EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN UNIVERSITY

EVALUATION REPORT

April 2021

Team:

Tatjana Volkova, Chair

Jacques Lanarès

Marisol Morales Ladrón

Adrian Tudor Stan

Terhi Nokkala, Team Coordinator

Contents

1. Introduction

This report is the result of the 2021 evaluation of the Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU). This was the second Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) evaluation that EMU has participated in. The first evaluation took place in 2007.

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 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 IEP are:

- a strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase;

- a European and international perspective;

- a peer-review approach; and

- support for improvement.

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

- decision-making processes, institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management; and

- the 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.

All aspects of the evaluation are guided by four key questions, which are based on a "fitness for (and of) purpose" approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?

- How is the institution trying to do it?

- How does the institution know it works?

- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 Eastern Mediterranean University's profile

EMU was established in 1979 in the northern part of the island of Cyprus[1] under the name Institute of Higher Technology. It is located in the port town of Gazimağusa, a community of approximately 70 000 inhabitants. EMU is an important employer in town and through its diverse community contributes greatly to cultural and social life in Gazimağusa.

---

[1] EMU's preferred terminology for the region is North Cyprus when referring to the country and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus when referring to the state.

EMU is a public university and was the first university established in the northern part of the island of Cyprus. As there are now dozens of universities in the region, many of them private, the operational environment for EMU is very competitive. The team was told that competition from other universities, which may offer lower tuition fees and have lower admission requirements, is causing some EMU students to drop out. EMU currently hosts 17 000 students, of whom 35% are international, 45% are Turkish and 25% are local students.

EMU's opportunities for international collaboration are limited due to the university not being eligible to apply to participate in various European Union programmes, such as Horizon 2020 or Erasmus+. However, EMU has expressed its wish to follow the spirit of the Bologna Process. EMU collaborates closely with the Turkish Higher Education Council (YÖK) and is able to enrol students through the Turkish national entrance examination.

Like many other universities around the world, EMU has faced turbulent times in 2020–2021 as a result of the global Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had consequences for the finances of EMU, which is largely dependent on tuition fee income and has been hit by decreasing student numbers. Similarly, EMU's day-to-day activities have been impacted by the periodic lockdowns, which necessitated a move to online teaching in spring 2020. EMU has also provided additional assistance to its students, many of whom have been facing financial and practical struggles during the pandemic.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a self-evaluation team appointed by the previous rector of the university, Prof. Dr Necdet Osam. The current rector, Prof. Dr Aykut Hocanın, assumed office in summer 2020.

The self-evaluation team was chaired by Prof. Dr Cem Tanova (academic), adviser to the rector. The other members of the team were:

- Prof. Dr Aykut Hocanın (academic), dean, Faculty of Engineering;

- Prof. Dr Tarık Timur (academic), professor, Faculty of Business and Economics;

- Asst. Prof. Dr Nilgun Suphi (academic), coordinator, Institutional Development and International Academic Affairs Office;

- Kazım Hakverdi (administrative), asst. general secretary;

- Bugu Sümen Cohar (administrative), Registrar's Office; and

- Mehmet Tolgay (administrative), Financial Affairs Office.

The self-evaluation report (SER), which the team encourages EMU to share widely within its community, was prepared in February 2020, with an update in autumn 2020. Information for the SER was collected from EMU's official documents and website, as well as from interviews with some department chairs. Additionally, the university's Senate members received a survey regarding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis included in the SER. There was no student representative in the self-evaluation group because EMU considered that the academic staff members in the group would represent students' opinion.

Although the IEP team was left with many open questions after reading the SER and its appendices, the two evaluation visits, as well as the additional material requested by the team and expediently

supplied by EMU, gave the team a good understanding of the university and its strengths and challenges.

The SER of EMU, together with the appendices, was originally sent to the evaluation team in April 2020, and the updates were provided in December 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was decided that the evaluation of EMU was to take place online. The first and second visits of the evaluation team to EMU took place from 15 January to 1 February 2021 and from 12 to 15 April 2021, respectively. During and between the visits EMU provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation.

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

- Tatjana Volkova, former rector, BA School of Business and Finance, Latvia, team chair;

- Jacques Lanarès, former vice-rector, University of Lausanne, Switzerland;

- Marisol Morales Ladrón, vice-rector, University of Alcala, Spain;

- Maciej Rewucki, student, University of Poznan, Poland (first visit) and Adrian Tudor Stan, student, Victor Babes University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Timisoara, Romania (second visit); and

- Terhi Nokkala, senior researcher, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, team coordinator.

The team thanks the rector and his team, the self-evaluation team and the entire university community for their warm welcome during the two visits. Regardless of the exceptional circumstances under which this evaluation was conducted, the openness and warmth of the university community made the team's task not only easy, but also enjoyable.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

2.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

EMU's mission, as expressed in the university's strategic plan for 2017–2022, is as follows:

> The Eastern Mediterranean University has set as a mission becoming a university acting in line with universal values, guided by internationally recognised academic educational criteria, providing solutions for regional and international problems with a sense of social responsibility, raising graduates who have internalized multiculturalism, free thought, tolerance and participation as well as carrying out work to make international improvements in the fields of production, science, arts and sports. (p. 13)

Additionally, the strategic plan for 2017–2022 describes EMU's vision as follows:

> The vision of Eastern Mediterranean University is to provide high quality education based on scientific production, and to become a leading and the most preferred university by students and academic staff within its unique geographical location which joins three continents. (p. 13)

2.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

Legislative framework and decision-making bodies

According to the SER, the significant legislative framework of EMU comprises the following documents: 1) EMU Law as drawn up by the parliament; 2) University By-laws, which are proposed by the university Senate, approved by the Board of Trustees and ratified by the national government; and finally, 3) the regulations, which are proposed by the Senate and approved by the Board of Trustees. As many of the significant regulations pertaining to the governance of the university are subject to EMU Law, EMU has limited capacity to change these. EMU set amending EMU Law and achieving more institutional autonomy as one of its central goals in its strategy for 2017–2022.

EMU is a public university. Its highest decision-making body, the externally appointed Board of Trustees, comprises nine members. The Board of Trustees is responsible for deciding on university statutes, approving the budget, opening new vacancies and approving the appointments of staff.

The second important decision-making body is the university's Senate, chaired by the rector and comprising 60 members. These include, in officio, all vice-rectors, deans, directors of administrative offices and department heads, as well as seven members elected by the university's academic staff. The composition of the Senate is determined by EMU Law, which makes no mention of a student representative. However, the team was told that the students have one representative, who is allowed to be present, but not to vote. According to the University By-laws, the Senate meets at least once per semester, but the team was told that, if necessary, the Senate can meet every month or even more regularly.

The daily running of EMU lies in the hands of the Rectorate, which comprises the rector, four vice-rectors (for Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Social & Cultural Affairs and Administrative & Technical Affairs) and their coordinators, as well as the General Secretary (currently deputised by two deputies). The rector is elected by the university community, including lecturers 64%, instructors 24%, administrators/staff 10% and students 2% of the vote. The current rector, Prof. Dr Aykut Hocanın, assumed this position in summer 2020, having previously held the position of dean of the engineering

faculty. According to the university's By-laws, it can have up to five vice-rectors, who are appointed by the rector and approved by the Board of Trustees.

Similarly significant for daily decision-making is the university's Executive Council, comprising the rector, vice-rectors, deans as well as directors of the academic schools, the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research, Institute of Distance Education and the General Secretary.

The faculty and departmental levels likewise have Faculty Academic Councils and Departmental Councils, comprising both ex officio members (dean, heads of departments), elected members and, informally, non-voting student representatives.

With the exception of the Board of Trustees, which comprises external representatives, EMU's governing bodies comprise only the university's own

 academic and administrative staff and students as informal, non-voting members. The team was told, however, that in some of the faculties there are programme-level advisory boards comprising external stakeholders.

While EMU considers students to be its most important stakeholders, in accordance with the Law governing the university (EMU Law) students do not have formal representation in the Senate, Faculty Councils or Departmental Councils. EMU previously established a committee that aimed to change the Law and allow for the formal representation of students in the university's governing bodies, but was not successful. However, the team heard that some faculties and departments do invite elected student representatives to participate in meetings, either regularly or when issues that are deemed to concern students are decided upon. Each programme has an elected student representative who meets with department heads and deans to discuss concerns. While students are also consulted through various informal channels, the team was told that on occasion students do not feel that their voice is adequately heard in the university community, thus decreasing their motivation to actively participate in it.

There is a university-level student council comprising one elected student representative from each faculty. Additionally, the international student societies have one representative in the student council. The student council is organised under the auspices of the university, rather than being fully independent.

Strategic plan

EMU's current strategic plan covers the years 2017–2022. The team was told that the plan is based on input from all of EMU's stakeholders, internal and external: students, staff, alumni, graduates and industry. The strategic plan comprises a large set of goals and objectives for the future development of EMU.

The strategic plan comprises a total of 16 goals, including "strengthening the institutional ownership, protecting EMU culture and values, and reflecting these in academic processes", the "formation of sustainable and secure living spaces" and "increasing the effectiveness of the community service activities and facilitating the awareness of social responsibility". Each goal has a number of objectives, which are linked to activities, responsible units and criteria. However, it is the team's interpretation that the strategic goals are on occasion mixed with operational targets and activities, and that key performance indicators (KPIs) are not clearly defined throughout. A number of auxiliary strategies, such as specific strategies for research, internationalisation or services to society, are not defined.

The faculties similarly have their own strategic plans prepared for a three-year period, following EMU's strategic plan. It is the understanding of the team that the strategic plans of the faculties act, first and foremost, as action plans for EMU's strategic plan.

Finances and staffing

In terms of its revenues, EMU is heavily dependent on tuition fees from students. International student fees account for approximately 55% of EMU's annual revenue; tuition fees from Turkish students account for about 27% and local student fees about 6%. Despite EMU being a public university, less than 2% of its revenue comprises the public subsidy.

EMU recognises its financial dependence on tuition fees and is taking steps to create a more balanced set of revenue streams. At the same time, it also recognises the cyclical nature of student demand and is strengthening its efforts to identify potential new student markets and attract more students. Additionally, EMU has the option to take action to close those study programmes for which there is no longer demand and move staff to other programmes.

The team understands that the two biggest expenditures constitute scholarships for students (45%) and salaries for staff (41%). EMU does not have an activity-based costing system that would enable the university to determine the share of its expenditure comprising its education and research activities.

EMU comprises 12 faculties (Architecture, Arts and Sciences, Business and Economics, Communication and Media Studies, Dentistry, Education, Engineering, Health Sciences, Law, Medicine, Pharmacy and Tourism), four schools (Computing and Technology, Health Services, Justice, and Tourism and Hospitality Management) and a Foreign Languages and English Preparatory School, as well as various administrative units. EMU hosts 1047 academic staff members and 844 support staff members. Altogether, 40% of the academic staff members are international; of these, 86% come from Turkey. Other groups include academics from countries such as Iran, Azerbaijan, Germany and Jordan.

The decision to hire a new staff member is initiated at the department level, and, if approved by the rector, the position is advertised internationally. It is the perception of the team that EMU has a clear process in place for recruitment of personnel. The candidates are screened by the relevant departments before the recruitment process progresses to the dean, then the rector and then finally the Board of Trustees, which makes the hiring decision. The overall staffing regulations are decided at the governmental level.

Career advancement for academic staff is based on the evaluation of their research quantity and quality, as well as other research activities, supervision and education activities. The process is handled by the Academic Evaluation Committee (ADEK). The criteria for career advancement, the so-called ADEK criteria, were most recently renewed by the EMU Senate in December 2020.

2.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The team understands that the monitoring process of EMU's strategic goals and objectives is informal and based on mutual trust and discussion among relevant parties. Both the rector's team and the faculties check annually whether they have taken the actions they wanted to take and conduct a SWOT analysis that allows them to discover their potential weaknesses. However, it seems to the team that there is no systematic ownership of the strategic priorities, follow-up structures, KPIs or information available that would allow EMU to ascertain how its strategic priorities are met. The performance management processes are under-defined in that collecting, compiling and analysing information

about all university operations does not effectively feed into the evaluation of the achievement of strategic goals.

EMU is, however, aware of this challenge, and as part of the process of updating its strategic plan it is also developing KPIs. The new strategic plan is expected to be finished by the end of 2021.

The team was told that achieving EMU's strategic priorities has been impacted to some extent by the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, the envisioned student number increases have been delayed and some internationalisation goals, such as establishing new joint programmes, have similarly been delayed, albeit with some exceptions. Recruitments have decreased somewhat and some investments have been delayed. However, overall EMU perceives itself to have navigated the pandemic's challenges successfully; for example, EMU has not needed to lay off staff or cut research funding as a result of the pandemic.

2.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team would like to point out the following strengths regarding governance and management at EMU:

- EMU is in the process of revising its strategic plan and recognises the need for developing KPIs.

- Its mission statement has a strong emphasis on internationalisation and social responsibility.

- Involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes is good.

At the same time, however, the team feels that EMU governance has certain weaknesses:

- EMU's strategic goals are mixed with operational targets and activities.

- Even though the enhancement and development of research is one of EMU's strategic goals, there is no vice-rector for research.

- Due to regulations, student representatives are not voting members in all university governance structures and the extent to which student opinion is heard varies between faculties.

In order to help EMU improve its governance and management capacity, the team would like to offer the following recommendations for EMU's consideration:

- *Elaborate strategies at the university level for human resource development, research and internationalisation, as well as service to society.*

- *Ensure the alignment of academic and administrative activities and goals with the overall strategy of the university.*

- *Encourage ownership of the strategy by involving all relevant stakeholders participating in developing the strategy.*

- *Refine strategic goals, operational targets and activities, and assign KPIs to correspond with them.*

- *Consider appointing a vice-rector for research.*

- *Ensure that the student voice is heard and has weight in all relevant decision-making processes, and actively encourage the students to participate in university governance while at the same time ensuring the independence of the student council.*

3. Quality culture

3.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

According to EMU's SER, EMU's quality assurance policy aims to

> Provide student satisfaction-oriented higher education services with the support of qualified staff and current technology, while utilizing risk related threats as opportunities in line with the legal framework and to continuously improve quality management system and services with the satisfaction of all stakeholders. (p. 10)

EMU strives to have all its programmes accredited by international accreditation agencies, such as ABET in engineering, NAAB in architecture, FIBAA in social sciences, TPD in psychology, and so on. Additionally, EMU aims to improve its placement in international university rankings, such as QS Stars and Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

3.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

EMU follows International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards in many of its daily activities and has ISO certification, which was renewed most recently in October 2020. Since 2016, EMU has had an internal quality assurance handbook, which, according to the SER, "includes samples of documents used, description of the terminology used, vision, mission, quality policies, definition of internal and external stakeholders, procedures used for quality assurance, planning and control, method of performance appraisal, method used for improvement/rectification". It can be accessed through EMU's Total Quality Management Directorate (TQMD) and is primarily used by the TQMD's own staff.

The TQMD comprises three staff members and a network of representatives from all faculties and administrative offices of the university. Additionally, the TQMD has a complaints committee, which discusses and aims to solve student complaints collected through complaints boxes located around the campus. The complaints are collected every two weeks and dealt with by the complaints committee. The students are able to leave complaints also through EMU's social media pages. There is, however, no specific unit dedicated coordinating the quality assurance system for teaching and learning. While the need was recognised already some 5-6 years ago, and an attempt was made to establish a quality committee for teaching and learning, the attempt was not successful. However, the current leadership is aware of the need to establish a functioning committee dedicated to teaching and learning quality and of involving that committee as well as the TQMD better into EMU's strategic management process.

To ensure and enhance the quality of its study programmes, EMU places great weight on international programme accreditation. The first international accreditation at EMU was received in 2000 by the electrical engineering programme. There is great variation in the extent to which programmes have received international accreditation: while some programmes have already been accredited three times, some newer or smaller programmes have not yet received an accreditation. Approximately 50% of the programmes are accredited.

There is, to the team's understanding, no systematic quality culture in EMU that would encompass linking EMU strategic goals to the quality of its education, research and service to society: continuously collecting information on the quality of all these elements through various means, allocating clear responsibility for quality control and enhancement to relevant bodies and persons, systematically

analysing this information and continuously improving the performance of EMU in all these areas. While EMU collects information about the different activities and services through multiple forms, there is no clear description available as to how that information is utilised, beyond it being discussed by the relevant body (for example in the case of course evaluation the department head and council, dean and faculty council; and in the case of evaluation of services the TQMD). The quality culture in EMU seems to rely on easy and collegial discussions and problem solving, rather than clear procedures. The students interviewed by the team indicated that the feedback loop back to students, concerning any potential improvements made based on the surveys, was not always closed.

3.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The quality assurance system in EMU is built of two main pillars: external evaluations, such as accreditations by international accreditation agencies and ISO certification, and collection of staff and student feedback, whether through formal surveys, informal complaints boxes and discussions, and solving of problems in an informal manner as they arise.

Internal quality assurance is largely based on collecting information about the satisfaction of EMU's constituents through various surveys. There are, to the team's understanding, two types of satisfaction surveys distributed to students at the end of each semester. There is a survey pertaining to each course in which the student participated, distributed to students by the faculties and asking students to rate various aspects of the course on a scale of 1–4. Another survey is managed by the university's TQMD: this asks students to rate various university services and facilities, as well as the student experience, on a scale of 1–5. Both surveys also contain an open space for giving feedback. EMU has determined that if the mean of student ratings is below a certain level, corrective action must be taken.

The surveys are distributed through the student portal, but the response rates have recently been low; on average, 11% of students have responded to course evaluation between 2015 and 2020, although there is some variation between faculties. The team was told that previously, when the surveys were distributed as paper copies in class, the response rates were higher at approximately 60%. The team was also told that some students do not inherently trust the system and are therefore not willing to fill in the surveys. At the same time, it seems that students feel they can convey their message through class representatives or directly to teachers, and thus the motivation to complete the surveys is low. During the Covid-19 pandemic, EMU also prepared a student satisfaction survey concerning online teaching. The results of this survey were distributed to the community.

There is also an annual staff satisfaction survey, administered by the TQMD, in which the staff can evaluate, for example, various administrative services and their own working conditions.

Additionally, the various administrative offices also survey the satisfaction of their clients, be those students or other members of the university community. EMU similarly sends surveys to canvas the opinion of graduates, alumni and local employers. The results are collected by the TQMD and can be requested from there. They are currently not available openly on the EMU website, but can be received by email upon request.

3.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team identified the following strengths in terms of the quality culture:

- EMU is aware of the need for an integrated approach to quality assurance.

- EMU strives to acquire external accreditation for all its programmes and to achieve good results in prestigious international rankings.

- EMU has introduced a quality system based on ISO certification for administrative services.

- There are some quality processes aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning.

- A new system of performance evaluation for staff is being developed.

The team also identified some weaknesses:

- The institution does not have centralised information systems and systematic data analysis concerning teaching quality that would allow EMU to continuously improve the quality of its education. The surveys used by EMU are not normalised, in that they are all constructed around the same criteria. This lessens their applicability in systematic data collection, triangulation and analysis.

- The ISO-based quality assurance system is not strategically aligned with EMU's overall development and only partly covers its strategic goals.

- EMU has a strong emphasis on rankings and external accreditations and thus undervalues the importance of a well-defined quality culture and shared ownership of quality. There is neither full ownership of quality, nor institutional policies or an agenda that will move it forward.

- There is little evidence of a link between a quality assurance system and the strategic management.

- Quality policies do not include teaching and learning matters, including a well-defined student-centred approach and research.

- Although a variety of surveys are conducted at EMU, there is no systematic procedure that can lead to comprehensive information and analysis on several key aspects of how different agents perform.

- The percentage of students participating in surveys is rather low, and no formal and regular feedback is provided to the students or to staff on the conclusions drawn from the various surveys.

- There is no rigorous Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle in place for identifying and solving potential quality challenges.

The team would like to offer the following recommendations for EMU to consider with regard to quality culture:

- *Develop an overarching approach to enhance quality assurance that covers all the activities of EMU and enables it to achieve its strategic goals.*

- *Develop a quality culture that engages the entire university community, including students, and recognises their contribution towards quality enhancement.*

- *Ensure an integrated information system that allows for effective monitoring, and supports decision-making and continuous quality enhancement.*

- *Consider innovative approaches to improve student participation in the surveys, as well as complementary approaches to quantitative forms, including interviews, focus group discussions, etc.*

- *Establish a clear feedback loop on student surveys and other satisfaction surveys pertaining to university services.*

- *Acknowledge students as agents of transformation and change.*

- *Ensure that annual performance evaluation processes are centred on staff development and empowerment.*

4. Teaching and learning

4.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

EMU's strategic plan for 2017–2022 contains several goals and specifications of these goals concerning teaching and learning, as well as the overall educational philosophy of EMU. These include, for example, the following:

> Equipping students with universal values that would turn them into self-confident, creative, highly aware, inquisitive and autonomous individuals who demonstrate respect towards others' freedom. (p. 19)

> The objective of Eastern Mediterranean University is to become a center of attraction for successful students both in Turkey and the countries in close proximity to our region, to maintain the existing level of quality in undergraduate/associate programs and to take it to higher levels. In this respect, we aim to offer undergraduate/associate education through programs motivating learning through experience, supporting interdisciplinary cooperation, and prioritising internationalisation. Bringing up our students as self-confident individuals and encouraging them to take the initiative and to act as creative individuals with up-to-date research, learning and inquisition skills form the basis of our educational philosophy. (p. 22)

The university Senate's curriculum committee has developed generic aims that all study programmes should foster in students. These are defined in the SER as follows:

> EMU's education philosophy is based on educating students so that they will be effective and participative persons in their community in the profession they have chosen. The aim is for our students to be educated professionals with high ethical standards and be honest, trustworthy, have self-confidence, be able to question and thinking critically, take initiatives, be competitive, sociable and open to collaboration, give value to others thoughts and views, be sensitive towards community problems, sensitive to the environment, respectful to social and cultural diversity, be able to communicate in at least two languages and be computer literate. (p. 11)

The team also learned that improving teaching quality and the introduction of systematic assessment of learning outcomes are important strategic development goals for EMU.

4.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

Opening a new degree programme takes place through a rigorous evaluation process, going through organisational decision-making levels in the university including the department, the faculty, the Office of the Rector, the Senate and its curriculum committee, and finally the Board of Trustees. Externally, the programme is confirmed by the Ministry of Education. The team was told that all new programmes are furthermore evaluated by the region's Higher Education Academic Evaluation and Quality Improvement Commission (YÖDAK), as well as by YÖK, which enables EMU to be listed in the Turkish central admission system and thus to admit Turkish students. YÖK similarly conducts periodic quality audits of degree programmes. The course contents are regularly reviewed and updated. EMU also encourages all the programmes to be periodically accredited by international accreditation agencies.

Given that EMU is an international university, there are many admission routes to the university. All Turkish students are admitted based on their placement by YÖK in the Turkish national entrance

examination, and YÖK determines the quota for Turkish students in each programme. Local students are admitted based on local, university-wide entrance examination, according to the quota set by EMU. International students have no quota and are admitted based on their national or international matriculation examinations, such as the UK's A-levels. A certificate of English language proficiency, such as IELTS or TOEFL, is required to enter programmes that are taught in English. In some programmes, such as medicine, international students are required to achieve workable language proficiency in Turkish before they enter the clinical phase of their studies. Admission to Master's and PhD programmes is based on student's performance in the undergraduate degree and subject to evaluation of the department's graduate studies committee.

EMU follows many of the principles agreed upon in the Bologna Process. For example, the Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes follow the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System structure. EMU perceives itself to be student centred, which it understands to mean students being assigned an adviser at the beginning of their studies, and teachers making use of discussions and information technology in their teaching methods. The team was also told that there are both compulsory and elective courses on the curriculum, especially at the Master's and PhD levels, and a limited flexibility for students to choose the mode of completing those courses.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, EMU has been largely teaching online, with the exception of some practical teaching and lab courses in disciplines like dentistry for those students who are close to graduation. This action was supported by the student body. Based on the opinions of students, EMU also introduced a modified system of student grading; instead of a multigrade scale, EMU moved to a pass–fail grading system, and in some courses, in study fields such as medicine, offered students the option to conduct their final exam either online or face-to-face, depending on the availability of a good internet connection. EMU also provided other practical help for students during lockdown, such as food packages or mobile phone cards.

The team was told by several interviewees that EMU has good teaching and learning facilities and that it wants to further improve its cultural and sports facilities. It has taken significant steps to make the campus accessible for students with disabilities, such as mobility or visual impairments. EMU feels that it has adequate facilities to receive a greater number of students than it currently hosts; however, in some fields a lack of supervisor capacity limits the ability of EMU to admit more students into Master's and PhD programmes.

The team received various views on whether the teaching loads are considered to be heavy or not. The compulsory teaching load for academic staff is 12 contact hours per week. In some faculties, such as medicine, there is a modular system that means the teaching load may be higher during some periods and lower during others.

There is some pedagogical training for staff, but this is not consistent throughout all faculties. The team was told, for example, that in the faculty of medicine all new academics must attend a 2–4 day course on problem-based learning and other pedagogical applications. EMU organised training on how to use Moodle in teaching when it had to suddenly move courses online at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to encourage teachers to participate in the Moodle training, the university issued a participation certificate.

4.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

Written course descriptions are available on the university website for all courses. However, the team was not able to find evidence of systematic linking of expected learning outcomes and assessment

methods throughout EMU. EMU monitors student drop-out rates, which, although declining in the past three semesters, have been a cause for some concern. The drop-out rate is especially high among international students. EMU explains this development as resulting from increasing competition from lower-cost universities in the region. Drop-out rates are monitored by the Rectorate and discussed by the Senate. EMU has an interview scheme for those students who drop out, and thus is able to analyse the leading causes of the relatively high drop-out rates. EMU also offers some support services, such as psychological counselling, to students.

4.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team observed the following strengths pertaining to the teaching and learning function and the activities of EMU:

- Students and external stakeholders are delighted with the competences offered by EMU degrees.

- The international flavour of EMU is appreciated by the students.

- There is a good practice, in some cases, of establishing advisory boards on the programme level with external stakeholders.

- Teachers appear motivated to improve their teaching based on student feedback.

- Flexible arrangements and support were put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The team similarly observed some scope for further improvement:

- There is limited understanding and alignment of student-centred learning (SCL) with internal quality assurance and the management of teaching and learning processes.

- No systematic pedagogical training is available for academic staff.

- Relatively high drop-out rates have been a cause for concern, although there are signs of steady improvement.

- The learning outcomes are not fully outlined or in line with the pedagogical methodologies, and student assessment is not consistently linked to learning outcomes throughout the university.

To remedy these weaknesses, the team would like to offer the following recommendations for EMU to consider:

- *Increase awareness of the concept of SCL and ensure that internal quality assurance supports its implementation; monitor its application and share best practices across faculties.*

- *Provide regular opportunities for pedagogical training for staff and bring together academics interested in pedagogical development, not only locally but also in the wider region. This needs to be coordinated (e.g. by the Continuous Education Centre or another relevant unit).*

- *Continue good practise in establishing advisory boards on programme level with external stakeholders.*

- *Monitor closely the causes and trends of drop-out rates and offer individualised support and solutions for students in danger of dropping out.*

- *Ensure that all expected learning outcomes are defined and linked to pedagogical methodologies, and that the assessment instruments and criteria are closely linked to expected learning outcomes; disseminate good practice across EMU.*

5. Research

5.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

EMU's strategic plan for 2017–2022 contains several provisions on research. These include, for example, the following:

> Strengthening the culture of science, research, creativity and innovation within the university. (p. 29)

> Encouraging, supporting and awarding quality research. (p. 29)

> Strengthening research infrastructure and research-targeted human resources. (p. 30)

Much of the research done at EMU is connected to postgraduate studies; therefore, the following objectives pertaining to postgraduate students are relevant to understanding the institution's research strategy.

> Strengthening postgraduate teaching and learning through innovative and creative approaches. (p. 27)

> Conducting an ongoing evaluation of postgraduate programs, increasing their efficacy and productivity, and developing unique programs. (p. 27)

> Attracting qualified students to postgraduate programs. (p. 28)

> Ensuring that postgraduate students gain direct or indirect international experience. (p. 28)

5.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

EMU has a Research Advisory Board, which comprises representatives of all faculties. The Research Advisory Board is responsible for giving out research awards, as well as allocating, based on applications, the limited amount of research funding for projects and conference attendance that EMU has made available for the university community. It also supports research activities by temporarily reducing the teaching load of academics who want to focus more on research. There is, at the moment, no administrative office that would provide practical support for preparing research proposals, for example, but EMU is aware of the need for such an office.

EMU does not have a specific research strategy; nor did the team find evidence of EMU having strategic priority areas for research. Instead, research is developed organically by staff members according to their own interests.

EMU wants to increase its research activities and has taken several steps to meet this goal. These include giving awards for those researchers who have been able to publish their research, as well as to highly cited researchers. The monetary value of the research awards has recently been changed to depend on the quality of the journal in which the article is published. In this way, EMU tries to encourage publishing in high-quality outlets. Additionally, EMU is currently working to establish longer (2–3 year) PhD student/research assistant positions, as well as postdoc positions that would be solely research positions, and wants to advertise these internationally.

A significant challenge for research activities is EMU's limited ability to acquire external research funding. There is significant amount of public funding available for research in the region, and EMU is only eligible to apply for Turkish research funding in collaboration with Turkish universities through

one research funding instrument. EMU is not eligible to apply for European Union research funding, such as Horizon 2020, which it considers a fundamental challenge. Although EMU seeks to establish collaborations with companies in the region, limited industrial capacity in the area poses challenges for this. EMU has also established collaboration with public authorities, such as the Ministry of Health, to engage in some research projects.

The limited research funding has some implications for the ability of EMU to conduct infrastructure intensive research in certain fields, like medicine. In some cases, however, academics have been able to establish international collaborations that enable them to conduct research with a partner university abroad, and EMU has supported these collaborations by granting leaves of absence and funding travel to work at other universities to conduct the research. Academics also engage in theoretical research that does not necessarily require large infrastructure or expensive empirical research equipment.

EMU hosts 20 research centres that focus on fields ranging from energy research to archaeology. The research centres may be administratively located inside a single faculty or be under the Rectorate. The research centres are established based on the interests of academic staff; they conduct primarily project-based research and host researchers and graduate students who are mainly affiliated with their own academic departments. The research centres have their own boards and directors, but the administrative work related to running a research centre does not diminish an academic's other duties. EMU could support its research centres by acquiring equipment, for example, or assigning some assistant positions to the research centre.

EMU hosts over a hundred graduate programmes at Master's and PhD level. Acquiring a PhD requires the candidate to publish a number of indexed publications and therefore graduate students contribute a significant part of EMU's research output. While there are no specific research positions in EMU, there are some relatively short term, part-time or full-time research assistant positions aimed at doctoral students. Similarly, a limited number of scholarships are available for doctoral students; these cover either all or part of the tuition fees.

5.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

EMU monitors the quality of its research primarily through three channels. First, it regularly trawls the international research indexing databases for publications with EMU as the affiliation. The IEP team was able to receive information about publication activity as evidenced by these databases over the previous years. This information is also regularly presented to the Research Advisory Board and to the Senate. Second, EMU receives information about the publication activities of its staff when staff members either go for promotion or apply for a research award. And third, individual faculties may from time to time collect information about the research conducted by their staff. However, the latter two types of data collection activities do not end up in any centralised institutional database, so EMU has systematic data only on a very limited number and type of publications: internationally published articles.

The team notes a large discrepancy in publication activity between different faculties. Some faculties are very prolific publishers, while others publish very little. Some of this discrepancy may perhaps be explained by the type of publications captured by the systematic data collection, which is only able to capture journal articles that are indexed in internationally renowned databases. According to the information provided by the university, EMU faculty members have published a total of 2018 scientific articles that have been indexed by the Web of Science SCIE, SSCI and AHCI indexes between 2015 and 2021. The most significant collaboration partners, based on a co-author analysis, have been the

following universities: University of Pretoria (81 publications), Cyprus International University (63), Pontificia Universidad Cattolica De Valparaiso (59), Islamic Azad University (54) and Hacettepe University (52).

Some faculties, such as engineering and medicine, have also started to collect systematic information about non-indexed publications, conference attendance and research projects conducted in the faculty.

5.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team perceives that EMU exhibits the following strengths in terms of research:

- Research development is a strategic priority for EMU and the institution has taken steps to achieve this goal, e.g. by opening more postdoc positions and attracting international scholars at the doctoral and postdoc level.

- EMU has established research awards; these are highly appreciated by staff.

- EMU has created research centres to support multidisciplinary research.

- Students have opportunities to be involved in research projects.

- Research is also oriented towards local community needs.

However, the team would also like to point out some weaknesses in terms of EMU's research function and activities:

- EMU does not have a specific research strategy or strategic priority areas for research: instead, research is developed organically by staff members according to their own interests.

- While there is some funding available and time allocated for research, there are unclear principles of ensuring the financial and personnel stability of research centres.

- Steering and systematic monitoring of research output is underdeveloped.

The team would like to present the following recommendations for EMU:

- *Ensure a balance between strategic research priority areas and research arising from individual interests.*

- *Establish systematic data compilation for all research outputs. This would allow EMU to track the development of its research activities and establish targeted support measures for priority areas or areas that require further improvement.*

- *Consider strengthening research capacity by purposeful collaboration and diversified sources of funding.*

- *Ensure that all faculties, departments and individual academics have a genuine possibility to engage in research.*

- *Consider building structures that might allow for drawing from external expertise (e.g. advisory boards) in developing EMU's research strategy.*

6. Service to society

6.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

EMU's strategic plan states that it has the following goals for service to society:

Increasing the effectiveness of the community service activities and facilitating the awareness of social responsibility. (p. 46)

Supporting research/application/educational programs targeted towards community problems and encouraging the participation of graduates and students into these processes. (p. 46)

6.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

EMU is a significant actor in its area, both in terms of being one of the region's biggest employers and in terms of its contribution to the vibrant culture of the city through its multicultural student body and many cultural activities.

EMU is one of the three shareholders of the Technopark, in addition to European University of Lefke and the local Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Industry. This hosts 40 companies in total, 10 of which were established by EMU academics. Academics can spend 20% of their time on their own companies or consulting other companies in the Technopark. It hosts mainly start-up companies, but also some bigger, exporting companies, primarily in the fields of software development, energy and robotics. The companies located in the Technopark offer internships and employment opportunities for EMU students and graduates, collaborate with EMU research centres and enable researchers to commercialise their research.

EMU has several units that are engaged with establishing connections between the university and the local community. These include an alumni centre, which keeps track of and offers services to university alumni; a community engagement centre, which organises elective courses on community involvement for students; and a careers centre, which advertises employment opportunities and organises careers fairs and events that enable students to connect with potential employers. EMU has also recently established a Continuing Education Centre, which offers professional training and development courses to the local community.

6.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The team was told that EMU sends an exit survey to graduating students and keeps track of where alumni have found employment after their graduation. EMU also occasionally collects feedback from employers through an employer survey. Some faculties, such as engineering, similarly send a survey to the external advisory board members of their programmes. The team found no evidence, however, that these data collection activities systematically feed into EMU strategy, or that EMU has a specific strategy pertaining to service to society.

6.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team would like to point out the following strengths and weaknesses in terms of outreach and service to society.

Strengths

- EMU is a significant actor in its area, both in terms of being one of the region's biggest employers and in terms of its contribution to the vibrant culture of the city. EMU graduates are much appreciated by external stakeholders, who complement both their competencies and work ethic.

- There are multiple opportunities for students to engage with potential employers and the local community (careers fairs, internships, elective courses on community involvement).

- EMU maintains relationships with its alumni through alumni surveys, a portal and activities.

- Many training and development programmes are offered to the community through EMU's Continuing Education Center, which supports lifelong learning.

Weaknesses

- The collaborative Technopark provides services and networking opportunities to researchers and local entrepreneurs; nevertheless, EMU finds it challenging to develop research projects with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the area.

- EMU does not systematically analyse the impact of its activities (e.g. community-oriented research) on the local community and reflect on the extent to which they meet its needs and goals, and those of the university.

In order to build on EMU's strengths and to remedy the weaknesses, the team would like to offer the following recommendations for EMU's consideration:

- *Develop a strategic approach to the provision of services to society based on an understanding of its needs, systematic regular analysis of societal engagement activities and their impact, and a feedback loop linked to EMU strategy. Ensure that information about this is disseminated inside and outside the university through appropriate channels.*

- *Introduce a single information point for SMEs and community actors who wish to engage in collaboration with EMU; proactively disseminate information about university services and infrastructure that can serve the needs of these actors and generate income for the university.*

7. Internationalisation

7.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

EMU does not have a separate internationalisation strategy, but its strategic plan contains some provisions on internationalisation. The objectives pertaining to internationalisation emphasise things like attracting international students to EMU, providing an international experience to existing students and increasing the international visibility of EMU. However, other areas of internationalisation, such as internationalisation of research, receive little or no attention.

7.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

EMU was planned from the start as an international university and since its establishment has been recruiting a significant percentage of its students internationally. EMU understands internationality primarily in terms of international student recruitment, although a large portion of its academic staff are also international, most significantly Turkish. EMU recruits staff internationally and plans to strengthen this by establishing postdoctoral positions to be advertised internationally.

EMU has an international office whose tasks focus on international marketing of EMU, administration of the student exchange programme and organisation of various kinds of activities and services for international students. The international office does not have a role in international staff recruitment or development, nor in fostering international research collaborations.

The widely international student body creates a vibrant cultural mix at EMU and in the local community. EMU hosts students from approximately 150 countries around the world. Many nationalities have their own student societies, which represent the students of that nationality at EMU, organise social and cultural events and help students resolve any challenges they may face in their studies. Additionally, the vice-rector for Social and Cultural Affairs regularly meets with the representatives of the various international student societies. Nevertheless, the international students met by the team indicated that they do not always feel that their voice is heard at EMU.

Many of EMU's programmes are offered in English and the team was told that the language of daily interaction at the university is also English. International students also have the option to learn Turkish via language courses offered by EMU's preparatory centre. However, the team understands that there is some variation in the capacity of the Turkish-speaking staff to speak English, and there is English language training available for non-English speaking staff. The team received mixed views about whether all documentation and forms were available in English.

The team learned of some exchange opportunities available to students, although they are currently on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. These may be arranged through the university's bilateral collaboration or through various associations, such as the international student organisation AIESEC, the European Medical Students' Association, etc.

7.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The team was told that the international office monitors its own activities after each semester, analysing the data and adjusting its course if necessary. The team found little evidence, however, of systematic data compilation and analysis of all internationalisation activities and their linking to a wider internationalisation agenda.

7.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team recognised the following strengths and weaknesses pertaining to internationalisation at EMU:

Strengths

- EMU is a very multicultural university, and this is appreciated by all its constituents.

- EMU is continuously striving to achieve international recognition (rankings, accreditations, partnerships, etc.).

- EMU is appealing to international students and is looking to attract international academic staff.

- There are various support structures for the international student community.

Weaknesses

- While internationalisation is a key priority of EMU, it is not fully reflected in the strategic plan or goals; similarly, there are no specific internationalisation strategies or guidelines in place.

- International students do not feel represented in all bodies; some survey forms might only be available in Turkish, and international students' Turkish proficiency is sometimes poor.

- The English language proficiency of staff does not always reach a sufficient level.

Finally, the team would like to suggest the following recommendations for EMU:

- *Ensure a well-defined strategic approach to internationalisation; link internationalisation activities to EMU's strategic goals and priorities, including teaching, research and service to society.*

- *Introduce the evaluation of relevant language proficiency (English, Turkish) of staff according to set targets, and offer language training in order to meet them.*

- *Strengthen efforts to grant more scholarships and provide better assistance to international students facing financial challenges.*

- *Implement measures to guarantee that the voice of international students is heard at EMU.*

- *Ensure that all student services and forms are available in English, and that there are adequate resources for international students to learn the Turkish language.*

8. Conclusion

The team would like to conclude that EMU is a lively community appreciated by all its members. EMU plays an important role in its society and in the development of its country. The team sees that EMU is an internationally recognised institution, as evidenced by its ranking position and multiple internationally accredited programmes. The team feels that EMU can be proud of its achievements so far. Furthermore, it has ambitious plans for future development and has the necessary capacity to overcome the ongoing challenges. Finally, the IEP team thanks the entire university community for the warm welcome during the two evaluation visits and wishes EMU all the best on its onward journey.

Summary of the recommendations

Governance and institutional decision-making

- *Elaborate strategies at the university level for human resource development, research and internationalisation, as well as service to society.*

- *Ensure the alignment of academic and administrative activities and goals with the overall strategy of the university.*

- *Encourage ownership of the strategy by involving all relevant stakeholders participating in developing the strategy.*

- *Refine strategic goals, operational targets and activities and assign KPIs to correspond with them.*

- *Consider appointing a vice-rector for research.*

- *Ensure that the student voice is heard and has weight in all relevant decision-making processes, and actively encourage students to participate in university governance while at the same time ensuring the independence of the student council.*

Quality culture

- *Develop an overarching approach to enhancing quality assurance that covers all the activities of EMU and enables it to achieve its strategic goals.*

- *Develop a quality culture that engages the entire university community, including students, and recognises their contribution towards quality enhancement.*

- *Ensure an integrated information system that allows for effective monitoring and supports decision-making and continuous quality enhancement.*

- *Consider innovative approaches to improve student participation in the surveys, as well as complementary approaches to quantitative forms, including interviews, focus group discussions, etc.*

- *Establish a clear feedback loop on student surveys and other satisfaction surveys pertaining to university services.*

- *Acknowledge students as agents of transformation and change.*

- *Ensure that annual performance evaluation processes are centred on staff development and empowerment.*

Teaching and learning

- *Increase awareness of the concept of SCL and ensure that internal quality assurance supports implementation of SCL; monitor its application and share best practices across faculties.*

- *Provide regular opportunities for pedagogical training for staff, and bring together academics interested in pedagogical development not only locally but also in the wider region. This needs to be coordinated (e.g. by the Continuous Education Centre or another relevant unit).*

- *Continue good practice in establishing advisory boards on the programme level with external stakeholders.*

- *Monitor closely the causes of and trends in drop-out rates, and offer individualised support and solutions for students in danger of dropping out.*

- *Ensure that all expected learning outcomes are defined and linked to pedagogical methodologies, and that the assessment instruments and criteria are closely linked to expected learning outcomes; disseminate good practice across EMU.*

Research

- *Ensure a balance between strategic research priority areas and research arising from individual interests.*

- *Establish systematic data compilation for all research outputs. This would allow EMU to track the development of its research activities and establish targeted support measures for priority areas or areas that require further improvement.*

- *Consider strengthening research capacity by purposeful collaboration and diversified sources of funding.*

- *Ensure that all faculties, departments and individual academics have a genuine possibility to engage in research.*

- *Consider building structures that might allow for drawing from external expertise (e.g. advisory boards) in developing EMU's research strategy.*

Service to society

- *Develop a strategic approach in the provision of services to society based on an understanding of its needs, systematic regular analysis of societal engagement activities and their impact, and a feedback loop linked to EMU strategy. Ensure that information about this is disseminated inside and outside the university through appropriate channels.*

- *Introduce a single information point for SMEs and community actors who wish to engage in collaboration with EMU; proactively disseminate information about university services and infrastructure that can serve the needs of these actors and generate income for the university.*

Internationalisation

- *Ensure a well-defined strategic approach to internationalisation; link internationalisation activities to EMU's strategic goals and priorities, including teaching, research and service to society.*

- *Introduce the evaluation of relevant language proficiency (English, Turkish) of staff according to set targets, and offer language training in order to meet them.*

- *Strengthen efforts to grant more scholarships and provide better assistance to international students facing financial challenges.*

- *Implement measures to guarantee that the voice of international students is heard at EMU.*

- *Ensure that all student services and forms are available in English, and that there are adequate resources for international students to learn the Turkish language.*