

UNIVERSITY OF DONJA GORICA

EVALUATION REPORT

June 2014

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the University of Donja Gorica. The evaluation took place in the framework of the project “Higher Education and Research for Innovation and Competitiveness” (HERIC), implemented by the government of Montenegro with the overall objective to strengthen the quality and relevance of higher education and research in Montenegro.

While the institutional evaluations are taking place in the context of the project, each university is assessed by an independent IEP team, using the IEP methodology described below.

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. 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).

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme 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 the 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.

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

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 The University of Donja Gorica's profile

The University of Donja Gorica (UDG) is a private, not-for-profit university located in a suburb of Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro. It was established in February 2010 by the incorporation of five existing faculties: international economics, finance and business; law; information systems and technologies; humanistic studies; and arts. The UDG founders had created these faculties sequentially as components of the future UDG.

The aspiration of the founders, which is widely shared within UDG, is to change Montenegrin culture and prepare the country for European accession. This vision is implemented through an innovative education philosophy that stresses intellectual and personal development through active learning.

Today, UDG includes nine faculties and 12 departments. The faculties are:

- Faculty of International Economics, Finance and Business
- Faculty of Information Systems and Technologies
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Humanistic Studies
- Faculty of Polytechnics
- Faculty of Food Technology, Food Safety and Ecology
- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Design and Multimedia
- Faculty of Sports Management

UDG enrolls about 2 000 students. Five faculties offer the Master's degree and three, the doctoral degree. The number of academic staff totals 215 full-time equivalent (FTE), of whom 155 are full-time and 134 part-time. The administration includes 20 staff and is completely centralised in the rectorate.

The whole university is housed in a single, attractive and well-maintained facility that was purpose built for UDG by one of the university's founders; it is decorated with inspirational and life-affirming quotations. It has several elevators that ensure access to mobility-impaired staff and students.

1.3 The evaluation process

A self-evaluation group, composed of the following ten members, undertook the self-evaluation process:

- Sandra Tinaj, General Manager, self-evaluation group coordinator
- Maja Drakic Grgur, Dean, Faculty of International Economics, Finance and Business
- Milica Vukotic, Dean, Faculty of Information Systems and Technologies
- Ivana Stesevic, Teaching Assistant and Coordinator, Faculty of Design and Multimedia
- Ramo Sendelj, Professor, Faculty of Humanistic Studies

- Enes Banda, Associate, International Cooperation Department
- Dragana Dubljevic, CEO, Centre for Foreign Languages
- Milana Cabarkapa, Teaching Assistant and Coordinator, Faculty of Law
- Vuk Uskokovic, Teaching Assistant, Faculty of Humanistic Studies
- Nemanja Katnic, President of the Student Parliament

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and a number of annexes were prepared and delivered to the evaluation team on time. The composition of the self-evaluation group represented a meaningful cross-section of the university. The group organised a consultation in the university; as a result, the SER was known to almost all those with whom the evaluation team met and its content was not contested.

The SER was useful in presenting the university and providing some analysis of strengths and weaknesses. However, it would have benefitted from a better presentation of the university and more analysis. There was only one organisation chart. Additional figures, graphs, visual presentations could have assisted the evaluation team in better understanding the university. Similarly, an analysis of past trends and expected extrapolations based on these could have been instructive to the evaluation team and useful to the UDG community.

In the IEP approach, the self-evaluation process is considered an invaluable opportunity for the university to deepen its self-knowledge, share information and analyses across the university and discuss delicate issues and challenges that are “important but not urgent” and that are normally overshadowed by “urgent but not important daily business”. The evaluation team is not sure that UDG used the opportunity of the self-evaluation process to its full potential.

The UDG self-evaluation report, together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team on 5 February 2014. The two visits of the evaluation team to the University of Donja Gorica took place from 4 to 7 March 2014 and from 22 to 25 April 2014, respectively. It met about 80 staff and students. In between the visits, UDG provided the evaluation team with additional documentation as requested.

In the IEP evaluations, first visits are fact-finding missions, in which the teams are focused on understanding the university in its context. The additional information that is usually requested after the first visit deepens the teams’ understanding and raises additional questions to be explored in the second visit.

In the case of UDG, the first visit accomplished its goal. The evaluation team was able to discuss with a range of university members who shared their challenges and their goals openly.

Unexpectedly, however, the conversations during the second visit were guarded and, at times, defensive. The team felt the enthusiasm and deep affection towards the institution and appreciated this, but the lack of willingness to discuss challenges reduced the effectiveness of the second visit. As a result, the evaluation team may have missed analysing some important

institutional aspects. Regrettably, the rector was unavailable during the second visit due to health reasons but the evaluation team was able to meet with the acting rector.

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

- Prof Öktem Vardar, Rector, TED University, Turkey, chair
- Prof Elena Dumova-Jovanoska, former Vice-Rector for Education, “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University, Macedonia
- Mr Mateusz Celmer, student, Wrocław University of Technology, Poland
- Dr Andrée Sursock, Senior Adviser, EUA, Belgium, team coordinator

The team would like to thank Rector Veselin Vukotic for the open and friendly atmosphere during the first visit, which allowed the IEP team to work in optimal conditions. Thanks are extended to all colleagues and students who met with the IEP team and discussed many aspects of UDG. The team is particularly appreciative of the considerable work done by Ms Sandra Tinaj and Mr Enes Banda who coordinated all aspects of the two visits and prepared all the documentation requested.

The team hopes that the UDG community will understand the collegial spirit in which this report is written and will accept that every university, regardless of its standing, can benefit from an external review. This evaluation report takes UDG’s aspirations as starting points to propose ways for this young university to further progress. The evaluation team understands that there are constraints, including financial ones, but thinks that this evaluation can be most useful by making both short- and long-term recommendations that would allow UDG to meet its goal of reaching equal footing with universities in Europe.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

UDG is a private, not-for-profit institution. This type of institutions has the potential to be a vital category in the European higher education landscape, provided that they are carefully developed and that they uphold core academic values, including through an appropriate governance model. The existence of such institutions could serve as a model to public institutions, particularly in state systems characterised by rigid regulations.

UDG defines itself as an innovative university in Montenegro. It was created with the aspiration of changing Montenegrin culture in the perspective of European accession. It is a forward-looking institution in its educational philosophy but with a traditional organisation based on autonomous faculties.

The university grew quickly under the leadership of a charismatic rector who is also one of UDG's founders. While he concentrates power and works with a small circle of staff, he is also keen to engage in a democratic dialogue across the institution. There is a shared view across the university and a strong sense of community as well as an awareness that UDG needs to start thinking about the next phase of its history and ensure that all the elements are in place to ensure sustainability, including grooming the next generation of institutional leaders.

UDG has grown quite rapidly since its formal creation and its growth is continuing, albeit at a slower pace. While there did not seem to be a shared view about the optimal size of the university, the numbers cited by the leadership hovered between 2 500 and 3 000 students. Montenegro is experiencing a demographic decline, which can be a threat to UDG, but the state is gradually introducing portable loans that allow students to enrol in the accredited programmes of the private institutions. This constitutes an opportunity to support the growth of UDG.

2.1. Decision-making bodies, leadership roles and university structures

UDG has several decision-making bodies at university level:

- The University Founders' Board is chaired by one of the founders (who is an academic) and includes the rector (also one of the founders), the deans of the five original faculties, the president of the Students' Parliament and the head of finance. The other founders are not academics; as business associates they are not involved in academic decisions. The Board adopts the university statutes, and a range of strategic issues, such as determining the investment and development of the university, including the enrolment targets, and creating new faculties and new teaching positions.
- The Rector's Board is the highest executive body of the university. It is chaired by the rector and includes the vice-rector, the university general manager, the president of the Students' Parliament and other unspecified members. It is responsible for the daily running of the university.

- The Senate is the highest decision-making body with respect of academic issues. It includes 21 members (faculty representatives, the president of the Students' Parliament) and is chaired by the rector. The Senate has met 13 times since the foundation of the university. The team was told that strategic issues are discussed in the Senate as "any other business" and are often brought up by the students.

Leadership functions include the rector, one vice-rector (without a specific remit), the chairman of the Founder's Board, and the deans. Given the young age of the institution, all current post holders were appointed.

The team's observations point to a managerial rather than a collegial governance model, although academic staff members feel that their voice is heard and that they can contribute to UDG's development. The university is steered by the Founders' Board, in which the chairman of the Board and the rector play a major role.

Members of the Founders' Board are also in the Senate. The university is young and small and the team was told that overlapping memberships were due to the small number of academic staff able to fill these key senior posts. In the team's view, however, a Founder's Board that does not mix internal and external members would be better prepared to provide effective guidance to the rector and the rectoral team and would sidestep any potential conflict of interest. The leadership is aware that the Founders' Board needs to evolve in the future.

UDG is often described as a family, with the rector as the father figure; the family metaphor seems to explain and fit many aspects of life at the university. Thus, when academic staff speak about the university, it is rare that they spontaneously mention the formal university or faculty bodies. Instead, they will mention face-to-face contact with the rector or their dean and with colleagues during the round table discussions that are organised occasionally to discuss important issues.

So far, the rector seems very successful in harmonising different interests within the university, and in unifying the whole community around UDG's ideals. The team notes positively the family atmosphere at UDG where everyone feels at home. It is important, however, to remember that every family business needs to be professionalised when it reaches a certain age and size. The university leadership is aware of this necessity and spoke to the team about it.

The decision-making bodies at the faculty level are:

- The faculty councils gather all of a faculty's academic staff to discuss academic issues, some of which will then be discussed by the Rector's Board and the Senate.
- The faculty boards are the equivalent of the University Founders' Board but at the level of the faculty. It is a legal requirement to have such a board because the faculties are legal entities. Thus, in the case of the Faculty of Humanistic Studies, the

faculty board includes the rector, the chair of the University Founders' Board and a third founder.

The university is organised into nine faculties that are legal entities. The team was told that they were set up in this way to increase the deans' sense of responsibility. It should be recalled that faculty autonomy was a characteristic of universities in former Yugoslavia and were found to varying degrees in other European countries as well. However, a large number of European universities have shifted to an "integrated" university model in which the central leadership gained importance and where deans are incorporated into the rectoral teams and are expected to implement the university strategy in their faculties.

The team notes that, despite the rhetoric of autonomous faculties, UDG faculties are closely tied to UDG's upper management anyway, particularly for financial aspects and strategic decisions. Furthermore, the faculty founders' boards constitute an extra layer of control on top of the faculty councils. These features are quite understandable given the young age and the financial position of the university, where the younger faculties need to be financially supported by the older ones and the pressure of repaying the university loan weighs heavily. It seems paradoxical, however, to have so many different legally autonomous bodies when in reality the university is quite centralised and very small.

In addition, while the team understands the historical reasons that led to the inclusion of the deans of the original five faculties to be part of the University Founders' Board, it finds it highly unusual to include some deans in such a key decision-making body and not others. This results in disequilibrium among the faculty leaders, with some who are part of the inner circle and others whose limited knowledge of the institution may reduce their effectiveness. Therefore, it would be a desirable and relatively small step to integrate the university and treat all the deans in the same way.

There are nine faculties and twelve study programmes. This is a very high number of faculties for the size of the student body and the number of study programmes. The team was told that university-wide communication and interdisciplinarity are facilitated by the fact that the university is housed in a single building. In fact, the team noted that there is less communication across faculties that are on different floors than the single building would suggest.

It seems also that the university relies on informal channels of communication: for instance, it is assumed that Senate members would report back to their faculties about Senate decisions; therefore, there is no formal publication of Senate minute meetings.

The team's recommendations are:

- *To evolve the Founders' Board into a Board of Trustees that would be composed of external members only. These would be chosen carefully on the basis of their genuine interest in UDG's development.*

- *UDG should consider ways of integrating faculties and suppressing their autonomous legal status and the corresponding faculty founders' boards. To ensure accountability, deans could continue to be appointed. They should have a clear job description, with clear goals and objectives, and be accountable to the rector.*
- *All nine deans should be integrated into a Deans' Council, chaired by the rector, to replace the membership of some of them in the Founder's Board.*
- *The number of faculties should not be increased. New programmes could be carried out within existing faculties and UDG could consider merging the faculties that teach similar subjects to promote interdisciplinarity.*
- *More formal and regular ways of communicating across the university should be devised, particularly regarding the important decisions taken by the Senate; this is an immediate need that will become even more important in the future as UDG continues to grow.*
- *In the long term, coordination and communication across faculties would also be improved by creating three vice-rectorships to lead and develop three areas: research, internationalisation and teaching and learning. Given the primary focus on teaching and learning, the first vice-rector should be assigned to this area.*

2.2. Finance

Finance is a crucial issue, particularly for a private university, but the financial information the team received was too sketchy to propose a thorough set of recommendations. The budget was not clear and showed an unusual way of counting income and expenditures. Thus, UDG scholarships were both counted in the income and expenditures columns. The team does recognise that there is an annual loan of 800 000 euro, which needs to be paid in instalments until 2025, and that a portion of the tuition fees is used for that purpose. It regrets, however, that information and explanations about the rest of the budget were too vague to arrive at meaningful conclusions. For instance, it was impossible to get precise answers on the average salary by academic rank.

- *The team recommends, as a matter of principle, that a large portion of the tuition fees should not be allocated for investment purposes and that tuition fees are used primarily to fund current (operational) expenditures rather than long-term investment.*

2.3. Human resources

2.3.1. Academic staff

The number of academic staff totals 215 full-time equivalent (FTE) of whom 155 are full-time and 134 part-time. The evaluation team met a large number of young academics who are a great asset to UDG. Many have international experience, which means that they can bring back know-how and competences acquired in North America or Europe to UDG. The

university also employs a number of academics from nearby universities in Belgrade, Skopje, Zagreb, etc.

In Europe, universities have institutional human resource policies that spell out the typical workload and expected salary for a given academic rank. UDG does not follow this practice. It has a flexible and individualised contract policy, which specifies a core number of teaching hours for a given rank and additional responsibilities (including teaching) as required.

The team found unclear the explanations that were given about this practice and it was impossible to receive consistent answers to the questions related to academic career management.

There is nothing wrong in having flexible contracts but, to ensure fairness and proper staff management, there is a need to have more explicit and detailed human resource policies. This is a particular concern when it comes to managing young academic staff's workload and giving them the opportunity to carry on research. In addition, it is important that such policies are in line with the institution's priorities.

At the moment, the focus is on developing UDG as an innovative teaching institution. However, despite all the emphasis placed on teaching, promotion criteria seemed more focused on research performance (although recruitment of assistants requires a 25-minute public lecture to demonstrate pedagogical skills). Academics get a salary bonus if they publish but not for good teaching.

As mentioned earlier, UDG is housed in an attractive and spacious building but a number of academic staff members share office space; part-time staff members sometimes give appointment to students in the open space and the wide corridors.

The team's recommendations are:

- ▶ *To develop a set of institutional policies regarding the management of academic careers with the specific goal of reaching an optimal balance between teaching, research and administrative duties, in line with the institution's priorities.*
- ▶ *To allocate separate offices to academic staff; these do not need to be large, but separate offices will be needed if academics are expected to spend long hours at the university and be productive.*

2.3.2. Administrative staff

UDG's administrative staff number is small (20) and administrative services are totally centralised. Some, such as IT, psychological counselling and legal services, are outsourced.

The evaluation team sees the advantages and the efficiency of having central administrative services but the present staff count is at odds with the objective of UDG to provide a student-centred learning experience. Thus, the Registrar's Office has four staff members who are on

the frontline for interacting with students who bring to them a variety of problems, which they are not always equipped or have the time to handle. The software used is rather basic and many tasks require manual handling.

Out of the twenty staff, only two hold a Master's degree (six have a high school degrees and 12 a Bachelor); many functions do not appear on the organisation chart (human resources, public relations, institutional planning, quality assurance, etc.). As a result, with no middle manager to assist her, the university general manager seems to be carrying a very heavy workload.

New units will be needed in the near future to match the goals of the university. These include a psychological counselling service, a career centre, a continuing education centre, a research support centre, a technology transfer office, a public relations office, a human resource office, an office of institutional analysis, a dean of students, and faculty secretaries.

It is clear, however, that it would be unrealistic to develop all these units in the immediate future. Therefore, as first steps, the evaluation team recommends the following:

- *To distinguish the registrar functions from student support services (psychological, career centre) and to appoint one staff member who would be the main interface with students who are experiencing problems. This staff member needs to have specific qualifications (e.g. psychologist) that would allow him/her to address students' needs directly or to advise them about the right resources within or outside UDG.*
- *To strengthen administrative staff by increasing both their numbers and their qualifications in order to develop middle-rank managers who would support the university manager.*

2.3.3. Students

Students' involvement in governance is a hallmark of many universities and this is done through student representatives who are elected by the students and are leaders of student government bodies. These students' representative bodies are distinct from student clubs whose mission is to organise social and extracurricular activities.

At UDG, student government and student clubs are put in the same category. In addition, at the moment, one student (the president of the Students' Parliament) represents his peers in the three key university bodies: the Founders' Council, the Senate and the Rector's Board (in the case of this third body, the president of the Students' Parliament is replacing another student who is away on a mobility period). These two features can potentially reduce the effectiveness of student representation.

The evaluation team's recommendations are:

- *To distinguish between student representation and student clubs and activities.*

- *To ensure that the student representatives represent effectively their peers through appropriate elections, by expanding the number of students involved in the university decision-making bodies and providing them with a structured introduction to university governance and their role in it. The European Students' Union (ESU) could assist in this training and provide examples of best practice.*

2.4. Strategic capacity

UDG is an innovative institution that requires a formal strategy that would guide its future development. The team's recommendations include:

- *To consolidate UDG's position by developing a strategy with all the necessary components: priorities, timelines, responsibilities, resources, performance indicators and an accompanying detailed and realistic financial plan. This overall strategy would take into account the three missions of the university – teaching and learning, research and service to society – as well as internationalisation.*
- *To identify the most useful indicators UDG needs in order to monitor its development.¹ These indicators need to be defined sincerely and be adapted to UDG's situation. They should be set in the context of a continuous quality assurance system.*
- *To review annually the implementation of this strategy in order to assess progress to date and decide if changes need to be introduced.*
- *To identify key performance indicators as a basis for UDG's public relation campaigns, such as ratio of research expenditure over total expenditure, English proficiency level (through showing the added value of UDG's English courses), current expenditure per student related to tuition fees (corrected by scholarships).*

¹ There are more than the ones listed in the SER which are: student to teacher ratio; active student to teacher ratio; total student to space ratio; active student to space ratio and teacher to total available space ratio.

3. Teaching and learning

The university's primary focus is on teaching and learning and its portfolio in this area has several strengths, which the evaluation team wishes to highlight. Thus, the team was told that some fields (such as food technology) are only taught at UDG, and that some subjects (such as civil engineering and food technology) were developed in response to needs expressed by external stakeholders from the public or the private sector.

As mentioned earlier, UDG strives to recruit young staff who has been trained in North America and Europe. They are given the responsibility for developing new programmes of study, thus ensuring that curricula are up to date.

The university has just received funding to develop a product design lab that will involve graphic, interior and fashion designers. The team was told that, as the first such lab in the region, it is likely to become a regional magnet.

UDG's student-centred philosophy is an important asset and a constitutive element of UDG's specific profile. Teaching methodology is a matter of pride at UDG. The team was able to collect evidence through both written documents and discussions held on site confirming that active and interactive methods and minimisation of *ex cathedra* lecturing are well rooted in the culture of the university. The team praises UDG for this aspect because this is kind of shift is challenging to introduce.

The rector plays a pivotal role in promoting active teaching. He talks and writes about it; he organises roundtables with the whole university community to discuss the subject; he requires all academic staff to respond to students' emails within seven hours; he drops in on classes randomly to make sure that UDG's teaching and learning doctrine is implemented. An almanac that he wrote to present this philosophy is being finalised following the round tables.

The emphasis placed on skills and competences in the study programmes, rather than simply on content, and an education approach that promotes a wide scope (i.e. arts, literature, history, etc.) and generic competencies are in line with good practices. These features are particularly evident in the well-designed and much appreciated course sequence entitled "Ideas and Character", which is linked to a different subject every semester. Some staff members mentioned that they would like to promote broad, interdisciplinary programmes instead of specialisations but that the accreditation system favours traditional disciplinary programmes. There are very few optional courses available.

In general, practical training is encouraged at UDG and is incorporated differently depending on the discipline: sometimes it is through projects with professors (such as asking students to write articles in newspapers); other times it is through internships. Students are encouraged to keep a diary during their internships and are provided with a template but beyond this, there is no university-wide approach to internships.

The positive developments listed above need to be consolidated. Thus, given the pride attached to “Ideas and Characters” and the time commitment required from students, the team was surprised to learn that it is worth no ECTS (although it is documented in the diploma supplement). The explanation given was that it is too original to be accepted as being academically sound by the Montenegrin academic community at large.

Similarly, even though students are encouraged to do internships, these are not integrated into their study programmes and receive no ECTS. In addition, students have to find these internships themselves or with the help of the business centre run by fellow students. As a result, the team observed that there seems to be a lack of distinction in students’ minds between a random job and an internship linked to and complementing a study programme.

The foreign external stakeholders whom the team met mentioned that job searching in Montenegro is very formal: young applicants send their CV, often without knowing anything about the company or doing preliminary informational interviews to find out if they would be a good fit; they do not know how to network beyond their circle of family and friends and how to present themselves. For their part, Montenegrin employers complain about graduates’ skills.

The three-cycle system is in place, but with the additional “specialist” level, which is a legacy from previous times when the Bachelor was four years in duration. The specialist is an intermediate year between the three-year Bachelor and the two-year Master. The team was told that is very difficult to get a job with a three-year Bachelor. Most students are continuing to the fourth, specialist year to improve their chance of getting a good job, which is much appreciated by employers.

UDG plans to develop a learning-outcome approach. This should involve identifying the skills and competences that students are expected to have gained by graduation, including more general skills. The team encourages this approach and advises UDG to make sure that learning outcomes are identified for each study programme, discussed with students and communicated to the wider public via UDG’s website. Similarly, each course should have its learning outcomes, including the generic ones, identified as part of its syllabus. A matrix mapping the programme’s learning outcomes onto individual courses would be helpful to staff and students. The assessment scheme of a programme’s learning outcomes needs to be continuous and well thought through in order to address any deficit well before graduation.²

Two introductory courses, randomly chosen by the evaluation team, showed high failure rates ($\pm 40\%$). It is unclear if this problem is generalised because UDG provided these data, without contextualising them. If this high failure rate were generalised, it would be important

² For a very useful publication addressing how to implement and assess learning outcomes, and particularly about how to pick the verbs that point to the cognitive levels (e.g. know / explain / apply / analyse / design), cf. Declan Kennedy (2007), *Writing and Using Learning Outcomes: A Practical Guide*, University College Cork, Ireland. A shortened version of the book was published as an article: Kennedy D, Hyland A and Ryan N (2006), *Writing and using Learning Outcomes*, *EUA Bologna Handbook*, C 3.4-1, 1-30, Berlin: Raabe Verlag, <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/qf/resources.asp>

to understand its root causes and not to dismiss it as being linked to the poor level of secondary school leavers. It is essential that the point of departure for any teaching correspond to the students' level of knowledge, skills and interests. This is vital for both the students and UDG whose budget is based primarily (84%) on student fees.

A number of guest lecturers from Belgrade, Skopje or Zagreb, enable UDG to respond to its teaching obligations. Some commute regularly between their home institution and UDG; others come to UDG for a short period and offer concentrated classes, relying on teaching assistants to support students during their absence. Although teaching assistants seem very committed to their students and appreciated by them, this is not an optimal solution.

The ratio of academic staff to student is about 1 to 25 rather than the reported 1 to 10 because teaching assistants should not be counted even if they are the ones that students seem to be appreciating a great deal.

Although all faculty members and deans met by the team seemed very committed to their students, it is surprising to find out that students who do get into serious academic trouble, end up in the rector's office. It clearly shows the rector's commitment to each student but it also reveals the need to develop student support services (psychological, a career centre) and, as mentioned earlier (cf. section 2.3), to distinguish these services from the registrar's core functions (such as registering and certifying students).

The learning environment needs to be further developed. Thus, the polytechnics and the food technology faculties lack studios and laboratories. The existing system of using construction company facilities and industrial laboratories can be continued with special purpose equipment and technology as long as teaching labs are available on site.

The team was told that the library is open 24 hours, seven days a week (even though it has a staff of two) and is equipped with computers. This is highly appreciated by students who find it a pleasant place to study. The library is networked with all university libraries of former Yugoslavia. Yet, some of the young researchers complained of deficits in the databases and a lack of the publications required for their research.

Some academic staff members were able to benefit from academic staff development but such opportunities appear to be limited. To give some examples, one staff member attended a course at Université libre de Bruxelles to learn how to introduce active teaching and he is training others. Two staff members went to Prague for eight months to improve their skills. A trainer from Slovenia was brought in on one occasion. There is no policy for staff development but the deans and the Rector's Board discuss annually how to send three to five teaching assistants abroad.

The team recommends that UDG promote teaching through systematic academic staff development. This could include the creation of a Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to provide both pedagogical and IT support to faculty members. Perhaps a small teaching innovation fund could be set up as well as teaching awards for best teachers; recognition of

good teaching could be strengthened by adopting promotion criteria related to teaching.³ Given the current financial priorities, it would be realistic to start with the less expensive options provided in this paragraph.

UDG could consider developing Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) as an innovative supplement to its teaching and learning activities. The experience developed through “Ideas and Characters” might give the university a niche and help promote further pedagogical innovations.

In brief, UDG is a young university that has quickly developed several strengths; these could be built upon further. The following are a summary of recommendations in relation to teaching and learning:

- *Pursue the niche approach in developing study programmes in cutting-edge fields and sustain the innovative pedagogical approach.*
- *Apply ECTS to all student work, whether it is academic or practical, whether it is linked to traditional lectures or to innovative active learning.*
- *Distinguish between random jobs and study-related internships. Integrate the latter better in the curriculum by attaching ECTS to it. Assess internships on the basis of the students’ formal analysis of their internships and their employers’ formal assessment of the student interns.*
- *Establish a good career advising structure to prepare graduates for the labour market.*
- *Develop a learning-outcome approach in line with best practice.*
- *Analyse the patterns of students’ success and failures in all introductory classes and take appropriate measures to reduce failure rates. Student organisations could be enlisted to support student success.*
- *Build standard teaching studios and laboratories, with appropriate instruments and experimentation opportunities to service the students of the technical faculties.*
- *Minimise the use of teaching assistants as substitutes for guest professors.*
- *Promote teaching via systematic academic staff development, recognising good teaching in promotion and setting up teaching awards if finances permit it.*

³ Cf. OECD-IMHE (2012), *Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education: Policies and Practices*. <http://www.oecd.org/edu/imhe/QT%20policies%20and%20practices.pdf>

4. Research

The following sections examine doctoral education and research capacity at UDG. It concludes with a set of recommendations that apply to both aspects.

4.1. Doctoral education

Presently, doctoral education is offered in three faculties – international economics, finance and business; humanistic studies; and law – as a three-year, structured doctoral programme that includes courses and independent work, with ECTS attached to both types of activities. Each of the six semesters is worth 30 ECTS, for a total of 180 ECTS; the ECTS allocation seems to conform to legal requirements.

In the first two to three semesters, doctoral candidates attend lectures and submit a thesis proposal. In the last three to four semesters, they work on their thesis, write articles and make public presentations of three original scientific papers at doctoral colloquia or in smaller settings. They are required to publish one of these papers; the UDG journal can be the outlet.

A Doctoral Studies Committee, appointed by the faculty, assigns two to three supervisors to each candidate. These supervisors need to satisfy a range of criteria and cannot mentor more than three candidates. Some of the supervisors and co-supervisors work at UDG (either full time or part time) while others are affiliated to neighbouring universities (Croatia, Serbia, etc.) or institutions further afield (e.g. Italy). These provide an important complement to the expertise at UDG.

Doctoral studies are self-funded through tuition fees but working students could stop the clock if they cannot finish in three years. All the doctoral candidates whom the team met were working and most of them were planning to pursue a non-academic career. It is unclear if this group of candidates was atypical.

In addition to their professional work and attending their doctoral training, all doctoral candidates are required to mentor the undergraduate students participating in the “Ideas and Character” sequence. The doctoral candidates expressed positive support for their involvement in this sequence.

UDG is a young university with strong aspirations in this area. It has put in place a framework to ensure the quality of its doctoral education. To assist in further developing this area, the team makes the following recommendations:

- *Encourage doctoral candidates to publish in international journals and minimise the use of the UDG journal.*
- *Encourage supervision from outside the region while making sure that the link between doctoral candidates and their supervisors is strong.*
- *Develop soft-skills training to prepare doctoral candidates for non-academic careers.*

4.2 Research capacity

Six of the nine faculties are registered as scientific institutions, which means that they can apply for research funding. These are the faculties of international economics, finance and business; information system and technologies; law; humanistic studies; polytechnics; food technology, food safety and ecology.

Two research institutes are affiliated to UDG: the Institute for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (IEED) and the Institute for Strategic Studies and Prognosis (ISSP). Their staff members are not on UDG's payroll and the two institutes predated the university. The affiliation is mutually beneficial to apply for grants and signal UDG's commitment to research. The institutes occasionally hire students on research projects.

The team was given a list of research projects that have been carried out at UDG. As befitting a young institution, research is applied. There seem to be some limited consultancy activities. The team was told that the method to introduce the euro in Montenegro was developed at UDG. However, the university does not encourage consultancy activities and wants its staff to focus on teaching. Curiously, given the teaching focus, no one spontaneously spoke about how teaching and research could be linked to strengthen each other.

Research performance is considered in the promotion process and the university stressed that its publication requirements are stricter than that of the state university.

As mentioned in chapter 3, there are no laboratories yet at UDG but the first will be built soon.

The team understands that blue sky and frontier research is not a priority in the short-term but is a long-term goal. It is in this spirit that it offers these long-term recommendations, while being mindful that developing research today would be best achieved through the concept of "Mode 2 research".⁴

- *Strengthen the link with the two sister research institutes, IEED and ISSP.*
- *Identify niche area and set research priorities, preferably in interdisciplinary areas that would cluster members of different faculties around specific thematic projects. These should be linked to study programme development.*
- *Focus on "Mode 2 research", which will require working with external partners, thus circumventing the current lack of laboratories.*

⁴ Mode 2 research refers to research that is characterised by new forms of transdisciplinarity and partnerships. It is socially responsive, accountable and reflexive and, thus, does away with the demarcation line between theoretical and applied research. Cf. Gibbons, M., C. Limoges, H. Nowotny, S. Schwartzman, P. Scott & M. Trow (1994), *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Cotemporary Societies*. London: Sage.

- *Establish a technical research project office to support the preparation of project proposals and grant applications.*
- *Develop seed money funding for research, even if initial amounts are small.*

4.3. Additional recommendations

Doctoral education and research capacity are interconnected. Therefore, the following recommendations are linked to both aspects. The team is aware that these recommendations are conditioned by the financial situation of the university:

- *Create the post of vice-rector for research who would be responsible for doctoral education, the supervision and training of thesis supervisors, and ensuring common standards and frameworks across the university. The vice-rector would be charged with promoting research through the development of a research strategy that would include the identification of key thematic areas, partners, milestones, sources of funding, etc.*
- *Fund the conference attendance of doctoral candidates and the research active staff.*

5. Service to society

Service to society is seen as the third mission of Europe's universities. This mission is inscribed in the creation of UDG to the extent that the university's central goal is to change Montenegrin economic and political culture and prepare the country for European accession.

Concretely, the university has shown its capacity to respond to stakeholders' needs. It opened two new faculties – polytechnic and food technology – and work with them to develop the new curricula. Discussions with stakeholders are ongoing about possibly opening a culture and tourism faculty.

UDG is committed to developing entrepreneurship among its students. It participated in a Tempus project to foster "students' entrepreneurship and open innovation in university-industry collaboration". According to documentation received, "Project outputs include a network of Transfer of knowledge centres located at 6 universities within former Yugoslav countries that will foster entrepreneurial culture among students and intensify university-industry collaboration in the WB region".

UDG secured funding from the Montenegrin Ministry of Science through the INVO project to create the product design lab (cf. p. 14). According to the university:

The main project output will be a product design laboratory, which will enhance cooperation between companies in Montenegro and UDG. UDG's staff and students will participate in the creation of prototypes that will be commercialised using support and expertise of involved companies.

Other activities that put UDG in contact with society include:

- Outreach to high schools to market UDG and to prepare students to come to the university. They are invited to lectures and speak to UDG students. UDG cooperates with high school teachers. The university invited school principals and two professors from each school to attend a regional conference on higher education in Montenegro. In April 2014, 200 professors from primary schools were invited to discuss the UDG almanac.
- Public events seem to be organised regularly and advertised on the website and via mails to external stakeholders. These can be on a variety of themes, such as cultural events, economic topics, "Science Day", an event to present new business ideas and support entrepreneurial projects.
- UDG organises company visits for students and visits of company leaders to UDG.
- UDG has a Council for Development but the team was not able to meet them. However, the team met 11 external stakeholders who mentioned some links to the university. So far, these appear to be small scale (a few internships offered) and

anecdotal. Nevertheless, external stakeholders are very supportive: “UDG needs to continue to work this way”.

The team praises UDG for the emphasis attached to entrepreneurship, its capacity to respond to stakeholders’ needs, its outreach to high schools (even if these could be construed as marketing outreach), and its developing roster of company partnerships.

These elements can be the building blocks for developing further the third mission of universities, along the following lines:

- *Service to society should become a focus of attention: a strategy should be developed based on identified areas of expertise. This strategy should include creating a UDG brand and a public relation strategy (including the use of social media).*
- *The use of the Council for Development should be strengthened with the ultimate goal to support UDG in becoming a central actor in the development of the city and the country through its teaching, consultancy and research activities.*
- *In the long-term, UDG could develop lifelong learning provision and a knowledge transfer office.*

6. Quality culture

UDG is a small university made up of conscientious staff members, proud of being at the institution. Hence, internal quality assurance (QA) and monitoring of activities is done through professional behaviour (self-control, academic pride) and informal means, such as direct contact between students and academic staff and between the academic staff and the rector. Seminars and workshops are used as further opportunities to discuss UDG and to consolidate the sense of commitment to the institution.

The specific QA mechanisms at UDG include:

- Two student questionnaires, for teaching and for administrative services.
- If an academic staff member receives a poor evaluation from students, s/he gets a warning; if this recurs two years in a row, the contract is terminated if it is a part-time staff member. The team was told that there have been no occurrences of poor teaching evaluation of full-time staff.
- Tracking students' destinations three months after graduation and up to one month before the graduation of the next cohort. This is done via email and yields a response rate of 80%; those who have not answered are contacted by phone.
- The promotion criteria, which are said to be rigorous.
- The requirement for academics to produce individual annual reports. This self-evaluation report is submitted to the dean and discussed.
- The deans produce an annual report that goes to the rector and the Senate.
- At least one faculty used a panel of internal and external experts to revise its curriculum. Their analysis was discussed in the Faculty Council.

The team was told that the student questionnaires are "owned" by the faculties; although the deans discuss individual results with staff, the students are reported to have no deep interest in the questionnaires and they do not know how the results are used.

As mentioned earlier (cf. 2.3.2) the software used in the student services is basic and it is set up to produce national statistics rather than institutional ones.

UDG has grown in size and such informal and traditional means for quality control need to be progressed further, particularly in gathering and analysing basic institutional data.

Inspiration of how to set up an internal quality assurance system could be found in the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (or ESG), which were adopted by the Bologna signatories in 2005. Aside from the fact that Part 1 of ESG lists a set of good practices for institutions, UDG should anticipate that the Council of

Higher Education will wish to conform to this European framework and would be evaluating the extent to which Montenegrin institutions have implemented internal quality assurance mechanisms on the basis of the ESG.⁵

The team makes the following recommendations:

- *Develop quality assurance further, based on the ESG, and give it as a primary responsibility to a vice-rector for teaching and learning. This vice-rector should be supported by a qualified staff member who understands how to analyse the data gathered through the information system in order to monitor activities and would be able to progress quality culture further.*⁶
- *Explain how results of QA processes are used to improve and review the quality of the student questionnaires.*⁷
- *Focus on promoting quality culture as a shared responsibility by using the established practice of round tables to discuss quality assurance issues.*

⁵ All QA external agencies wishing to become a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA, <http://www.enqa.eu>) and to be listed on the European Register of Quality Assurance (EQAR, <http://www.eqar.eu>) need to show that they have evaluated the internal quality assurance of higher education institutions on the basis of Part 1 of the ESG (2005, <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/>).

A new version of the ESG will be adopted in 2015 and will address the following ten areas in Part 1: policy for quality assurance, design and approval of programmes, student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, student admission, progression, recognition and certification, teaching staff, learning resources and student support, information management, public information, ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes, cyclical external quality assurance.

⁶ For more information on the profile of this administrative staff, cf. Sursock, A (2011), *Examining Quality Culture, Part II. Processes and Tools – Participation, Ownership and Bureaucracy*, EUA, pp. 32-33, http://www.eua.be/pubs/Examining_Quality_Culture_Part_II.pdf

⁷ Ibid, pp. 37-39.

7. Internationalisation

UDG is a very young university and its internationalisation strategy is still being developed. The university reported the following international activities:

- Involvement in five Tempus programmes
- 33 institutional agreements signed
- Mobility through five Erasmus projects; Erasmus information is sent to students regularly by email and the office advises them for their mobility period.
- As mentioned earlier, a large number of academic staff members were educated abroad and the practice of inviting guest lecturers from universities in former Yugoslavia seems well established.
- There is an emphasis on language skills acquisition. The students' English proficiency skills are tested when they are admitted and when they exit the university, thus showing the added value of language instruction at UDG.
- Students are interested in having courses in English and professors are willing to do this as well.

However, the international office has few staff members and UDG does not yet have a detailed strategy. It wishes to internationalise as much as possible through the following activities: increase number of European projects; promote student and staff mobility; strengthen language skills beyond English (English is no longer considered as a foreign language). The university, however, has not yet set any precise targets (geographical, numbers, level of students, outgoing vs. incoming student, staff mobility, etc.), timelines, responsibilities for this area and the means to achieve these objectives.

The team recommends the following:

- *There is a need to develop an internationalisation strategy with clear rationales, specific geographical targets, milestones, key performance indicators, etc. This strategy needs to be linked with the overall institutional strategy and to support it.*
- *Ideally, there should be a vice-rector in charge of this area. If this is not possible at the moment, then UDG should consider having the deans in each faculty be responsible for developing the international portfolio in their faculty or appointing a vice-dean in charge of this area. The Deans' Council that was recommended in section 2.1 could be in charge of coordinating actions across the university.*

8. Conclusion

UDG has shown potential for innovation. The university grew quickly and is steered by a charismatic rector who has managed to lead decisively while consulting democratically. There is a shared view of the university and a strong sense of community. Ownership exists in UDG; this is very important in a young, private university. Both faculty members and students express satisfaction and pride. While the team wishes to commend the founders for this success, it also wishes to remind the institution that it will be important to find ways of sustaining these feelings particularly when the pioneering phase is over. Indeed, this phase involves sacrificial behaviour to the extent that staff members are willing to go the extra mile to accomplish a worthwhile project (e.g. doing extra work with no extra pay). Reaching steady state, however, will require different motivations to attract dynamic young academics.

The team is confident that the leadership is aware of these issues and wishes the university well.

Summary of the recommendations

Governance

- To evolve the Founders' Board into a Board of Trustees that would be composed of external members only. These would be chosen carefully on the basis of their genuine interest in UDG's development.
- UDG should consider ways of integrating faculties and suppressing their autonomous legal status and the corresponding faculty founders' boards. To ensure accountability, deans could continue to be appointed. They should have a clear job description, with clear goals and objectives, and be accountable to the rector.
- All nine deans should be integrated into a Deans' Council, chaired by the rector, to replace the membership of some of them in the Founder's Board.
- The number of faculties should not be increased. New programmes could be carried out within existing faculties and UDG could consider merging the faculties that teach cognate subjects to promote interdisciplinarity.
- More formal and regular ways of communicating across the university should be devised, particularly regarding the important decisions taken by the Senate; this is an immediate need that will become even more important in the future as UDG continues to grow.
- In the long term, coordination and communication across faculties would also be improved by creating three vice-rectorships to lead and develop three areas: research, internationalisation and teaching and learning. Given the primary focus on teaching and learning, the first vice-rector should be assigned to this area.
- The team recommends, as a matter of principle, that a large portion of the tuition fees should not be allocated for investment purposes and that tuition fees are used primarily to fund current (operational) expenditures rather than long-term investment.
- To distinguish the registrar functions from student support services (psychological, career centre) and to appoint a staff member who would be the main interface with students who are experiencing problems. This staff member needs to have specific qualifications (e.g. psychologist) that would allow him/her to address students' needs directly or guide them about the right resources within or outside UDG.
- There is a need to strengthen administrative staff by increasing both their numbers and their qualifications in order to develop middle-rank managers who would support the university manager.
- To distinguish between student representation and student clubs and activities.

- To ensure that the student representatives represent effectively their peers through appropriate elections, by expanding the number of students involved in the university decision-making bodies and providing them with a structured introduction to university governance and their role in it. The European Student Association (ESU) could assist in this training and provide examples of best practice.
- To consolidate UDG's position by developing a strategy with all the necessary components: priorities, timelines, responsibilities, resources, performance indicators and an accompanying detailed and realistic financial plan. This overall strategy would take into account the three missions of the university – teaching and learning, research and service to society – as well as internationalisation.
- To identify the most useful indicators UDG needs in order to monitor its development.⁸ These indicators need to be defined sincerely and be adapted to UDG's situation. They should be set in the context of a continuous quality assurance system.
- To review annually the implementation of this strategy in order to assess progress to date and decide if changes need to be introduced.
- To identify key performance indicators as a basis for UDG's public relation campaigns, such as ratio of research expenditure over total expenditure, English proficiency level (through showing the added value of UDG's English courses), current expenditure per student related to tuition fees (corrected by scholarships).

Teaching and learning

- Pursue the niche approach in developing study programmes in cutting-edge fields and sustain the innovative pedagogical approach.
- Apply ECTS to all student work, whether it is academic or practical, whether it is linked to traditional lectures or to innovative active learning.
- Distinguish between random jobs and study related internships. Integrate the latter better in the curriculum by attaching ECTS to it. Assess internships on the basis of the students' formal analysis of their internships and their employers' formal assessment of the student interns.
- UDG could establish a good career advising structure to prepare graduates to go on the labour market.
- Develop a learning-outcome approach in line with best practice.

⁸ There are more than the ones listed in the SER which are: student to teacher ratio; active student to teacher ratio; total student to space ratio; active student to space ratio and teacher to total available space ratio.

- Analyse the patterns of students' success and failures in all introductory classes and take appropriate measures to reduce failure rates. Student organisations could be enlisted to support student success.
- Build standard teaching studios and laboratories, with appropriate instruments and experimentation opportunities to service the students of the technical faculties.
- Minimise the use of teaching assistants as substitutes for guest professors.
- Promote teaching via systematic academic staff development, recognising good teaching in promotion and setting up teaching awards if finances permit it.

Doctoral education and research

- Encourage doctoral candidates to publish in international journals and minimise the use of the UDG journal. Encourage supervision from outside the region while making sure that the link between doctoral candidates and their supervisors is strong.
- Develop soft-skills training to prepare doctoral candidates for non-academic careers.
- Strengthen the link with the two sister research institutes, IEED and ISSP.
- Identify niche area and set research priorities, preferably in interdisciplinary areas that would cluster members of different faculties around specific thematic projects. These should be linked to study programme development.
- Focus on "Mode 2 research", which will require working with external partners, thus circumventing the current lack of laboratories.
- Establish a technical research project office to support the preparation of project proposals and grant applications.
- Develop seed money funding for research, even if initial amounts are small.
- Create the post of vice-rector for research who would be responsible for doctoral education, the supervision and training of thesis supervisors, and ensuring common standards and frameworks across the university. The vice-rector would be charged with promoting research through the development of a research strategy that would include the identification of key thematic areas, partners, milestones, sources of funding, etc.
- Fund the conference attendance of doctoral candidates and the research active staff.

Service to society

- Service to society should become a focus of attention: a strategy should be developed based on identified areas of expertise. This strategy should include creating a UDG brand and a public relation strategy (including the use of social media).

- The use of the Council for Development should be strengthened with the ultimate goal to support UDG in becoming a central actor in the development of the city and the country through its teaching, consultancy and research activities.
- In the long-term, UDG could develop lifelong learning provision and a knowledge transfer office.

Quality culture

- Develop quality assurance further, based on the ESG, and give it as a primary responsibility to a vice-rector for teaching and learning. This vice-rector should be supported by a qualified staff member who understands how to analyse the data gathered through the information system in order to monitor activities and would be able to progress quality culture further.
- Explain how results of QA processes are used to improve and review the quality of the student questionnaires.
- Focus on promoting quality culture as a shared responsibility by using the established practice of round tables to discuss quality assurance issues.

Internationalisation

- There is a need to develop an internationalisation strategy with clear rationales, specific geographical targets, milestones, key performance indicators, etc. This strategy needs to be linked with the overall institutional strategy and to support it.
- Ideally, there should be a vice-rector in charge of this area. If this is not possible at the moment, then UDG should consider having the deans in each faculty be responsible for developing the international portfolio in their faculty or appointing a vice-dean in charge of this area. The Deans' Council that was recommended in the governance section (2.1) could be charged in coordinating actions across the university.