IEP

EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OF MADRID

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT

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1. **Introduction**

    This report is the result of a follow-up evaluation of Universidad Europea de Madrid (European University of Madrid or UEM). European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) originally evaluated in 2011 with the report submitted to the University in July of that year. In 2014 the University subsequently requested that IEP carry out a follow-up evaluation.

    1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme and follow-up evaluation process

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

    In line with the IEP philosophy as a whole, the follow-up process is a supportive one. There is no prescribed procedure, and it is for the institution itself to set the agenda in the light of its experiences since the original evaluation. The institution is expected to submit its own self-evaluation report, which will describe the progress made, possibly indicating barriers to change.

    The rationale is that the follow-up evaluation can assist the institution in evaluating the changes that have been made since the original evaluation: What was the impact of the original evaluation? What use has the institution made of the original evaluation report? How far has it been able to address the issues raised in the report? The follow-up evaluation is also an opportunity for the institution to take stock of its strategies for managing change in the context of internal and external constraints and opportunities.

    As for the original evaluation, the follow-up process is also guided by four key questions, which are based on a "fitness for (and of) purpose" approach:
    - What is the institution trying to do?
    - How is the institution trying to do it?
    - How does the institution know it works?
    - How does the institution change in order to improve?

    1.2 UEM's profile

    UEM was established in 1995 and has developed into one of the largest private university in Spain with 16,306 students enrolled in spring 2014. Of these, 675 students are enrolled in 24 Advanced Career and Technical Education programmes; 10,746 in 52 undergraduate programmes; 4 487 in 91 graduate programmes; and 398 students in 17 PhD programmes. There are 1 183 academic and 468 non-academic staff employed at the university. UEM operates two campuses on the outskirts of Madrid, the main one at Villaviciosa de Odón and a newly finished Alcobendas Campus. The latter is located in an area which is a hub for businesses and entrepreneurship, and is intended

to serve as an incubator for graduate students in business. (Two other campuses, in Valencia and the Canaries, function as individual institutions and were not part of this evaluation.)

Faculties, or schools, which have recently been merged from seven into four, are now set up as follows:

- School of Social Sciences and Communication;

- School of Biomedical and Health Sciences;

- School of Sports Science;

- School of Architecture, Engineering and Design.

Additionally, UEM has a Health and a Dental Clinic in Madrid, which serve as both teaching institutions and out-patient treatment centres.

On its website, UEM states that it is a skills-oriented university that produces professionals "ready to enter the international workplace", with some 90% of graduates finding work within a year. In line with its international agenda, UEM advertises internships in some 40 countries and over 70 English or bilingual degree programmes. The emphasis on internships for all students and the growing number of courses taught in a foreign language, primarily English, was also noted in the 2011 IEP evaluation report, as was the success of graduates in the labour market.

Together with some 80 other universities around the world, UEM is part of the Laureate International Universities network. As a member of the Universidad Europea, UEM joins in the common aim, among others, to impress on their students a sense of social responsibility.

> "At Universidad Europea we foster corporate responsibility through awareness-raising and volunteering programs in Spain and abroad, fighting for human rights, carrying out literacy programs for highly vulnerable groups, and promoting alternative forms of consumption."[1]

UEM is one of 32 private universities in Spain out of a total of 82 higher education institutions. As a for-profit institution, UEM charges tuition fees for its students well above the national average (approximately 1 000 Euros per year at public universities in the country[2]).

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[1]   http://universidadeuropea.es/en/about/social-responsibility

[2]   http://www.mastersportal.eu/articles/357/tuition-fees-and-living-costs-for-studying-in-spain.html

UEM's programmes are accredited by the Spanish quality assurance agency ANECA, which has also conducted an audit of UEM's quality assurance system and has certified its compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), and the Autonomous Community of Madrid also reviews the implementation of programmes.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation report for the follow-up review was compiled by the head and staff of the quality assurance department of UEM, based on data requested from the university's faculties and departments as well as the recent information compiled for an evaluation by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). The decision to apply to IEP for a follow-up review was taken by the rector and vice-rectors.

During the three-day visit to UEM, the team met with:

- the Vice-Rectors for Planning and Development and for Quality and Academic Innovation;

- the two staff from the Quality Department who drew up the self-evaluation report and an additional staff member of the department;

- academic staff responsible for academic innovation;

- three members of the Dean's Council together with the Vice-Rector for Quality and Academic Innovation;

- international officers;

- a research director, technical staff and international researchers in separate sessions;

- student services staff;

- graduate students, and

- external partners from businesses, some of them graduates of UEM.

The evaluation team divided into two groups to visit the deans and directors, academic staff and students of the Schools of Architecture, Engineering and Design, and of Social Science and Communication.

The self-evaluation report of UEM, together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team in April 2015. The visit of the evaluation team to Madrid took place on 5-8 May. Based on the self-evaluation report, the 2011 IEP report, and the information gathered in the site visit interviews, the team presented its main findings in an oral

report at the conclusion of the visit. The current report expands on the main issues set out in the oral report.

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

- Finn Junge Jensen, former rector of the Copenhagen Business School, Denmark, team chair who also chaired the 2011 evaluation;

- Hannele Niemi, professor of education, former vice-rector of the University of Helsinki, Finland;

- Rok Primozic, student, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium;

- Christina Rozsnyai, programme officer for international affairs, Hungarian Accreditation Committee, team coordinator.

The team thanks Vice-Rectors Isabel Fernández and Pedro Lara and the members of the university whom the team was able to meet in the interviews for the frank and informative discussions. It also thanks the contact person, Cristina Paléaz Lorenzo, head of the Quality Management Department, and Belén Murillo of the Quality Management Department, for the organisation of the site visit. The team is grateful for the kind and generous hospitality of the UEM leadership that made its visit not only efficient but also enjoyable.

In the ensuing section, the report describes the positive developments the team has observed at UEM since the 2011 evaluation. The report then offers recommendations in the areas of research, internationalisation, teaching, alumni relations, quality assurance and internal communication and branding, which the team hopes can help UEM to progress in its strategic development.

2. Positive developments at UEM since 2011

The evaluation team appreciated the effort that has gone into reflection, gathering of information and the results that have been achieved in the last few years. The mergerfrom seven into four faculties was certainly a major change for the whole university community[3]. The team believes that the fusion of the faculties at UEM has provided a better platform for cross-disciplinary collaboration among different academic areas. The degree to which the possibility for cross-fertilisation is implemented depends on the ability of the stakeholders to recognise the opportunities the collaboration provides and their managerial ability to exploit them. It is natural that different faculties proceed at a different pace and the process to achieve the implementation is not a rapid one. The team visited the School of Architecture,

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[3] For a recent report on mergers, giving European trends and case studies, see EUA's *DEFINE Thematic Report 2: University Mergers in Europe*, available at http://www.eua.be/define.aspx

Engineering and Design and saw a good example of disciplinary collaboration in the problem-based learning arrangement. It was launched in 2012-2013 by the then Engineering School, following extensive analyses and feedback from teaching staff, students and companies, with the aim of applying project-based learning in all engineering courses. The concept is based on cross-disciplinary subjects.

The team noted repeatedly in its interviews the enthusiasm and dynamism of the leadership and staff at UEM, which, with their openness to change, has made it possible to implement innovation and is the basis for further development.

In the area of research the team observed a number of positive trends and achievements. The establishment of the School of Doctoral Studies and Research stands out among them. Following a national decree in 2011, which mandated universities to set up doctoral schools comprising PhD programmes that are managed by academic committees, UEM was quick to react and its school was approved by the "Community of Madrid" in 2012. The School includes not only doctoral education but also concentrates research through currently five research excellence centres: Physical Activity and Sports Science; Health and Life Sciences; Intelligent Systems and Renewable Energies; Values and Global Society; and Education Innovation. The centres, each with its own doctoral programme, aim to be at the forefront of the respective fields in focusing on topical inter- or multi-disciplinary fields. The School involves students, mostly on the graduate level, in research.

Further achievements in the area of research are the increase in internal grants (from €60,000 to €120,000 since 2012). UEM has set up the function of Research Chair, whose task is to head research projects with a lifespan of at least three years. The number of Research Chairs contracted has grown from three in 2012 to 11 in 2014 who, in the past three years respectively, have signed 11, 12 and 10 external contracts. International research collaboration has increased, with the number of proposals for European projects in this period having grown from one to 29, resulting in three awarded projects in 2014. In line with the 99/2011 decree, UEM has submitted and secured the accreditation of PhD programmes in two of its centres of excellence: Physical Activity and Sports, and Health and Life Sciences. The number of papers produced by the Doctoral School has risen from 150 in 2012 to 372 in 2013.

The team has also seen positive developments in quality assurance practices. A score of indicators is being applied to keep track of internationalisation, research and educational excellence. With the university's assistance, all students take part in practical training and internships in companies.

Student services have recently been reorganised into a single unit to facilitate access to various kinds of information for students in one location, a move that is appreciated by students as testified in the interviews (even if some confusion in the transitional

period was also registered). Additionally, a help desk was set up in 2014 that is connected to an IT platform.

A number of good internal mechanisms have been installed. There is a mentor scheme whereby each student is assigned an academic staff member to guide him or her through studies as well as career choices and other matters. A training scheme has also been put in place to guide staff in this aspect of their work.

Teaching staff are increasingly using innovative teaching methods, which the indicator system acknowledges in the teacher evaluations and workload allocation. UEM set up what it refers to in its self-evaluation report as a "Think Tank teaching group" to propose and debate various approaches. The group is ongoing and renewed every two years.

Academic staff development is integral to UEM, with 60 hours of training courses in pedagogy and innovative teaching methods as part of their normal workload. A variety of approaches are available, including classroom observation and international study trips. The team heard in the interviews that the heads of departments devise individual development plans with their academic staff, which include specific hours to be used for different purposes, e.g. teaching, international activities, projects, organising or attending conferences etc.

The team was impressed by the innovative spirit of the UEM leaders and most staff, which has enabled the university to make progress in so many areas; the above list is by no means complete. At the same time, the team had the impression, supported by feedback they received, that the multitude of initiatives has to be consolidated, since some staff are overwhelmed by the changes and feel that time is needed to for innovations to be well established into their everyday work.

3. Assessment of key areas and recommendations

3.1 Research

UEM is a teaching oriented school and, as such, it is not obligatory to focus on research, but it is important for international recognition, for raising the quality of staff and the university overall, all of which also reflect back on the quality of teaching. In particular, as UEM considers itself a quality teaching institution, both *research processes,* with the participation of students in research*, and output should be integrated into teaching*. Innovative teaching methods are research subjects and the results can be fed back into teaching just as much as they can stand as topics for research projects, as is commonly the case with teaching institutions.

Certainly, this does not preclude research in a select set of other areas that build on the strengths of the university. UEM is well aware of the need to build up its research output and quality and has taken numerous commendable steps, as noted in the

previous section. The team encourages UEM to continue in this direction, but it *strongly recommends focusing on a select set of key research areas* in order to optimise UEM's human and material resources on the one hand, and to highlight in its branding, on the other.

The team, moreover, *recommends seeking out and dedicating more resources to research* in order to obtain critical research mass in its volume and quality. As a senior researcher noted in an interview, money is needed not only for equipment but also to achieve a critical mass of good researchers. Moreover, it should be possible, for example, to have seed money accessible in order to start a project before its income can be secured, or to send aspiring researchers to international projects, which currently is not always the case, as reported in an interview. The team also *recommends that UEM pay strong attention to the recruitment and support of young researchers* in a strategic way with the aim of building up its research capacity.

The internal grants have doubled, as noted above, but the actual funding for research is still low in absolute terms, which the team also heard in several staff interviews. As according to its business model UEM collects its main income from tuition fees, the team *recommends that UEM increase efforts to also obtain external financing*. There are many opportunities for tapping into external financing sources from businesses, not only from direct funding but via donations, sponsorships, contracting more Research Chairs, etc. The team learned that UEM has some 100 agreements with companies such as IBM, Microsoft, Telefónica, McDonald's and others. The team encourages UEM to continue to expand this practice. It commends the strategic awareness inherent in UEM's practice to secure a commitment from companies for three years, since projects need not only funding but also to be built up with a secure financial background.

The team *recommends that UEM increase research collaboration with external partners*. UEM's focus on practical teaching and learning makes it especially well placed for joint projects involving external partners and students.

The Ministry of Economy and Finance, as well as the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, are national funders via projects, and although the resources from these sources have declined with the economic crisis that has hit Spain in the past years, the lines should be kept open in this direction with a view of increasing such income in the future.

The team also *recommends focusing on strengthening international research collaboration*. Research collaboration should be sought both in and outside the Laureate International Universities network in order to allow UEM to focus on its main strength areas rather than the availability of projects within the network. UEM has made good use of the network and can build on strengthening relationships, but the given scope of the network should not function as a straightjacket. In seeking alliances

outside the network, UEM could exploit the opportunities in, for example, the merger between the faculties of architect and design, which opens doors for both fields. The point is that collaboration should be sought with a select set of good institutions in a strategic way, founded on UEM's mission.

3.2 Internationalisation

UEM places itself in the international arena in its vision and aims, and the team realised in its interviews that most members of the UEM community were well aware of the importance of internationalisation. UEM has taken many positive steps to increase its international presence. Being a member of the Laureate International Universities network has provided a ready basis for interactions in various areas. Again, the team recommends thinking strategically and *using personal contacts of members of the university to enhance collaborations with top level institutions*.

Several developments, such as the increase in the number of European research projects; the relative growth in student and staff mobility; international accreditation of the institution and, for example, its architecture discipline; the goal to teach more classes in English; and indeed the indicator system that forms UEM's ongoing self-evaluation, all reflect the university's drive to improve its international profile.

The team heard, however, that 395 students, out of over 15,000 who were enrolled, went abroad in 2014, while, without counting Erasmus mobility, some 25% of the students at UEM are international. The team *recommends that UEM continue to make efforts to expand the volume of outgoing students*. *The team also recommends building on double degree collaborations to expand mobility* not only in relation to outgoing students but staff exchanges as well.

The international office at UEM has two full-time and one part-time members of staff. An increase in mobility requires an *increase of human resources in internationalisation*, *which the team strongly recommends.* The staff to whom the team spoke seemed enthusiastic and had ideas on how to develop internationalisation, but did not have the capacity to follow up on many of them.

The team commends UEM for its incentives for its teaching staff to attain English proficiency through training support, recognition toward advancement, opportunities for mobility and international conference participation, and a number of other measures. The team *recommends continuing to concentrate its efforts so as to improve English proficiency of teaching staff*.

3.3 Teaching

The team was pleased to learn about the increase in learning-centred education at UEM in the past years. There is awareness among the staff to whom the team spoke about the essence of innovative teaching methods and student-centred teaching. The team heard in the interviews about examples where problem-based learning is being

practised with an interdisciplinary approach. Moreover, the "Think Tank teaching group" mentioned in the self-evaluation report and noted earlier shows that there is a good basis for *reinforcing UEM's profile of using problem-based methods to facilitate learning processes as well as interdisciplinarity*, *which the team recommends* UEM should continue building up even more than in the past. Problem-based learning and interdisciplinarity go hand in hand and reflect the reality of the modern workplace.

Among the actions embedded at UEM to make innovating teaching and learning a reality are the 60 hours per year teaching development that is mandatory for academic staff, the consideration of the use of technology in class and the focus on developing students' skills and competences in the programme design. The team heard of many examples of online and blended learning offers at UEM, and students corroborated that they make use of the offer. The team *recommends further expanding online teaching and blended learning*, with a view to enhancing the quality of provision rather than merely adding parallel learning methods.

As mentioned already in the 2011 IEP evaluation report, the workload of the teaching staff seems to continue to be problem, as it was raised in several interviews. The team read in the self-evaluation report about the scheme to set a maximum number of teaching hours in consideration to other staff activities, nevertheless it *recommends to UEM to revisit the question of sustainability of the teachers' workload*.

Related to the workload issue is the capacity of teachers to act as individual mentors for students. The team commends the basic idea behind the individual care for students and the mandatory mentoring training for teachers. However, it heard in the interviews with students that the scheme is not always implemented in practice. The team, therefore, *recommends for UEM to reassess the mentoring scheme.* The process should start by surveying both students, undergraduate and graduate separately, and academic staff about the issue, with a few targeted questions about their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the scheme and suggestions for improvement.

3.4 Alumni relations

Its self-evaluation report notes that "UEM is working to strengthen the Alumni network". In the interviews the team heard from several groups that the relations with alumni are waiting to be improved, with a strategy currently being developed. The team encourages the university to maintain the momentum and *recommends continuing to build up its alumni database, but coupled with a strategic concept on how best to use its alumni*. It need not be limited to "Employability, Networking and Lifelong Learning" as is stated in the self-evaluation report.

Alumni could be recruited as mentors, to give guest lectures about their careers and their companies, etc. In the long term they are a valuable resource also as potential donors, individually or through their companies. Moreover, alumni relations can be linked with UEM branding by building up university identity through joint events and

even having UEM souvenirs that all outgoing students receive at graduation, together with an invitation to join the alumni club and to provide their contact details.

3.5 Quality Assurance

The team noted that UEM is highly active in its quality assurance activities. External evaluations are ongoing, by both the national agency ANECA that carries out mandatory reviews and other external bodies with specific focus. In addition to mandatory assessments noted in section 2 above, UEM invites numerous other evaluations, such as the present evaluation by IEP, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), and the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) to name just a few such activities. Three engineering programmes are also being reviewed with the aim of receiving the EUR-ACE label.

There is a quality management structure involving the Academic Council, which oversees academic quality; an Operations Committee, overseeing the implementation of the budget; and the Quality Assurance Committee, to oversee the planning and implementation of quality at the schools and the university. Internal evaluations via surveys and focus groups are conducted regularly.

The team *recommends*, and this need was corroborated in its interviews, *that UEM now build up a quality culture among all internal stakeholders* that is taken up by each members of the university[4]. In addition to the many indicators noted in Section 2, UEM is advised to *keep in mind the improvement of quality rather than aiming for only quantitative results* (e.g. not an unlimited growth in international students but the quality of incoming students). The team also *recommends refocusing surveys in order to make them relevant and to show results. Measure not only the level of satisfaction but also explore with internal stakeholders how to gather suggestions for improvement*.

On the *programme and department level, the team recommends benchmarking with a select number of high quality international institutions* both within and outside the Laureate network. The aim is for UEM to view its discipline-level achievements in relation to those of similar institutions in various parts of the world in order to identify its potential on a tangible level.

3.6 Internal communication and branding

Internal communication exists through a number of channels at UEM, such as e-mails and surveys on specific issues. Nevertheless, the team noted in interviews that while it was acknowledged that a great deal of effort is made, the information disseminated may be confusing, and issues are not followed up. There is a need to transmit awareness about new developments that reaches all levels of the university community.

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[4] The Promoting Quality Culture project conducted by EUA in 2012-2013 is a useful resource on the subject, available at www.eua.be/PQC.aspx

The team, therefore, *recommends improving internal communication through specific projects that provide opportunities for internal information exchange and practical "how-to" guidelines for implementing innovative actions*. UEM could perhaps involve journalism students to build up a project with handbooks, and use relevant media such as websites that reach internal stakeholders in real time. On the other hand, it is important for those who provide information to be selective in order to avoid overwhelming stakeholders and making them unreceptive to opportunities and challenges.

With respect to branding, it should be clear to internal stakeholders and the public at large in what way UEM is unique in the community of scholars, in entrepreneurship and in innovative teaching methods and problem-based learning. This should be communicated internally and externally. The team suggests that UEM could brand itself as an innovative, student-centred teaching institution and a research university. In any case, the team *recommends identifying what makes UEM unique in teaching and research and as an institution and use it actively in branding. It also recommends focusing on a few key research areas that will be reflected in UEM's branding*.

4. Conclusions

UEM is a university that has shown remarkable development since the IEP evaluation in 2011. The team believes that the university is developing in many valuable ways for which it is supported by an enthusiastic leadership, staff and students. Its ongoing self-assessment and drive to improve the quality of its activities, and its presence in the national and international community of universities will ensure that it succeeds in its endeavours in the future.

Summary of the recommendations

Research

- Integrate research into teaching.

- Dedicate more resources to research.

- Focus on a few key research areas.

- Increase efforts to obtain external financing.

- Pay strong attention to recruitment and support of young researchers.

- Increase research collaboration with external partners.

- Focus on strengthening international research collaboration.

Internationalisation

- Use personal contacts to enhance collaborations with really good institutions.

- Expand the volume of outgoing students.

- Build on double degree collaborations to expand mobility.

- Increase human resources in internationalisation.

- Continue concentrating efforts to improve English proficiency of teaching staff.

Teaching

- Reinforce profile of using problem-based methods to facilitate learning processes and interdisciplinarity.

- Further expand online teaching and blended learning.

- Reconsider the sustainability of the workload of teachers.

- Reconsider the mentoring scheme.

Alumni

- Continue to build up the alumni by expanding the database and providing close follow-up.

- Set a strategy on how to optimise the availability of alumni for UEM.

Quality assurance

- Work on developing a quality culture among all internal stakeholders.

- Keep in mind the improvement of quality rather than aiming at only quantitative outcomes.

- Refocus surveys to make them relevant and to show results.

- Benchmark on programme and department level with high quality international institutions.

- Follow up on feedback mechanisms by measuring not only satisfaction but exploring with internal stakeholders how to gather suggestions for improvement.

Internal communication and branding

- Improve internal communication through projects that provide opportunities for information exchange and guidelines for implementing innovative actions.

- Identify what makes UEM unique in teaching and research and as an institution and use it actively in branding the university.

- Improve the research in relation to branding.