



IEP

EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme

MARMARA UNIVERSITY, ISTANBUL

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of a follow-up evaluation of Marmara University in Istanbul, Turkey. European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) originally evaluated Marmara University in 2014 with the report submitted to the University in November 2014. In 2016 the University subsequently requested that IEP carry out a follow-up evaluation.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme and follow-up evaluation process

IEP is an independent membership service of the EUA that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

In line with the IEP philosophy as a whole, the follow-up process is critical but supportive. 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 all aspects of the follow-up process are 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 the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 Marmara University's profile

Marmara University took its current name and status in 1982, having been established as a state educational institution since 1883. The team was informed that the overall structure of the university remains largely unchanged since the initial evaluation visit (SER p.6). The university website currently lists 14 separate campuses, eight on the Asian side and six on the European side of Istanbul, forming a huge university with many different cultures. Originally established for commerce, the university's longest standing subject areas are business and banking, with engineering taught at Marmara only since the 1990s. Since 1982, the university has expanded rapidly and now comprises 17 faculties, 11 institutes, four schools, four vocational schools, 21 research and application centres and two education centres. Faculties

are diverse, ranging from Fine Arts, Business Administration and various Social Sciences, through to Technology, Dentistry and Health Sciences. The university claims to attract good students due to its comprehensive offer and continues to grow in student numbers whilst rationalising its provision. The team was informed that 81,560 students (including 3,150 international students) were now enrolled on a total of 729 programmes (226 short and first cycle programmes, and 503 second and third cycle programmes), compared to 70,000 students enrolled on a total of 935 programmes (250 short and first cycle programmes, and 685 second and third cycle) in February 2014, maintaining Marmara's position as one of the largest universities in Europe. Faculties deliver only undergraduate education, whilst postgraduate provision is delivered only in the institutes. The university continues to offer several programmes in more than one language, i.e. Turkish, English, German, French and Arabic. Its staffing levels have remained similar to 2014, employing over 1521 administrative and technical staff and 3441 academics.

Since the last evaluation visit, Marmara University has invested much time and effort in involving its staff in a carefully structured and well-organised collaborative exercise to produce the draft for a new strategic plan 2017-21. Under this draft, the institution's vision is 'To become a leading international university, supporting social development through cutting-edge research and education'. Its accompanying mission is proposed as 'Being a pioneering, multilingual, international and modern university, to create value and progress in science, culture, arts and sports. Our university aims [for] lifelong learning for all its stakeholders emphasising social values and aiming [for] sustainability.' (SER appendix 3). The team heard that the university aims to grow and continuously improve its quality, and that the development of the new strategic plan has been a significant step in this journey.

In Turkey, the National Qualifications Framework for higher education reflecting the Bologna conventions was established in 2010. The university system is unchanged since 2014 and the university remains accountable to the Council of Higher Education (Council of HE) in Ankara, which has been under the auspices of the Higher Education Law since 1980. The Council of HE oversees and regulates all public universities in Turkey, setting tuition fees centrally for all students. Admissions to particular universities and degree programmes are determined by the performance of students in the national selection examination and their achievement level in high school. The quotas for both new students and positions for academics are determined by the Council of HE (SER p.6).

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a self-evaluation group of fourteen members, nominated by the Rector and comprising ten academics, three members of administrative staff, and a student council representative. Each section of the report was written by a sub-group comprising a minimum of three experts in the field, after investigation through interviews, and gathering data and secondary sources from relevant departments. The sections were then

integrated into the final report by the self-evaluation team. The self-evaluation report and appendices were sent to the IEP evaluation team in early March 2017, and the team visit to Marmara University took place on 27-30 March 2017.

The evaluation team (hereinafter named the team) consisted of:

- Prof. Henrik Toft Jensen, former Rector, Roskilde University, Denmark, team chair
- Prof. Ingegerd Palmér, former Rector, Mälardalen University, Sweden
- Tijana Isoski, student, Singidunum University, Serbia
- Dr Karen Willis, Dean of Academic Quality and Enhancement, University of Chester, UK, team coordinator

Both the team chair and the team coordinator undertook the same roles in the 2014 evaluation team.

The team thanks the Rector, Prof. Dr M. Emin Arat and Vice-Rectors, Prof Dr Recep Bozlagan, Prof. Dr Mehmet Akalin and Prof. Dr Mehmet Akman, faculty deans and vice-deans, Prof. Dr Refika Bakoglu and the self-evaluation group for their warm hospitality and for the open discussions. The team would like particularly to thank Mr Murat Türkman as the liaison person who, together with Ms H. Gökçen Öcal Özkaya, efficiently prepared and organised all arrangements and meetings for the visits. Thanks are also extended to our interpreters, and to all staff and student representatives who the team met during their visit.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

This and the following sections will follow up on the findings and recommendations from the initial evaluation as well as examine any new issues that have emerged in the meantime. In the 2014 report, a number of recommendations were raised under this heading, each of which is separately numbered below, with the team's follow-up observations.

1. *The team encourages the rector to discuss with the Council of HE in Ankara and with other rectors of state universities the possible scope for less micro-management from the Council in Ankara. (2014)*

The team observed that no mention was made in the SER of any progress against this recommendation and considered that this might be a reflection on the wider national picture relating to higher education, rather than on the institution itself. The team heard that the Rector is responsible for representing his institution in communications and interactions with the HE Council in Ankara, for example on financial arrangements, and noted his attendance at meetings there as required.

2. *The team recommends that the university discuss and simplify the format of the strategic plan in order to drive forward the future development of the university. (2014)*

The team congratulated the university on having completed an impressive process of formulating a new strategic plan for 2017-21, involving nearly 700 people from all organisational units. The SER sets out in detail the stages and inclusive processes that were undertaken to create the strategy. The team heard that the exercise involved two different levels of research-based activity to produce strategic analyses at both institutional and local unit levels, which were then integrated into one overarching strategy of three main strands, each with accompanying action plans. The three strands are set out in the SER as:

- Restructuring our University campuses with an integrated and ecological approach
- Integration of education and research by means of collaboration between the university and stakeholders
- Conducting international value-added research and development studies.

The result is a clearly-defined strategic plan, which, although still quite complex, includes for each of the three strands goals, precise targets, performance indicators and an allocation of duties to units with responsibility for driving these forward and for implementation. The team heard that the IT department has developed a Decision Support System to capture data and enable future monitoring and evaluation of how each strategic strand is being taken forward in practice.

In the team's opinion, the strategic plan provides an excellent framework of actions for the development of the university, providing that the plan is put into action and used as intended. However, at the stage of the team's visit, the team heard less information about how it was intended that each unit should achieve their targets. The team found that, although some

senior members of staff showed a good understanding of the university's wider position and planning priorities, and some faculties were setting their own goals in accordance with the plan, this did not appear always to be the case. In discussions, the team found that not all academic managers, including some deans, appeared yet to be fully acquainted with the outcomes of the institutional planning processes, including the three key strategies and their supporting goals and targets. The team therefore encourages the university to ensure that all staff be made fully aware of the strategic plan, and that those colleagues with associated responsibilities become familiar with the plan's expectations and requirements. To support the embedding of strategic thinking and action, **the team recommends that the university undertake further work to improve internal communication and information-sharing.** In particular, **the team recommends that the university improve the knowledge of its decision-makers in relation to the strategic plan and other important developments in teaching and research.** In support of its suggestions for progressing the wider communication of the strategy and its associated responsibilities, **the team recommends that the university use the regular Administrative Board and Senate meetings to involve deans and others in discussion of the development and the implementation of the institutional strategy.**

- 3. The team recommends the rector to create not only goals for the future but also a vision for the everyday work of the university, including opportunities for planning priorities and incentives for day-to-day activities at different levels of the university. (2014)*

Following on from observations on the previous recommendation, the team noted that the new strategic plan presents a vision and sets out planning priorities for the university. A great strength of this process was the wide involvement of staff from all areas of the university to generate ideas and ownership. However, in the view of the team, the vision of how this is to be enacted in everyday work activities is not yet fully developed and this stage of development needs further planning. The team therefore encourages the university enact plans for the everyday enactment of the vision in order to create a strong framework for taking forward the future of teaching, research and service to society, as part of the institution's quality culture. In various meetings, the team formed an impression of interested and lively engagement from several members of staff at various stages in their careers, some of whom had been involved in the strategic planning exercise but who often felt distant from decision-making. In order to progress the day-to-day enactment of the strategic plan and its targets, and to promote the continued success of the university, **the team recommends the leadership should use ideas from staff at all levels and stages of experience, not just to contribute to the written plans but also to take forward actions.**

- 4. The team encourages the senior management to continue to consider ways in which the complexity of the university's regulatory processes might be decreased. (2014)*

The team found that the university had made some progress in this area. Although some views were expressed to the team indicating that there was still too much bureaucracy, the team notes several useful examples in the self-evaluation report of steps taken to address this recommendation through notable improvements to regulatory processes. These include: re-organising the functions of the Student Affairs Office for the benefit of students; simplifying

the registration processes for international students; easing administrative burden and accelerating internal correspondence by permitting units administrators to correspond directly amongst themselves without any longer requiring oversight by the Rectorate; and extending the use of electronic signatures to all academic and administrative staff, not only senior managers, thereby improving the efficiency of approvals. Notwithstanding the nature of the administrative requirements of the Council of HE, the team urges the university to consider the further actions that it might take to continue to improve internal regulatory efficiency.

5. *The team recommends that the university should consider more coherent approaches and models to increase student engagement and influence in decision-making. (2014)*

The team congratulates the university on some important steps that have been taken towards increasing student engagement and influence in decision-making. However, based on conversations with students, the team formed the view that students do not yet regard themselves as an integrated part of faculty boards and Senate, and that more progress is required to secure student membership and participation as accepted and fully embedded across the university. Some students met by the team expressed the view that they would like to have more of a voice in committees and to attend all meetings, not only for discussion of those matters that concerned students. In the view of the team, therefore, further steps should be taken forward to develop and establish more formal and systematic frameworks for the influence of students as partners, together with better promotion of information about, and training in, this approach for students themselves. **The team recommends that the university should increase student involvement in the Senate and other boards and committees.**

6. *The team strongly commends the rector's commitment to delegate more decision-making power to faculties and departments and recommends improved simplicity, transparency and accountability of budget allocation. (2014)*

The team heard that more opportunities have been delegated to faculties enabling them to benefit from income generated by projects, and were given some examples. It was explained that some other aspects of decision-making have also been devolved to faculties, for example decisions on students applying to attend activities abroad, and choices relating to students' residential accommodation. The team welcomes this positive development and advises the university to continue to identify more ways to delegate decision-making and budgets to faculties and departments. **The team recommends that the university continue to strengthen a visible and active commitment to the development of decision-making at faculty level.**

3. Quality culture

1. *The team recommends that the university develop its use of information and data on performance in order to strengthen its own internal approaches to evaluation, planning and enhancement. (2014)*

The university has made efforts to establish internal key performance indicators to support the fulfilment of targets in the strategic plan. Particularly in faculties with professional programmes, productive and well-developed quality improvement activities are undertaken as these contribute to the accreditation processes of the respective professional bodies. The team observes that, whilst the national context emphasises the central monitoring and reporting of data according to the regulations of the HE Council, quality culture should also primarily operate as an integrated part of the daily life of a university. **The team therefore advises that, whilst it is necessary to have indicators of the results and impact of activities, it remains important to identify and focus efforts on the measurements that are the most necessary.**

2. *The team recommends that the university assist all faculties and departments to develop effective systems for collecting feedback from students and for acting on these at local level. (2014)*

The team recognises that the university is required to collect student questionnaires for the Council of HE and advises that these also be used internally. The team notes that the use of questionnaires is in some cases combined with dialogue and informal feedback from students. The team compliments the efforts of some faculties and departments to collect further feedback from discussions with students and encourages all departments to act on feedback to improve their teaching. The team heard, for example, of several instances where faculties had acted upon student feedback to improve the content of their course.

4. Teaching and learning

- 1. The team recommends that further alumni links be developed at faculty and departmental levels. (2014)*

The team recognises that a central alumni office has been recently established, together with an alumni data management system and heard about several decentralised initiatives to support this area, for example the use of alumni contacts to inform course development and employment opportunities. The team heard that students are very active in support of the alumni office, as they are with participation in the careers centre. The team met several alumni amongst the representatives from stakeholder organisations, who commended the university on its preparation of graduates for work.

The team was also informed of a number of new and recent developments to increase student-friendliness and strengthen other aspects of the student learning experience. This included the provision of a more responsive, interactive information service relating to student affairs. **The team heard about and commends new initiatives for student support, including the careers centre, the call centre, the solution centre, and the online student contact system (BYS).**

- 2. The team recommends that a learning and teaching unit be established, either at university or possibly faculty level, to support the pedagogic development of academic staff and to share existing good practice. (2014)*

The team saw no evidence yet of such a unit to support pedagogical developments in student-centred learning or the wider development of understanding and use of learning outcomes in course design and delivery. Concerning the area of research, the team heard that the academic development unit, in collaboration with the library, currently focuses primarily on support for the development of academics' and graduate students' skills for research and the publication of scholarly articles. The teaching of digital literacies for students is also a primary focus of the library.

The team was made aware of proposals for training, particularly of younger university teachers, in contemporary teaching skills and methods. The team urges the university to progress these plans and to keep student-centred learning and use of learning outcomes in curriculum design, teaching delivery and assessment high on its agenda for the development of teaching and learning. **The team recommends that the university should create a unit for developing teaching quality and methodology by offering educational pedagogic seminars and workshops.**

It was also explained to the team that the restructuring of the university into thematic campuses under the proposed strategic plan would support more student choice, particularly where students wanted to take modules from different departments. The team heard from staff and students that the national process through which the university receives high numbers of allocated students could at times produce challenging implications for the quality

of education in some departments, particularly in terms of large classes, and pressure on space and resources. It was expected that the acquisition of new land for campus development would in due course help to ease this situation. **The team has seen far-reaching plans for the restructuring of the university campuses and observed a high level of building activity on some of the campuses.**

The team was also informed that at least one large campus was now fully accessible to those with disabilities. **The team commends the university's efforts to improve access and support for disabled students.**

3. *The team recommends teaching staff develop more pedagogic knowledge about student-centred learning and learning outcomes, and apply these in their practice. (2014)*

Both staff and students reported to the team that relationships between students and teachers were generally very good and that staff were keen to help their students. In the faculties visited, the team heard clear evidence from staff there that they understood and were using learning outcomes and student-centred approaches to their teaching.

The team formed the impression that these approaches were well-understood in some faculties, and particularly (although certainly not exclusively) in those faculties with professional accreditation for their programmes. However, based on discussions with senior representatives from a range of faculties, and whilst recognising the autonomy of subject specialists, it is not evident to the team how well understood these approaches are across the whole university. Several international students who met with the team reported relatively teacher-centred methods of teaching compared to the more student-centred methods they had experienced in their home countries. Some students met by the team offered views that they would prefer more choice of curriculum, more practical opportunities and more lessons in how to critically analyse rather than just memorise. However, others praised the practical facilities and active projects offered by their faculties, so the team formed the impression that this aspect varies considerably between faculties and courses. **The team therefore encourages the university to take active steps to raise awareness of and promote more systematic use of learning outcomes and student-centred learning approaches throughout its policies, practices and staff development in teaching and learning.**

4. *The team recommends that the university sustain and further develop its teaching in a range of languages, and provide support for academic writing skills in English where necessary for both students and staff. (2014)*

The team heard that progress in these areas had been maintained, and affirms that these remain an important priority for the university. This includes the teaching by some faculties in a range of languages.

The team was informed that the collaboration of the library and academic development unit, together with the Continuing Education Centre, included support for academic staff to improve

their spoken and written English, in order to enhance their teaching and the quality of their written articles in English.

5. Research

The team recommends that the university develop a research policy and appropriate supporting structures for research. (2014)

The team was told that the faculty journals were receiving wider recognition (for example, by EBSCO) and that the number of citations of Marmara researchers was increasing; this was therefore improving the university's reputation and ranking. The team heard that the university's research priority is to increase the capacity for research projects and the number of publications and that there are formal expectations and incentives encouraging staff to publish. The team heard that, on the basis of a grant received from Scientific and Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), the university had greatly enhanced interaction between its academics and industry on opportunities for research projects. The team noted that the institution, under the auspices of the Technology Transfer Office, had undertaken an analysis of the disciplines with the most research potential and from this had developed five research priorities, in economics, biotechnology, polymer sciences, disease and curative technologies, and environmental technologies, in which to develop further applications for external funding. **The team notes the benefits of the TUBITAK project to increase the capacity of the university for research projects.**

Opportunities also exist for individual academics to apply for internal institutional funding for research projects through the Scientific Research Projects Coordination Office (BAPKO), which has provided increasing resources for research in four main areas (health sciences, pure and applied sciences, social sciences and educational sciences) over the last five years (SER appendix 8). Academic staff are supported by their faculties to undertake research, including some examples carried out in other countries, and some faculties also organise research symposia and conferences.

The team also noted that the library works with the academic development unit to support staff writing for publication, to contribute to the raising of the university's national and international rankings. The team heard that a "third generation library" is being developed, creating social spaces and working on digital repositories, and that the library also manages the Marmara University Press, with 22 journals currently in print and openly accessible electronically.

The team warmly congratulates the university on the strong progress it has made with developments in this challenging area of activity and encourages the university to continue its work in this regard.

6. Service to society

1. *The team invites the university to consider the potential benefits of establishing faculty-based units advising on research and knowledge transfer to the public and industry. (2014)*

The team was impressed with the development of the Technology Transfer Office at university level to actively create stronger links with industry, and formed the view that this was functioning well. Industrial liaison officers build links with public bodies and the private sector to undertake needs analyses and then match these with the profiles of academic departments. It was noted that several faculties also have their own activities. The team heard that these activities are closely integrated with increasing the university's research capacity and that the Technology Transfer Office was also hoping to promote income-generating activities by gaining the approval from senior management and the Senate to apply centrally to become a research application centre.

The team notes that the new strategic plan includes the goal of 'Increasing the collaboration between our University and Stakeholders', with one of the associated targets being 'Completion of one social responsibility project per year by all undergraduate and associate degree programmes together with their stakeholders'.

2. *The team recommends that the university increase the visibility of its contacts with the community and further extend opportunities for delivering benefits to the community. (2014)*

In its meeting with external partners, the team was very impressed to learn about the wide range of projects and partnership developments with municipalities, industrial associations and other stakeholders. Many of these projects involved students as well as researchers of the university, and some included European as well as local and national dimensions.

The team also learned that the Education and Training Unit contributes to society through the professional development of schoolteachers, and includes social responsibility projects such as training approximately 250 teachers to teach Turkish to Syrian residents in Turkey. The team were told that the Faculty of Sports Science makes some sporting facilities available to the public for free or at reduced rates, and that continuing professional development was delivered to pharmacists, lawyers and other professional groups as an income-generating activity. The health-related faculties also provide service to society by providing treatment for patients in the general population.

7. Internationalisation

1. The team highly commends the university for its active commitment to increased internationalisation. (2014)

The team saw and heard evidence that the university maintains its strong commitment to internationalisation and has had great success in this area, noting that the number of international students had increased by 25% over the last five years and that Marmara is the most preferred university in Turkey for incoming Erasmus students. The team notes that the university is strongly placed for internationalisation in terms of geographical location and size of student population, and congratulates the university on its success in recruiting international students and establishing exchange arrangements. A number of home students met by the team reported having studied in other countries under the Erasmus scheme. The team were informed that international students value the open, multicultural experience of studying at Marmara and those met by the team reported feeling very welcomed at the university by both the international office and their teachers. The only reservations expressed related to the organisation of timetables. Several students remarked that it had taken a lot of effort and time to obtain their timetables (one reported that it had been too late to attend the Turkish language class) and that information about rooms could be a little disorganised.

2. The team recommends that it continue to develop these opportunities. (2014)

The team found that internationalisation remains a high priority for the university's senior management, notably in terms of exchanges for students and faculty members, and of bilateral cooperation and projects abroad, and that some faculties take full advantage of this. For example, the team heard of one cooperative development with institutions in Portugal and Spain to produce a joint masters' degree. **The team advises that the university continue to increase the development of language skills in its staff and to increase staff mobility.**

The team highly commends the university's commitment to internationalisation and urges the university to maintain its strong efforts in this area of activity.

8. Conclusions

In determining its overall conclusions, the team revisited the recommendations of the 2014 report and considered progress made against these.

The team found that the university had prepared a strong self-evaluation report and that the university had addressed many of the points and recommendations raised by the 2014 evaluation visit. In particular, the team were impressed by the thorough and comprehensive processes by which the institution had engaged many of its staff and stakeholders in developing its new strategic plan 2017-21, including the accompanying strategic goals and targets for implementation. The team advises the university to focus now on embedding understanding of the plan throughout the organisation and to develop mechanisms to drive, as well as monitor, its implementation. The team found the institution open to identifying current challenges and to taking clear steps towards addressing these.

Summary of new observations

The team

- heard about and commends new initiatives for student support, including the careers centre, the call centre, the solution centre, and the online student contact system (BYS)
- has seen far-reaching plans for the restructuring of the university campuses and observed a high level of building activity on some of the campuses
- commends the university's efforts to improve access and support for disabled students
- notes the benefits of the TUBITAK project to increase the capacity of the university for research projects.

Summary of new recommendations

Governance and institutional decision-making

The team recommends that

- the university undertake further work to improve its internal communication and information-sharing
- the university improve the knowledge of its decision-makers in relation to the strategic plan and other important developments in teaching and research
- the university use the regular Administrative Board and Senate meetings to involve deans and others in discussion of the development and implementation of the institutional strategy.
- the leadership use ideas from staff at all levels and stages of experience, not just to contribute to the written plans but also to take forward actions
- the university should increase student involvement in the Senate and other boards and committees
- the university continue to strengthen a visible and active commitment to the development of decision-making at faculty level.

Quality culture

The team advises that

- whilst it is necessary to have indicators of the results and impact of activities, it remains important to identify and focus efforts on the measurements that are the most necessary.

Teaching and learning

The team

- recommends that the university should create a unit for developing teaching quality and methodology by offering educational pedagogic seminars and workshops.
- encourages the university to take active steps to raise awareness of and promote more systematic use of learning outcomes and student-centred learning approaches throughout its policies, practices and staff development in teaching and learning.

Research

The team

- warmly congratulates the university on the strong progress it has made with developments in this challenging area of activity and encourages the university to continue its work in this regard.

Internationalisation

The team

- advises that the university continue to increase the development of language skills in its staff and to increase staff mobility.

Concluding remarks

The team enjoyed the follow up visit to the university and learning about the university's initiatives and work with the strategic plan. These initiatives look promising, even though there are still important steps to be taken in teaching methodology and the involvement of the students in the decision-making structure.

The team wishes the university good fortune with their efforts in developing an internationally orientated university and would like to thank all at Marmara for their hospitality.