

**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, BUDAPEST**

***EVALUATION REPORT***

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## **1. Introduction**

This report is the result of the evaluation of the National University of Public Service (NUPS), Budapest, Hungary. The evaluation took place in 2017/2018 at the request of NUPS. The Rector of NUPS especially welcomed the opportunity to do three things through this and other external evaluations: to bring NUPS closer to European standards in higher education; to measure the standing of its often unique and specialist disciplinary areas; and to benchmark itself through an independent, international evaluation.

### **1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme**

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

The distinctive features of IEP are:

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

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

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

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 National University of Public Service's profile**

NUPS was established as a new university by an Act of Parliament in 2011 and commenced operation from 1 January 2012. The new university integrated the Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University (originally established in 1920 as Royal Hungarian Military Academy); the Faculty of Public Administration (established in 1977 and formerly part of Corvinus University, Budapest); and the Police College (established in 1971). In 2015, NUPS commenced career training in diplomacy and international relations and, as a consequence, the Faculty of International and European Studies (FIES) was established. In 2017, NUPS became responsible for career training in the management of the Water sector, taking over water sciences programmes from a College in Baja and establishing a new Faculty of Water Sciences (FWS) there.

NUPS is highly vocational in nature and offers undergraduate, postgraduate taught and doctoral degree programmes, both part-time and full-time, as well as higher level training programmes to support the continuous professional development of employees within the military, the police as well as the state and local government. In some disciplines it is the sole national provider. It currently has just under 8,000 students including just under 4,000 undergraduates; over 2,600 students on higher level training programmes; and less than 300 doctoral students. It currently has around 650 teaching staff, evenly split between lecturing staff and other teaching staff, such as instructors.

NUPS is mostly consolidated on the campus of the former Ludovika Royal Hungarian Military Academy, in a combination of refurbished, historic and new buildings, and is located in central Budapest, the capital of Hungary. In addition, as the sole national provider of certain higher level training programmes, it works in collaboration with regional partners on their delivery. It also has campuses (not visited by the team but about which information including video material was provided by NUPS) away from Budapest at Szolnok for Air Force training and at Baja where FWS is located.

NUPS is a non-profit, publicly funded university but with a bespoke governance model, different to that of other existing Hungarian universities where a Chancellor and Consistorium are standard. Its main employer stakeholders, the respective Departments of State, form an overseeing Board of Governors but leave the executive management of NUPS to the Rector and his team. NUPS is accredited by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC). In its self-evaluation report NUPS cited the European University Association report on University Autonomy in Europe to offer context on the level of perceived autonomy in Hungarian higher education. The report noted Hungarian universities to have "medium/low" levels of organisational, academic and staffing autonomy, while financial autonomy was said to be "low". However, its bespoke governance model means that those general ratings may not be fully applicable to its unique circumstances.

In accord with national requirements, NUPS produces an Institutional Development Plan (IDP). The IDP is considered at Senate before approval by the Board of Governors. NUPS's current

IDP has a duration of five years, setting goals and tasks for the 2015-2020 period and being subject to quarterly monitoring.

According to the IDP, the medium-term vision of NUPS is “to make NUPS: one of the best and most attractive universities in Hungary; a stable teaching and research base both of the development of Hungarian public administration and of careers in public administration; a devoted supporter of Hungarian-language Higher Education, both in Hungary and abroad; actively participate in the international higher educational and academic relations in cooperation with Europe's and the World's leading universities.”

Similarly, according to NUPS's self-evaluation report “the essence of NUPS' mission is to become a high quality research and educational basis of the development of Hungarian public service, of careers in public service and of the challenges of sustainable development; to become a devoted supporter of Hungarian-language higher education abroad; and, in cooperation with the World's leading universities, to become actively involved in international academic and higher educational networks.”

### **1.3 The evaluation process**

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a self-evaluation group comprising members drawn from key postholders from central university and faculty level and as well as two student representatives, one for taught students and one representing doctoral students. The members were said to have been selected based on their comprehensive knowledge of the functioning of NUPS and their professional and international experience. During the drafting of the self-evaluation report, the self-evaluation group convened several times and considered different iterations of the report in order to create a wording based on consensus. The Rector, the Rector's Council, the Senate, the Board of Governors and each Faculty Council also received and discussed the final report. The team was advised that there was no regulation within NUPS on who should sign off such a report and so it was effectively the group itself which had done so. There was therefore no official endorsement by Senate, but Senate allowed it to be submitted as a good report. The group claimed that the report had been communicated to all staff, although in its meetings with staff the team found the level of awareness to be variable.

NUPS's self-evaluation report, together with informative appendices, was sent to the evaluation team in February 2018. The report drew in part upon documentation and data from the relatively recent successful accreditation of NUPS by the HAC. The report was analytical as well as factual, although the team noted that perceived strengths outweighed perceived weaknesses. The two visits of the evaluation team to NUPS took place on 18-20 March 2018 and on 21-24 May 2018 respectively. Both before and in between the visits NUPS met the evaluation team's requests for additional documentation.

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

- Professor Joan Viñas-Salas, former Rector, Lleida University, Spain , Team Chair
- Professor Emeritus, Hans Beunderman, former Vice-Rector, Delft University of Technology, Netherlands
- Marija Vasilevska, student, Saints Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Gregory Clark, former Associate Secretary, University of Salford, United Kingdom, Team Coordinator

The team thanks the Rector, Professor András Patyi, and all the staff and students of NUPS for their engagement in the evaluation process and, in particular, Dr. Györgyi Nyikos and Katalin Molnárné Stadler, for their supportive and helpful contribution to the evaluation process as institutional contact persons.

## **2. Governance and institutional decision-making**

NUPS was integrated following its foundation as a new university in a range of aspects: by its governance and academic committee structure comprising the Board of Governors and the Senate and its committees; by the cross-university approach of its Rector's Council; by its organisational structure of faculties, departments and cross-faculty research institutes; by its sharing of good practice; by cross-university regulations, systems and processes, such as for human resources; by standardised role descriptions and remits; by the common study programme structure, the cross-university "common module" and increasing amounts of cross-faculty and cross-programme delivery; and by an organisational culture based on common values. The report of the most recent and successful five yearly HAC accreditation, which had complimented NUPS on the level of post merger integration, was cited as evidence of that high level of integration. The team found various concurrencies between the HAC accreditation report and its own evaluation.

Throughout their visits to NUPS the team heard from most staff that the merger which had resulted in the establishment of NUPS and the subsequent expansion of NUPS by two further faculties had largely been a success. The Rector admitted that integration, whilst well advanced, was not yet complete and that the merger as other transformational change was a process and not a final goal. NUPS sought to balance an academic emphasis with a vocational and practitioner emphasis. However the team discerned some variability in that balance at faculty level with academic staff at FIES and FWS placing much greater emphasis on the academic, in what they articulated as their teaching and research sub-missions within the context of the overall university-level mission. The team believed this could best be addressed by NUPS continuing to embed the merger and to promote integration of the sub-missions of its constituent faculties and of best practices in teaching and research. For example, in the area of teaching, this could be through the greater use of cross-department and cross-faculty teaching including the common module and, in the area of research, this could be by replicating the stimulation of international research partnerships in FWS across all of NUPS.

The team also noted, for example, some variability of terminology of sub-faculty units and heard of some variability of implementation of university processes in different faculties, especially FWS. The team nevertheless recognised the not inconsiderable achievement of NUPS's governance and management (and not least the current Rector) in making significant steps forward towards successful integration.

Academic staff, especially those from constituent parts which previously had not had university status, recognised the advantages deriving from merger: more opportunities to engage in research and hence to improve individual career development (even though, in turn, this created heavier demands than before on what was required from academic staff), the ability to set up doctoral schools and doctoral programmes, the scope to extend beyond practical training into the theoretical underpinning of subject disciplines and to modernise

curricula, more scope for international collaborations, a more diverse student body, a better infrastructure, a higher standing in terms of external perception both of the academic staff themselves and of the vocational subject disciplines which they taught, and opportunities for cross-disciplinary teaching and research. Generally the student body also recognised the advantages deriving from merger and greater integration, although some, especially students not based on the main campus, felt that faculties were still in “separate worlds”.

The team heard that the merger was less well received by the professional services staff as it had meant consolidation, reorganisation, rationalisation and arguably a narrowing of promotion opportunities, offset somewhat by increased staff development and training opportunities. A minority of academic and professional services staff were said to regret a loss of financial and other independence and to feel no longer directly connected to a more distant executive management not necessarily familiar with their subject disciplines. The team’s view was that the largely successful handling of the merger process was indicative of an institution with a clear capacity to manage change.

The oversight of NUPS is through the Board of Governors which comprises solely ministerial representatives of four Departments of State, the main employer stakeholders: the Prime Minister’s Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice. Additionally the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the right of attendance at meetings. However, there is no other mechanism, such as an advisory board, for engagement with a broader range of employers, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also non-state employers.

The Board of Governors leaves the executive management of NUPS to the Rector and his team. The relationship between the Board of Governors and the Rector and his team was said to work well both on the professional and personal levels. The Rector therefore enjoys considerably more autonomy and wider powers than other Hungarian universities where a Chancellor manages legal and financial aspects whilst the Rector deals with academic matters. The team explored the balance of power between the Board of Governors and the Rector through the medium of programme development and approval, asking whether the “employer” voice might be more dominant than the “academic” voice because of the Board of Governors’ effective veto on programme development and approval. The team was advised that, whatever the extent of their powers in theory, in practice the Board of Governors gave an opinion rather than a decision on academic matters and relied primary on the expertise of the Rector and his team on academic matters. The Board of Governors held informed discussions on curricula matters but worked to the same longer-term horizons as the Rector and his team in modernising the curricula and were not dominated by shorter term skills needs in their respective Departments of State. There had been only one instance in NUPS’s eight-year existence where a new study programme had not been approved by the Board of Governors, whereas they had been fully engaged in the development and consideration of recent new and innovative niche Masters programmes which faculties had proposed to broaden and modernise NUPS’s programme portfolio, aligning it better with wider European perspectives.



The Senate is chaired by the Rector. The Rector and Deans of Faculty are ex-officio members of the Senate. All other members, including student members, are elected. NUPS's staff and students may observe the Senate's meetings. The team heard that student members of Senate and other lower level academic deliberative committees were full members and had the right to vote. The Senate has established a permanent board, of whose membership at least a quarter must be students, for the management of students' educational, assessment-related and pastoral issues. NUPS also has a working relationship with the Students' Union and the separate Doctoral Students' Union. Many of NUPS's students, such as in the Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training (FMSOT) and the Faculty of Law Enforcement (FLE), work in a hierarchical career environment and system so NUPS needs to maximise the scope for them to engage openly and actively as students in institutional decision-making.

The role of the Senate is described in NUPS's self-evaluation report as framing teaching and research strategies for approval by the Board of Governors; supervising their implementation; endorsing the IDP for approval by the Board of Governors; and commenting upon and evaluating proposals put forward by the Rector. In addition, the Senate elects the candidates for the position of Rector and evaluates the performance of the Rector. The Senate is responsible for the approval of a broad range of matters including: the endorsement to the Board of Governors of the initiation and discontinuation of study programmes up to and including doctoral level; academic, organisational and operational regulations; principles of remuneration based on performance; budget allocation within the framework set by the Board of Governors; the annual financial accounts; and the process for students' evaluation of teaching activities. To carry out that broad range of responsibilities, the Senate establishes academic committees and selects their chairs and members. These committees, amongst other matters: evaluate proposals for the recruitment of lecturers, students, researchers and executives; determine the granting of awards and academic titles; and make proposals to the Ministry of Education for the disbursement of national higher education grants within NUPS.

The Rector is responsible for the executive management of NUPS and is assisted by three Vice-Rectors: for Education (Teaching and Learning), for Science (Research) and for International Affairs. These are nominated by the Rector for endorsement by the Senate and approval by the Board of Governors. In addition, the Rector is assisted by the Chief Secretary, who manages the central university's professional services staff and by the Director General for Economic Affairs for financial matters. A Rector's Council forms the executive leadership of NUPS for the purposes of strategic planning and decision-making. Representatives of the two Students' Unions are permitted to observe its meetings.

The current and founding Rector is approaching the end of his second term of office, the maximum number of terms of office allowed by law. The process for finding a replacement will include a national advertisement and consideration by both the Board of Governors and the Senate. The current three Vice-Rectors provide some continuity as two will continue to serve for a year and one for a further three years. Similarly those Deans currently in place will see out their existing terms of office. Nevertheless the Board of Governors and the Senate

face a difficult task in replacing a postholder whom the team heard was widely regarded across NUPS as an inspirational leader, who was approachable and accessible to staff, who was viewed as even-handed to all five faculties and who had in the main successfully integrated NUPS. The team recommends to the Board of Governors and the Senate a careful consideration in its recruitment of a new Rector of whether at this stage of NUPS's development the need is for consolidation of what has already been achieved or a departure towards a new strategic direction.

The above governance arrangements are effectively replicated at faculty level with the Board of Faculty mirroring the Senate and with the Dean (who is elected after nomination by Rector with the consent of Senate and of the Board of Governors) and faculty leadership team mirroring the Rector and executive management team.

The Rector's Council, with approval sought from Senate, retains the overview of human resources. The Deans make recommendations to the Rector's Council in relation to academic staff promotion or remuneration for additional activity or responsibility. Faculties work within a set budget but these allow some discretion to be exercised by the Dean for additional activity or responsibility. However, this is always within the context of salaries regulated by central government.

All lecturers are appointed through an open application process under which they are assessed by the Faculty Council. The appointment of assistant lecturers is also determined by the Faculty Council. In these appointment matters the Dean is merely another member of the Faculty Council.

The appointment of associate and full professors is determined by a Senate Commission. Full professors must meet set requirements determined at national level by HAC. At least nominally academic staff appraisal with their line manager is an annual process, although academic staff whom the team met intimated that the process is not necessarily always applied. Research performance and results emerging from student evaluation questionnaires were seen as key factors within the appraisal.

The team learnt that NUPS, within the context of nationally set minimum annual teaching hours for the different grades of academic staff, aimed to ensure that at least 30% of an academic staff's time could be dedicated to research as opposed to teaching and administration. In part NUPS was able to deliver its 30% target because, unlike most other Hungarian universities who teach for 30 weeks a year, NUPS teaches for 44 weeks a year. For most academic staff their teaching load included both degree programmes and higher level professional training courses. The team heard mixed views from academic staff as to whether this all resulted in there being enough time for research. Most academic staff whom the team met taught for around 8 to 12 contact hours a week and did have dedicated research time available to them. NUPS was supportive in simple but effective ways and a lecturer could request whole days without teaching from Central Timetabling. Nevertheless, the team did hear that the rapid pace of change in NUPS, the drive for improved research performance and

uncertainty as to how potential further growth might impact on staff and facilities were placing many academic staff under pressure and potentially causing burn out.

There were perceived problems in smaller departments within faculties where the specialist nature of the teaching meant that it was more difficult for other staff to cover that teaching and allow their colleagues the required research time. In such instances the lecturer might have weekly contact hours in the high teens. However, the team believed that such smaller departments might be better swimming with the tide of university integration and greater use of cross-department and cross-faculty teaching so that specialisation was less prevalent at undergraduate level and more found in niche Masters study programmes. This might not only alleviate the perceived staffing difficulty but also broaden the student learning experience.

Again the Rector's Council retained the overview. The IDP set priority areas for investment in staffing such as an allowance to assist in the integration of the FWS and the development of a new programmes. Moreover, to bid for additional staffing a department and faculty has to prove that all existing staff were working to the required levels. However, NUPS faces some significant staffing issues, such as a shortage of professors eligible to supervise doctoral students and a failure to secure adequate succession planning which might jeopardise the continuity of certain faculty units, for example, aviation.

Although NUPS took the trouble to monitor levels of gender imbalance, both for academic staff and for students, NUPS was unable to identify any initiatives it had undertaken to address the academic staff and student gender imbalances that its monitoring had revealed in some subject disciplines. The team suggested that NUPS should go beyond merely monitoring the position and should initiate and then evaluate measures to address those imbalances.

The team heard from a number of different staff and student sources that in general the professional services of NUPS could be rigid, self-justifying and bureaucratic (see chapters 3 and 5). The gist was that generally rather than facilitate a process the professional services made a process more complicated with complex and unnecessary demands for approvals and prior permissions with the route to securing innovation unnecessarily long and bureaucratic. Information about why certain administrative processes were necessary and how best to navigate those processes was not readily available. Many staff and students felt that if communication and explanation of those processes were better there might be greater compliance.

In accord with national legislation, the Senate, at the request of the Rector's Council, proposes a budget to the Board of Governors who in turn then present a budget request to central government (the Prime Minister's Office rather than the Ministry of Education as for other universities), which disbursed the consequent grant based on performance against targets rather than mere student numbers. In addition, NUPS had successfully bid to central government for a considerable capital development budget including campus development.

The team learnt that NUPS's main budget had increased every year since its establishment and that this had created some resentment elsewhere in the higher education sector and even in the media where there was some feeling that NUPS was treated preferentially as a favoured child. NUPS did not believe this to be the case but was unsure how best to defend itself against the accusation other than by continued budget transparency.

Other income derived from EU development projects, with NUPS sometimes the lead partner and sometimes just a participant. Although not identified by NUPS as a potential threat in its self-evaluation report, the team noted that NUPS has a high dependency upon EU funding, which was a significant proportion of the overall budget (see chapter 6). Finally income also derived from what the Rector described as an invisible source: the considerable saving in academic staff salaries arising from the regular, and often long-term, secondment of practitioners from the Hungarian defence forces, law enforcement authorities and public administration bodies to serve as academic staff.

NUPS operates through a highly centralised budgeting system. Each year a faculty applies and receives a budget framework for staff salaries and programme delivery including consumables, and individual Deans could lobby and make their respective cases within the Rector's Council and Senate. The system was undoubtedly in the team's view transparent and most members of the university community viewed it as fair.

## **Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings above, the team recommends that NUPS:

- Gives careful consideration in its recruitment of a new Rector to whether the need is for stability and consolidation of what has already been achieved or a departure towards a new strategic direction.
- Considers the establishment of an Advisory Board to assist it in keeping in close touch with external employer stakeholders other than the four member ministries of the Board of Governors.
- Continues the embedding of the merger and promotes integration of the sub-missions of its constituent faculties and of best practices in teaching and research, including in FIES and FWS.
- Takes the time, in the context of its recent rapid and ambitious development, to review the impact of this on its staff.
- Reviews if its professional services staff have an appropriately focused, customer-oriented ethos and are sufficiently empowered to improve administrative processes and make them less burdensome by better design.
- Initiates and then evaluates measures to address gender imbalances in NUPS's academic staff and students.
- Develops a more strategic approach to the diversification of funding sources.

### **3. Quality culture**

The team's evaluation of NUPS's internal quality culture should be seen in the context of NUPS's stated commitment to external and international evaluations (see chapter 1). In its self-evaluation report NUPS advised that its "...quality assurance system has revealed the following operational deficiencies... NUPS excels in planning, but the evaluation of the realization of goals has room for improvement." The Rector confirmed to the team that this might primarily have been because the quality system initiated at NUPS's establishment in 2012 was created primarily for the integration of the merging entities.

NUPS's self-evaluation report further advised that in 2015 the university undertook an identification and review of its operational processes. This resulted in the current definitively documented Quality Assurance Regulation which sets out to define the responsibilities and competences of key roles and administrative units within NUPS and does so "in line with both internal and external requirements". The Quality Assurance Regulation further designates the constituent documents and units comprising NUPS's quality assurance system: the Leadership Declaration; the Quality Policy; the Quality Assurance Regulation; the Quality Assurance Committee of the Senate. The self-evaluation report further names other documents forming part of NUPS's quality assurance system: the Mission Statement and the Quality Improvement Programme, the latter setting out quality improvement measures developed after taking into consideration the results of the IDP's implementation and self-evaluation. The overall, cyclic approach of NUPS is now a more self-evaluative one of plan-do-review-evaluate.

The team discussed this extensive range of systematised documentation with academic staff and was told that it was equally applied across NUPS in each faculty and had indeed been a factor in achieving standardisation of systems across NUPS after its establishment by merger. The team was told that the system was bureaucratic in nature but did work, not least through the five weekly update reports by Heads of Department to faculty leadership on such aspects as research including publications and teaching.

The Deans whom the team met advised that the system enabled them to know what is going on across all relevant activities, to discuss matters with Heads of Department, to update their Faculty Council on achievements to be signed off and on matters still to be brought forward into the next planning round. In turn the Deans then report upwards, on an informed basis, to the Rector's Council. The Deans confirmed that all staff were aware of the current quality assurance system. The team was happy to accept the Deans' diagnosis that the system, though somewhat bureaucratic, was necessary; worked well enough; and helped the faculties and therefore NUPS to fulfil planned targets.

To underpin the assessment and evaluation processes under this quality assurance system NUPS advised that it had developed an information system comprising an electronic platform, the Quality Assurance Analysis and Evaluation System (QAAES). The team saw a

demonstration of QAAES. NUPS claimed that this supported self-evaluation both at faculty and university level, allowing comparison against targets and trends and ensuring that, again at the strategic level, achievements were signed off or matters were brought forward into the next planning round.

NUPS's professional services units deliver basic administrative and student support services. The units concentrate mainly on administering processes and maintaining statistical, financial and other support information without any strong advisory function in relation to strategic decision-making. The exception to this is NUPS's recently established Centre for Excellence which, in collaboration with faculties and administrative units, supports NUPS's quality assurance system.

Academic quality assurance is overseen by the Senate and the lower level deliberative committees at faculty level. Apart from the student course evaluations and teacher evaluation questionnaires, the main mechanism is the periodic review of study programmes in preparation for HAC accreditation. Academic staff reported that there was little scope to amend programmes significantly outside that accreditation cycle because of the formal nature of institutional and national permissions required.

The team saw examples of NUPS's lower level suite of quality assurance mechanisms: the student satisfaction survey; the doctoral candidate satisfaction survey; the employee satisfaction survey; the end of semester student course evaluation and teacher evaluation questionnaire; and examples of analyses of responses to these mechanisms. The team also heard from academic staff that detailed feedback on graduates was gathered from employers. For example, in the Faculty of Science of Public Governance and Administration (FSPGA) an electronic platform tracked employment destinations which were indeed mainly into Public Administration with over 90% securing associated posts.

The students whom the team met confirmed that end of semester anonymised student course evaluation and teacher evaluation questionnaires were consistently used but they regretted that there was seldom feedback on what NUPS then did with the information gathered. The team also noted that response rates varied significantly but were also advised of faculty level attempts to incentivise completion. Students also reported the use of occasional rather than regular student satisfaction surveys and of post-placement, non-anonymised, student questionnaires but again were unaware of any feedback by NUPS on the outcomes. The team believed that NUPS broadly had appropriate student feedback mechanisms in place but that these might benefit from consideration of how to "close the loop", ensuring that students canvassed for their views were made aware of what consideration had been given to those views and what actions had followed as a consequence.

The academic staff whom the team met however believed that extensive use was made of end of semester anonymised student course evaluation and teacher evaluation questionnaires, both at department level and by individuals, and that they were instrumental

in informing changes in teaching delivery, even though as academic staff, they regarded questionnaires as somewhat subjective. The team was advised that the Head of Department saw all completed questionnaires and that individual academic staff saw and had to sign off each questionnaire relating to them as well as discussing the questionnaires with the Head of Department including a report back on any necessary remedial actions taken.

Overall the students whom the team met regarded NUPS's staff as approachable but in some instances, such as FLE, that was within the context of quite regimented professional processes and hierarchies. The team saw evidence of academic appeal and student complaint processes in operation and was satisfied that students were aware of those processes. Student complaints were processed in first instance at local level and then by a university panel. The team however noted that there was no Ombudsman or similar system for a neutral, independent and confidential consideration of student (and staff) complaints on sensitive matters such as harassment. The students whom the team met were guarded about whether they might securely raise such matters without somehow impacting on professional standing and future promotion prospects. The team thought it was exactly that context of quite strict and rigid professional processes and hierarchies that meant that NUPS should give consideration to developing further its student complaint processes so that there might be some mechanism, such as an Ombudsman, for a neutral, independent and confidential consideration of student complaints.

### **Recommendations**

The team recommends that NUPS:

- Considers how better to “close the loop” on feedback about the student evaluation questionnaires.
- Considers the further development of its student complaint processes to permit a neutral and independent consideration of confidential matters, for example, by an Ombudsman mechanism.

#### **4. Teaching and learning**

Within its five faculties, NUPS offers undergraduate and postgraduate taught, including integrated Masters, study programmes in the fields of politics, technical sciences, social sciences and economics. NUPS also offers high level professional training courses, essentially continuous professional development, in politics, economics and technical sciences, certificated by NUPS itself. Within its four cross-university doctoral schools (of Military Sciences; of Military Engineering; of Public Administration Sciences; and of Law Enforcement) NUPS offers doctoral programmes in technical and social sciences. These programmes are consistent with the three higher education cycles of the Bologna Process. NUPS also uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

NUPS's self-evaluation report advises that the undergraduate and postgraduate taught study programmes and the high level professional training courses were developed with regard to the educational needs identified by the members of the Board of Governors and their associated key employer stakeholders such as the Hungarian defence forces, law enforcement authorities and public administration bodies. The IDP for the 2015-2020 period sets out the dual approach of NUPS to curriculum development: (1) the requirements of the respective career paths and the content and output of the study programmes are determined by "the controlling authority", the Board of Governors and their associated key employer stakeholders, and (2) the required knowledge base as validated by NUPS. Unusually therefore for a university, programme development and approval is shared between the Board of Governors and NUPS's academic community. NUPS also advised that part of balancing of that dual approach was the frequent use of external, and especially international, curriculum benchmarking.

NUPS's self-evaluation report offers four key planks supporting NUPS's teaching and learning: flexibility in delivery modes; the quality assurance of its teaching provision; the range of methods of delivery applied in NUPS; and the emphasis placed on the student as an independent learner within the context of mutual respect between academic staff and students.

The team learnt of recent changes in the structure of study programmes including the availability of four-year as opposed to three-year undergraduate programmes. The students who the team met, on both attendance modes, advised that they saw the four-year mode programme less stressful and more sustainable, allowing them to enjoy a more rounded student experience with more involvement in extracurricular activities. The three-year mode was described as having too many mandatory elements and being too concentrated, overburdening and tiring students.

NUPS was flexible in other forms of study programme delivery with some distance learning and e-learning and a readiness to allow students to defer continuation if career requirements so necessitated. This meant that information about completion and withdrawal rates, which NUPS did duly collect and analyse, had to be interpreted quite carefully and with an



understanding of the amount of flexibility built into modes of delivery. The team was also advised that there had been an encouraging increase in cross-faculty delivery and interdisciplinarity, for example six out of fifteen modules on one study programme were now being delivered by faculties other than the home faculty.

NUPS reported that there were currently three applications for every undergraduate place and that, even in the context of a demographic downturn, high levels of emigration and emergent competition in some disciplines (for example a NUPS degree remained a popular but was not the sole career route into the Hungarian defence forces and the police, and FSPGA faced growing competition from other providers of education for lawyers, economists and general managers), the university anticipated remaining oversubscribed into the foreseeable future.

NUPS did also recognise that fewer applications, whilst not resulting in fewer admissions, might result in somewhat lower entry standards. Currently NUPS was able to select undergraduate applicants on the basis of ranking based on secondary school performance only and did not operate entrance examinations. Moreover, NUPS was not solely reliant upon the recruitment of 18-25 year olds but, for example in FLE and FSPGA, could recruit older, experienced practitioners with at least three to five years of relevant work experience. The team heard however that these differently aged cohorts on the same study programmes seldom enjoyed joint delivery or close interaction. The team thought this was a missed opportunity in that useful, mutually beneficent synergies (as well as potential savings in delivery costs) might result from 18-25 year olds studying alongside older, experienced practitioners. The team believed NUPS should initiate a faculty-led review exploring the potential for savings in delivery costs and, more importantly, for the identification of synergies by the greater integration of differently aged cohorts on the same study programmes.

NUPS had also developed niche specialist programmes which were a unique offer in Hungary, for example the Bachelors degree in Public Administration and Masters in Public Governance in FSPGA. Additionally, the academic staff whom the team met were confident that NUPS would retain a competitive advantage because its study programmes were in part designed by, and were known to be valued by, the key employer stakeholders who were also directly represented on the Board of Governors. Moreover, there was a generous scholarship system in place to attract undergraduate students, with quotas decided by the Board of Governors.

Much of NUPS's postgraduate taught study programme portfolio was designed for career development, especially at middle management level. As such, certain professional practice requirements were often in force for admission to Masters level. Sometimes these were closed programmes for a particular employer and sometimes they required students to obtain employer permission and support before admission. For example, the Hungarian defence forces limited supported access to Masters level study to higher ranking officers which impacted on recruitment to FMSOT, while FWS had no Masters programmes. In

discussion with academic staff and students the team concluded that these restrictions were a factor in NUPS's relatively low continuation rate from undergraduate to postgraduate taught. The team also heard from existing undergraduates that continuation was not actively promoted by all academic staff and learnt of undergraduates wishing to continue to a Masters having to seek provision elsewhere.

NUPS intended that faculty level development of niche Masters programmes and consequent higher postgraduate taught recruitment might also address a similar low continuation rate from postgraduate taught studies into doctoral programmes. Admissions to the doctoral schools, despite having fewer practitioner practice requirements and less of a specific career or promotion focus than postgraduate taught study programmes, were relatively low as well, although the newness of this provision was also likely to be a factor. NUPS saw the doctoral programmes as potentially a means of increasing research capacity and as suitable both for professional and for academic career paths. The team believed that it might be appropriate for NUPS to initiate an institutional level review of postgraduate continuation rates to see which current faculty initiatives could be applied across the institution and what better deployment of resources or investment in internal and external marketing might improve those rates. Such a review might also enhance the academic staff career path and might improve succession planning in NUPS.

The doctoral schools had a highly centralised administration, overseen by the Vice-Rector (Research), but drew on faculty level academic staff for the supervision of students. The doctoral candidates whom the team met reported certain administrative problems, arising from perceived over-bureaucratisation and a high dependency on the support of their supervisors to compensate for this. Some doctoral candidates and academic staff also reported a certain tension in that supervisors were faculty-based rather than doctoral school-based, resulting in a lack of clarity about how the doctoral schools integrated with the faculties. The doctoral candidates exemplified this lack of integration by commenting also that there was little opportunity for interaction with undergraduate students so that the latter might become more engaged in research activity. The team saw clear scope for NUPS to standardise and integrate the operation of its doctoral programmes, perhaps for example, through an overarching, university-level doctoral school.

There was some compulsory internal research training and there were teaching and some other research-related opportunities available but the team felt that as a new entrant into doctoral schools, NUPS might benefit from exploring the scope for joint doctoral training with national and potentially international partners.

The team did however accept that, in part, it was the depth of NUPS's high level professional training courses, which also impacted on postgraduate continuation rates. Some courses could last up to two semesters, delivering professional development and enhancing the promotion potential chiefly of civil servants. Key employer stakeholders wanted flexible advanced non-degree training including in some instances delivery in remote locations. National requirements did not allow degree regulations that sort of flexibility in terms of

distance learning. Even to the extent that no credit transfer from those courses permitted to facilitate advance standing onto degree programmes. NUPS had a monopoly position as provider in collaboration with twelve partner national universities and a training agency. The considerable volume of high level professional training courses therefore covered some of the ground which elsewhere might be covered by postgraduate degree programmes.

The main mechanism for review of study programmes is a periodic review in preparation for the five yearly HAC accreditation. Academic staff reported that there was little scope to amend programmes significantly outside that accreditation cycle because of the formal nature of institutional (Senate) and national permissions required, although at the more operational level teaching delivery could readily be amended in response to the regular student course evaluations and teacher evaluation questionnaires.

The team found variable use in different faculties of cross-department and cross-faculty teaching including the common module (see chapter 2). With regard to the range of methods of delivery, the students whom the team met reported some variability in readiness of academic staff in different faculties to embrace innovative teaching methods. Students expressed the view that this often depended on the discretion of the individual lecturer and on class size, while some lectures were cited by the students as traditional, dry and boring. That view was effectively corroborated by the staff whom the team met. NUPS did however take due account of student course evaluations and teacher evaluation questionnaires (see chapter 3).

Teaching was an element covered in annual appraisals and there was an annual cross-university staff development day. This was backed up by teaching observations with each academic member of staff observed three times a semester by their line manager and on an occasional basis by the Dean. However, NUPS did not have a structured staff development programme (for example on sharing best practice; on the use of IT in teaching; on eLearning; on how to complement teaching through the use of the virtual learning environment; or on student-centred teaching techniques). The team believed that the development of a structured teaching and learning staff development programme should be an important early focus for NUPS.

Examples of innovative teaching cited included the use of voting software; use of mobile phone apps; creative use of IT; encouragement of student participation and interactivity; extensive use of case studies; interdisciplinary input such as psychology in law enforcement enabling students to understand both the community they served and criminals themselves; and highly job-focused practical sessions. As might be anticipated in a highly vocational university there were ample opportunities within study programmes for students to engage in complementary placements and practical training opportunities, some of it credit-bearing, with even more extensive opportunities on the four-year as opposed to three-year undergraduate programmes. Some of the students whom the team met especially valued the opportunities for internships and other placements, often at prestigious venues such as government ministries and embassies, which study at NUPS opened up to them, even

identifying this as a primary factor in their initial choice of university. Other students voiced dissatisfaction with the amount of practice placement and work opportunities.

NUPS reported a range of student services (Counselling, Careers and Guidance, Mental Health and Wellbeing) to be available to students, who in turn demonstrated to the team that they were aware of these services. In addition, there was support for students through the Students' Union and the separate Doctoral Students' Union. However, perhaps because of their particular vocational disciplines and quite regimented professional processes and hierarchies, there seemed to be some feeling amongst students that they were expected to be self-dependent and able to cope with the challenges of work, study and life. NUPS offered exceptionally good sports and physical training facilities to students as these formed part of the curriculum for some study programmes. However, they were also available on a restricted basis to all students. The students whom the team met reported good extra-curricular and networking opportunities to be available through NUPS.

Overall the students whom the team met believed that NUPS kept them well informed on academic and other matters. Students understood the structure of their study programmes, the options available to them within their study programmes and how they would be assessed. There were some student misgivings about the level of IT support they received and the ability of NUPS's IT infrastructure to keep pace with curricular innovation. Examples cited included recurrent problems with timetabling and a requirement to take online assessments on campus rather than remotely. The students also reported that their general experience of administrative support within NUPS was that it lacked customer focus and was over-bureaucratic even when discharging a simple task such as issuing proof of student status.

With regard to NUPS's fourth plank, the student as an independent learner in the context of mutual respect between academic staff and students, perhaps because of the hierarchical career environment and system within which certain students existed, the team did not find the culture of the independent thinker strongly evidenced in all faculties. Nevertheless, the team welcomed the statement of support by the Chair of the Board of Governors for NUPS's wider academic, and not merely vocational and practitioner-led, approach to the education and development of students.

Senior staff whom the team met placed great emphasis on NUPS's Ethical Code which set the tone for that context and which was promoted to the student body from induction onwards. However, the students, whilst demonstrating high regard for NUPS and its academic staff and confirming that there were sound relationships between staff and students and whilst showing good understanding of their duties, responsibilities and entitlements as students, saw these more as flowing from their particular vocational disciplines and were unaware of the Ethical Code. The team did not think there was any problem in this area but thought that, if NUPS did indeed see its Ethical Code as a keystone document, it should do more to promote knowledge of its existence and content amongst all students.

The team toured the main University campus, set in the grounds of a well maintained public park, and indeed held meetings in its two principal buildings: the recently refurbished 19<sup>th</sup> century military university and a purpose-built new building. Both evidenced significant investment in capital infrastructure including high specification facilities, fittings and furniture. The campus is also the site of other university buildings such as student dormitories and sports facilities, with the latter about to be enhanced by the addition of a new sports centre and swimming pool. Any expansion or further consolidation by NUPS could be readily accommodated by the acquisition and refurbishment of neighbouring buildings with the sale of relinquished former sites offsetting the capital costs.

The staff and students whom the team met were highly satisfied with the facilities, learning environment and equipment provided by NUPS (although some equipment, such as in FMSOT, was externally provided and some staff, such as in FWS, reported some equipment to be outdated). The students however regretted that university dormitory provision was not yet sufficient to meet demand and was allocated according to certain overt prioritisation (for example all first year undergraduates in the FLE resided in dormitories) as well as to need, assessed via a points system which factored in financial status, distance from home and student achievement.

The library the whole main campus was in the refurbished 19<sup>th</sup> century building and was well regarded by the staff and students whom the team met. There were also smaller libraries for those parts of NUPS not on the main campus. The library facilities were of a high standard with ample room for private study. There were no student complaints about the availability of learning material, even though the team believed the opening hours (09.00 to 18.00 Monday to Friday) were somewhat limiting, even with online electronic access on campus being provided. 30% of hard copy stock was in a foreign language (usually English) and 40% of electronic journals were in English. The library controlled a decentralised budget for the acquisition of new learning material and worked in collaboration with faculties on the introduction of new study programmes or subject areas.

The library had laptops available for student use and wi-fi was available across the main campus. However repeated concerns were raised by the students whom the team met in relation to certain aspects of NUPS's support for IT: there was limited provision of electric sockets for recharging laptops in classroom and auditoria in the refurbished 19<sup>th</sup> century building; remote electronic access to NUPS was very limited and required a lengthy and bureaucratic authorisation process; academic staff input to the virtual learning environment was variable; there was perceived to be centralised university control of access to external websites; and not all learning databases provided by NUPS were considered sufficient to meet students' learning and research needs. As the students were otherwise highly complimentary of what NUPS provided, it might wish to consider a direct consultation with staff and students on how well NUPS's IT provision met their needs, both when on and off campus. A consultation could tease out which elements of dissatisfaction arose from aspects such as inadequate information about or understanding of what was actually available; unnecessary or bureaucratic constraints; technological constraints; or simply underprovision.

## **Recommendations**

The team recommends that NUPS:

- Coordinates administrative arrangements (such as timetabling) so as to facilitate greater cross-department and cross-faculty teaching.
- Initiates a faculty-led review exploring the potential for savings in delivery costs and mutually beneficial synergies by the greater integration of differently aged cohorts on the same study programmes.
- Ensures that a structured teaching and learning staff development programme is an important early focus.
- Does more to promote knowledge of the existence and content of its Ethical Code amongst students.
- Undertakes a direct consultation with staff and students on how well NUPS's IT provision meets their needs, both when on and off campus.
- Reviews how Masters and doctoral programmes are promoted and how continuation rates may be improved.
- Standardises and integrates the operation of its doctoral programmes, for example, through a university-level doctoral school.
- Explores the further scope for joint doctoral training with national, and potentially international, partners.

## **5. Research**

Unlike most higher education institutions in the European Research Area, research and development and the benefit to the body of knowledge are not of themselves the principal higher purpose at NUPS. Instead, research and development have their principle purpose as tools to serve the state, although research is seen as also benefitting the body of knowledge and its transmission through teaching. That teaching in turn is viewed to be of public service.

NUPS's self-evaluation report describes NUPS's approach to its Research Strategy as "...to produce, partially through international cooperation, results, which support the capabilities of the State, promote the values of public service and improve the efficiency of governance. Furthermore... NUPS's task is to conduct transdisciplinary research into the areas of government, public administration, public order and protection...". NUPS cites examples of the type of research activity this entails with the following major examples:

- State Reform;
- Central Government Public Administration Development Strategy for 2014-2020;
- Personnel Related Strategies in Public Administration, such as Career Development programmes in the areas of National Defence and Law Enforcement;
- Anti-corruption Strategies;
- Tasks related to Information and Cyber Security in Public Administration;
- Tasks related to Disaster Relief.

NUPS therefore clearly identifies in the self-evaluation report of areas of priority for research and the pursuit of research excellence at university level; however that prioritisation was not consistently, or even necessarily, fully observed by the team at Faculty level

Oversight of research at NUPS is through the Research Council of the Senate and constituent Research Colleges, each responsible for a particular research area. Research was structured through inter-faculty institutes so as to ensure that research activities remain coordinated and focused. The three inter-faculty institutes are: Institute for Research and Development on State and Governance; Institute of Disaster Management; Institute of National Security. An individual research proposal originating in one of the inter-faculty institutes would therefore need approval through a multi-stage procedure at the Research College, at the academic staff's faculty or faculties and at the Research Council.

The academic staff whom the team met advised that research was valued by NUPS and those staff with previous experience working in the constituent elements before the merger viewed the more research-oriented ethos of NUPS as one of the demonstrable main benefits of the merger. They viewed the environment in NUPS as much more research-friendly with every academic member of staff given a chance to grow their research potential. It was no longer sufficient to be an expert practitioner and experienced teacher, academic staff were also now expected to be research-active and to publish, especially if they hoped to gain promotion, as research performance was a factor in the national criteria for service as an academic member of staff.

In addition to research being factored into annual monitoring of academic staff by their line manager, it is also monitored specifically on a five weekly basis with information collected on publications, conference presentations and attendance; on citation in the national Hungarian Research Database, MTMT; and through reports by Department Heads.

Research was supported through such mechanisms as internal grants, especially for disciplines such as law enforcement where arguably it was more difficult to attract external research grants. State Public Service grants were also said to have been accessible since 2016 with up to 100,000 forints (320 Euros) available dependent upon published research outputs. NUPS offered individual academic staff support for research travel and conference attendance. Additional funding gained from external research projects could benefit not only locally held accounts, where the individual academic staff member could spend monies at their discretion on any education-related activity, but could also benefit the personal income of those staff. Support to improve English-language proficiency, so as to enhance prospects of successful publication, was available free of charge to all academic staff through NUPS's Language Institute. However, this service did not include translation of potentially publishable articles.

Finally, the team heard variable responses from academic staff on whether there was a fair workload balance between teaching and research. The team was advised that ultimately the Dean of Faculty determined workload and that an approximate norm was that an academic member of staff was expected to dedicate 70% to teaching and 30% to research, reportedly higher than a national norm of 25% to research.

The team acknowledges the conscientious efforts NUPS had made to improve its international standing and profile in research. Nevertheless, despite its significant progress for such a recently established university, NUPS had itself recognised in its self-evaluation report that the level of research activity needed to be higher; that the citation rate in MTMT was low; and that the publication rate in higher rated, especially foreign language, journals was not high. The academic staff whom the team met recognised that NUPS was attempting to address those weaknesses. They reported that a strategic approach had been taken to improve internationalisation and the level of research publications, both in terms of the volume of publications and the standing of journals in which they were published, but that the actual local implementation of those approaches had yet to work through. They saw the process as an on-going one which had brought some improvement and was on the right track but was yet to have full impact. For example, they mentioned that two months previously NUPS had issued a competitive call to all academic staff offering support for securing publication in different and higher rated types of journals.

Whilst welcoming NUPS's research ambitions, such as increased international partnerships and publication in higher rated journals, staff were also frank about what they perceived to be external and internal inhibitors which prevented better research performance. Externally, they thought there was insufficient recognition by the MTMT online system for recording publications of the time and effort it took to secure publication in more prestigious



international journals. Internally there was a shared perception that the professional services staff at NUPS were over-centralised, too inflexible and bureaucratic. Processes supporting research were seen as poorly communicated, insufficiently transparent and not permitting a smooth administrative flow. Various examples were cited, such as short response times but also long processing times for calls for resources to attend international conferences; slow confirmation and acquisition of tickets for travel arrangements, completely inflexible application of spending norms which had resulted in an exceptional request to facilitate the arrival at NUPS of a prestigious foreign researcher and the consequent loss of joint research and publication opportunities; and poor timetabling so that academic staff could not consolidate research time on particular days but had that time parcelled out on every day of a working week.

There were some general representations from academic staff that greater investment of time and financial resource would produce improved research performance. However the team noted NUPS's significant and continuing progress from a low base and that a coordinated approach had been put in place to address weakness. The team would encourage NUPS to continue and to strengthen these operational improvements as valid and well considered. There might be elements of that approach which might be tweaked (perhaps financial support could be made available for translation of articles into the English language; perhaps internal starter grants could be provided to initiate research bids to external funders; perhaps some adjustment could be made to financial incentives for exceptional research performance) but overall the team viewed NUPS's approach as sound, although some academic staff believed it to be not sufficiently entrepreneurial.

However the team thought a more productive, although possibly more long term, area for consideration might be enhanced support for the creation of new, and fostering existing, international networks. For a new university it is often a challenge to break into established consortia which had already been successful in bidding for research projects, especially project funded by the EU. However, NUPS might want to review its existing partnership arrangements with foreign institutions (especially those perceived to be of higher standing than NUPS) across the full range of activities, to see if, with investment, some of those partnerships could be deepened by staff exchanges, joint bidding, joint research, and joint publication. The scope for such partnerships would also be wider if the research themes were formulated on as general a basis as possible and not limited by an overemphasis on the NUPS professionally oriented mission. Selection of partners would best be carried out in the context of a formalised Internationalisation Strategy (see also chapter 7). Initially this might mean NUPS attracting partners by weighting the financial contribution towards the cost of such investment against itself.

From academic staff, with some corroboration from students, the team learnt of examples of NUPS's approach that research be embedded into teaching and the student experience. Undergraduate students were invited to attend interdisciplinary guest and Masters level lectures; undergraduate students were invited to enter student research competitions and

were subsequently invited to consider developing their entries into potential postgraduate taught or doctoral level study; curricula were updated to reflect research; materials for teaching delivery were informed by research; and undergraduate students were invited to participate in research, for example as demonstrators, exposing them at an initial level to routes towards higher level study.

### **Recommendations**

The team recommends that NUPS:

- Develops, as an essential pre-condition to its further growth and impact in research, a transparent and fair workload balancing model so that academic staff may clearly be offered dedicated time to conduct their research.
- Continues and strengthens its existing operational improvements as valid and well considered.
- Continues to seek greater international impact for its research by concentrating upon the development of focus and critical mass.
- Considers additionally strategic investment in the deepening of existing partnership arrangements with international universities with a view to fostering increased joint research activity.

## **6. Service to Society**

NUPS sees service to society as in fact its primary purpose but interpreting that concept at its highest level: service to the state. It encapsulates this in its self-evaluation report through the emphasis upon "Good Governance" as the primary condition of economic development and effective public administration, seeing it both as an integrated system of goals and as a value-oriented factor in the function of the state and in the activities of public service. NUPS sees itself as delivering service to society through the development of the state's intellectual and human capital. Again, unlike most higher education institutions, the development and transfer of knowledge in itself are not the higher purpose. The development and transfer of knowledge as tools to serve the state are that higher purpose.

In NUPS's own words, "the education and training task of NUPS is to provide public service-oriented training... in combination with modern and comprehensive knowledge... NUPS is an important venue for professionals to improve on their community and a cohesive force in the close relationship between Higher Education and Public Service. The research task of NUPS is to produce, partially through international cooperation, results, which support the capabilities of the State, promote the values of Public Service and improve the efficiency of Governance."

To some extent NUPS also sees its partnerships with other higher education institutions in Hungary as part of its service to society where, as a sole national provider of certain higher level training and examination courses for over 70,000 civil servants, it works in collaboration with regional partners on that delivery. NUPS advised that it had thirteen general cooperation agreements and seven specialist cooperation agreements with national partners. In addition, NUPS invited other Hungarian universities to join EU development projects for knowledge transfer claiming that these projects involved around 500 researchers across associated research groups. The team met representatives from two such partners, Budapest University of Technology and Szent Istvan University, who confirmed the research, teaching and societal benefits arising from such projects.

The above partnerships were almost entirely based on EU and state or quasi-public body funding sources. NUPS has had significant recent success in drawing down such funding. Undoubtedly its specialist disciplinary portfolio has meant that it seldom seeks opportunities from the private and commercial sector. However, if public funding becomes scarcer or the competition for it more intensive, the team felt NUPS might wish to develop a more strategic approach, including systematising its customer relationship management, to the diversification its funding sources. This would be done by, in so far as any state restrictions allowed, offering its considerable expertise to major private and commercial enterprises, both national and international.

The team heard of the wide range of mutually beneficial interactions and cooperation between NUPS and state ministries, as its key external stakeholders, including: knowledge

transfer and research, their influence on the formation and maintenance of up-to-date, practitioner-related curricula for new and existing programmes, not least because staff often were still actively engaged with those key employer stakeholders and on secondment at NUPS; the responsiveness of NUPS's curricula to key employer stakeholder-identified needs; mutually beneficial practice placement and work opportunities; and the contribution of individual external stakeholders as guest practitioner lecturers. The team also saw scope for similar, mutually beneficial relationships, such as in knowledge transfer and research, to be built up with the business and commercial sectors.

The team heard of other, practical ways in which NUPS offered service to society: active promotion of NUPS's work in primary and secondary schools; open days for students and local community; and public demonstrations of student prowess. All of these also served also to bolster recruitment. Additionally, NUPS's lecturers presented their recent publications to public audiences and NUPS offered use of its sports facilities and its library to the general public. The team also heard that some staff but especially the students themselves organised philanthropic activities and charitable donations to the needy in Hungary and to needy Hungarians in neighbouring countries; that NUPS had initiatives to engage with students and others in the Roma community; and that students on their own initiative might engage with the public through programmes in sports and other special interest clubs. The team believed that NUPS might wish to review whether it should become more directly involved in such programmes, embedding them within certain curricula, for example in law enforcement, as serving the public in that manner could assist the personal development of students and their ability to empathise and engage with the community that they would later serve.

## **Recommendations**

The team recommends that NUPS:

- Continues the range of measures already in train to offer mutually beneficial service to society.
- Looks also to work with commercial and business partners, other than Ministries of State for similar mutual benefit.
- Reviews the potential embedding of the currently voluntary student community service opportunities in certain curricula to assist the personal development of students.
- Continues philanthropic efforts by staff, and especially by students, to assist the more disadvantaged in the Hungarian and global society.

## **7. Internationalisation**

NUPS is a member of the European University Association and the International Association of Universities. Throughout its self-evaluation report, NUPS cited the need to benchmark against international standards and to enhance the international nature of NUPS, not least so as to measure the standing of its often unique and specialist disciplinary areas. The team welcomed the statement of support by the Chair of the Board of Governors for the Rector and for the Vice-Rector (International) and for the faculties to create international partnerships and relationships, including in research.

NUPS offered an extract from its IDP to set out its approach to internationalisation and the team also heard a number of ways in which NUPS approached internationalisation: the pursuit with international partners of external research funding, especially from the EU; attempts to increase international student exchange recruitment; encouragement to NUPS's students to take international work placements; a generally open and supportive attitude to incoming and outgoing student exchanges; student visits to foreign universities or other excursions; encouragement of NUPS's academic staff to gain international experience through exchanges; the appointment of some academic staff with international experience, both via their own higher education studies or subsequent working experience; and input from visiting international academic staff. NUPS could with ease formalise that approach into an International Strategy.

The level of internationalisation varied by faculty, being especially embedded in FIES whose experiences and practices could offer a learning opportunity to the less internationalised faculties. NUPS had Erasmus student exchange agreements with over 40 institutions, even though in certain subject disciplines, such as law enforcement, it was more difficult to find complementary providers with similar structures and study programmes to NUPS, as law enforcement students had to seek out cognate awards in institutions similar to FLE or a Police Academy, as they were not permitted merely to take elements of a more generic law study programme.

NUPS allowed students to enrol with only those institutions with whom a formal agreement existed. The students whom the team met were generally satisfied with the Erasmus mobility opportunities available at NUPS, although they attributed the majority of the promotion and support to be through the dedicated International Office and its International Coordinator rather than through individual lecturers. Students reported Erasmus exchanges to be relatively easy to arrange and to be well supported. However, the position with regard to foreign internships was not as simple. There was a considerable amount of bureaucratic processing to be gone through beforehand and the onus was on the student to find an appropriate internship, although NUPS did then assist in vetting contracts and other documentation, such as security clearance to work abroad in an embassy. Incoming Erasmus students complimented the efforts NUPS made to assist them despite their difficulties with the language of programme delivery.

Students also reported that in some instances an Erasmus exchange meant a doubling of study load in that NUPS's students had to register for teaching and examination at the foreign university whilst simultaneously coping with a study pack from their home study programme for examination at NUPS. The students whom the team met were calm about this high study load and indeed expressed satisfaction at the opportunity it presented to acquire more credits. Academic staff confirmed that this was the position when, for a discipline such as Correctional Sciences, there were no equivalent course at a foreign university where ECTS credits could be gained in the specific discipline. However, the team saw this is contrary to the spirit of the Erasmus Programme and an unfair burden upon particular students.

The team learnt that an increasing number of elements of study programmes (the figure of 42 "general courses" was cited) were being delivered at NUPS in the English language, although only FIES currently offered an entire study programme in English. This was however from a low base and of course meant that there were limited opportunities for non-Hungarian students to be recruited to degree programmes. However, the team was advised of an increase in credits for courses delivered in English, French and German from one or two, to five. This was said to have been instrumental in doubling the number of Hungarian students on English-delivered courses and thence to an increase in the number of English-delivered courses on offer as well as opening the door wider for outgoing Erasmus students. The team recognised that it was nevertheless difficult for NUPS to square the circle by developing more English language-delivered degree programmes whilst at the same time being true to that part of its vision requiring it to be "a devoted supporter of Hungarian-language Higher Education." Nevertheless, NUPS might wish to explore further extending English language-delivered degree programmes, or perhaps dual delivery, so as to increase the recruitment of non-Hungarian students and to enhance internationalisation.

The academic staff whom the team met also reported that there were opportunities for staff to undertake Erasmus exchanges, although the participation rate was reported to be low. This was attributed to the pressure of work and domestic commitments as well as, in the case of some older staff, limited English language proficiency. It was claimed, and at least partly confirmed by the team's meetings with those constituencies, that the large majority of students and new academic staff were proficient in English upon joining NUPS. For more established and older staff there was support to facilitate improvement in English language proficiency available free of charge to all academic staff via NUPS's Language Institute. In view of the key part English language proficiency would play in NUPS's development both of teaching and research, NUPS should do as much as possible to encourage take up of that support. The students whom the team met confirmed that English language support was generally available, although was especially focused on provision delivered in English.

Academic staff welcomed a recent university initiative to offer academic staff and students the opportunity to apply for NUPS's special scholarship programmes for international study. They also reported that initial consideration was being given to the development of joint

programmes, perhaps even for joint international doctoral programmes, with foreign partner institutions and they also suggested that NUPS should foster opportunities for more incoming academic staff mobility and visiting staff sabbatical placements so as to improve internationalisation. In meetings with faculty level staff there was some feeling that faculties and departments should be better resourced by NUPS so as to become more international.

### **Recommendations**

The team recommends that NUPS:

- Encourages NUPS to continue the range of measures taken to deepen its international partnerships and to develop NUPS as truly international institution.
- Explores further extension of English language-delivered degree programmes, or perhaps dual delivery, so as to increase the recruitment of non-Hungarian students and to enhance internationalisation.
- Works towards broadening its portfolio of joint degrees with international partners.

## **8. Conclusion**

The team compliments NUPS for the manner in which has progressed since its relatively recent establishment. In particular, whilst many of their respective strengths have been retained, the disparate cultures and practices of its previous constituent elements have been standardised and unified through a, so far, successful merger. Its academic and professional services staff both, overall, acknowledge the benefits of its status as a university. However there remain some residual merger matters still to be fully resolved and requiring the attention of the NUPS academic leadership. In a relatively short period of time, NUPS has grown in size (including through the establishment of new faculties), has achieved a large degree of consolidation on a main campus, and has enhanced its national profile as well as developing an international profile. The team especially welcomed the statements of the Chair of the Board of Governors in support of a wider academic approach to the education and development of students within NUPS and in support of international partnerships and relationships, including in research. NUPS is served by an able, dedicated and professional academic staff; has a motivated and career-focused student body; and has a strong reputation amongst, and is trusted by, its employer stakeholders.

NUPS is forward-looking and aspirational and it has already demonstrated a capacity to embrace change, not just in its successful merger, but also in initiatives such as the establishment of new doctoral schools and the modernising of its curricula by the amendment of existing and the introduction of new study programmes. NUPS is committed to both self-evaluation and external evaluation and values cooperation, partnership and externality.

NUPS is soon to face a point of transition and will be changing Rector for the first time since its establishment and will be giving initial thought to its future strategic direction. The team's recommendations are made so as to assist NUPS in the context of the period beyond the current 2015-2020 IDP. NUPS may wish to take this opportunity to consider the team's recommendations in its report as a means of thinking through the strategic and operational implications of that transition and the change process it will necessitate. NUPS will want to undertake a strategy development process which builds on the successes of the recent past and the continuing commitment of its key employer stakeholders, as well as its staff and students, so as to ensure a strong base for its future.

NUPS would then be well placed to face any significant recruitment challenges, such as a demographic downturn or increased emigration, or any significant economic challenges, such as more limited provision of, or greater competition for, EU research project funding or the need to generate income from private as well as public sources. NUPS would also then be well placed to make the most of any new research and joint teaching opportunities which might arise in collaboration with national and international partners of substance.



## **Summary of the recommendations**

For ease of reference, the full list of recommendations to NUPS is set out below:

- Gives careful consideration in its recruitment of a new Rector to whether the need is for stability and consolidation of what has already been achieved or a departure towards a new strategic direction.
- Considers the establishment of an Advisory Board to assist it in keeping in close touch with external employer stakeholders other than the four member ministries of the Board of Governors.
- Continues the embedding of the merger and promotes integration of the sub-missions of its constituent faculties and of best practices in teaching and research, including in FIES and FWS.
- Takes the time, in the context of its recent rapid and ambitious development, to review the impact of this on its staff.
- Reviews if its professional services staff have an appropriately focused, customer-oriented ethos and are sufficiently empowered to improve administrative processes and make them less burdensome by better design.
- Initiates and then evaluates measures to address gender imbalances in NUPS's academic staff and students.
- Develops a more strategic approach to the diversification of funding sources.
- Considers how better to "close the loop" on feedback about the student evaluation questionnaires.
- Considers the further development of its student complaint processes to permit a neutral and independent consideration of confidential matters, for example, by an Ombudsman mechanism.
- Coordinates administrative arrangements (such as timetabling) so as to facilitate greater cross-department and cross-faculty teaching.
- Initiates a faculty-led review exploring the potential for savings in delivery costs and mutually beneficial synergies by the greater integration of differently aged cohorts on the same study programmes.
- Ensures that a structured teaching and learning staff development programme is an important early focus.
- Does more to promote knowledge of the existence and content of its Ethical Code amongst students.
- Undertakes a direct consultation with staff and students on how well NUPS's IT provision meets their needs, both when on and off campus.
- Reviews how Masters and Doctoral Programmes are promoted and how continuation rates may be improved.
- Standardises and integrates the operation of its doctoral programmes, for example, through a university-level doctoral school.
- Explores the further scope for joint doctoral training with national, and potentially international, partners.

- Develops, as an essential pre-condition to its further growth and impact in research, a transparent and fair workload balancing model so that academic staff may clearly be offered dedicated time to conduct their research.
- Continues and strengthens its existing operational improvements as valid and well considered.
- Continues to seek greater international impact for its research through by concentrating on the development of focus and critical mass.
- Considers additionally strategic investment in the deepening of existing partnership arrangements with international universities with a view to fostering increased joint research activity.
- Continues the range of measures already in train to offer mutually beneficial service to society.
- Looks also to work with commercial and business partners, other than Ministries of State for similar mutual benefit.
- Reviews the potential embedding of currently voluntary student community service opportunities in certain curricula to assist the personal development of students.
- Continues philanthropic efforts by staff, and especially by students, to assist the more disadvantaged in the Hungarian and global society.
- Encourages NUPS to continue the range of measures taken to deepen its international partnerships and to develop NUPS as truly international institution.
- Explores further extension of English language-delivered degree programmes, or perhaps dual delivery, so as to increase the recruitment of non-Hungarian students and to enhance internationalisation.
- Works towards broadening its portfolio of joint degrees with international partners.