

UNIVERSITY OF LUXEMBOURG

EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the University of Luxembourg (UL), by the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP). The evaluation took place in 2016.

The IEP evaluation took place in parallel to a separate evaluation of research activities at UL. A representative of the IEP evaluation team was invited to observe part of the research evaluation exercise, and a representative of the research evaluation team was invited to observe the first IEP team visit to UL. In all other respects, the two evaluations were conducted by the respective external evaluators as entirely separate exercises.

In order to avoid overlap with the research evaluation, the IEP has limited its comments on research at UL to matters of governance and organisation.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme

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

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

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

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

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

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

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?

- How does it know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 University of Luxembourg's profile

The University of Luxembourg was founded in 2003, through the merger of four existing higher education institutions, and is the first and only university in the Grand Duchy. The founding principles of UL included the encouragement of academic mobility for both students and staff to and from Luxembourg, the value of multilingualism, and the need for Luxembourg to address the challenges of the 21st century through the development of a knowledge society.

Previously, higher education students who wished to study in Luxembourg attended one of UL's predecessor institutions, where they were able to obtain professional qualifications in the fields of technology, primary teaching, and social work, or could study the first year or two of higher education programmes in languages, humanities, economics, law, medicine and natural sciences, before moving abroad – mostly to a nearby university in France, Belgium or Germany – to complete their studies. Many other students undertook their entire studies abroad, before returning to Luxembourg with their qualifications. The creation of UL was designed to provide options for students to stay in Luxembourg for the entire duration of their higher education and to attract students to Luxembourg from other countries, but not to stop those Luxembourg students who wished to travel abroad for their studies from doing so. The university has indeed been successful in attracting academic staff and students from abroad. The IEP team was informed that both the government and the university explicitly recognise the value of these mobility patterns for the social, cultural and economic development of the Grand Duchy, as well as contributing to the university's potential for excellence in research, teaching and learning.

UL has grown rapidly since its foundation, with over 6 000 students enrolled by the academic year 2015-16, and over 1 500 staff including doctoral candidates. UL consists of three Faculties (Law, Economics and Finance - FDEF; Language and Literature, Humanities, Arts and Education - FLSHASE; Science, Technology and Communication – FSTC), and two Interdisciplinary Research Centres (Centre for Security, Reliability and Trust - SnT; Luxembourg Centre for Systems Biomedicine – LCSB). A third Interdisciplinary Centre, the Centre for Contemporary and Digital History, was created in October 2016.

UL initially occupied the buildings and physical infrastructure of its predecessor institutions across three campuses in Luxembourg City and immediate environs. However, soon after UL's creation, the government announced a major development at Belval in Esch-sur-Alzette, on the southern border of the Grand Duchy and some twenty kilometres from Luxembourg City. This very substantial project has involved the reclaiming of former industrial premises and wasteland, the development of a completely new campus for the university and other public research facilities, start-up companies, private and public – including student – housing, sports facilities, private enterprises and retail and commercial enterprises. The first UL

Interdisciplinary Research Centre moved to Belval in 2011, and was followed in 2015 by the first of the Faculties, some research groups of the second Interdisciplinary Centre, as well as the Rectorate and central administration. It is expected that almost all teaching programmes will have moved to Belval by 2019, with the exception of the Faculty of Law, Economics and Finance that will mainly remain on the Kirchberg campus. During its visits, the IEP team was able to witness the rapid ongoing development of the Belval campus, with a number of important building projects underway such as the *Maison des Arts et des Etudiants*, the Learning Centre and additional student accommodation.

The situation of UL, as a young public university, the only one in the country, benefiting from very substantial public investment, means that it also attracts significant attention from the public, political authorities, and a range of national stakeholders. Quite naturally, there is also a broad range of high expectations regarding what the university can and should do. The IEP team met a variety of public and private stakeholders during the evaluation, and was able to hear these at first hand.

This overall context and combination of factors leads to a university profile that is almost unique in Europe. This obviously presents opportunities for UL and can be seen as a significant strength. However, it also means that UL is operating under an unusual set of conditions which could – depending on particular developments and interpretations – also be seen as a potential weakness and lead to possible threats. These issues will be covered in greater detail at various points throughout this report.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a specially convened self-evaluation working group, under the direction of Michel Margue, former Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Literature, Humanities, Arts and Education.

The self-evaluation working group included balanced representation from across the range of UL structures, including the Faculties, Interdisciplinary Centres (IC), administration, students and doctoral candidates. The Faculty and IC staff included both academic and administrative staff. The self-evaluation process was very extensive, and included interviews and online surveys across most of the UL structures and student groups. The draft self-evaluation report was presented to the UL Management Team, University Council and Board of governors for approval, and published on UL's intranet as well as being sent to the IEP team.

The self-evaluation report and appendices contained a large amount of useful data and information. As part of preparing for the IEP evaluation, each Faculty and (IC) had prepared reports and data, which helped feed into the overall self-evaluation exercise and report. Although the Faculties and ICs had previous experience of evaluations, the fact that the IEP evaluation covered the entire university was new. The IEP team was informed that this had raised awareness within UL of the challenges the university is facing, and that the time taken

to reflect during this exercise had been useful. The large workload involved was also noted, particularly given the separate research evaluation exercise underway conducted by Interface.

The UL self-evaluation report, together with the appendices, was made available to the evaluation team in July 2016. The two visits of the evaluation team to UL took place from 3 to 5 October 2016 and from 6 to 9 November 2016 respectively, and followed the IEP methodology and four main questions as outlined above.

In between the visits, the team requested some additional documentation, regarding the process and mechanism for internal budget allocation across UL and the policies and criteria for UL staff promotions development.

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

- Kerstin Norén, Rector, University West, Sweden, team chair
- Jacques Lanarès, former Vice-Rector, University of Lausanne, Switzerland
- Marián Dzimko, former Vice-Rector, University of Žilina, Slovakia
- Thierry Chevaillier, former Vice-Rector, University of Bourgogne, France
- Beate Tremel, Masters student, University of Graz, Austria
- Lewis Purser, Director of Academic Affairs, Irish Universities Association, Ireland, team coordinator

The team would like to thank the President, Rainer Klump, and the UL liaison persons, Anne Christophe, Isabelle Blaise and Michel Margue, for their warm welcome and efficient organisation of the visits to UL. The team would also like to thank all those who came to meet us at UL, including university staff, students, board members and external partners and stakeholders, for the very stimulating and candid discussions, focused on the ongoing development and consolidation of the university.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

2.1 Background

Effective governance and decision-making structures and processes allow a university to set its strategic goals and objectives, and to work towards these in a productive, efficient and transparent manner in overall pursuit of its mission, with the support of its various internal and external stakeholders. The UL mission is centred on excellence in a specified number of research and education fields, with a clearly identified international reach and reputation, an innovative offer to students, teachers and researchers, and a strong commitment to the quality of its graduates and to contributing to the economic, social and cultural development of Luxembourg and the Greater Region. It can be expected therefore that the UL governance and decision-making structures and methods will reflect this mission, and that the strategic plan will also build on these.

UL's strategic development has been built on a series of four year plans, each providing the basis for an institutional development contract signed between UL and the Luxembourg government. These plans have determined the state grant for each period and UL's associated obligations. UL's position as the only university in the country means that it must at the same time meet national requirements for skilled graduates and other outputs, as well as ensure international visibility based mainly on research. The process of identifying realistic priorities for these four year plans is therefore more complicated than in countries where priorities can be shared across a range of different higher education institutions.

The current plan covers the period 2014–2017 and has been centred on UL's move to the Belval campus and the consolidation of the university's activities during this process. This consolidation process is both organisational and physical, the move to Belval providing the opportunity to bring different parts of the university together for the first time since its foundation. The appointment of the new UL President, Rainer Klump, during this period also led to a revision of the contract in 2016, allowing for some additional financial resources.

In addition, the appointment of the new President was the catalyst for the development of a new "Strategic Framework" for UL for the period 2016–2026, approved by the Board of governors in May 2016. This document, which sets out a high-level vision and strategy for the coming decade, is also intended to serve as a broad over-arching framework for the next series of four-year plans, the most immediate of which (2018–2021) is already being considered by both UL and the government.

Apart from being the only university in Luxembourg, a number of UL's other distinctive characteristics are rather specific in a European context, and have not changed since its foundation in 2003. UL is a very young and still small university, with a streamlined Anglo-US-

type governance system. The UL Board of governors is responsible for the general policy and strategic choices of the university, and oversees UL's activities. All seven of its members are appointed by the government, three from abroad and four from Luxembourg. Four of the seven should have held senior academic roles, and three business roles. In addition, the Board of governors is attended by the UL President, a representative of UL academic staff, a student representative and a Government Commissioner. These additional representatives are however only present in an advisory capacity.

The UL Rectorate is composed of the President, a maximum of three Vice-Presidents, and the Director of Administration. These are all appointed by the Grand Duke, following a proposal by the Board of governors. The Rectorate defines and implements UL policy, as determined by the Board of governors.

In addition to the Board of governors, UL also has a University Council, whose role is to advise on the university's educational and scientific affairs, including the drafting of the UL development plan. The University Council is composed of the Rectorate, Deans and Directors, as well as elected student and staff representatives from across UL.

The university law provides for a Scientific Advisory Committee, which does not appear to meet or play an active role in any way.

However, as UL's foundation was based on the integration of four previously-existing national institutions, which until recently retained their own physical space and a rather large degree of their previous academic identity and traditional decision-making processes, the university administration is relatively decentralised. UL Faculties are headed by Deans who are elected by the Faculty academic staff, and the Faculty Councils are composed of elected members of academic staff and representatives of administrative and technical staff and students.

The Interdisciplinary Centres, all created after the foundation of the university, are headed by Directors, appointed by the Board of governors, after prior opinion of the University Council and approved by the competent Minister.

This situation has resulted in a number of residual high level challenges in terms of institutional governance and decision-making. UL is now focused on the substantial task of physically integrating most of the university onto a completely new campus which is still under construction, while facing a number of new and evolving societal and political demands regarding the university's role and potential in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

The team heard repeatedly during its visits that this complex set of characteristics has resulted in a lack of clarity at all levels regarding governance responsibilities and prerogatives, and unnecessarily cumbersome decision-making processes across the university. The forthcoming revision of the university law presents an opportunity to remedy this.

However, UL's small size and dynamic environment also facilitate the easy exchange of information between staff across different parts of the university, and informal contacts between students and staff, which are often difficult in larger institutions. The quality of this daily exchange and the importance of these informal networks were mentioned frequently to the team. However, the team was also informed of the clear need for UL to now establish effective processes and systems in order to ensure that academic and administrative decisions are taken in an efficient and transparent manner. More structured internal communication channels will also be needed, both bottom-up and top-down, to assist with this process.

2.2 Autonomy

One of the issues which comes more sharply into focus is the topic of university autonomy, as a result of UL's significant growth, increased Luxembourgish societal and political expectations, along with the generalised requirement for higher education institutions to show increased accountability and transparency. This topic was raised with the team by a broad range of internal and external UL stakeholders, not in terms of how UL's autonomy is covered in the existing legislation, but in terms of the perceived evolving interpretations and practices regarding autonomy "on the ground". The team was informed that a number of opportunities were available – such as drafting the new university law which is currently in the early conceptual stages, and the development of the new UL strategic framework and the four year plan – to ensure that all parties can be satisfied with a suitably balanced relationship, and with sufficient levels of information for all.

As in all European countries, there are obvious requirements for high levels of transparency in dealings between government and the university, and these should also be seen as bringing long-term advantages to this relationship. Conversely, the risks inherent in reliance on informal channels for these dealings have grown considerably in recent years, given the enhanced profile of higher education now as a major actor in the economic, social and cultural life of any country, and the important public and private interests at play in this.

Naturally, UL's unique situation as the only university in the Grand Duchy heightens these phenomena, and also presents additional potential risk in terms of being the focus of attention from a range of interested parties, to deliver on both national and "world class" expectations.

The team noted that there appeared to be an accepted *ad hoc* practice by a range of government ministries or agencies of adding separate conventions or similar arrangements to the agreed four year plan, with earmarked funding at Faculty or IC level, particularly in the area of teacher education. If not carefully managed, this practice obviously has the potential to distort the original strategic, financial and operational elements of the overall plan. The team was informed however that these existing additional conventions would be integrated into the next four year plan, to ensure they are coherent with the overall resources of the university. In the opinion of the team, such strategic and financial integration will be helpful

in terms of strategic planning and financial management, together with the setting and monitoring of performance indicators, to the benefit of both internal and external UL stakeholders.

The team also considered that it would be beneficial if the university and its relevant stakeholders could identify any additional areas which should also be considered in the process of drafting the next four year plan, to ensure that the final version of this plan is as complete as possible from the perspective of both the government and the university.

The team therefore recommends that sufficient horizon scanning and planning take place in the early stages of drawing up the next four year plan, so that the necessary elements can all be integrated into the overall strategic, financial and operational framework. The next four year plan would also need to set out timelines and prioritised steps for strategy implementation.

2.3 Decision making processes

All effective and efficient organisations need well defined decision-making processes, which are understood and respected within the organisation. A general feature of effective university organisation is that, once roles and responsibilities are clear and overall policies and procedures are in place and respected, decision-making is delegated to the level as close as possible to that most affected by the decision. Exceptions to this general feature are usually only found in circumstances where top-down control is applied for very specific reasons and temporary periods.

This type of delegated internal decision-making process requires clear policies and procedures to be in place and used across the university, coupled with the necessary internal accountability mechanisms. It also requires that roles and responsibilities at all levels are well defined and understood. A third prerequisite is that sufficient and relevant information is available to inform the decision-making process.

One of the conclusions of the SWOT analysis undertaken by UL in preparing the self-evaluation report for IEP was that the university's structures – in particular the roles and responsibilities attached to each level of these – were insufficiently clear, leading to overlap, sub-optimal efficiency and slower processes. This was echoed repeatedly to the team during its visits, in discussion with a broad range of internal and external groups.

This is a clear area of weakness for the university, and could be addressed during the forthcoming revision of the university legislation, and through the next four year plan agreed with government. While the original UL legislation was designed to allow the creation of the university and to guide it through its early years, the team believes that UL has now reached a sufficient level of institutional maturity and critical mass for some of the powers reserved in the original legislation for the government to be devolved to the university, and for some of the powers reserved for the Board of governors to be devolved to the University Council. This would provide greater consensus and clarity regarding the powers and attributions of each

respective level in the governance and decision-making structure, including at the levels of Rectorate, Faculties and ICs, so that the relevant management and micro-management decisions can all be taken at the most suitable levels. In conjunction with clear transposition of such a system into the university's own internal regulations, this would, in the opinion of the team, significantly enhance decision-making and also ensure that responsibilities are more explicit and borne at the appropriate levels.

Improved clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities at each level of UL's structures would also contribute significantly to the streamlining of the university's administrative procedures and processes, as discussed in the next section of this report.

The team therefore recommends that the university and the government work closely together to identify improvements to the governance structures and decision-making responsibilities which can be incorporated into the forthcoming revision of the university legislation, and to communicate these clearly and persuasively to the relevant parliamentary and legislative authorities.

The team also recommends that a thorough review of UL's own internal regulations is then undertaken, to ensure that – within existing and future legislative frameworks – these can facilitate academic and administrative decision-making which is as effective and efficient as possible.

One of the changes implemented by the UL President since his arrival has been the creation of the Strategic Planning Office, a small advisory unit reporting to the President to facilitate evidence-based decision-making. As already mentioned, the availability of good information – i.e. reliable data and expert analysis of this – is a prerequisite for effective university planning and both academic and administrative decision-making. This is particularly the case when the university needs to integrate and expand further, in an era of less plentiful resources.

The team was informed that until now a lot of data has been collected and retained by academic and administrative units at local levels, and that a major role for the Strategic Planning Office is the retrieval and processing of data from across the university, so that these can be used to inform decision-making by a much broader relevant range of parties. Although its name is somewhat misleading (and the team heard a number of reactions to this during the visits), the Strategic Planning Office is well placed and includes the relevant expertise to support the decision-making process, not only by providing good information, but also by bringing people together and helping to enhance the planning and decision-making processes across the relevant UL structures in an open and transparent manner.

In a context where UL is moving to develop new key performance indicators with the government in order to facilitate the 2016-2026 Strategic Framework and the next four year plan, UL should consider the need to improve the empirical basis of its data. This would also be crucial in ensuring an evidence-based discussion regarding the proposal to move from historical to performance-based allocation processes in the coming years.

The team recommends that UL make full use of the potential and expertise now available to bring together and analyse relevant data, in order to inform the necessary strategic planning, prioritisation and decision-making for the next phase of the university's development.

2.4 Administration procedures and processes

Universities across Europe have seen significant changes in their administrative cultures, profiles and processes in the last decade. These changes have been driven by the academic and regulatory changes taking place across European higher education, including the increased focus on the student experience (including reflecting the broader diversity of students now studying at universities), the development of user-facing administrative services, continued enhancements in IT, and much greater accountability to public and private funders.

As a result of these changes, and to ensure that university administrations remain fit-for-purpose, a broad range of new high level administrative and technical functions have been created, for example in the areas of student services, quality assurance, strategic planning, pedagogical development, research management, change management, communications, and many more. The staff who lead these new areas do not always have a traditional administrative profile, are often recruited from a range of academic and professional backgrounds, and are themselves invariably highly qualified. They play an important and influential role in the planning, implementation and monitoring of all change processes at any university.

The team noted that this process was also underway at UL, with a number of new functions already created or planned. The team also heard however that the administrative culture during the first ten years of UL's existence had been based on the important heritage from the previous institutions which were merged to form the university, each of which was somewhat different. This is to be expected in any merger process, and has been compounded at UL by the understandable prioritisation of early UL investment in academic infrastructure and the more recent complications and delays in moving to Belval. The team heard however that UL was keen to ensure that these previous cultures are now brought together into an agreed and unified fit-for-purpose administrative culture, as part of the ongoing consolidation of the university and the move to Belval.

This administrative challenge was openly recognised by all groups the team met at UL. One of the symptoms of this has been the lack of agreed standard operating procedures and budgeting transparency across the university, and the team was informed of a well-established tendency for individuals to seek exceptions to the rules. From the perspective of the team, the current incremental approach to budgeting, with few apparent links to the strategic planning process, is likewise seen as a major issue. In the opinion of the team, the challenge is compounded by a lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of Faculties and ICs (as already discussed in this report), including in the administrative domain.

The IEP team was informed that standard operating procedures are now being agreed and put in place in some important areas, as part of the rollout of the new SAP administrative information system. This in turn will be of assistance in developing greater levels of confidence in the planning process and in performance indicators across UL. This is the first important step in ensuring administrative processes that work for everyone, and when successfully implemented will then free up resources to commence the next layer of administrative reforms, so that greater administrative and budgetary responsibility can be devolved to local units, within the agreed overall UL policies and frameworks. It would be important for UL to realise some “quick wins” in this area, so that – for example - the administrative tasks undertaken by academics, such as entering student exam results and requesting travel reimbursements, are significantly simplified. Targeted staff training and development may also be required, to ensure that any competence gaps which emerge during this process are addressed.

The team recommends that UL increase the transparency of its budget allocation process to ensure it supports the implementation of the new UL strategic framework.

The team also recommends that the review of UL’s standard operating procedures be completed as a priority, to ensure these are efficient and effective. These new standardised procedures should then be implemented to ensure a significantly enhanced administrative system, which meets the needs of students, academic staff and the administrators themselves.

2.5 Role and involvement of students

One of the central elements in the founding mission of UL is to provide a high quality university education to students from Luxembourg, and to attract high quality students to Luxembourg from other countries. This goal of excellence in education is also linked to the desire to ensure that UL’s graduates are “discerning and independent personalities with strong potential for action in research, innovation and in society” (UL self-evaluation report, p8).

In the modern European context, an essential element in this is to involve students as equal partners in the governance and decision-making processes of the university. This involvement helps students and graduates to gain these qualities and attributes. However, just as importantly, the involvement of students is also crucial for the university in ensuring all decisions include a careful consideration of the student perspective.

For their own academic and personal development, but also for the ongoing health of the university, students therefore need to be encouraged and supported to engage and contribute meaningfully at every level of the institution.

The team was informed that student bodies at UL are faculty based, or thematically organised around specific interests. Students are represented on study programme boards, at faculty level and at university level in the University Council and in an advisory capacity on the

Board of governors. While the team learned that there is a body which represents all Luxembourg students who study abroad, there is no official student representation at institutional level.

However, from the team's meetings with student representatives during both its visits, it became clear to the team that UL student representatives do not have the tools to liaise with their constituencies, except informally through their own class. This devalues the important role which they should be playing, and weakens their overall contribution to the university. Similarly, there do not appear to be structures or systems in place to ensure that student representatives can work properly together. It is therefore hardly surprising that the team was informed by both students and staff that the sense of student ownership and engagement within the institution is seen as very low. The fact that a significant proportion of the UL student population is not from Luxembourg means that they are even less likely to engage. In the opinion of the team, this represents a long-term challenge for UL.

On a positive note, the student representatives met by the team noted that they were taken seriously and as equal partners at both university and faculty levels. However, the students had received no training handbook or guidelines regarding their roles or how they should fulfil these, thus again limiting their potential contribution.

The team found it difficult to understand how student representatives are elected, and the official length of term once elected. Each faculty appears to organise student elections differently, some more actively than others. The team was informed that new elections had recently been organised by UL but the existing student representatives appeared not to be aware of these.

In terms of student clubs and societies, the team was informed that there were a number of good student activities and initiatives but that these were not sufficiently publicised, even within the student body, and so many students remained unaware and unable to participate. Students from neighbouring countries noted a different culture at UL compared to what they knew from their previous universities, and that there was a tendency among UL students to attend class and then go home, and that a "real campus experience" was missing. There was however agreement that student life in Belval was improving as campus development continued, with more student associations and more activities now taking place. Student associations had been informed that temporary offices for them would soon become available, and that the new *Maison des Arts et des Etudiants* should be open in 2017.

It was agreed that this, together with the planned opening of the new Learning Centre and Library, would provide more possibilities for information and dissemination to students, and further opportunities to improve student life at UL. In this context there is scope to improve communications between the university and these student clubs and societies. The team heard varying experiences regarding obtaining funding for these associations, and also regarding organising meeting rooms and basic logistical support. It was noted that communication to students regarding the management of the Belval campus had been poor, adding to difficulties.

The team considers that the situation regarding the overall involvement of students in UL governance and decision-making at various levels is a significant weakness for the university, at a key moment in the university's development when committed and energetic student input would be very important.

The team therefore recommends that UL should empower students to play their role at the university. This includes ensuring that UL students are represented in a more structured and permanent way, including at central level, and that financial and infrastructural resources are made available for this. Student representatives should also receive training to assist them in carrying out their functions effectively.

The team also recommends that an effective system of electing student representatives be put in place across the entire university, which meets the needs of the students, reflects the structures of the university, and ensures that students are well represented. This may involve clarifying existing legislative or regulatory stipulations, and modifying these in the near future.

The team further recommends that students should be supported and incentivised to organise clubs and societies on topics of interest to themselves, and that the university infrastructure be made available for this.

3. Quality culture

As a public university which depends on state support for its study programmes and research activity, the quality of UL's education and research outcomes are paramount, as is the quality culture across the university needed to sustain these. This is particularly so when student numbers and state funding may be under pressure, and the competition for research funding is increasing. The team therefore explored the theme of quality culture during its visits to UL, and the issue of quality assurance was a central element in UL's self-evaluation report.

Given UL's position as the only university in Luxembourg, and that there is no national quality framework to which it should adhere, the importance of a robust internal UL quality culture assumes even more prominence than usual. UL is in the fortunate situation however of being a young institution, completely open to European developments and experiences, and has a strong tradition of working closely with leading practitioners in neighbouring countries and other European universities to help develop its own internal policies and practices.

UL has used this external expertise in the external evaluations and follow-up exercises which took place during the period 2007–2014. According to the self-evaluation report, these exercises have helped inform UL and government policies, and also increased the involvement of the academic community in quality assurance activities and processes. Other examples of benefitting from external expertise or benchmarking include the participation by UL units, for example the library, in projects organised in neighbouring countries, in international ranking exercises, in international project grant applications, in staff development exercises, and in the design and monitoring of study programmes.

Internal quality assurance at UL is led by the Faculties, where the Deans are responsible for the quality assurance of programmes, along with the course directors. There is a quality assurance officer position in each faculty – each with different tasks – who reports to the respective Dean, and some Faculties have a Faculty quality group, which is mainly focused on study programmes.

While each course has a course director, it was acknowledged that these persons have a difficult position, with no authority to oblige somebody to teach a class or change the way they teach if that person does not want to. This is where the Dean has an important role to play. Course evaluation systems are in place in the Faculties: these are monitored for staff performance and used to encourage staff who need to improve. Continued poor performance can result in the non-renewal of contracts for short-term staff.

Two Faculties also have Vice-Deans with responsibility for pedagogical developments, e-learning, course evaluation and assessment systems, and where relevant to monitor and maintain accreditation requirements, and two Faculties also have a teaching award.

Unlike in some European countries, the accreditation of UL study programmes is not required under Luxembourg law. However, given that in certain professional fields such accreditation can be seen as useful for the employment of graduates and marketing of the programme, the Faculty of Law, Economics and Finance decided to work with a German agency to accredit

some programmes in finance and economics. The Faculty of Science, Technology and Communication is also considering whether it should do likewise.

A recent development at UL following the appointment of a new Vice-President for Academic Affairs (VPA) has been to bring the quality officers together informally at university level, to share experience and build up collective competences. The new VPA has also appointed a quality officer at university level to support this process, and to provide a link to the strategic planning process.

Although these officers already had quite close informal relationships across the Faculties, there is now a regular meeting structure, and tools for common project management and communication are being put in place, with a focus on quality assurance for teaching and learning. The feedback heard by the team regarding this development was that it could be useful in supporting faculties to carry out their quality assurance roles at local level, but that it should not try to replace these.

The team was informed however that this new university-level approach to quality does not yet extend to quality assurance for administration or research, and that there are no equivalent quality assurance structures or positions in the ICs. While competitive research funding - including UL's internal research development fund - is distributed based on peer-reviewed expert feedback, and the concept of quality is anchored in each individual research project, the team found little other evidence of cross-cutting internal research evaluation in the ICs or the Faculty-based research units. It was clear to the team that UL would benefit from a stronger internal overview of research quality and performance.

Quality is not reduced to evaluation, and includes all measures to support the development and improvement of the university's activities. UL has taken a number of initiatives regarding the development of teaching and staff training. For example, the Faculty of Science, Technology and Communication has an established academic staff development programme with a series of activities, based on the UK professional development framework, and almost one-third of staff from this Faculty have participated at least once. The team was informed that these academic staff development activities are also open to other Faculties, but that the other Faculties do not organise such activities themselves. The Faculty of Law, Economics and Finance has however provided professional development opportunities for administrative staff, linked to its ISO 9001 certification for administration. The Faculty of Language and Literature, Humanities, Arts and Education provides staff training in media technologies at its media lab.

These efforts are commended and should be pursued; indeed the team considers there would be merit in consolidating at central level all such opportunities to develop staff pedagogical competences (including for part-time staff), and to link these to UL policies which promote the value of teaching. The importance of academic ownership of these staff development opportunities is recognised as important at UL, and the team was informed that the VPA's office can provide resources to encourage these to expand. An open question now facing UL and heard by the team is how to motivate staff to participate in professional development courses.

Based on its meetings across the university, the team noted that the development of a quality culture at UL has been a bottom-up process so far. The elements observed above have all developed within the Faculties, including existing quality assurance policies, which from a cultural development perspective is very positive. However, the team supports the new moves currently being planned to build on these and develop an overarching university-wide quality system and steering mechanism to provide better oversight of all UL activities.

This support is based on the team's observation that there are many elements of quality assurance at UL, but that these are of a non-systemic nature and lack visibility across the university. The development of a comprehensive institution-wide quality assurance system provides an ideal opportunity for UL to think carefully about what indicators would be best suited to a tailored quality assurance system, and how UL should measure success in enhancing quality. These institution-wide reflections will in turn help strengthen the positive work already taking place in the Faculties.

Feedback to students about actions taken as a result of evaluation processes is a crucial aspect of the quality assurance process which the team would like to highlight. From its discussions with students and staff during the IEP visits, the team found little systematic evidence of such feedback to students post-evaluation, and few tools in place to facilitate this. Given that such feedback is widely acknowledged, including in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG), as a very significant element in enhancing quality and in developing a robust quality culture, the team believes that improved and more systematic feedback to UL students would be a powerful way of changing attitudes and culture regarding evaluation.

The team therefore recommends that UL should draw together all the different elements which already exist in a coherent manner to create an overarching quality assurance system for the university, which covers teaching, research and administration, and includes ongoing programme evaluation and feedback to students.

This overarching system would need to include a regular internal monitoring process, based on agreed performance indicators, and also develop effective internal communication – bottom-up, top-down and between UL structures – to develop awareness and capacity at all levels of the university, and to strengthen and share the various aspects of quality culture which already exist across the university.

4. Teaching and learning

Since its creation in 2003 from the predecessor institutions, UL has more than doubled its student numbers, to over 6 000 in the winter semester of 2015-16. This growth has been particularly strong in terms of students on bachelor programmes and on postgraduate programmes. The numbers of bachelor and master level programmes have likewise expanded substantially, and seven doctoral schools have also been created. Such growth was to be expected, as part of the UL's mission to expand higher education opportunities for residents of Luxembourg, and also to attract greater numbers of international students to the country.

The draft new UL strategic framework for the 2016-2026 period outlines three distinctive strategic pillars for UL development: a commitment to digitalisation, leveraging UL's strengths as the most international university in Europe (according to the 2016 Times Higher Education ranking), and continuing UL's sustainable integration into Luxembourg. These three pillars obviously rely heavily on teaching and learning at UL and the quality of this.

The draft ten year strategic framework also outlines a number of strategic impacts and guidelines for teaching, to help reach the overall goals of the framework. These include strengthening UL's approach to research-based teaching, targeting a further increase in the postgraduate student population, developing digitally enhanced teaching and learning opportunities, fostering the acquisition of transversal skills, further enhancing mobility opportunities, and strengthening the university's approach to quality assurance.

The current process for the design and approval of UL study programmes begins at Faculty level, before presentation to the Rectorate and University Council and approval by the Board of governors. There are also Grand Ducal Regulations and UL's own internal regulations governing bachelor, master and PhD programmes which must be taken into account. Given that UL was founded after the start of the Bologna Process, all UL programmes make full use of the standard European components of this process, such as ECTS, a focus on learning outcomes, delivery of the diploma supplement, recognition of prior learning and experience, and recognition of credits and degrees for mobile students. There is an opportunity as part of the forthcoming review of UL legislation to streamline the governance process of approval for new programmes, and particularly for modifications to existing programmes, as well to review the associated national and institutional regulations, so that for example the feedback from student evaluations can, where appropriate, be integrated rapidly into the following year's programme.

Programme steering committees operate within each Faculty, and each programme has a course director. Programme monitoring is done locally by these committees, which include students, alumni and external professionals or stakeholders. While many students did not appear to be aware of the existence of these steering committees, students also told the team that Deans and individual lecturers favoured an open door policy, and were very available to students, making it easy for them to relate to their lecturing staff and programme structures. As previously mentioned in this report, it was also noted that the role of course director could

sometimes be difficult, given their lack of authority over other academic colleagues regarding the organisation of teaching for that study programme.

One of the observations of the IEP team following its visits was that UL communication seems to be more focused on research than on teaching and learning. The background for this situation is that with the creation of UL, a major focus was to ensure that the new university was seen as a research university, not simply a continuation of the former Higher School profile. This attitude appears to have persisted subconsciously until today, and may explain why many Luxembourg students still prefer to go abroad for their university education, and why UL policies and processes – for example recruitment and promotion, or the allocation of professorial staff time for teaching and research – appear to continue to advantage research above teaching activity. A sustained communication effort would be needed to strengthen the profile of teaching and learning, both within and outside the university.

There is scope within the next four year plan, and particularly within the ten year strategic framework, to strengthen the profile of teaching and learning by reviewing UL policies and processes to ensure that both are encouraged and supported in line with the university's overall strategic objectives, leaving enough scope to ensure that these can be applied in a flexible manner at local level as long as the overall UL parameters are respected. Such an approach would, for example, require the university to agree on the overall teaching and research role of professors, with the respective loads for individuals being applied locally as required. If UL can agree that teaching and research are core duties for all, then it could also begin to ensure that these profiles are adequately identified and strengthened through future recruitment and promotion processes.

The forthcoming opening of the Learning Centre, one of the major elements of UL infrastructure currently nearing completion at the Belval campus, is also likely to help support a renewed commitment at UL to the importance of teaching and learning. This spectacular new building will incorporate the library, and will also house classrooms, a conference centre, and a range of student-oriented services and generally support innovation in learning.

The team also identified that the status, profile and place of educational programmes within Faculty structures was not universally clear, and that more explicit UL-wide policies in this regard would be helpful. This does not necessarily mean a one-size-fits-all approach, but it would ensure that there are structures within each Faculty to ensure that teaching can be suitably organised without relying on goodwill and/or regular external short-term contract teachers. This would also be of significant support to the role of course directors, as already discussed earlier in this report.

The team recommends that UL rebalance teaching and research through its Human Resource policies, including recruitment and promotion, and other processes.

One of UL's major objectives over the coming years is the development of enhanced digital learning opportunities at the university. The team was informed of this objective by many of the groups it met during its visits. While acknowledging the significant potential of ICT to

enhance both the teaching and the learning processes, the team did not hear much discussion regarding how digital learning would fit into the broader UL pedagogical strategy, and what was the added value it was expected to bring. Digitalisation is a tool, but careful consideration of the content would also be needed to ensure this has value.

The team realises that these discussions are at an early stage in UL, and that senior UL leaders and experts are also in direct contact with experienced institutions, providers and individuals in other countries regarding how to combine digital learning and MOOCs, and to develop more personalised learning processes for students. The team was informed that pilot groups with staff and students were now being used to test some of these. In this process, UL is advised to be clear as to where the digital components can be integrated usefully, but also where more traditional methods, seminars and tutorials should remain. Digital learning could, for example, be used to facilitate students who wish to take elective modules currently not available at UL, or to facilitate an international experience for students who are not in a position to undertake a mobility period at another university.

The team was also informed that – generally speaking – the UL tutoring system is poorly defined and implemented. A well-functioning tutoring system can be of significant benefit to students and can be a real asset to a dynamic and progressive education environment, particularly at a time when student diversity – both domestic and international – is increasing and a broader range of learning needs are apparent. A refreshed tutoring system could also be used to encourage and support greater uptake of digital learning opportunities, as mentioned above, and could also help students who have queries or problems with which they need assistance. The team notes that investment would be needed to enhance the capacity of teaching staff in this respect.

The team recommends that UL develop an overarching pedagogical strategy, which clarifies the profile and place of education at UL, and also incorporates the broad range of additional UL strategic objectives which involve teaching and learning, such as internationalisation, languages, interdisciplinarity, digital literacy, student entrepreneurship, etc.

5. Research

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, the IEP evaluation took place in parallel to a separate evaluation of research activities. In order to avoid overlap with that evaluation, the IEP has limited its comments on research at UL to matters of governance and organisation.

Enhancing research capacity and outputs in Luxembourg was one of the main drivers behind the creation of UL, and the university can be commended for having achieved this objective during the first ten years of its existence. The university's profile now reflects the strength of its research mission in targeted fields and the international dimension of these.

UL has six main areas of research focus, agreed nationally through its four year plans. These collectively account for about 60% of research staff capacity. There are many additional non-focus areas of research, built up locally within the UL Faculties.

UL has two well-established Interdisciplinary Research Centres (ICs) in the largest research focus areas (Systems Biomedicine and IT Security and Trust), and has very recently created a third (Centre for Contemporary and Digital History). These ICs have played an important role in ensuring UL has become visible and research active in a short period of time.

The ICs are placed within UL structures at the same level as the Faculties, but their Directors are appointed by the Board of governors, on the proposal of the Rectorate, and after opinion of the University Council, and final approval by the competent Minister. In addition, the IC Directors have greater strategic decision-making powers and budgetary autonomy than Faculty Deans.

Research also takes place within the Faculties, in Research Units. These Research Units bring together individual researchers – currently between nine and forty associate/full professors plus junior scientists per Research Unit – on a voluntary basis in areas of similar research interest. The larger Research Units can be subdivided into Institutes or Research Groups. The Research Units enjoy considerable self-organisational freedom, including the election of their own Research Unit Heads.

Doctoral education at UL is organised in seven doctoral schools within the Faculties, some of which are also linked to the ICs. These schools appear to have gone through various mergers and demergers over time, and the team heard that discussions were ongoing regarding where they should fit into the UL structures and how they should best be managed, including the option of creating a “graduate studies” structure at the university level. There are currently approximately 600 doctoral candidates at UL, with an additional 100 due to begin over the coming year due to a new PhD funding programme from the National Research Fund.

While there is no formal alignment between these Research Units and study programmes in the respective Faculties, each Faculty appears to have found a different relationship. In some cases these units appear to operate *de facto* as schools, in other cases the units organise teaching either collectively or separately, and in other cases the teaching and research link appears to be moving towards a departmental structure. The team learned that master

programmes are more likely to be closely linked to Research Groups, but that the bachelor programmes are much less likely to be so. The mission and role of the ICs with respect to the study programmes was even less defined, with a range of apparently *ad hoc* relationships in place.

The team was informed that the recent creation of the third IC means additional clarity is now required regarding the roles of Faculties and ICs in the research field and how these link to the teaching function of the university.

There are significant risks inherent in these very different organisational models for research, which may affect staff and stakeholder behaviors and perceptions, as well as interactions across the university. The team recommends that the university should pay attention to these, and be more explicit about the respective goals, objectives, roles and responsibilities of Faculties and ICs.

There are also, external to UL, three more publicly funded research performing organisations in Luxembourg. These research institutes are likewise located in Belval. The team was informed that there was increasing pressure from government and through funding sources for UL and these institutes to cooperate across a range of issues, including through joint projects and appointments.

The main source of competitive public research funding in Luxembourg is the National Research Fund (FNR). The FNR has five main and long-standing thematic priorities, and the team learned that these are broad enough to accommodate most research topics at UL.

The team learned that the basis for the budget allocation for the research units within UL is mostly historical and incremental. This presents a number of challenges, in terms of rewarding excellent performance or encouraging new fields, and in the opinion of the team is not necessarily the best way to use the significant resources available. There are obviously additional specific research budget lines, both internal to UL and from external sources, which can be targeted. However, if the university wishes to sharpen its research profile as part of the new ten year strategic framework, it will also need to be able to use its own core internal budget allocation mechanism to support this.

The team was informed that the aggregate consolidated size and financial weight of UL, the FNR, and the three other public research institutes all together was similar to that of a medium-sized French or German university. Given this situation, within the broader national and European context, it would make sense for these resources to be used in a very strategic and targeted way.

The draft 2016-2026 Strategic Framework sets out UL's initial plans to define a more limited number of top-tier research areas on the basis of clear criteria, and to use this to sharpen the research profile across UL Faculties and ICs. **While allowing for this strategy to strengthen research in such focus areas, the team recommends that UL also needs to maintain strong explicit links between research and teaching across the university.**

The team learned from the UL organisational chart and law that the university has a Scientific Advisory Council but does not appear to make any use of it. Composed of equal numbers of internal and external representatives to advise the university in the field of research, this could - in the opinion of the team - be a useful structure to help integrate UL research strategies and policies more closely with national and international contexts, and also to help with communicating the results of UL research to external stakeholders.

6. Service to society

Service to society is explicitly included in UL's mission through its commitment to be attentive to the needs of society around it, and through the production of graduates with strong potential for action in research, innovation and in society. These concepts were covered in the team's discussions with the internal and external groups during the two IEP visits to UL. Both internal and external UL stakeholders highlighted to the team the reality of these aspects of the university's mission and the positive economic and social impact of UL in Luxembourg. The university is now firmly positioned in the Luxembourg landscape, and universally accepted as necessary and important for the country.

Indeed, the foundation of UL was intended to serve a broad societal purpose: enhancing higher education opportunities for the residents of Luxembourg, with the attendant benefits of improved employment opportunities in a broader range of higher value jobs. The foundation of UL was also intended to help bring talented young people from other countries to Luxembourg, to contribute to its economic development and diversification. The reality today is that UL and its staff and students operate in a cross-border context; the team was informed that UL had recently received a European Investment Fund loan guarantee scheme to further develop the objective of cross-border recruitment.

In addition, the creation of UL was intended as a draw factor in attracting new economic activities to Luxembourg. There has been significant societal investment in these broad objectives, which is reflected by the important levels of attention received by UL from stakeholders, and the high expectations held by different stakeholders. The team noted through its discussions that the UL leadership and senior staff were very aware of these societal expectations.

The development of the Belval campus is also a significant example of UL's broader impact on society, as part of the concerted national strategic effort to revitalise a former heavy industrial area and to stimulate economic and social renewal through the relocation of the university and a number of other economic and social enterprises. The construction of student residences on the campus likewise brings a new population to the region. In particular, by attracting international students - including many research students - and staff to Belval, UL is supporting the internationalisation of the local scientific, economic, social and cultural environment, where people from a variety of backgrounds bring different experiences and ideas to the campus and its surrounding communities, which can stimulate further innovation, development and investment. Once the current intensive campus development phase has been completed, there would be considerable further scope to increase the number of cultural activities organised by or linked to UL, for the benefit of the broader community as well as for UL staff and students.

The team was informed that some of the Faculties had begun to work systematically with secondary schools in Luxembourg to improve awareness regarding the university among students, their parents and teachers, mainly in order to increase recruitment to study

programmes at a time of changing Luxembourg demographics and increased demand for graduate skills in certain areas of the economy. UL likewise has a good network of professionals who are willing to teach on its professional programmes; this professional input helps make these programmes very attractive to students.

UL Faculty representatives informed the team that UL graduates are successfully getting jobs, in some cases with 100% employment in Luxembourg, and contributing through this to local and national development. While some Faculties track their alumni, more complete information regarding UL graduates' destinations and outcomes would help provide additional evidence regarding the impact of the university, and also be of use in advising students and potential students regarding study choices and potential career paths. UL hosts an annual career fair with large numbers of Luxembourg based employers: the team learned that 4 000 students attended the most recent fair, with over 2 400 jobs advertised.

A recent initiative - in association with industry stakeholders and the Luxembourg chamber of commerce - has been the development of transversal courses open to all UL students designed to help develop students' entrepreneurial skills. The team was informed that during this first year, 200 students had already signed up. There is also scope to expand the use of student internships and practical placements more systematically across study programmes, as an additional way of strengthening student entrepreneurial attitudes and employability, as well as communication between UL and a broader range of local, national and international companies and organisations.

Given UL's academic and research profile, the university has begun developing a more systematic approach to technology transfer, with this now included in a Vice-President's portfolio. The university has five people working on this topic across its structures, and having developed a common policy in this field, is now working on the development of a commercialisation policy, to encourage the identification of potential intellectual property opportunities at UL with external partners.

The team was informed that the favourable Luxembourg tax regime was also a positive factor in stimulating collaboration with industry: seven UL chairs have already been funded by industry, with three more planned, and the ICs have a history of undertaking collaborative research projects with industry. Such cooperation also facilitates the useful transfer of industry expertise into UL and enhances the university's competitiveness.

As the only university in Luxembourg, UL has been sensitive to the need to respond through relevant teaching and research to national priorities and challenges. As discussed earlier in this report, there is now an opportunity to ensure that new and emerging priorities and challenges are identified and discussed, so that they can be adequately included in the next four year plan.

A clearly emerging priority, as seen by the team, is the need for UL to work more closely over the coming years with other education, training and research actors in the Grand Duchy, in order to offer a globally coherent response to national challenges. In particular, UL may need to show leadership in developing a national joined-up approach to ensuring fit-for-purpose

lifelong learning opportunities for citizens and employees across a range of different qualifications levels.

The team was informed of many initiatives at UL to communicate its work, in terms of research activity, expertise and the use of research results, to Luxembourg stakeholders and the general public. While the external stakeholders the IEP team met were all in regular bilateral communication with the university, it appeared however that their meeting with the team was the first time they had all collectively participated in an event at UL. The team received the impression that while stakeholders generally were aware of details of UL's work of relevant to them, few of them had an up-to-date overview of the university and its activities, nor of its future plans, and that general citizens were not aware of what happens within the university.

Given that communications and networking, at a variety of levels, are important for the image and position of UL in Luxembourg and for ongoing societal support, the team recommends that UL continue to develop its communication activities, both internally and externally, for the benefit of society and the university.

7. Internationalisation

UL was explicitly created as a Luxembourgish university operating in a very open international context, and has stayed true to this founding objective. Its student and staff profile is highly international, with a strong representation from neighbouring countries but also from other countries of Europe and further afield. The university is explicitly multilingual in both theory and practice. This combination of different nationalities, languages and academic and research cultures across the UL community is a significant strength of the university, and has led to UL being ranked by the Times Higher Education as the most international university in Europe in 2016.

More than 50% of UL students come from outside Luxembourg, with much higher percentages at masters and doctoral levels. All permanent staff positions are open for international recruitment. In addition to the international composition of its student and staff bodies, UL students are exceptionally mobile, with 95% of bachelor students completing a semester abroad during their studies, and strong encouragement for mobility among masters and doctoral students also. Many of UL's study programmes are explicitly international in outlook, and have also been very successful in attracting students from outside Luxembourg to the university. UL can justifiably be proud of its international character.

While the team heard that UL could almost be considered to be "international by default", there are a number of areas where the team also considered that UL could be more strategic about what it wants to achieve by being international, and how it should consolidate its international profile and outlook. One of these would be to make greater use of relevant international benchmarks to measure UL's performance across a range of key indicators. Another would be to take a more strategic approach to international relations, particularly with institutional partnerships, including the exchange of UL staff, to ensure these are strong two-way relationships from which both institutions can benefit.

In the opinion of the team, there is now an opportunity for UL to explore in more depth what benefits it would like to achieve through internationalisation, based on the existing international diversity among its students and staff, and using the many opportunities available for the benefit of its educational programmes and research. **The team recommends that UL use this opportunity to develop a more explicit internationalisation strategy, with underpinning rationale and objectives.**

8. Human resources

UL is a young university which has developed a strong internationalised research and teaching profile, and which inherited various categories of staff from several different precursor institutions. From a human resource management perspective, this situation presents a number of challenges. In addition, UL is the only university in the country, with a number of academic programmes which are unique to Luxembourg and for which there is a very limited international labour market. The university must obviously also apply national labour laws, which have not necessarily been designed with the international nature of the academic profession in mind.

As with a number of other areas of UL administration, various aspects of human resources (HR) management data are organised at either central or decentralised levels. The team was informed that one of the benefits of the self-evaluation work undertaken in preparation for the IEP evaluation was that this involved bringing together and analysing more of this data at a central level for the first time.

Given that many of the UL Faculty structures are *de facto* based on the precursor institutions, and that the ICs were created after the foundation of the university with different internal governance structures and levels of administrative autonomy, different HR practices have developed across the university. UL's rapid growth since its foundation, and the corresponding recruitment of predominantly younger, highly qualified and internationally-oriented academic staff, coupled with the already existing HR management inconsistencies, has now resulted in a bottleneck situation presenting many challenges for career progression. While staff recruited on research contracts such as Principal Investigators, group leaders and post docs appear particularly affected by the current situation, this is by no means limited to research staff.

The team was also informed of communications challenges in the HR field between the central and devolved administrations. These challenges have been clearly identified as part of the current administration reform project. As discussed earlier in this report, the agreement of UL-wide standard operating procedures and the rollout of the new SAP system is expected to alleviate these challenges considerably. In the meanwhile, the move in recent years to improve central- devolved HR communications through the "HR partners" network involving each Faculty and IC appears to be bearing fruit and has potential a model to facilitate ongoing devolution in other areas of administration also.

UL is very aware of this suite of challenges, and the issues were discussed during many of the meetings held by the IEP team during its visits. The self-evaluation report also presents a clear analysis of this situation, and concludes that UL now needs to "chart a clear career and staff development policy for all staff categories". This report notes that, "in particular, career paths, including promotion and tenure track opportunities, must be studied and implemented rapidly for academic and scientific staff". There is also scope here to create additional

opportunities for staff to work with colleagues across different parts of UL, which would help increase collaboration between existing structures and units.

While safeguards were built into the founding UL regulations to ensure that young research staff had to gain experience in other universities and to avoid automatic promotions, the team considers these dangers are no longer prevalent. The team was informed of the difficulties facing a number of PhD students and postdocs whom UL would like to retain, but whose contracts cannot be renewed again beyond an overall five year limit without the formal opening of a position and an international recruitment process. UL is likewise aware of this situation, and the self-evaluation report refers to the forthcoming review of university legislation as an opportunity to include a promotion mechanism.

Given that UL appears to create new academic positions on a regular basis, the team suggests that there should be regular opportunities as part of this for the best internal candidates to seek promotion. This, coupled with the further strengthening of HR practices, including annual performance reviews, would provide considerable support to both the teaching and research missions of Faculties, ICs and the university.

The team recommends that, as part of drafting the new legislation, UL elaborate a career development scheme for academic and non-academic staff.

There is widespread recognition in European higher education and research of the importance of ensuring equal opportunities for students and staff at all stages of the student lifecycle and the staff career path. It would be in the university's own interests, in the pursuit of excellent and quality enhancement, to ensure these opportunities are available to the best candidates, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic circumstances, disability, or other such distinguishing factors.

The very wide diversity of cultural backgrounds and traditions among UL staff and students is already a positive sign of the university's openness to this concept. The team noted the overall good intentions which exist regarding the promotion of equal opportunities at UL, and the recent appointment of a Vice-President with specific responsibilities in this area.

A gender mainstreaming committee has existed for a number of years at UL, with membership from the central administration HR office and some of the Faculties, but appears to be missing representatives from several key UL internal structures and stakeholders, in particular from students. The current four year agreement with the Ministry states that UL should pay particular attention to the proportion and number of female professors, but this does not yet appear to have been transformed into a performance indicator. Nor does there appear to be information at the level of the university regarding gender profiles in recruitment panels, or specific actions at Faculty level to address this issue.

The team therefore recommends that UL develop a gender action plan, with suitable resources to implement this.

9. Conclusion

The IEP team would like to thank all UL staff and students, together with the university's external partners and stakeholders, whom they met during their visits, and who helped the team understand the context, challenges and opportunities UL is currently facing.

The team found a small, young, and active university at an important consolidation phase in its development, allowing it to move from the initial "start-up" period to that of a well-established international player in both education and research, with significant benefits for Luxembourg society and economy. This consolidation process also includes the completion of the Belval campus and ensuring its optimal use for students, staff and university life.

In order to establish sound foundations for subsequent developments, the university leadership will need to concentrate on this necessary consolidation phase over the next period. The team considers that well as requiring the prioritisation of objectives and activities, and the option of saying no to initiatives which do not fall within this scope, this will also require resources and investment in putting in place the systems and processes now needed for UL to consolidate its position and prepare for the next phase of development.

The team found, however, that the UL leadership and governance teams are very aware of these issues, and have been working hard to develop the common vision, shared values and sense of urgency required to address them. There is clear evidence of the university's ability to succeed in its next phase of development, with strong support from its stakeholders and partners.

The team hopes that this IEP evaluation, both in terms of the discussions during the team's visits and this report, will be useful in addressing these challenges in the period to come.

The following is a brief summary of the main recommendations made by the team, for consideration by the university.

Governance and decision-making:

- ▶ The team recommends that sufficient horizon scanning and planning take place in the early stages of drawing up the next four year plan, so that all agreed elements can be integrated into the overall strategic, financial and operational framework. The next four year plan would also need to set out timelines and prioritised steps for strategy implementation.
- ▶ The team recommends that the university and the government work closely together to identify improvements to the governance structures and decision-making responsibilities which can be incorporated into the forthcoming revision of the

university legislation, and to communicate these clearly and persuasively to the relevant parliamentary and legislative authorities.

- ▶ The team recommends that a thorough review of UL's own internal regulations and standard operating procedures is then undertaken, to ensure that – within existing and future legislative frameworks – these can facilitate academic and administrative decision-making which is as effective and efficient as possible.
- ▶ The team recommends that UL make full use of the potential and expertise now available to bring together and analyse relevant data, in order to inform the necessary strategic planning, prioritisation and decision-making for the next phase of the university's development.
- ▶ The team recommends that UL increase the transparency of its budget allocation process to ensure it supports the implementation of the new UL strategic framework.
- ▶ The team recommends that the review of UL's standard operating procedures be completed as a priority, and that these new standardised procedures then be implemented to ensure a significantly enhanced administrative system which meets the needs of students, academic staff and the administrators themselves.
- ▶ The team recommends that UL should empower students to play their role at the university. This includes ensuring that UL students are represented in a more structured and permanent way, including at central level, and that financial and infrastructural resources are made available for this. Student representatives should also receive training to assist them in carrying out their functions effectively.
- ▶ The team recommends that an effective system of electing student representatives be put in place across the entire university, which meets the needs of the students, reflects the structures of the university, and ensures that students are well represented. This may involve clarifying existing legislative or regulatory stipulations, and modifying these in the near future.
- ▶ The team recommends that students should be supported and incentivised to organise clubs and societies on topics of interest to themselves, and that the university infrastructure be made available for this.

Quality culture:

- ▶ The team recommends that UL should draw together all the different elements which already exist in a coherent manner to create an overarching QA system for the university, which covers teaching, research and administration, and includes ongoing programme evaluation and feedback to students.

Teaching and Learning:

- ▶ The team recommends that UL rebalance teaching and research through its Human Resource policies, including recruitment and promotion, and other processes.
- ▶ The team recommends that UL develop an overarching pedagogical strategy, which clarifies the profile and place of education at UL, and also incorporates the broad range of additional UL strategic objectives which involve teaching and learning, such as internationalisation, languages, interdisciplinarity, digital literacy, student entrepreneurship, etc.

Research:

- ▶ The team recommends that the university should pay attention to the significant risks inherent in the very different organisational models for research which exist at UL, and be more explicit about the respective goals, objectives, roles and responsibilities of Faculties and ICs.
- ▶ While allowing for a strategy to strengthen research in certain focus areas, the team recommends that UL also needs to maintain strong explicit links between research and teaching across the university.

Service to society:

- ▶ The team recommends that UL should continue to develop its communication activities, both internally and externally, for the benefit of society and the university.

Internationalisation:

- ▶ The team recommends that UL should develop a more explicit internationalisation strategy with underpinning rationale and objectives.

Human Resources:

- ▶ The team recommends that UL should elaborate a career development scheme for academic and non-academic staff.
- ▶ The team recommends that UL should develop a gender action plan, with resources to implement this.