



IEP

EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme

UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of a follow-up evaluation of the University of Montenegro. The European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) originally evaluated the University of Montenegro in 2014 with the report submitted to the University in June 2014. For brevity this will be referred to as IEP 2014 throughout this report.

This follow-up 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 and follow-up evaluation process

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

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

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

As for the original evaluation, the all aspects of the follow-up process are also guided by four key questions, which are based on a "fitness for (and of) purpose" approach:

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

1.2 University of Montenegro's profile

The university was founded in 1974 from a number of independent faculties, colleges and research institutes. The university remains the largest and the only comprehensive, integrated and public university in Montenegro. Other than this university, which has about 80% nationally of all Higher

Education students, there are two private universities and ten private faculties in Montenegro. In 2018, the university had 21 organisational units, 19 faculties and 2 research institutes with a third being considered for establishment. All changes to university structure require central government approval.

The main campus is in the capital, Podgorica, but the university operates nationally over a number of different campuses. Some faculties offer provision at the main campus in Podgorica and also at other campuses, known to the university as “dislocated units”. The university has over 700 teaching and research staff and over 20,000 students. Both totals are lower than in 2014. The university’s total budget in 2017/18 was just below 30 million Euros.

The follow-up evaluation took place after a period of change since IEP 2014 both nationally and at the university. Nationally a new Higher Education Law was promulgated in 2014. Two new national higher education strategies were published by the Ministry of Science: on Research 2017-2021 and on SMART (ICT, Medicine, Energy, Tourism, Health, Ecology) Specialisation in 2018. A new Collective Agreement on Staffing was reached in 2016. Internally there had been considerable change in senior academic managers between IEP 2014 and this follow-up evaluation. There had been two changes in Rector of whom one was expelled. Some deans had also been replaced.

There had therefore been a context of considerable change at the national level with regard to higher education, both in terms of the law and national strategies. As such a major player, not only as the sole public provider of size but also as the sole public provider of certain subject disciplines and professional training in a small country, the university has the potential to be a major influencer of central government. However, broadly, the evaluation team’s view was that, although there was a good working relationship between the parties, the university tended to rely predominantly on central government higher education strategy and believed itself to have a low level of autonomy and was reluctant to take or promote alternative strategic directions.

One unusual symptom of this was that the university had not formally articulated its mission, vision and strategy. There was a “situation analysis” after IEP 2014. This was in effect a SWOT exercise but had not resulted in an articulation of mission, vision or strategy as such. There were sub-strategies covering certain aspects of the university’s activities but these were written in isolation and on occasion solely to accompany external project bids. No statement of mission, vision and strategy was offered in the self-evaluation report.

Montenegro has a relatively basic infrastructure and a developing economy, not necessarily well served by the skills available within the labour market nor providing employment opportunities for all graduates, especially doctoral graduates. Nearly 75% of employment is in the service sector, especially tourism, with manufacturing and agriculture providing the remainder. Employment is mainly within small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with few large international employers.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation group (SEG), whom the evaluation team met, comprised members, nominated by the Rector and including the former Rector at time of IEP 2014 and a student. Each SEG sub-group had taken the lead in drafting each of its chapters before consideration by the SEG as a whole. However this approach had led to some inconsistency in approach and overlap, despite

attempted harmonisation. The SER had been made available on the university website and the SEG had held consultative meetings with various consistencies. The SER had been sent to Senate for factual correction before submitting to IEP. Neither the Governing Board nor external stakeholders were involved formatively in the SER's production. The majority of the academic staff whom the evaluation team met said they had had limited participation in the production of the SER. The SEG admitted that there had not been enough involvement of the wider university community, especially Senate members, in the drafting of the SER and retrospectively regretted not holding focus groups at a formative stage.

The SER clearly evidenced the use of HERIC grants but was less explicit on the implementation of the recommendations from IEP 2014.

Nevertheless the Rector stated that most recent changes which had taken place could be tracked back to IEP 2014. He felt the university was better organised as a result of IEP 2014 even though some recommendations were still to be implemented. He described IEP 2014 system review report (on the Montenegrin higher education sector overall) as having sent a clear message to central government on unsustainably low funding and he saw the revised funding arrangements now operating as IEP 2014's most significant impact and a key factor in the achievement of stability at the university.

The evaluation team noted that effectively several of the IEP 2014 recommendations had been facilitated by their congruity with changes required anyway by the new Higher Education Law. The Rector and SEG also described how those recommendations had set the university thinking and had prompted some "continuous" discussion with stakeholders, academic and other staff and students. The view was however offered that cultural change in Montenegro took a long time and that the expelled former Rector had paid a high price for attempting to accelerate change with too firm a hand, an inappropriate management approach in the circumstances. The view was offered that the period following IEP 2014 had not been sufficient for the fostering of a bottom up adoption of change through a process of open dialogue but that perhaps the university was now ready for more change.

The self-evaluation report of the university, together with supporting appendices, was sent to the evaluation team in April 2018. The visit of the evaluation team to the university took place on 14-17 May 2018.

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

- Professor Joan Viñas-Salas, former Rector, Lleida University, Spain, Team Chair
- Dr. Lučka Lorber, Vice-Rector for Quality Development, University of Maribor, Slovenia
- Linda Teikmane, student, the Art Academy of Latvia, Latvia
- Gregory Clark, former Associate Secretary, University of Salford, United Kingdom, Team Coordinator

The team thanks the Rector, Professor Danilo Nikolić, and all the staff and students of the university for their engagement in the follow-up evaluation process and, in particular, Dr. Sanja Peković, for her supportive and helpful contribution to the process as the institutional contact person.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

The university's governance is overseen by a Governing Board comprising 15 members: five from the academic staff; five appointed by central government; one representative of teaching assistants; one representative of administrative staff; and three students. The Rector is not a member. Unfortunately, all three Board of Trustee members, including a central government appointee, whom the team met, were employed by the university and the team was therefore not able to gain an informed external view of the university's governance.

The Governing Board sees itself as dealing principally with finance, such as the approval of project bids. Proposals may originate at faculty level and then pass through a Board of Senate to Senate and then to the Governing Board. The Rector presents proposals to Governing Board for approval. Some proposals may then need central government approval. For example, student numbers are proposed by Senate, endorsed by the Governing Board and then approved by central government.

The Rector is President of the Senate. Faculties have one or two seats on the Senate according to size. Nine of the Senate's 39 members are students. The Senate deals with academic matters and relies on delegation to specific Boards, such as the Scientific (Research) Board, for the operational detail and to ensure greater equity and transparency in its decision-making. Academic proposals, such as academic appointments, may also originate at faculty level, then pass through a Board of Senate and then onto the Senate as the ultimate academic authority. The Rector merely offers comment on appointments made by faculties through this process.

The Senate considers a number of candidates for Rector, on the basis of their respective Rector's platform. The current Rector had been in post six months at the time of the follow-up evaluation and would serve for three years, with the possibility of serving a maximum of a further three-year term. This maximum six-year period offered more stability than the previous arrangement of a maximum of two terms of office of two years. Deans and Research Institute Directors are elected by their respective units, and later, with the Rector's recommendation, are approved by the Governing Board. Vice-Rectors, with the Rector's recommendation, are approved by the Governing Board.

The university does not have a Strategic Plan nor supporting Implementation (Action) Plans despite the IEP 2014 recommendations. The Rector saw the IEP 2014 recommendations as a departure point for the university in initiating strategic planning, as no centralised and integrated strategic planning process had been done before. However, overall, the many changes and challenges facing the university had led to particular focus on certain activities, such as internationalisation, rather than a comprehensive, forward-looking strategic plan. The university had had to respond to external requirements, such as the reform of study programmes, and to external funding opportunities. The university did have some strategic planning experience, for example, where this was necessitated as a component of joint project bids with partner universities. The university had also had to respond to these external factors whilst at the same time considering a broad raft of IEP 2014 recommendations. What had developed therefore was a more piecemeal, fire-fighting approach by the university. There were some strategies in discrete areas such as internationalisation, lifelong

learning and doctoral education, but even then there was insufficient monitoring of implementation, which could be done by setting key performance indicators.

Senior professional services staff whom the team met claimed that strategic priorities should flow from the Rector's election platform, without taking account that those platforms failed to look beyond the incumbency of whoever was the current Rector. There was no clarity on prioritisation but a heavy dependence on whatever state and project funding, such as EU pre-accession funding, might be available at the time. In brief, strategy was very much seen as originating chiefly with central government. They questioned the purpose of a strategic planning process if the state or the university would not be able to resource the strategic priorities identified by that process. Similarly, the view of the members of the Governing Board whom the team met, was that strategic prioritisation was not just at the discretion of the university. The university and the Rector might have preferences, but central government funding was the determining factor and central government's priorities might change with a change of Minister. Similarly, even such university desires as updating the curriculum or enhancing teaching delivery might depend upon acquisition of external project funding.

Faculty level strategic planning was similarly patchy and did not necessarily integrate with the university level. The starting point again tended to be the respective dean's election platform for next three years and intentions with regard to such issues as the amendment of study programmes and staff deployment and succession planning.

Consequently, there was no strategic planning system in place for the university to determine clearly its budgetary priorities amongst competing demands. As an example of the delay in the planning process in the university, it aimed to adapt its regulations by 2020 to reflect the two new, recently published, national higher education strategies but there was no action plan in place for that work as yet. Indeed the Rector advised the team that both the Ministries of Education and of Science were supportive of the university developing its own strategic plan. The team advised the university to compile a strategic plan, with supporting implementation plan and key performance indicators for monitoring purposes, as well as identified budgetary priorities, and to ensure that faculties and research institutes drew up their own similar strategic plans and supporting implementation plans, incorporating key performance indicators and budgetary priorities, under the umbrella of the university's strategic plan. Amongst other uses it would allow the university to evidence its needs in its negotiations for increased support from central government.

The Rector did aspire to the creation of a five-year strategic plan via strategy boards, which would include stakeholders and students, and an external project bid had been made to resource that initiative, including by the commissioning of expert external advice, although the Rector recognised that the initiative was an imperative, even if the external project bid were unsuccessful.

Several IEP 2014 recommendations had focused on the integration of the university in such areas as the reform of studies, budgeting and management. The university has integrated to a degree and partly in accord with IEP 2014 recommendations in such areas as public procurement, the internal mobility of students, interdisciplinary study programmes and doctoral studies. However even the Rector queried whether the current level of professional services personnel and the IT systems supporting that integration were sufficiently effective. Senior academic staff spoke of insufficient

administrative support in the Rectorate to process the different approvals by 21 units discharging a range of disparate tasks. They claimed that there was poor coordination with systems needing optimisation and improvement as the current wait for approvals caused delay and inertia. In their view, too many approvals were required from the university level and faculties needed more discretion. Several deans suggested that integration should be reserved for future strategies but centralisation was an inappropriate mechanism for operational, for day to day matters, where devolution to faculties would be more appropriate.

The university has also carried out some centralisation in accord with IEP 2014 recommendations: for example, the establishment of the Board of Doctoral Studies and the Scientific (Research) Board. Most policies are now centrally generated and previous local level arrangements no longer applied having been replaced by “the rule of Senate”. Examples cited were the perceived low level of financial discretion accorded deans and all legal agreements requiring sign off from the Rector and the Governing Board. Standard approvals followed a route through Faculty Councils to Senate and deans felt they had to comply with Senate decisions in the knowledge that the Rector could recommend a change of dean to the Governing Board. Even in areas such as teaching and learning, where the subject discipline expertise lay with the dean and faculty academic staff, there had to be alignment with university level policies.

Other senior academic staff argued that the wider university community confused centralisation with integration. They accepted that some decisions had to be imposed top down but felt that the university had so far failed to create a common culture. It remained difficult to generate academic staff interest in working groups and other fora which would enable academic staff to feel more ownership of necessary changes in the university. The suggestion was that until this occurred the university would remain centralised rather than integrated.

As well as regular one-to-one business meetings between the Rector and individual deans, the Rector and senior team meet deans in a “Collegium”, convened by the Rector on an ad hoc basis to address specific cross-university issues. These meetings were not scheduled or regular in their frequency, perhaps taking place twice or three times a year. Similarly meetings between deans were ad hoc and occasional. The team saw clear scope for more regular and scheduled meetings of this type, especially so as to ensure the development of cross-university approaches but also to smooth out any instances of the poor functioning of centralised support systems.

The university’s income derived from tuition fees; commercial/consultancy activities; and EU and other external project funds. The university had received increasing state budget support since IEP 2014 but from academic year 2017/18 central overnment had abolished tuition fees with compensation to universities for that loss of income. In theory that funding arrangement might provide more stability if the compensation at least matched the amount of lost tuition fee income. Central government (and some university monies) provided capital funds for the refurbishment of university premises. Equipment purchase was often dependent on EU and other external project income.

The university had some expectation of other additional state support in the future for employment, research and infrastructure initiatives. However currently the resources dedicated to the

achievement of the university's preferred actions derived from EU and other externally funded projects and the reservation of some internal funding.

Internal budget allocation was in accord with a university rulebook approved by the Governing Board . Faculties felt they had some residual financial discretion but now felt more centralised than before IEP 2014. The financial centralisation was also reinforced by the new Higher Education Law. 72.5% of tuition fee income generated by faculties went to the university level with the balance to passing to a Faculty Development Fund and again disbursed in accord with a faculty rulebook. 10% of commercial/consultancy income went to the university level with the balance to faculties including up to 50% of the balance as additional income to individual staff members. Nonetheless some professorial staff, despite working under their university titles, took private commissions with no percentage accruing to the university.

Staff salaries were determined by the national Collective Agreement 2016. There was a set number of hours of teaching according to academic staff grade. Additional teaching was remunerated at 50% of salary to a ceiling beyond which it was remunerated at 0% of additional salary. The Collective Agreement also prescribed other, such as administrative, duties. Supposedly 30% of time was reserved for research but academic staff complained that this was difficult to measure. The consensus amongst academic staff was that salaries tended to reward teaching more than research and that there was insufficient time for research with staff carrying out research in their own time or when students were absent on student exchanges.

That latter view was not shared by the Governing Board who saw current workloads as reasonable and enabling the improvement of both teaching and research. The team heard that the position varied from faculty to faculty and had difficulty in making sense of Staff:Student Ratio (SSR) computations presented and then represented by the university, especially as these did not factor in staff paid by other employers, such as doctors in the Medical Faculty. In the context of IEP 2014 the overall position on staff workload and SSRs was now better. This was corroborated by the students whom the team met but not on a consistently standardised basis across all faculties.

Academic staff promotion criteria had been clarified in accord with the IEP 2014 recommendation, although probably more because of the establishment of the Scientific (Research) Board of Senate in accord with a national Higher Education Council requirement from 2016 that faculties monitor associate and assistant staff performance and a national five yearly habilitation review for all academic staff against national criteria.

In terms of the use of HERIC grant, the team learnt of the initiative "Improving Academic Network and Accompanying Services at the University of Montenegro" (IANAS), which was reported as having significantly modernised and improved IT hardware structures and document management.

Recommendations

The team recommends that the university should:

- Continue to integrate its internal systems and processes but at the same time should ensure that these are efficient and adequately supported by its professional services staff and IT infrastructure.

- Draw up a Strategic Plan and supporting Implementation (Action) Plan incorporating key performance indicators.
- Determine, in the context of that Strategic Plan, budgetary priorities and thus strengthen its negotiating position with central government for the resources it undoubtedly requires.
- Ensure that faculties and research institutes draw up their own Strategic Plans and supporting Implementation (Action) Plans, incorporating key performance indicators, under the umbrella of the university's Strategic Plan.
- Continue to address localised high staff:student ratios.
- Ensure that the Rector and senior team meet deans in a "Collegium" on a scheduled and reasonably frequent basis.

3. Quality culture

The Rector advised that he wished the university to develop “a deeper quality culture”. However there had been no overt attempt after IEP 2014 to do so or even to articulate or formalise how it would be done. The university’s focus had been on the creation of a framework for quality led by the establishment in 2015 of Committees for Quality Assurance and Control, overseen by the Centre for Studies and Quality Control. This title in itself is indicative that the wider implications of a quality culture are not fully developed across the university. The team believed the redesignation of the title of the Centre would be an important symbolic step.

The Centre for Studies and Quality Control promoted the initiation of a Committee for Quality Assurance and Control in each organisational unit through which the Centre for Studies and Quality Control collaborates with faculties, administrative units and the Student Parliament on quality assurance matters. In addition, a Quality Assurance Board assists the Senate in gathering feedback about and assessing the quality of university taught study programmes. Moreover, the Rector advised the team that the university monitors its position in relevant rankings. However, the university did not evidence that it monitors its activities against a full range of standard quality indicators, for example in taught study programmes against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The team found little, if any, awareness amongst academic staff of the ESG, although the university did express an aspiration to promote their use. The team suggested that the university should select and adopt a set of internationally comparable key performance indicators (perhaps the ESG) for its quality assurance and should incorporate these into its Strategic Plan.

The team found that the university does not carry out a set process of internal self-evaluation but instead self-evaluates in response to external requirements, mostly national, such as those of the Higher Education Council and requirements for national accreditation, but occasionally even more external such as for IEP 2014. As an example, study programmes, under current arrangements, are evaluated every three years for external accreditation. The university had successfully achieved national accreditation in 2017. The team learnt that enhanced national quality assurance arrangements were in preparation, with the Ministry of Education issuing additional guidance on quality criteria, and that the remit of a national agency would include study programme review. The university advised that there was regular though not formalised self-evaluation of study programmes through peer review by academic staff delivering those programmes and that the university, as an aspiration, was considering more frequent, perhaps annual, formal internal self-evaluation and monitoring of study programmes. The team would encourage the university to carry out regular internal self-evaluation including of its study programmes.

The university conducted an annual student survey as required and defined by national legislation. However, a response rate of only around 20% was achieved despite its supposed obligatory nature. The university was considering making its return a condition of progression. Similarly the response rate to other student evaluation questionnaires was low despite university efforts, in cooperation with the Student Parliament, to improve that response rate. The university was now looking at more user friendly formats for the questionnaires so that they could also be submitted off campus. In the context of low response rates, some academic staff questioned the validity of student surveys and

evaluation questionnaires. The Centre for Studies and Quality Control advised the team of its aspiration in future to disseminate and analyse three staff and student representative questionnaires on: quality culture, quality mechanisms and training opportunities.

The team found low survey and evaluation questionnaire response rates somewhat symptomatic of low student motivation to be involved in quality assurance matters. For example, only five of 40 students had completed a pilot new, non-mandatory, first year student survey. Some academic staff advised that the additional practical requirements within study programmes and students' focus on their individual achievement and employability meant that they felt themselves to have less time for such matters. This was despite the Centre for Studies and Quality Control lobbying the Student Parliament to raise interest in student response rates. Similarly the student influence upon institutional decision-making and student understanding of quality assurance did not come across strongly to the team during the evaluation, despite the guaranteed level of 20-25% student representation on all university bodies including the Governing Board . On the other hand, it was also acknowledged by the university that it could do more to close the loop when student feedback was obtained, reporting back directly to students on action taken perhaps even via a regular and direct address to students by the Rector on such matters.

The student voice was heard chiefly through the Student Parliament whose President was also known as the "Student Commissioner". The current Student President had been actively involved in a number of university processes during their two-year elected term of office, including the compilation of the SER. The Student Parliament had 24 student members with at least one place for each organisational unit and worked in tandem with faculty level student organisations with whom it had a good working relationship as it did with the university itself. The team saw an opportunity for the university to work with the Student Parliament, at university and faculty level, to ensure the fuller participation of students in institutional-decision making and the fuller understanding of students of issues relating to quality assurance.

In terms of the use of HERIC grant, the team learnt of the initiative "Improving Communication Capacities of University of Montenegro" (ICC) which was reported as improving and integrating communications within the university through a web platform both for staff and increasingly for students. This was facilitating, for example, the more efficient dissemination and return of student questionnaires and of the Centre for Studies and Quality Control questionnaire for quality monitoring in faculties.

Recommendations

The team recommends that the university should:

- Work with the Student Parliament, at university and faculty level, to ensure the fuller participation of students in institutional decision-making and the fuller understanding of students of issues relating to quality assurance.
- Led by the Rector, articulate how the desired "deeper quality culture" is to be developed and embedded.
- Redesignate the Centre for Studies and Quality Control and endorse its promotion of quality throughout the university.

- Select and adopt a set of internationally comparable key performance indicators (drawing on the ESG) for its quality assurance and incorporate these into its Strategic Plan.
- Carry out regular internal self-evaluation including of its study programmes.

4. Teaching and learning

In accord with an IEP 2014 recommendation but also so as to comply with the new Higher Education Law, the university had reformed its study programmes since 2017 so that they were consistent with the Bologna cycles (3+2+3) replacing the former Montenegrin cycles of (3+1+1+3). In addition, again in accord with an IEP 2014 recommendation, the university had significantly reduced the number of its study programmes (from 270 to 160) and its overall student numbers. Changes to central government grant funding had removed the former financial incentive to over-recruit. Some faculties had been shut or merged and subject disciplines had been realigned (such as the transfer of pharmacology and physiotherapy into the Faculty of Medicine).

The adoption of Bologna cycles (3+2+3) was not welcomed by all faculties with some whom the team met expressing strong residual misgivings and claiming that employers were also resistant. However other faculties welcomed the change, not least as it assisted student mobility. Previously the Montenegrin cycles (3+1+1+3) had not been recognised abroad, for example, the former University Diploma was not recognised when graduates sought further study in Germany and some other EU countries.

The reformation and closure of study programmes had followed consideration by working groups in each faculty as well as external advice from the University of the Aegean and other EU universities. The closure of study programmes had been chiefly concentrated upon unsustainable study programmes with low recruitment. Further and simultaneous impetus towards study programme closures had come from SWOT exercises and external evaluations within the national accreditation process which had also suggested reductions. At the same time, the team noted that the university remained responsive to completely new curricular areas, for example, the introduction, with external financial support from foreign governments, of Turkish and Chinese languages in the Faculty of Philology.

Some faculties had taken the opportunity at the same time to modernise curricula and introduce innovation, often reflecting a strong European influence or enabling compliance with international standards for consequent international accreditation, for example, compliance with the International Maritime Organisation in the Maritime Faculty. The students whom the team met preferred the use of the Bologna cycles mainly because of wider European recognition. They confirmed that they had been kept informed of the often rapid changes throughout the extensive reformation exercise and that their studies had suffered no disruption during it. The team complimented the university on the manner in which it had carried out a demanding administrative process of reformation requiring a large commitment of resources.

In terms of the use of HERIC grant, the university had made appropriate use, not least by the simultaneous acquisition of enhanced equipment, of a number of projects in relation to the modernisation of study programmes a range of subject disciplines: “Strengthening of the Teaching Process in Basic Sciences and ICT in the University of Montenegro” (STBSUM); “Reform of Study Programmes in line with the Needs of Modern Education in the field of Technologies, Materials and Environmental Protection” (REMMTF); “Didactic Concept for Targeted Teaching on the Fundamentals of Engineering” (DETT); and “International Certification of Maritime Education in Montenegro” (EDUMAR)

The university was broadly compliant with Bologna policies in terms of the use of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the adoption of the Diploma Supplement, although there was some differing practice across faculties in the recognition of ECTS (as opposed to subject compatibility) on student exchanges (see also chapter 7).

The team also heard that learning outcomes had been adopted in accord with an IEP 2014 recommendation but the university was frank that the assessment was still not always directly mapped onto those learning outcomes. The introduction of learning outcomes had also become compulsory under the new Higher Education Law. The university had made use of funding from a TEMPUS project “Development of Learning Outcomes Approach – A Way to Better Comparability, Recognition and Employability in the Labour Market” (Devcore) to facilitate the introduction of learning outcomes. The team saw this only partial introduction of learning outcomes as an opportunity for the university to ensure the relevance and currency of their curricula by engaging with external stakeholders in a meaningful review of study programmes so as to ensure the direct assessment of learning outcomes.

The Rector advised that he wished for the university to move towards a more “problem solving” teaching approach. However, this aspiration had yet to be systematised within a properly costed teaching and learning strategy and implementation plan. Academic staff commented that problem-oriented teaching yet to be rolled out and that students tended to learn to achieve the pass mark or grade. They identified issues of knowledge retention and consequent difficulty in application of that knowledge and agreed that innovative teaching and learning approaches were needed. Promotion criteria for assistants and associates factor in student evaluation grades. There was staff development, as recommended in IEP 2014, available in the Career Development Centre on topics such as teaching and learning methodology; research methodology; and project management. However, if study programme delivery teams did indeed engage with external stakeholders in a meaningful review of study programmes so as to ensure the direct assessment of learning outcomes, this again presented an opportunity for a holistic consideration of what was being taught, how it should be taught and how it should be assessed.

The university has only partly addressed the very high SSRs, in some subject disciplines, such as in the Faculties of Economics and Law. In line with a recommendation in IEP 2014 there had been some improvement in SSRs (see chapter 2). The university asserted that further improvement was intended but this was not systematised within a properly costed strategy and implementation plan. The position appeared to vary considerably, not only as demonstrated in the university’s statistical information but also in detailed discussion with academic staff and students, with some very large class sizes in certain subject disciplines.

The position was exacerbated by the difficulties the team noted for students’ internal mobility and their transversal selection of modules from other study programmes, especially study programmes outside the home faculty. In theory the university had taken steps to address the matter as part of its reformation of study programmes, firstly by planning mobility into the final year of both undergraduate and Masters study programmes and secondly by requiring that elective modules were standard modules on other study programmes. However, these had to be taken during the

same semester and had to have the same ECTS as the module which they would otherwise have to study in the home faculty so an appropriate match was usually impossible and therefore this measure did not really offer internal mobility. Academic staff advised that interdisciplinarity had to be approved each time by Faculty Council and that some academic staff could be parochial and obstructive to internal mobility.

The team found, in parallel, scope for greater internal mobility of lecturers to teach the same subject across different faculties and across different study programmes to optimise resources. The team acknowledged that the university centrally and individual faculties, such as the Maritime Faculty, had made efforts to address the matter. However, the university had not, as an obvious example, looked at mathematics, where, despite some consolidation, essentially similar provision was still being offered separately in some faculties. The team heard that beyond undergraduate level there was university expertise in the development of integrated cross-campus teaching, for example, the accreditation of seven interdisciplinary study programmes at Masters level and one at doctoral level. At undergraduate level there was less integration and little interdisciplinarity, although some academic staff reported faculty level initiatives to share teaching.

From the student viewpoint, there was therefore little opportunity in practice to enjoy the benefits of the Bologna-promoted transversal opportunities across subject disciplines. The majority of Faculties, with better practice exceptions such as the Faculty of Philology, in reality offered limited practicable elective choice and often this was only within the home Faculty. In summary the team saw clear scope for the University to work towards greater internal mobility of lecturers to teach the same subject across different Faculties and across different study programmes so as to optimise resources and to enhance student choice of modules.

The team noted that the University faced a considerable challenge in meeting the requirement of the recent Higher Education Law that at least 20% of the curriculum of a study programme be “practical” (see also chapter 6). The laudable aim of the requirement was to modernise curricula so as to balance the theoretical with the more practical. However, this had caused considerable difficulty for some disciplines where practical placement opportunities were limited and/or where the student cohort was large but the availability of local, regional or even national placement opportunities was low. In the team’s view, the university was already actively addressing this challenge but might also want to explore the potential for it to be met in part through cooperation with international employers or international institutional partners. In terms of the use of HERIC grant, the university had made appropriate use of “Acquiring Practical Knowledge through Virtual Enterprise and Internships” (PRACTing) and EDUMAR testing employability with specialist external experts and large international employers.

The university monitored student progression, retention and achievement through the academic deliberative committee structure led by the Senate and was able to pick up factors such as a disproportionate withdrawal rate of students at dislocated units and adjust its provision and target student support accordingly. The university offered examples of appropriate student support such as the Career Development Centre which offered sessions on the compilation of CVs and interview techniques.

The students whom the team met were complimentary about the university's provision of information for students. The university student website was much improved and offered comprehensive pre-admission and programme information. The students singled out especially the online student handbooks which had replaced faculty-based printed versions and which covered all aspects of the student and on campus experience as well as course outlines with details of ECTS and learning outcomes for each course.

The students characterised academic staff as responsive and readily contactable to discuss academic issues, both in person and via email. Students were aware of a University Ethical Code and the work by the Centre for Studies and Quality Control on Academic Integrity and the introduction of anti-plagiarism software and associated training.

Students reported variability, depending on faculty and campus, in the standard of learning support, of the teaching environment in classrooms and other specialist study spaces, of equipment, and even of the standard of sports facilities and dormitories. For example, some students benefitted from access to a university sports centre and enjoyed faculty-based sports clubs with cross-university sports leagues whereas students on the Kotor campus were reduced to attempting to hire sports facilities from local schools.

The university had integrated its Central Library in 2016. Overall the students viewed library and IT provision as insufficient for their studies. Some claimed only to be able to access text books as reference copies and not to have university access to e-journals or articles, even claiming that academic staff had requested students on Erasmus exchanges to source articles on their behalf. University IT hardware, such as computers, was regarded as very limited in number and outdated

Masters students and doctoral candidates in particular regretted that the university's library did not meet the level of other European and international university libraries that they had experienced. To some extent this could be offset if the students were fortunate enough to be in a faculty which itself paid subscriptions for e-access and databases, perhaps procured via external project funding. Again the university did not evidence to the team how these deficiencies and variability were to be addressed in a systematised manner within a properly costed strategy and implementation plan.

Recommendations

The team recommends that the university should:

- Work towards greater internal mobility of lecturers to teach the same subject across different faculties and across different study programmes so as to optimise resources and to enhance student choice of modules.
- Work with external stakeholders to ensure that learning outcomes are directly assessed.
- Continue its exhaustive efforts to secure practical placements for all students in collaboration with external stakeholders and perhaps look to international employers or international institutional partners.
- Standardise the recognition of ECTS credits for student exchanges.

5. Research

The university advised that it had no research strategy other than statements of its research approach made so as to fulfill external requirements such as background information for project bids. Central government, through the Ministry of Science, had announced a Strategy on Research 2017-2021 and Strategy on SMART Specialisation (ICT, Medicine, Energy, Tourism, Health, Ecology) 2018. In the absence of a research strategy the Rector advised that he was aiming to build on current project income to formulate one. However, he felt himself inhibited from prioritising certain subject disciplines as this might disadvantage other subject disciplines for which the university is the sole provider in Montenegro. He would also have to factor in the national priorities expressed the Strategy on SMART Specialisation. Nevertheless the team was keen to stress that a research strategy should include the university's prioritisation of areas of research strength, critical mass and excellence within the university, whilst continuing to take due account of the diversity of specific scientific fields and subject requirements

The Rector wished to make research capacity-building and critical mass the focus of the proposed research strategy. He pointed to work already carried out to establish the Scientific (Research) Board of Senate (for academic staff promotion criteria, for criteria for selection of supervisors of doctoral theses and for research publications) and Doctoral Studies Board (for the assessment of doctoral theses) as evidence of the integration of the university's research to this end. The team heard concerns at faculty level that, whilst this integration was welcome, it should still permit appropriate consideration of the diversity of specific scientific fields and subject requirements, wherever national criteria so allowed. The Rector was in discussion with the Ministry of Science seeking for the Ministry to open a new Doctorial Research Fellowship funding programme and to lower doctoral tuition fees. The Rector wished the university to invest as a priority in young researchers, young associate professors and doctoral candidates and for Erasmus staff mobility to focus especially upon research opportunities for younger staff. However, until such time as these wishes of the Rector were set out in a research strategy with due prioritisation and an implementation plan, the team feared that they might remain largely aspirational.

The team heard examples of research good practice at local level, such as in the Sports Faculty, which demonstrated faculty level promotion of research: for example, the publication of three journals and ten working papers; a modest faculty research incentive fund; the support for research conference attendance; and the successful hosting of research conferences. However such practice was not captured and disseminated at university level and little evidence was offered of cross-university, interdisciplinary research, as this also remained chiefly faculty-based. And there was considerable variability in the external research standing of individual faculties.

The university's two existing research institutes were the only units permitted by central government to employ research-only staff, although these staff could contribute to teaching. There were about 80 research institute staff at present, but this figure varied according to the success of project bids. The Rector aspired to have research-only staff in faculties as well but the members of the Governing Board whom the team met preferred the status quo, claiming that there was no demand from the faculties' academic staff and that the current arrangement ensured all academic staff could be involved in research.

The university presented a somewhat confusing picture of previously intended and possible future research structural units. This included some structural units which related to the IEP 2014 recommendations, which were subsequently not acted upon. A Research and Development Service Centre had ceased to exist having only been a nominal office that was never staffed; a Biotechnology Strategy was not adopted other than by an individual faculty; an innovative Transfer Centre was established on paper but without a policy, plan or framework within which to operate.

However, a Science Technology Park had been built but not yet fitted out. The university claimed that this had originated as a university concept and the Ministry of Science had agreed to broker EU and World Bank funds to create it. A multi-disciplinary Centre of Excellence, with its origins in a start-up platform grant for Biodiversity following IEP 2014, was also on the verge of becoming the third university research institute, subject to central government approval. This built on successful project bids and funding from interested international partners and industry. The university expressed confidence that these two new units would plug some of the gaps in research support identified in IEP 2014 and by the university itself.

Research-active staff whom the team met claimed that the university needed a central Technology Transfer Office: for patents, intellectual property rights (IPR), project bid support, and industry links as there was no capacity at faculty level to deal with such matters. As a starting point, the university advised that it had commissioned future external expertise to advise on technology transfer and that World Bank experts were currently advising on a permanent Technology Transfer Office for Montenegro to be located at the university, perhaps with on-going support from the Ministry of Science. The university advised additionally, in the context of the Science Technology Park and the Centre of Excellence, that it was working on an IPR Policy and Commercialisation Strategy; however, these were not yet in place. The university saw the two units as assisting in the provision of a better approach to innovation and technology transfer; in adding value to the university's research; promoting collaboration with industry and private universities; and stimulating multi-disciplinarity and more inter-disciplinarity. The team would advise the university to underpin its research strategy with a consistent institutional research structure which suits the purposes of its strategy.

IEP 2014 was viewed as having encouraged central government to invest in research. The university looked chiefly to external funders, particularly the EU and central government, to support its research. The team heard of current negotiations with a foreign government on a 2.5 million Euro package from a group of faculty bids. The university hoped that its new Centre of Excellence would attract central government research grants.

The university also relies heavily on external income to acquire research equipment but the Rector advised that the university intends in future to dedicate funds for that purpose. Again the team's view was that this could best be systematised within a properly costed research strategy and implementation plan. Faculties reported that otherwise there was very little support for purchase of equipment. The Rector saw investment from the Ministry of Science (and where possible from the university) for access to research databases as a key future acquisition. The team also heard of possible further Ministry of Science support for the purchase of research equipment and of a possible cooperation with neighbouring former Yugoslav countries and Albania in this area.

The university currently pump primes research in faculties which cannot generate funds. The team also heard suggested by senior academic staff a possible University Application Fund to support successful project bids as external projects could often take up to a year before income accrued. This would be a more transparent form of the “co-financing” for which a line already existed in the university budget.

There was variability by faculty in whether academic staff felt sufficiently supported, especially in terms of time and workload balance, to carry out research. The university did deploy some processes in support of research such as research sabbaticals which, at least in theory, were available once every seven years of service. Academic staff felt there had been a significant improvement since IEP 2014 in the university’s support for internationalisation and international partnerships which academic staff regarded as crucial to research.

The university applied nationally set and strict regulations and stringent criteria, including a minimum of journal publications, for academic staff promotion, according to staff category, and for the ability to supervise doctoral candidates. *With a currently low number of active researchers, compared to the total number of academic staff, as well as a low number of doctoral candidates there was only 0.3 of a doctoral candidate for each doctoral candidate supervisor.*

Although the level and quality of research outputs informed academic staff promotion, it did contribute not to any on-going appraisal of academic staff performance, even though technically research activity was a condition of employment. Despite this the Scientific (Research) Board still sought to stimulate research through support for journal publications, research-friendly regulations, research mobility, research sabbaticals, as well as collaboration with the Montenegrin diaspora in foreign universities. Overall the university reported an increased level of citations. University regulations permit, and the university uses, some financial incentivisation of publications.

The university had not yet established the doctoral school(s) mentioned in IEP 2014 recommendations. The university advised that this would require central government approval, but that the matter would be raised with the Ministry of Education in its next annual report to the Ministry. The Rector aspired to establish an interdisciplinary doctoral school by merging the best of current capacities as overall there was currently insufficient capacity for doctoral candidate supervision in various subject disciplines. There were some 40 to 50 doctoral candidates on 20 doctoral programmes, some of which remained in existence despite not having students registered. This activity was overseen by a Centre for Doctoral Studies. There was a need to assemble a quantum even if initially this had to draw on external or centralised expertise and even if it meant a rationalisation of the current number of doctoral programmes. The team encouraged the university to accelerate the much postponed establishment of a Doctoral School so as to support and to assure the quality of doctoral studies.

A Doctoral Studies Board monitors the quality of doctoral theses and is viewed generally as having improved their quality by being prepared to refer for revision as necessary. Nevertheless, there remains some opposition in faculties who believe that only they have the academic competence to assess in certain subject disciplines.

There is a limited number of potential doctoral candidates seeking admission to the university. Montenegro has a basic infrastructure and a developing economy not necessarily offering good local

employment prospects to doctoral graduates. The Rector wishes to see the university employ more doctoral candidates as teaching assistants with a guaranteed tuition fee waiver, especially where limited alternative funding was available, such as in Social Studies. Again this aspiration was not articulated in a research strategy and implementation plan. The Rector desired more central government support to this, seeing doctoral candidates as part of the critical mass which would create IPR and economic development. The Ministry of Science had not financed a national research call for doctoral candidates since 2012.

Some senior staff involved in research offered the view that many potential doctoral candidates preferred the stronger research cultures already available at foreign universities. The university might be able to use technology transfer as bait for employer support and interest from potential doctoral candidates, or might be able to build on international partnerships for joint doctoral activity. Revisions to undergraduate curricula and the introduction of the Bologna cycle might also prompt better future progression to Masters and doctoral studies. However, there is currently no salary premium for graduates with a Masters or doctoral degree. A future labour market might however be based on an “Innovation Economy” valuing entrepreneurial and highly educated graduates. Currently however doctoral candidates in Montenegro tended towards an academic career.

Some existing doctoral candidates already serve as teaching assistants and demonstrators or are employed within projects. Those whom the team met had some concern about work demands impacting on their own personal study time. Teaching assistants deliver at least six classes a week, which together with associated tasks constitutes a significant workload. On the positive side, their dual role often successfully bridges teaching and learning and research and connects undergraduate students to research activities. However, the team saw high workloads for many teaching assistants as potentially inhibiting the scope for their engagement with research.

The doctoral candidates whom the team met were broadly satisfied with their supervision and overall study experience, reporting regular and useful contact with their supervisors and regular opportunities to engage with and be supported in research activities including publication, although some doctoral students expressed dissatisfaction with access to electronic research databases, journals and learning resources.

In terms of the use of HERIC grant, the initiative “Reforming Doctoral Studies at the University of Montenegro” (REDOS), as described above, was crucial to the university’s reform of doctoral studies exemplified by the establishment of the Doctoral Studies Board.

Recommendations

The team recommends that the university should:

- As the prime research university in Montenegro, design its own research strategy (within the context of the overall Strategic Plan).
- Ensure that the research strategy includes the specific prioritisation of intended areas of research excellence.

- Ensure that the research strategy be underpinned by a consistent institutional research structure.
- In integrating research (and other activities), continue to take due account of the diversity of specific scientific fields and subject requirements.
- Accelerate the establishment of a Doctoral School so as to support and to assure the quality of doctoral studies.

6. Service to society

The university spoke of intentions to promote more stakeholder engagement, including from the Montenegrin diaspora, in both the development of its institutional strategy and of its study programmes and in responding better to market demand and workforce planning. However, it has no specific strategy or implementation plan for how this will be done.

The university is a “big player” in the country and has significant social responsibility as the sole public, integrated university and the principal (and sometimes sole) provider of education in certain professions and subject disciplines. Many Montenegrin political and business leaders and employers are alumni. The university is a key factor in the development of the Montenegrin economy and knowledge transfer in the Montenegrin business and commercial sector. University academic staff provide expert advice to the Montenegrin government and local authorities in several fields.

This social responsibility of the university is also reflected in its efforts to design the specification of its study programmes, working amongst others with the Montenegrin Chamber of Commerce, to ensure their relevance and currency. This has become more crucial because of the need to respond to the national requirement from 2017/18 for 20% of the curriculum to comprise practical training. The university has adopted regulations for practical training, compiled and published a list of practical training bases, and deans have been instructed to sign off agreements with those training bases. In that context the team saw an opportunity for the university more broadly to embed its social responsibility activity in the specification of its study programmes. In addition, as a contingency, the university had prepared a fall back option of replicating practical conditions on campus.

A “Lifelong Learning Centre” is part of the Centre for Studies and Quality Control. A set of associated university lifelong learning regulations exists. However, this has not yet extended in actuality to the effective delivery of lifelong learning. The university advised that lifelong learning had not yet been fully approved by central government. Lifelong learning was encouraged by the new Higher Education Law but accreditation arrangements had yet to be finalised. Nevertheless, the Rector also accepted the view of the team that the university needed to advance its preparation for lifelong learning: updating its lifelong learning strategy; activating the Centre for Lifelong Learning; and rolling out the development of lifelong learning beyond the pilot programmes developed in some individual Faculties.

The university has a close relationship with the Ministry of Education which creates central government higher education policy and whose representatives spoke about dialogue with the university on such issues as: student-centred learning; students as partners; student representation on university bodies; the adoption of the Bologna cycle; the introduction of 20% practical training in the curriculum; internationalisation; capital investment in infrastructure; setting accreditation requirements: and establishing the new national quality assurance agency. The university also has a close relationship with the Ministry of Science whose representatives spoke about dialogue with the university over such issues as the quality of doctoral studies including plagiarism; the low national level of research activity; the decline in competitiveness in bidding for EU projects; employability; and teaching and learning. Additionally both Ministries confirmed that they seek university assistance for

developments such as State Sectoral Committees and that university staff serve on a range of Montenegrin educational bodies.

In terms of engagement with the private sector, the representatives whom the team met stressed: a host and mentoring role in student placements; the importance of guest practitioner lecturers, especially with the compulsory increase in practical studies; the increasing involvement in final year projects, both as hosts for placement students but also as panel members and judges of presentations; input to study programme design to ensure good alignment between theory and practice in curricula; at Masters level, supporting the thesis or project linked to them as the students' employers; and the benefit to academic staff of close liaison so as to update their knowledge of "real world" business and commerce.

The university has a recently established, embryonic Alumni Association but has yet to optimise the benefits which could be drawn from that Association, especially in the light of its status as a "big player" and the number of alumni with prominence in the Montenegrin political and business sectors. Some initial steps had been taken such as meeting the expenses of illustrious alumni from the Montenegrin diaspora to offer guest lectures at the university. The university is also connected to the Western Balkan Alumni Association of Erasmus. The team encouraged the university to continue to develop its Alumni Association with those potential benefits in mind.

The university, assisted by the Student Parliament, also fosters a range of charitable and philanthropic staff and student interactions with society.

In terms of the use of HERIC grant, the team learnt of the initiative "Improving Academic Network and Accompanying Services at the University of Montenegro" (IANAS). This has clear potential for assisting the university in its customer relationship management and its development of its Alumni Association (see also chapter 2).

Recommendations

The team recommends that the university should:

- Continue to develop its Alumni Association so as to optimise the benefits which could be drawn from that Association.
- Seek more broadly to embed its social responsibility activity in the specification of its study programmes.
- Carry out its intended establishment of a Lifelong Learning Centre.

7. Internationalisation

The university has a stand-alone Internationalisation Strategy 2016-2020 which was approved in 2016 and which the university overtly claimed was a direct response to the related recommendation in IEP 2014. However, the strategy was not complemented by an implementation plan for its operationalisation. Moreover, some of the staff whom the team met reported there to be fewer staff than previously who were engaged in supporting internationalisation and so there was actually less capacity to deliver the strategy.

Nevertheless, the university reported an increased number of regional and other external partners, not least through the identification of suitable partners via Erasmus. Once more this was a direct response to the related recommendation in IEP 2014. Some of these partnerships had led to joint research, exhibitions and conferences which benefitted the enrichment of the curriculum through research. However, the university also admitted that some of those partnership agreements were “on paper” only and not active. The university did not evidence a process for reviewing the currency of its international partnership agreements.

The university understands the importance of international accreditation for the recognition of its study programmes and its own standing (see also chapter 4). The team welcomed the university’s proactivity in agreeing dual awards with international partners. Three dual awards had been developed with European universities and a joint supervision arrangement for doctoral candidates had also been agreed with a European university. The team thought it would serve the university well to continue its efforts to develop dual awards with international partners.

The university advised that previously no national accreditation was possible to deliver study programmes wholly in English. However, the Ministry of Education was said to have just permitted accredited degrees to be delivered wholly in English with the new national quality agency being responsible for determining criteria. The university was therefore well advanced in the development of undergraduate and Masters degrees wholly in English, for example in the Maritime Faculty. The university proposed to seek an exemption from free tuition fees for Masters delivered wholly in English. The university overall still has a relatively limited offer of modules within study programmes in languages other than Montenegrin, especially in English. This limited both outgoing and incoming student exchanges and the employability of its graduates. Currently delivery wholly in English was limited to doctoral level. Additionally all faculties delivered at least four modules in English. The team advised an expansion of the university’s provision of modules and study programmes delivered in other languages and especially in English. The university’s selection and recruitment procedures meant that new and especially younger staff appointments had high levels of proficiency in English. The university also provided English language support for existing staff and students. However, that support had not yet factored in increased demand from academic staff, both to increase successful research publication and to teach the new programmes proposed for delivery wholly in English. The team therefore advised the further facilitation of the provision of English language classes for existing staff.

Again in the context of IEP 2014 the university reported increased staff and student mobility since then, but acknowledged that both could still be increased further. The International Office was valued by staff and students as a key facilitator of such mobility. The incoming international students

whom the team met corroborated that the university had demonstrated an active interest in increasing the recruitment of international students, for example, through a dedicated website and support for international students; through improved pre-entry and induction arrangements; through improved services, such as dormitories, for incoming international students; and through a buddy network of local students to mentor international students. In accord with the related recommendation in IEP 2014, the university reported that the improved the web portal for International Relations Office had also meant better internal information flows to and from the university centre and the faculties.

Nevertheless, the incoming international (Erasmus) students whom the team met did report continuing inhibiting factors to coming to the university: the lack of English language delivery; a concern that learning agreements might have to be changed because undersubscribed modules would not run; and the reluctance of some parts of the university to move from subject recognition to credit recognition.

That latter issue of the university not recognising credits but only directly comparable subject content had continued despite the related IEP 2014 recommendation, and was also cited by outgoing Erasmus students whom the team met as an inhibiting factor to student exchanges. Otherwise their experience was more positive, with better preparation for outgoing Erasmus students, information days, individual meetings, and pre-departure briefings. They reported responsive and prompt support throughout the process from the International Office. Faculty academic staff whom the team met confirmed significantly increased outgoing student mobility as a result of these improvements. The team encouraged the university to build on that success and to continue to promote student exchanges so that numbers of incoming students reached at least the level of outgoing students.

In terms of the use of HERIC grant, the team learnt of the initiative “Development of the Centre for International Cooperation and Career Development” (DCIC) which had increased staff mobility through improved administrative efficiency including dedicated software for the administration and monitoring of mobility and bilateral cooperation.

Recommendations

The team recommends that the university should:

- Continue to expand its provision of modules and study programmes delivered in other languages and especially in English.
- Facilitate the provision of English language classes for staff to ensure the quality of any increased delivery of programmes in English.
- Continue to promote student exchanges so that numbers of incoming students reach at least the level of outgoing students.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate its partnership agreements and their continuing fitness for purpose.
- Continue its efforts to develop dual awards with international partners.

8. Conclusions

The team congratulates the university for the way in which it had moved forward, despite a constantly changing and challenging external environment, and for its efforts to address the IEP 2014 recommendations, although some work remained to be done on these. The team applauds the university for its continuing efforts to serve Montenegrin society and to maximise opportunities for its staff and students. The team recognises the university's conscientious attempts to collaborate with the Montenegrin Ministries of Education and Science to take forward Montenegrin higher education.

The team also congratulates the university for its considerable efforts to align itself with European higher education policies and practices so as to improve the quality of its teaching and research. In that context the university has made astute use of project funding drawn from HERIC and other sources.

The team commends the university on the progress made since the last evaluation. The university viewed its progress as having been significantly influenced by IEP 2014. To some extent the university has relied on the current follow-up evaluation to take stock of how it had so far actioned and implemented the recommendations of IEP 2014. The university has only partly addressed the recommendations made in IEP 2014. Some of these are still valid and the university should not just rely on the findings and recommendations of this follow-up evaluation but should continue to address, where appropriate, any recommendations made in IEP 2014 where action is incomplete. Moreover, the university should not rely solely on occasional external processes but should monitor and review, at least annually, how successfully it has addressed the recommendations of this follow-up evaluation as well as any residual IEP 2014 recommendations.

The university community recognised the progress and saw it as beneficial overall. All the staff (including those who were members of the Governing Board) and the students whom the team met were open and frank and actively engaged during meetings. They were cooperative and participated fully in discussions about the university. They were happy to engage with a process which could assist the further improvement of the university.

Recommendations

The team recommends that the university should:

- Continue to address, where appropriate, any recommendations made in IEP 2014 where action is incomplete.
- Monitor and review, at least annually, how successfully it has addressed the recommendations of this follow-up evaluation and any residual IEP 2014 recommendations.

Summary of the recommendations

- Continue to integrate its internal systems and processes but at the same time should ensure that these are efficient and adequately supported by its professional services staff and IT infrastructure.
- Draw up a Strategic Plan and supporting Implementation (Action) Plan incorporating key performance indicators.
- Determine, in the context of that Strategic Plan, budgetary priorities and thus strengthen its negotiating position with central government for the resources it undoubtedly requires.
- Ensure that faculties and research institutes draw up their own Strategic Plans and supporting Implementation (Action) Plans, incorporating key performance indicators, under the umbrella of the university's Strategic Plan.
- Continue to address localised high staff:student ratios.
- Ensure that the Rector and senior team meet deans in a "Collegium" on a scheduled and reasonably frequent basis.
- Work with the Student Parliament, at university and faculty level, to ensure the fuller participation of students in institutional decision-making and the fuller understanding of students of issues relating to quality assurance.
- Led by the Rector, articulate how the desired "deeper quality culture" is to be developed and embedded.
- Redesignate the Centre for Studies and Quality Control and endorse its promotion of quality throughout the university.
- Select and adopt a set of internationally comparable key performance indicators (drawing on the ESG) for its quality assurance and incorporate these into its Strategic Plan.
- Carry out regular internal self-evaluation including of its study programmes.
- Work towards greater internal mobility of lecturers to teach the same subject across different faculties and across different study programmes so as to optimise resources and to enhance student choice of modules.
- Work with external stakeholders to ensure that learning outcomes are directly assessed.
- Continue its exhaustive efforts to secure practical placements for all students in collaboration with external stakeholders and perhaps look to international employers or international institutional partners.
- Standardise the recognition of ECTS credits for student exchanges.
- As the prime research university in Montenegro, design its own research strategy (within the context of the overall Strategic Plan).
- Ensure that the research strategy includes the specific prioritisation of intended areas of research excellence.
- Ensure that the research strategy be underpinned by a consistent institutional research structure.
- In integrating research (and other activities), continue to take due account of the diversity of specific scientific fields and subject requirements.
- Accelerate the establishment of a Doctoral School so as to support and to assure the quality of doctoral studies.
- Continue to develop its Alumni Association so as to optimise the benefits which could be drawn from that Association.

- Seek more broadly to embed its social responsibility activity in the specification of its study programmes.
- Carry out its intended establishment of a Lifelong Learning Centre.
- Continue to expand its provision of modules and study programmes delivered in other languages and especially in English.
- Facilitate the provision of English language classes for staff to ensure the quality of any increased delivery of programmes in English.
- Continue to promote student exchanges so that numbers of incoming students reach at least the level of outgoing students.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate its partnership agreements and their continuing fitness for purpose.
- Continue its efforts to develop dual awards with international partners.
- Continue to address, where appropriate, any recommendations made in IEP 2014 where action is incomplete.
- Monitor and review, at least annually, how successfully it has addressed the recommendations of this follow-up evaluation and any residual IEP 2014 recommendations.