preparation, counselling and grading time (SER, Table A5 2). While the self-evaluation report claims that the student-staff ratios are getting better, no improvement can be seen in the last three years, for which the team received comparative data. At graduate level, it should be noted that research training conditions are still in need of improvement. The team understood that most doctoral students bear a heavy teaching load of more than two thirds of their working time (including preparation) which leaves too little time for building their own research qualifications and profile. Moreover, Master and doctoral students' prior qualifications are often regarded as unsatisfactory by their supervisors and therefore their input into research projects does not push the research profile of the institution as much as one could hope for.

Hence, the evaluation team greatly approves that IAU now promotes research production through additional time and financial resources for graduate students and through respective quality assurance measures. IAU should ensure that all doctoral programmes are embedded in an active research environment.

The evaluation team would also like to emphasise that it does not find the comparatively low research volume problematic in itself, given the active engagement of the staff in teaching. Such low research volume is only problematic in so far as it stands in contradiction to IAU's above-mentioned aim of becoming one of the top Turkish institutions and among the top 500

highly ranked ones in the world, rankings which are quite reductive in that they mostly reflect international research production, mostly in fundamental research, and ignore other higher education activities. IAU has the choice of:

- either adapting its aims to more realistic objectives, like the pursuit of excellence and internationalisation in terms of business sector-oriented applied research and teaching programmes which are strongly professionally oriented;
- or increasing the investment in the institution substantially (at least one hundred-fold) to hire clusters of new very research-productive staff in some chosen areas in which research staff and infrastructure is also brought to a critical mass, providing the necessary start-up and annual budget for them, as well as giving the research-active staff more time for research. Internationally competitive research-active staff will have to be hired with internationally competitive salaries, offered several research assistant posts with competitive conditions, as well as start-up funds, newly hired professor for experimental sciences, in addition to regular maintenance provision for scientific equipment.

It should be emphasised that building up a base in curiosity-driven and discovery-oriented research is a long-term, costly and difficult task. Indeed, the evaluation team would advise IAU not to move away from its primary focus of IAU as a teaching institution with a supporting applied research base that is intent on pursuing standards of excellence in teaching in close cooperation with external stakeholders and business sectors, as a motor of innovation for the region and the country. In the next five to seven years, building up its research capacity could be undertaken with this aim in mind, that is to say supporting excellence in teaching and knowledge transfer activities in view of regional and national business and innovation needs, with research projects for students and academic staff underpinning these aims — rather than being yet another higher education institution that aims at being present in international rankings of universities that pursue an entirely different set of aims.

To compete with the 500 top research universities, IAU would have to reorient itself to fundamental research which does not bear a strong relation to regional needs. The evaluation team recommends reviewing this aim and not underestimating the importance of the dimensions of teaching, including online teaching and lifelong learning, and knowledge transfer, and its impact on the regional and national community. In all of these IAU has established a good track record and excellent practice examples. To maintain this orientation does not mean IAU should not build up research capacity further or not internationalise further. It should just be more differentiated in the type of research it seeks to emphasise and the kind of international profile it wants to pursue in its own development and in its partners.

The evaluation team commends IAU for having chosen a few research areas in which to build up competitive research conditions and infrastructure. Such profiling and niche policy is essential for building some critical mass in a few areas, especially in the starting phase of

building research capacity. Given the great expenses connected with building up competitive research areas, IAU may want to conduct a systematic research strategy process, by bringing together assessments of external demand with an analysis of the latest scientific developments and an analysis of what combination of subject areas are needed to sustain a particular research area. It has not become clear to the evaluation team whether the Senate, the Executive Committee or the advisers to the President who have recommended the choices of research emphases have undertaken such a systematic analysis or whether the current choices have only been made on the basis of stakeholder demand. Once such choices are felt to stand on solid analytical grounds, the hiring policy should allow for the hiring of priority research personnel and should let these researchers have a strong say on the design of the area. This would make such a building phase a potentially exciting pioneering task. The hiring policy should include a few very promising independent research groups of younger researchers who should be supported generously to build their research profile at IAU. This could carry IAU's reputation as an entrepreneurial and pioneering institution further afield and into the national and international research communities, thereby potentially attracting more researchers and graduate students in the future.

Whatever the institutional choice and whatever the research volume and orientation may be, IAU will have to ensure that academic staff are given less teaching duties so that their comparatively high teaching loads are reduced and they can be competitive in research activities. Most importantly, a strong research function at a university needs a continuous internal funding stream and committed staff with enough time for research.

Finally, with respect to research capacity, the evaluation team would like to point out that competitive research cannot be undertaken without gaining access to an international research community. This in turn is only possible if researchers have a good command of English. Currently, the lack of English language competences of research staff hinders access to the international research community. This issue should be addressed with high priority.

8. Service to society

IAU shows very strong commitment to building educational and research activities that would be of service to society as well as to train graduates with a strong dedication to service to society. Its service orientation is also reflected in its close cooperation with business sectors, and public and private external stakeholders, both with respect to individual research projects and in developing and conducting its training programmes.

Furthermore, the evaluation team was impressed by the large amount of events and projects which are addressing social challenges and which also often attract public and private commissions from external stakeholders.

IAU has also chosen priority areas in applied research which have the potential to bear strong societal impact (e.g. in earthquake research and food safety).

Finally, in addition to the content of its educational programmes, service to society is strongly represented even in the extracurricular activities as the number of socially relevant student clubs show.

<p>In general, the evaluation team finds that IAU is an institution with a strong social conscience which has built up a very credible and intense cooperation network with private and public external stakeholders, and is willing to contribute in meeting the challenges of the century.</p>
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9. Internationalisation

IAU actively pursues its internationalisation by expanding the number of cooperation agreements with higher education institutions abroad and by mobilising their students to go abroad. These activities are supported by the university's internationalisation office (UAIPK) which coordinates all international academic agreements (currently more than 400). The ECTS and DS labels were awarded in 2012 and a range of Erasmus partnerships are in place so that students can expect their study abroad to be recognised at home. Given the profile of IAU, it may want to look for more of the internationally oriented Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) as partners since their emphases are quite similar to IAU (some are already among their partners).

IAU has recognised that language policy is an essential condition for effective internationalisation. Currently, however, the English language competence of students and staff are still not of a sufficiently high standard for a high level of international communication. Accordingly, only a small part of the programme can be offered in English. English language programmes can only be offered without disproportionate costs if foreign and local students can participate in these conjointly. In the current situation, expanding international student enrolment and exchange programmes are limited by the students' English language skills as well as the limited number of English-fluent academic staff. Currently, international student enrolment is low, amounting to 3% of international students per overall student number, namely 876 out of 26,000 students in 2013.

To mobilise its own students to go abroad and benefit from their stay abroad from an academic point of view, the goal of fostering English language competences among its students, which IAU has already set itself, should be pursued with full vigour and as a highest priority.

The evaluation team was said that IAU still would like to attract more students from abroad. Its goal is to receive up to 1500 foreign students by 2015, i.e. to more than double its intake of international students (in 2012 the number of incoming students reached 611). The evaluation team recommends that, for non-Turkish speaking students from abroad to come to IAU and be able to follow its programmes, IAU may want to expand the number of courses offered in English, complemented by Turkish survival language courses to allow for access to services and facilitate integration. In general, the evaluation team sees great potential for attracting qualified students from countries in the Eurasian region.

With respect to research, it is unclear to what extent the academic staff is engaged in international cooperation projects. According to the SWOT analysis, this is presented as one of the weaknesses. IAU does support international travel of researchers to conferences and even gives rewards for publications in international journals. What is needed to sustain a competitive research environment would be to create the right conditions (see 7. above). It should be pointed out, as studies of research at the universities of applied sciences in Switzerland and Germany have shown, that international cooperation is difficult for those

units that do not have their own institutional research budgets and have to rely entirely on external funding since the latter usually does not cover all indirect research costs.

10. Academic staff conditions and personnel development

Academics and students are the heart and soul of the institution. Human resources are the critical core resource, more than infrastructure or equipment, deserving the utmost care, from building up junior staff to selecting successful senior academics.

IAU must strive to develop junior staff, whatever national constraints there are, and give them more time to develop their research profile.

Academic staff at IAU are teaching oriented, with high teaching loads of 18+ contact hours for assistant professors or 15 teaching hours for full professors. Therefore, contact hours and the respective preparation, grading and counselling time occupy their whole working week. Moreover, since the team was told that students' qualifications are on the average lower than at some state universities, teaching itself is more challenging and time-consuming per student, in addition to having to tackle a high teaching load and difficult student/staff ratios. As mentioned above, research is done in extra time in the evenings or at weekends.

Moreover, all full-time staff members have to be physically present from 8 a.m. to 5p.m., no matter the working hours they had or will have to perform the day before or after in order to achieve their tasks. Most of them share open offices, which means that they cannot have confidential or concentrated conversations. Apart from the department secretary, they do not have secretarial support and do not have their own research or teaching assistants or subject-related counsellors to support their work. The team was told that these working conditions are being improved. One should point out, however, that academic staff do receive higher salaries than at state universities and that the infrastructure offered at IAU is of good standard. IAU has been trying to improve the overall qualification profile of the academic staff in terms of degrees and international background, and would like to hire a greater number of competitive academics from abroad to improve its research record.

Should IAU intend to improve its staff working conditions and resources so as to be able to achieve the aim of hiring internationally qualified academic staff with excellent research credentials, it should develop an action plan in this regard. Teaching load reductions and research project seed funds are a good way to start but are not sufficient to underpin a research active staff in general. A hiring policy with clear descriptions of the conditions to be established for researchers in the chosen strategic areas should be developed.

All in all, the evaluation team finds that there is a need for more international experience and time resources for research staff (reduced teaching load, sabbaticals).

Finally, unless IAU also hires more research staff and offers attractive working conditions for research, it will not be able to develop its research capacity.

11. Concluding recommendations

To conclude, the evaluation team would like to highlight its core recommendations that have been explained in more detail earlier in this report.

In its governance, IAU should further empower its academic community in order to further extend the entrepreneurial spirit of its leadership and create anchors for and sources of dynamic innovation across the whole institution. It should enhance the academic managerial capacity of IAU to achieve this.

In its quality assurance, IAU should build on its commitment to quality culture but introduce more structured and more integrated quality development processes.

In its teaching and learning, IAU should focus more on quality than quantity of teaching, and should concentrate more on student-centred teaching and on achieving the learning outcomes defined in the programmes.

In its research, IAU should concentrate on developing its applied research profile in the short to medium term, and should only opt for the development of long-term independent basic research units, if and as far as appropriate conditions can be realised.

In its doctoral education, IAU should ensure that all doctoral programmes are embedded in an active research environment.

In its internationalisation, IAU should implement the existing English language policy effectively and should include the academic staff in the aim of building English language competences so as to access the international education and research community more effectively.