

**European University Association
Institutional Evaluation Programme**

BAHÇEŞEHİR UNIVERSITY

EVALUATION REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Foreword	3
2. Introduction	3
3. Constraints and Institutional Norms	5
3.1 Profile of the University	5
3.2 Context, Environment	6
3.3 Autonomy	7
3.4 Governance and Organisation	8
3.5 Mission, Vision, Strategic Planning	9
3.6 Quality Assurance	11
3.7 Finances	13
4. Capacity for Institutional Change	14
4.1 Teaching and Learning; Study Programmes, Student Care	14
4.2 Research	17
4.3 Internationalisation, Bologna Process	19
4.4 The University and the Region	20
5. Envoi	21
Summary of Recommendations	22

1. Foreword

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) was launched sixteen years ago with the aim of preparing universities to meet the emerging needs for external accountability by an increased capacity for both strategic thinking and internal quality culture. To date, more than 180 universities from 36 countries have participated in this programme and some have subsequently asked for follow-up visits to monitor progress made.

The goal of the review is to offer to the university an external evaluation by university leaders who have experience of different higher education systems in Europe. This evaluation considers the quality issues and the main actors in the university's daily decision-making process. IEP does not wish to provide the university with a blueprint for its development; rather the review process is consultative and should be seen as a tool to help institutional leaders as they prepare for change.

By reviewing institutions in different countries IEP hopes to disseminate examples of good European practice, as well as international practice, to validate common concepts of strategic thinking, and to elaborate shared ideas on quality that will help member universities to reorient their strategic development while strengthening a quality culture in Europe. During the review the university is helped to examine how it defines its medium and long term aims, to look at the external and internal constraints shaping its development, to discuss strategies that will enhance its quality while taking account of these constraints.

The Review Team for Bahçeşehir University consisted of:

Professor Maria Helena Nazaré, Rector, University of Aveiro, Portugal (Chair)

Professor Fuada Stankovic, former Rector, University of Novi Sad, Serbia

Professor Bertrand Weil, former Vice-Rector, University of Paris 12, France

Anita Liice, European Students Union, Latvia

Professor Don McQuillan, Former Chief Executive, Irish Universities Quality Board, Ireland (Secretary)

2. Introduction

The Review process consisted of several phases. The university first produced a Self Evaluation Report (SER) prepared by the Self Evaluation Steering Group. The SESG consisted of ten members headed by vice-rector, Professor Dr Selahattin Kuru. Membership consisted of senior academics and included the General Secretary and one student. Under the general direction of the rector, Professor Dr Deniz Ülke Arıboğan the university organised the self-evaluation process very carefully with the involvement of all elements of the academic community. There were 40 direct contributors to drafting the SER and the draft was made available for comment across the university.

The report arrived in good time, was very well written and was a valuable source of information for the Review Team. It was evident in all our meetings with staff and students that everyone had had the opportunity to read the report and was familiar with it. The SER notes in the introduction that the evaluation process was considered to be an opportunity for emphasising quality improvement and with this in mind a large number of studies were carried out covering a wide spectrum of the institution's activities.

Documents related to these studies were on exhibit during the visits together with other relevant items.

The Preliminary Visit took place on 25-27 March 2009. This enabled the team to become acquainted with the university, with initial discussions centred in the areas of

- Autonomy
- Strategic Planning
- Evaluation and Quality Processes
- Organisation and Governance
- Internationalisation
- Resources
- Capacity for Change

as well as identification of areas for more detailed questioning during the Main Visit.

Subsequently the team requested and received further information and documentation in several areas including : succinct statement on internal QA practices; academic profile of incoming students for previous 5 years by numbers, based on national entrance examination, in 10% intervals; student failure rates each year in each faculty over previous 5 years; drop out rates in each faculty over previous 5 years; completion times for Bachelor and Masters degrees over previous 5 years; student:staff ratio in each faculty; research publications by staff over previous 5 years; samples in English of student Satisfaction, Course and Teaching Questionnaires; Erasmus numbers over past 5 years: students in, students out, staff in, staff out. break down on funding from TÜBİTAK; sources of research grants for each faculty for previous 5 years; details on Research Centres: activities, funding. The team is highly appreciative of the efficient work done in the preparation and translation of the requested documents.

The Main Visit took place on 12-15 May 2009. During the two visits the review team met the rector, the self evaluation steering group, the chairman and several members of the Board of Trustees, vice-rectors, deans of faculties, senior administrators, members of support units, of the student council, of the vocational school, of two research centres, staff and students of all six faculties and the two institutes, and representatives of external stakeholders. The team visited all the faculties, two research centres, the library, computer centre, film studio, and teaching laboratories.

The meetings were always helpful, friendly and frank. Throughout the university the goodwill and strong commitment to excellence were always in evidence. It was clear that the process of self-evaluation had been very open and extensive because in our meetings it was never necessary to explain our presence, and the goals of the evaluation, since they were well known in advance.

On the final day of the main visit the team presented the oral report indicating the principal conclusions and recommendations to an audience that included university leaders and representatives of the student council. This written report is a full exposition of these conclusions and recommendations.

We would like to acknowledge warmly the co-operation and hospitality we received throughout the two visits. We thank the rector Professor Dr Deniz Ülke Arıboğan who

signed the invitation letter to the IEP, the vice-rectors and deans, who actively supported us during our two visits, and all the staff and students, as well as stakeholders from outside the university, for their helpful contribution to our open discussions.

We wish especially to thank Professor Dr Selahattin Kuru for his efficiency in organising the documentation, liaising with the review team and maintaining our tight daily schedule. We trust that our joint efforts will together provide a sound springboard for Bahçeşehir University as it moves into the next phase of its evolution.

3. Constraints and Institutional Norms

3.1 Profile of the University

Bahçeşehir University was founded by Bahçeşehir Uğur Educational Foundation, and was ratified by the Turkish Parliament on January 15, 1998 as a trust-endowed university. After the university's first graduation ceremony in 2003 it moved to a unique location along the Bosphorus Strait on the European coast of Istanbul. It has three campuses, all close to each other. The main campus is the Beşiktaş Campus, where all bachelor's and master's programmes are offered, the Şişli Campus is home to the vocational school, and the Mecidiyeköy Campus is where the English Preparatory School is located

The SER notes that “Beşiktaş, the district of the main campus, is the center of commerce, culture and art in Istanbul, as well as one of the main stops in the city's public transportation network. The campus is also only a few minutes away from other important centres like Taksim, a social *Mecca* famous for its nightlife, and Maslak, where the headquarters of many international firms are located. This close vicinity enables students to conveniently seek internships and explore employment possibilities”.

It is a private (*foundation-owned, not for profit*) university and has six Faculties, two Institutes (graduate schools), a Vocational School and an English Preparatory School. The following is the list of faculties and institutes:

- Faculty of Architecture and Design
- Faculty of Arts and Sciences
- Faculty of Communications
- Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Law
- Institute of Social Sciences
- Institute of Science and Engineering

The university offers degree programs at the associate, bachelor, master's and doctorate levels. There are 30 undergraduate programmes in the 6 faculties, 52 graduate programmes in the 2 institutes (including 3 Ph.D. programs), and 17 associate degree programmes in the vocational school. The majority of the master's programmes are offered at night. The SER notes that “the university does *not* give priority to either undergraduate (bachelor), or graduate (master's or doctorate) or associate degree programs. Historically it started with undergraduate programs. Later associate degree programs and master's programs were started. The university is now at the initial stage of its doctoral programs”.

There are approximately 1000 students in associate degree programs, 4500 in bachelor's programmes, 1700 in master's programmes, and 1800 in the English Preparatory School (the language of instruction throughout the institution is English). Double major and minor programmes are very common. Approximately one fourth of the undergraduates are in the Faculty of Engineering, and three fourths of the graduate students are in the Institute of Social Sciences.

Currently there are 444 full-time members in the academic staff, including 135 professors holding academic rankings (assistant professors, associate professors and full professors), 185 instructors (mostly in the English Preparatory School) and 124 research assistants. Distribution of academic staff among faculties is more or less proportional to the number of students in the faculties. The total number of part-time academic staff is 202, including 128 professors and 74 instructors. The number of non-academic staff is 269. Bahçeşehir University has a young non-academic staff: 40% below 25 years of age, 33% with a university degree.

The ratio of students to academic staff (professors and instructors) is 23 to 1 for the undergraduate programmes, 46 to 1 for the vocational and 17 to 1 for the English Preparatory School.

3.2 Context, Environment

The modern university finds itself in a rapidly changing environment and facing challenges that are by now well known: increased international and national competition for scarce resources, increased cost of research, massification of education, economic globalisation with the resulting demands from government and society for more and better trained graduates especially in the sciences, the need to establish improved research capabilities for assisting/underpinning national competitiveness. There is also a growing awareness of the importance of international alliances, and the need for interdisciplinary studies and research. Add to these the financial problems posed by the present global economic downturn.

In Turkey there is the additional issue of the rapid increase in population over recent years, which, in turn, has led to the creation of many new institutions of higher learning. There are currently 2.5 million students in 130 universities, of which 94 are state universities and 36 private; in 2006 alone, 15 new universities were launched. The legal background is complex. The Law of Higher Education (1981), which provides the legal framework for the sector, has been changed frequently: twenty five permanent amendments, eighty six clauses altered, twenty three permanent and several temporary articles added. There are detailed accreditation/evaluation/audit requirements directed to ensuring that adequate and coherent standards are maintained across the sector. These requirements are particularly onerous for private institutions.

3.3 Autonomy

It appears that Bahçeşehir University enjoys a measure of autonomy comparable to that enjoyed by many institutions in western Europe. Indeed it has autonomy in several key areas, such as:

- organising its internal structure
- appointing Assistant and Full Professors in accordance with national norms

- enrolling students in accordance with national norms
- managing finances within the university
- organising international and national cooperation and exchanges, research initiatives and activities
- developing partnerships with the private sector
- generating income from research and other activities

EUA supports strong university autonomy. Autonomy is a necessary prerequisite for speedily responding to the challenges and changing academic landscape described above. On the other hand it is well recognised in European universities that university autonomy is bound up with accountability to society, and that accountability brings with it the responsibility to drive the required change and improvement. Thus universities must use the autonomy and independence that they have for positive strategic development and involvement with society according to its expectations and needs.

EUA in its Graz Declaration states that ‘higher education remains first and foremost a public responsibility so as to maintain core academic and civic values, stimulate overall excellence and enable universities to play their role as essential partners in advancing social, economic and cultural development. Governments must therefore empower institutions and strengthen their essential autonomy by providing stable legal and funding environments. Universities accept accountability and will assume the responsibility of implementing reform in close co-operation with students and stakeholders, improving institutional quality and strategic management capacity.’

The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) regulates higher education in Turkey. The Council acts as a national accreditation and evaluation body, and imposes an external ‘minimal standards’ burden of documentary proof on all universities, both public and private, over an extremely wide spectrum of university activities, with precise numerical indicators. An internal self-evaluation process, YÖDEK, is also in place involving specified criteria and a large number of numerical performance indicators. Private institutions like Bahçeşehir University are subject to additional measures. They are audited every year. An auditing committee visits the university for two or three days and inspects all procedures and files, including meeting minutes of the senate, the university council, the faculty councils and the faculty executive councils, student files and transcripts, grading standards and failure rates, student complaints, academic promotion files, etc.

Given the rapid increase in the number of new universities in Turkey, YÖK is entirely justified in establishing protocols to ensure that these institutions meet strict standards in the key areas of teaching, research, management, organisation and planning. However, this is a complex and time consuming process that diverts resources, both human and financial, from the core activities of the university to an exercise in form filling and number crunching, and could be considered as a restriction of its autonomy. Its role as a QA measure will be discussed in the section on quality assurance.

The team suggests that it should be possible to find a balance between institutional autonomy and necessary state regulation for those universities that have proved their value over the years and successfully and consistently satisfied the regulations. Perhaps extending the time cycle of evaluation/accreditation/audit to three years for those

institutions with an excellent record of compliance could be a step toward achieving this balance.

Recommendation to YÖK: the time cycle of evaluation/accreditation/audit could be extended to three years for institutions with an excellent record of compliance.

3.4 Governance and Organisation

The highest administrative body of the university is the *board of trustees*, which is appointed by the owner foundation. It sets the vision and mission of the university and approves the budget plan. The chairman of the board of trustees is the founder of the university and is active in management. He has considerable influence on the university in terms of new directions and new initiatives.

The board of trustees appoints the *rector*, subject to the approval of YÖK, and the rector appoints the academic managers, namely the three vice-rectors (academic affairs, international relations and research, student affairs), the deans of the faculties department heads, and directors of institutes, schools and research centres.

The *rector's council* comprises the rector, the vice-rectors and the *secretary general* (in charge of accounting and finance, human resources, purchasing, support services, food, health and sport services). This body is a creation of the university and is not prescribed by the Higher Education Law.

According to the SER:

- the council provides leadership and harmony throughout the institution
- the strategic choices of the university are set jointly by the board of trustees, the rector's council and the academic manager, e.g. establishment of new faculties and programmes, increase in number of staff, students, establishment of new labs, etc.
- specific objectives and action plans for the implementation of strategic goals are set jointly by the rector's council and the academic managers.

It was difficult to ascertain how well these arrangements work in practice or how final agreement is reached on thorny issues. However the SER notes that a top priority is “ensuring harmony between the chairman of the board of trustees, the rector's council and the academic managers; and synergistically setting strategic goals while maintaining a vision parallel with the future aspirations of the university in order to achieve them’.

There is a senate which deals with academic matters, and comprises the rector, the vice-rectors, deans, institute directors and elected faculty members. There is a small executive council that deals with administrative matters. Similarly each faculty, institute and school has a council and an executive council. Each department has a council.

There is one student representative in the senate whose direct involvement in discussions is limited to issues “related to student affairs”. Given that the Prague Communiqué states that students are to be considered as “competent, active and constructive partners” the team feels that Bahçeşehir University, like many universities around Europe, should welcome student representatives as full members of governing and academic bodies.

The role of the senate and the councils is to add a collegial and participative element to the governance and management of the university. However, the SER emphatically states

that the university's approach to governance is managerial and not collegial. Initiatives come from the managers and not the academic councils. Any manager may take initiatives as a response to a demand, a threat or an opportunity. This includes the board of trustees, rector's council, deans, directors of research centres, and even individual academic staff members. 'This kind of approach gives Bahçeşehir University the kind of environment needed for responding effectively to demands, threats and opportunities.'

This explicitly managerial approach to university governance is new to the members of the team. In their experience of the institutional evaluation programme universities usually stress that their approach to management is democratic, collegial and inclusive. Obviously this approach can lead to delays in their ability to respond to the urgent challenges facing higher education to-day, and already mentioned elsewhere in this report, Thus they are advised to find ways to speed up their decision making procedures. Here the situation is exactly the opposite.

So far the managerial approach employed here has worked well. In a very short time the university has made great progress in all its activities. The crucial question for Bahçeşehir University is will it continue to work well as the university grows; in the long term will it help or hinder the university to realise its aim of becoming one of the world's leading universities. The answer to this question is clearly central to the future of the university.

The team recommends that the university establish a Task Force to examine and report on international best practice in university governance and management in the context of Bahçeşehir University's long term ambitions. The Task Force should include external members with experience of governance and management in universities of world class.

3.5 Mission, Vision, Strategic Planning

The vision of the university is to become '*an internationally recognized university that contributes towards the design of the world of the future.*' As a higher education institution dedicated to teaching, research, and service to our society, the mission of Bahçeşehir University is '*to contribute towards the development of human values, to educate the work force and to conduct research for the well-being of the society with this understanding and to contribute towards the design of the future of the world by education, research and service to society*'

The university aims to become one of the leading universities in the world in just a few decades. It aims to integrate well with universities, communities and industry worldwide. It aims to expand the international student body on campus. It aims to respond to the needs of industry and society by offering the right programmes at the right time. It aims to adopt modern educational and learning paradigms such as *co-operative education*.

From our discussions with the board of trustees, the rector, staff and students it is clear that there is a good feeling about the university and about its ability to continue its effective growth. The team congratulates the university on its fine achievements to date. The SER presented plans for future development and, in our meetings across the university, we heard more about expectations for the evolution of the institution.

In the course of the two visits however the team became aware of a certain fragmentation in the university's perceptions of planning for the future and of the need for more joined up thinking across the institution. The development of research is a case in point. The SER notes that research is currently an area of weakness in the university. However there are no indications as to how this situation will be remedied, and when we raised the matter in one of the faculties it was clear that no thought had been given to ways and means to improve performance or to develop the research potential of young scholars within the faculty. That was other people's business.

It seems to the team that the university has reached an important juncture in its life. So far it has managed extremely well by making immediate strategic choices on a fairly short term basis. We believe that to achieve the progress necessary to drive its high ambitions it is crucial that the institution develops an overarching strategic plan. This plan should deal with all its activities, including growth, teaching and learning, research, quality assurance, regional, national and international involvement, etc. What does it mean to be a leading university? Is there a danger that catering to the perceived immediate demands of the market may in fact be counterproductive and lead to the type of 'short term-ism' that has been so disastrous in the global banking system?

Strategic planning has been described as 'the continuous and collective exercise of foresight in the integrated process of taking informed decisions affecting the future'. It is essential that the university understand what is involved in the preparation of a strategic plan. A strategic plan is not a wish list, a mere collection of desirable outcomes with no indication as to how these outcomes can be achieved, nor is it a compilation of departmental plans. On the contrary, the process of developing an effective strategic plan is complex and intensive. We suggest that three basic questions be kept in mind: Where is the university positioned now? Where does the university want to go? How does the university get there?

The answer to the first question requires a realistic SWOT analysis. This should be developed in the light of the IEP experience. It is important to emphasise that planning is a continuous process. Thus the plan itself and the SWOT on which it is based must be updated on an ongoing basis. This requires solid data to support conclusions and to position the university to meet new developments.

The team recommends that the university establish a capability for the collection and consolidation of data on all its activities.

The second question addresses the vision and mission of the university, and the detailed objectives to be achieved, say in the period in the period 2010-2014, based on the SWOT analysis.

The third question requires a detailed presentation of the steps to be taken in achieving the objectives. Good organisation and agreed procedures are essential. The objectives should be prioritised, and each objective should be stated in a clear and unambiguous way. An action plan for the successful achievement of each objective should be established, responsibility for completion assigned, and allocation of required resources agreed. Each objective should have a time frame for completion and precise indicators of success should be set down beforehand

The team recommends that the university establish a University Steering Committee with responsibility for preparing a Strategic Plan for the years 2010-2014. The Committee should be chaired by the rector.

A sense of ownership of the strategic plan throughout the university is essential to the success of the process. This could be achieved using a fairly common methodology. In the first instance each faculty prepares an agreed plan based on contributions from the individual departments. These plans could then be confronted with the university's vision and aims, and harmonised by the University Steering Committee to produce an overarching strategic plan for the whole university. The plan should be discussed widely, and then finalised and approved by the board of trustees.

This can be a complex and difficult task involving as it does repeated top-down and bottom-up debate within the university. Inevitably there will be competing agendas, and tension between the various elements of the university. No university finds it easy to arrive at the type of institution-wide consensus that is required if such a process is to have an effective and fruitful outcome. University leaders will play a vital role in bringing doubters along and in creating the conviction that the task is worth the effort.

3.6 Quality Assurance

The team discussed quality assurance with university staff and students in light of the information given in the SER. We have already noted the evaluation/accreditation/audit process required by YÖK in the section on autonomy. From the point of view of quality assurance this externally imposed accountability system, which delivers simple yes/no verdicts on whether or not the institution is in compliance with specified numerical performance indicators, has little to do with QA as this term is understood in the context of the Bologna Process. In the developing European Higher Education Area the emphasis is on quality improvement and the creation of a quality culture in all activities of the institution.

The university has developed internal procedures to check quality in a range of areas. There is a well-developed system of student questionnaires on teaching, courses, and student satisfaction. From our discussions with students this works well for them, with timely follow-up measures and an open door policy whereby they have easy access to teachers. However, there is a potential problem here for teachers, a tension between competing expectations. On the one hand, the system is meant to be formative in the sense that it aims at improving the quality of teaching and teachers. On the other it is summative in the sense that it is one of the elements used in deciding issues of staff promotion and salary. This tension can adversely affect delivery and grading in the classroom, and make for uneasy relations between the teacher and student. This kind of summative application of student questionnaires is widely used in the United States where there is a perception that it has contributed to so-called 'grade inflation' in many institutions.

The team recommends that results of student questionnaires should not be used to influence decisions on salary or promotion of teachers.

The procedures used in appointing new faculty members are in the hands of the university and are rigorously applied. This is of course a key element in assuring ongoing quality.

Procedures for appointing non-academic staff are also strong and carefully applied.

Nevertheless, the team feels that Bahçeşehir University should carry out an assessment of each non-academic post to establish precise job descriptions in terms of the responsibilities associated with the post, and the knowledge, attributes and experience needed to fulfill these responsibilities. Each staff member should be placed in the post best suited to his/her background and competences, and new staff hired where necessary. The objectives and goals to be achieved in each post should be clearly set year by year, with an annual evaluation to ascertain what new skills are required to improve performance. Excellence should be appropriately rewarded, and opportunities for lifelong learning should be available.

External stakeholders are consulted on the quality of graduates and for advice on the introduction of new courses and programmes. The SER lists many formal procedures in use throughout the university to ensure it functions smoothly and efficiently. It is clear that this is an institution that takes quality assurance very seriously and understands that in a competitive environment first class QA procedures are crucial in attracting the best students. However, we would like to propose that it go a step further in its drive to enhance performance, attract more top students, and create a quality culture.

The quality of higher education has emerged as a key element in the establishment of the European Higher Education Area, and in driving national progress and competitiveness. Thus quality assurance is one of the main action items of the Bologna Process. In the Berlin and Bergen Communiqués, the European Ministers of Higher Education committed themselves to supporting further development of quality assurance at institutional, national and European level, and stressed the need to develop mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance.

They also stressed that the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework. They agreed that the national quality assurance systems should include evaluation of programmes or institutions that would involve internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results.

EUA proposes a coherent QA policy for Europe, based on the belief that institutional autonomy creates and requires responsibility, that universities are responsible for developing internal quality cultures and that progress at European level involving all stakeholders is a necessary next step. With the active contribution of students, universities must monitor and evaluate all their activities, including study programmes, research productivity, innovativeness, competitiveness, management, funding systems and services.

The procedures must promote academic and organisational quality, respect institutional autonomy, develop internal quality cultures, be cost effective, include evaluation of the QA agencies, minimise bureaucracy and cost, and avoid over regulation. External quality assurance procedures should focus on checking through institutional audit that internal monitoring has been effectively done.

For EUA, as for the Ministers of Education, the key elements in a QA process are:

- self-assessment by the unit being evaluated
- review and site visit by peers including external peers
- publication of the peer review report
- effective follow-up on recommendations for improvement
- minimal bureaucracy
- quality improvement
- involvement of students and other stakeholders.

We refer to two publications:

‘EUA’s Quality Assurance Policy in the Context of the Bergen Communiqué’,
‘Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area’
(ENQA Report).

The team recommends that the university should establish overarching internal quality assurance procedures, and a high level Standing Committee to ensure compatibility between the Faculties, Institutes and Schools.

In this connection we note that excellent QA systems, consistent with the EUA approach, have been developed in several countries around Europe, so Bahçeşehir University should not waste time re-inventing the wheel. Nevertheless, establishing such an internal system of quality assurance takes time and commitment, and there may be an initial reluctance on the part of some staff to face the challenge of change or even to accept that change is necessary. Dialogue between all members of the university community is central to creating good will, if not total and enthusiastic acceptance. It should be stressed that the goal is to create a quality culture in all activities of the university through continuous improvement, and not to apportion blame for perceived shortcomings. Again the role of the university leadership is crucial in driving the process and in facilitating the missionary work necessary to convert the doubters. To ensure coherence and harmonisation across the university, the guidelines and operational procedures for this important work should be agreed at university level and a central unit established to organise and oversee the details of the procedures.

The team recommends that the university establish a Quality Office to oversee the operational procedures for quality assurance.

3.7 Finances

In academic year 2007/2008 income from tuition fees was 82,609,000TL and from research projects was 14.540,000TL (1 Turkish Lira = 0.5 Euro). The Faculty of Engineering accounted for 76% of the research money. Expenditure was 69.042,000TL, of which almost 50% went on salaries. This represents a healthy financial situation. Yearly tuition fees vary from 16,500TL for undergraduate programmes to 9,000TL for associate degree programmes.

Budget planning and monitoring is done by the rector’s council, the secretary general and the director of finance. Allotment of budget to academic units is roughly proportional to the size of the unit. Currently about 30% of students are on scholarships. Some are entrance scholarships designed to attract the best students based on the national entrance examination, and these continue through the four undergraduate years. Some are based

on academic performance within the university and are designed to increase academic performance. Loans and on-campus work are other sources of funding.

The SER notes that contributions from the Bahçeşehir Uğur Educational Foundation are a secondary source of funding, especially for developing the infrastructure and for expansion. Being part of a large educational group provides the university with financial stability.

4. Capacity for Institutional change

4.1 Teaching and Learning: Study Programmes, Student Care

In Bahçeşehir University the bachelor's degree takes four years, the master's 1.5 years and the associate two years to complete, with the academic year divided into two semesters. All courses except those in Law are taught in English, and there is an English Preparatory School to support this. However teachers often use Turkish to clarify and explain difficult material. The university has an excellent scholarship programme; currently 40% of undergraduate students have scholarship support.

A special feature of the undergraduate curriculum is the introduction of what the university calls cooperative education, whereby a student can choose to spend time working off campus in a local business and gain academic credit. The team commends the university on this initiative, still in its early stages, and urges BU to follow through on its extensive plans in this direction. Not only does it give students experience of the real workplace, but opens up employment opportunities and helps to consolidate the university's position in the community.

The team would like to add a note of caution. Curricula are designed to meet the demand of the labour market, and thus the SER says there is "continuous revision of the curricula and the involvement of the stakeholders in curriculum definition". There is no doubt that getting the advice of outside stakeholders on course content and new programmes suited to the market is to be encouraged, and indeed the stakeholders we met were unanimous in praise of BU and generally happy with its graduates. However we wonder if reacting to the immediate requirements of the market is compatible with the stated ambitions of the university. This has wide implications for the nature of BU and raises questions about where the university really sees its future in the long term. This matter has been discussed in a previous section.

The university produces an excellent Course Catalogue which describes in a clear and thorough fashion the degree structures and the content of courses. Two comments here. The first is perhaps technical. It is now usual to see course content set out in terms of outcomes, the knowledge and skills a student will have acquired by the end of the course. The second comment is a matter of clarity: course descriptions should be followed by a list of prerequisite courses, the courses a student should have attended beforehand.

We suggest that information to students could be extended to explaining the overall aims and purpose of the courses on offer, benchmarks for student learning and achievements each year, clear guidelines on written and project work, principles on marking and feedback to students. Many universities now include a set of Student Rights and

Responsibilities in their handbooks, and examples of these are easily found on the Internet.

The team recommends that the university improve the excellent Course Catalogue further by:

- **describing course outcomes rather than course inputs**
- **explaining the overall aims and purpose of courses, benchmarks for student learning and achievements, clear guidelines on written and project work, principles on marking and feedback to students**

We have already commented on the open door policy of teachers and on the excellent student questionnaire system and follow-up procedures. These are important factors and serve as a solid basis for good teacher/student relations. We noted one serious reservation about using data from student evaluations of teachers in a summative way, and made a recommendation to this effect.

Students voiced some concerns. While they are all happy with the central location of the university in the city, there is an obvious space problem and a lack of easily accessible sport and leisure facilities. The intranet system can be very slow, with students waiting up to a week to receive their examination results. Concern was also expressed about time-tabling problems, with clashes in the scheduling of courses. Students reported also that the dormitory is expensive and unaffordable for many. An immediate academic concern voiced by both students and staff is the perceived gap between secondary school preparation in mathematics and requirements at university level. This situation is not unique to BU. Many universities offer bridging courses to incoming students.

The SER refers to ‘new learning methods such as active learning and new educational models’. However many of the teachers we met use almost exclusively the standard ‘teaching by lectures’ model. There is a need to adopt a new mindset, now common in many universities, with a real move from a teaching oriented system of instruction to an emphasis on student learning. Some departments have already taken the first formal step in this direction, The reasonable teacher to student ratio should help to facilitate the process. Formal lectures should be reduced and augmented by well organised and supervised small self-study and group-study assignments, by tutorials, workshops and an increase in project work. This approach will bring a closer scholarly relationship between teachers and students.

Over the years the university has steadily increased its share of students ranked highest in the state entrance examination. In academic year 2008/2009 out of a total student population of 8,894 there are 2,404 who ranked in the top 50% nationally when entering. Given the university’s ambitious goals we suggest that BU imitate some other universities by introducing a more demanding degree course, better suited to the talents of brighter students, while the other students follow the ordinary syllabus. Apart from making academic life more exciting for the top students this will give BU an edge nationally in the competition to attract better students.

Staff development is central to the points considered here. We stress that it is of the utmost importance that training in teaching and modern presentation should be available to the teaching staff. This is particularly true of new young staff who may have little or no experience of teaching, and teachers who have been working in the non-university sector

and come to teaching later in their careers. The new emphasis on learning will highlight the necessity to provide guidance to staff members in new methodologies, in modern methods of communication, and in mutually beneficial interaction with students. The introduction of an effective sabbatical system for staff, allied with an exchange programme with foreign scholars, will be helpful here and provide useful benchmarking on international practice. This will require a structured approach, good organisation, and systematic funding.

The team recommends that the university establish a special unit with responsibility for:

- **overall development and implementation of policy on teaching methodologies**
- **staff development and training**
- **new and experimental ways of teaching and learning.**

Note: we include here development and training for non-academic staff

The SER notes that continuous education is an area of emphasis at Bahçeşehir University. We suggest that the university extend this programme in the following way. Graduates of the university have now been in the workplace for up to six years, involved in an ever changing economic and technological environment that continuously demands upgraded skills and approaches. The team believes that the time is right for Bahçeşehir University to develop a Lifelong Learning programme aimed at renewing the skills of its graduates. This would not only be a new source of revenue but would also be an effective contribution not only to the professional growth of the graduates but to the economic health of society as well.

The team recommends that the university develop a Lifelong Learning programme aimed at upgrading the skills of its graduates.

We would like to suggest that student care can extend to the life of the students beyond graduation. While the university has an Alumni Office it should consider a systematic process for tracking its graduates and creating a database on what they do, where they go, their opinion on teaching and courses, and so on. This would be mutually beneficial since it would maintain the link between the graduates and the university and at the same time provide valuable information for curricular reform and care of undergraduates. A University Alumni Association could be formed to maintain and fortify the contact with graduates and strengthen the good will in the community toward the university. This process of maintaining effective close contact with graduates embeds the University further in the community, and in turn will be helpful to new graduates in finding employment.

The team recommends that the university establish a capability of tracking its graduates, and establish a University Alumni Association.

The team is aware that the university has an active careers office that helps graduates in the jobs market. The remit of this office includes the following important elements: establishing contact between students and industry for the exchange of information on posts available and graduates qualified to take up the posts, helping students to prepare for interviews, inviting employers to speak to groups of senior students on employer

expectations, arranging interviews, and building up a data base on its activities. This is another effective way to embed the University in the working life of the community and maintain contact with graduates and employers. In addition it fits in well with cooperative education.

4.2 Research

The SER notes that ‘research is currently an area of weakness of Bahçeşehir University’. This is to be expected in an institution that is only ten years old and started life as a teaching institution. Nevertheless there has been a steady increase in the number of papers published in international journals over the past few years, with a total of 90 in 2008 compared to 78 in 2007. The Faculties of Arts and Science, Economics and Business Administration, and Engineering accounted for most of these. A quarter of the staff are involved in 39 externally funded research projects with a budget of 14,540,000TL. The university has nine research centres that conduct research in particular areas e.g. American Studies, Development of Professional Education, International and Global Law. BU has developed a masters programme that now includes 50 different degrees, some involving a thesis for students with a research orientation. There are now three doctoral programmes and new ones are being prepared for submission to YÖK.

The next step is to develop a strong research capacity. We come back to the urgent need for a strategic plan that sets targets in this and other areas central to the growth of a top class university. Of course the university cannot excel in all disciplines, and so priorities have to be set. Biomedical engineering and nanotechnologies are being discussed as possible new areas of specialisation.

The university has introduced a number of measures to promote the research effort. These include establishing a research fund for university-funded projects, promoting academic staff for research, incentives for paper publication and conference participation, and payments to researchers from research project budgets. The team congratulates the university on these initiatives, but notes that last year 3.2% of the budget went on research expenditures including publication incentives, conference expenditures and scientific meetings, while 4.2% went on PR and advertisement.

The university understands that research must be a key element in its plans to be included in the top 500 universities in the world by the year 2023 (the twentieth anniversary of its first graduating class). Therefore, as a first and immediate step in the drafting of an overarching strategic plan:

The team recommends that the university form a Task Force to:

- (i) establish a capability for the collection, updating and consolidation of data on all research activity**
- (ii) set priorities and achievable medium term goals in research, with time scales and funding mechanisms clearly spelled out.**

Several steps can be taken to improve the research profile of the university, and to drive research activity and applications for foreign grants:

- Re-examine research norms and values to bring them into line with European good practice as outlined by ESF and NSF
- Use commonly accepted international research and development performance

indicators

- Benchmark against selected leading universities to develop good practice
- Establish a Research Support Office to maintain the data base and support staff in compiling first class research proposals
- Provide adequate seed and reward money from the University budget to start and support promising research initiatives and outstanding achievements
- Join on a wider basis with other university research initiatives for larger EU grants.

To drive and harmonise the research effort some universities establish a small university research management team to build expertise over time. The responsibilities of this team might include:

- establishing an environment conducive to research and providing back-up
- guiding academic units /members to develop strategies, institutional priorities
- negotiating and approve grants/contracts
- acting as industrial liaison
- arranging for intellectual property rights
- assisting knowledge transfer
- managing donations and fundraising
- running the financial management of awards
- allocating internal funds
- commercialising / disseminating research findings
- appraising research performance

It is the opinion of the team that all staff members need to gain new perspectives by spending time in a foreign university. We have already suggested that BU establish an effective sabbatical year system and other mechanisms to allow staff to spend time abroad. This is especially important for staff who have been hired by the university immediately on graduation. In many countries colleagues facilitate this process by taking over the teaching duties of the person going abroad. This system works well where courses have been properly modularised as is the case in BU.

Balancing a staff member's time between research and teaching is a perennial problem in all research universities. At the moment it appears to the team that there may be a certain amount of over-teaching in the university; a move to a more learning, as opposed to a teaching, environment will certainly contribute to achieving a better balance. However it may be advantageous to reduce the teaching load of some staff members to allow more time for research. This is particularly important in the case of young staff members who need encouragement to continue on a research path after the PhD.

As the work to increase the quantity and quality of research output goes ahead this must be matched by an increase in the number of PhD students. Care must be taken however to ensure that the accepted European criteria for PhD mentorship, as outlined by EUA and ENQA, are observed. In the context of international competition for research funding it will be important that the university strengthen international acceptance of its PhD graduates. The following measures might assist in achieving this goal:

- Joint PhD programmes
- Use of external co-referees and evaluators
- Publication of results, especially of PhD research achievements, in international

- refereed journals
- Systematically stimulated and rewarded attendance at international conferences.

Related to this is the issue of post-doctoral studies. The team expects that this will be one of the action items in the strategic plan. The Research Centres could play a role here by acting as “research incubators” for post-doctoral staff, and indeed for PhD students as is already the case in BETAM.

4.3 Internationalisation, Bologna Process

Internationalisation is a main focus for Bahçeşehir University and it has set up a strong organisation to achieve its goals in this area. Indeed internationalisation is one of the main responsibilities of one of the vice rectors, and there is an International Relations Office responsible for international exchange programmes for students and academic staff, that includes

- summer schools in other countries such as the Diplomacy Academy in Vienna and Study Architecture in Florence
- English language study periods abroad (currently 150 students a year)
- recruiting students from other countries,
- organising social activities for its international students where they share their culture with each other and with Turkish students.

The university has over 70 Erasmus exchange agreements and 30 exchange agreements with non-European Universities (in the United States, South Korea, Japan, Pakistan, China, Russia). It has English language programs at four locations in the Unites States. It has joint dual master’s programmes with Northeastern University and negotiations are under way with Cleveland State University to establish joint diploma programmes in several disciplines. An appendix to the SER lists the large number of universities abroad that have a collaboration agreement with this institution. Recent initiatives include establishing scholarships to recruit students from Kosovo (10 students) and Iraq (20 students).

The university is developing a recruitment plan for foreign academic staff, which will include not only salary and insurance but also cover travel costs, job for the spouse, and school for the children (thanks to Bahçeşehir Uğur Educational Institutions, which will provide jobs for spouses and schools for children).

In the Bologna Process three action items have been emphasised for the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Quality assurance is the first of these and we have discussed the creation of a robust QA system earlier in this report. The second is the adoption of a degree structure on two main cycles. This is already in place in the university. The third is the mobility of students and teachers. In this regard the Ministers state that ‘mobility of students and academic and administrative staff is the basis for establishing a European Higher Education Area’. The university is to be commended for the excellent progress it has made in this important area.

The team recommends that the university develop further its excellent mobility programmes for students and staff.

In meetings with staff and students we were told that the Diploma Supplement is not actually available to students, in spite of a claim to the contrary in the SER. Also the credit system in the university is the one used in the United States, based solely on student contact hours. This works well of course but it does not conform to the European Credit and Transfer System where the work done by the student outside of class is taken into account.

4.4 The University and the Region

The main campus of the university is situated in Beşiktaş which is the centre of commerce, culture and art in Istanbul. There is an awareness that, in addition to this physical presence the university must create and maintain a highly visible intellectual and societal presence as well. The building of sound degree programmes over the ten years of the university's existence has been matched, as the SER notes, by the involvement of many professors in national debate on issues as diverse as political science, international relations, international politics, economics, cultural issues, gender issues, arts, communications, and technological issues. Several members of Bahçeşehir University's academic staff are columnists in leading national daily journals in Turkey. Some are TV commentators and TV programme participants. Last year the university spent 4.2% of its budget on PR and advertisement.

Many of the research centres are active in community service e.g. seminars for the legal community, documentaries on social issues, weekly seminars by politicians and leading figures, studies conducted on economic and social issues. Many NGOs and state organizations, politicians, artists, etc. organize events in the university and participate in events there.

5. Envoi

We wish to thank the University once again for its generous hospitality and for the excellent arrangements provided for the Evaluation Team. It was a pleasure to be in Istanbul to discuss with students and staff the future directions of Bahçeşehir University. At this time of profound and far-reaching change in higher education the University is to be congratulated on its frank and open examination of its ability to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. In all our meetings we were struck by the strong determination to see the University achieve its ambitious goal of becoming an institution of high international standing. The appropriate building blocks are certainly in place: highly qualified academic staff, strong visionary leadership, a dynamic rector, ready to embrace change, backed by a talented and supportive team of vice-rectors and deans, a strong scholarship programme to attract and support the best students.

We hope that the University finds our comments and suggestions helpful, and we wish the University well for the next stage of its development.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation to YÖK: the time cycle of evaluation/accreditation/audit could be extended to three years for institutions with an excellent record of compliance.

Recommendations to the University:

The university should establish a Task Force to examine and report on international best practice in university governance and management in the context of Bahçeşehir University's long term ambitions. The Task Force should include external members with experience of governance and management in universities of world class.

The university should establish a capability for the collection and consolidation of data on all its activities.

The university should establish a University Steering Committee with responsibility for preparing a Strategic Plan for the years 2010-2014. The Committee should be chaired by the rector.

Results of student questionnaires should not be used to influence decisions on salary or promotion of teachers.

The university should establish overarching internal quality assurance procedures, and a high level Standing Committee to ensure compatibility between the Faculties, Institutes and Schools.

The university should establish a Quality Office to oversee the operational procedures for quality assurance.

The university should improve the excellent Course Catalogue by:

- **describing course outcomes rather than course inputs**
- **explaining the overall aims and purpose of courses, benchmarks for student learning and achievements, clear guidelines on written and project work, principles on marking and feedback to students.**

The university should establish a special unit with responsibility for:

- **overall development and implementation of policy on teaching methodologies**
- **staff development and training**
- **new and experimental ways of teaching and learning.**

The university should develop a Lifelong Learning programme aimed at upgrading the skills of its graduates.

The university should establish a capability of tracking its graduates, and establish a University Alumni Association.

The university should form a Task Force to:

- (i) establish a capability for the collection, updating and consolidation of data on all research activity**
- (ii) set priorities and achievable medium term goals in research, with time scales and funding mechanisms clearly spelled out.**

The team recommends that the university should develop further its excellent mobility programmes for students and staff.