University of Chemistry and Technology Prague

EVALUATION REPORT

Month 2025

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1 Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of University of Chemistry and Technology Prague, Czech Republic. The evaluation took place in 2025 and was conducted by the EUA-IEP. The evaluation was the first EUA-IEP evaluation undertaken by the University of Chemistry and Technology (UCT) Prague.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme

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

The distinctive features of IEP are:

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

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

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

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

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

1.2 University of Chemistry and Technology Prague's profile

UCT Prague is a small, specialised research university tracing its origins to the Prague Polytechnic in the early 19th century and later reorganised as part of the Czech Technical University (CTU), from which it broke off as an independent institution in 1952.

The university comprises four faculties: the Faculty of Chemical Technology (FCT), the Faculty of Food and Biochemical Technology (FFBT), the Faculty of Chemical Engineering (FCE), and the Faculty

of Environmental Technology (FET), along with the Technopark Kralupy and other smaller units around the country. Faculties are the basic organisational units of UCT Prague with a large self-governing authority. Additionally, the university hosts a number of central university departments that provide administrative support and services to the entire university. Central university departments also comprise units providing specific educational functions, such as the School of Business and the Department of Education and Humanities.

The university employs approximately 1,300 staff and serves nearly 4,400 students across 25 bachelor's, 28 master's, and 22 doctoral programmes. Some of these programmes are offered in collaboration with domestic and international partner institutions. UCT Prague is recognised as one of the leading universities in the Czech Republic, consistently performing well in national rankings. In the most recent round of nationally mandated external evaluations, it was among only six institutions to receive the highest rating. Despite its modest size, the university is highly regarded by its partners both nationally and internationally, with its compact structure contributing to operational flexibility and a leadership team that is responsive and open to innovation.

Nevertheless, the university faces several challenges. These include demographic shifts, declining interest in STEM fields among prospective students, and an international profile that does not yet fully reflect the quality of its academic and research activities. Addressing these issues remains a strategic priority for the university as it seeks to strengthen its global visibility and maintain its position as a centre of excellence in chemical and technological education and research.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a self-evaluation group appointed by the rector after a discussion with the rest of the university leadership, and representing the broad community of the university. It comprised representatives from all faculties, administrative and service departments, as well as students. The members of the self-evaluation group and their respective responsibilities were as follows:

- Jan Masák – group coordinator.
- Jan Mareš – preparation and processing of materials primarily related to education.
- Radek Cibulka – preparation and processing of materials primarily related to education.
- Milan Kouřil – preparation and processing of materials primarily related to research and development.
- Jaroslav Zelenka– preparation and processing of materials primarily related to research and development.
- Iva Algerová – preparation and processing of materials primarily related to the university's development strategy.
- Karel Fous – preparation and processing of materials primarily related to internationalisation.
- Petra Šimonová – preparation and processing of materials primarily related to internationalisation.
- Michal Janovský – preparation and processing of materials primarily related to the university's third role.
- Klára Muzikářová– liaison person for the IEP Secretariat.

Each member of the self-evaluation group was tasked with collecting relevant data and information pertaining to their selected area and drafting their section of the text. The draft report was regularly discussed within the self-evaluation group and eventually reviewed by the members of the rector's collegium, deans, and vice-deans. The academic senate was also informed of the final report before it was submitted. Some, but not all members of the university community met by the IEP team had seen the report.

The self-evaluation report (SER), together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team in February 2025. The online meetings took place on 25 and 26 March 2025. The onsite visit of the evaluation team to the University of Chemistry and Technology Prague took place from 27 to 30 May 2025. In between the online meetings and the site visit UCT Prague provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation.

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

- Luc Hittinger, former rector, Paris Est Créteil University France, team chair
- Simona Lache, Vice Rector, Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania
- Francesc Xavier Grau Vidal, former rector, University Rovira i Virgili, Spain
- Nienke Wessel, student, Radboud University, the Netherlands
- Terhi Nokkala Terhi Nokkala, research professor, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, team coordinator

The team extends its gratitude to the rector and his team, the self-evaluation group, the liaison person for the IEP evaluation, and the entire university community for their warm welcome during the two visits. The openness and warmth of the university community made the team's task not only easy, but also enjoyable.

2 Governance and institutional decision-making

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

The Strategic Plan of UCT Prague outlines the university's mission, vision, values, and key priorities over a five-year period, and is supplemented annually by an implementation plan. It defines core priority goals and operational goals across management, education, research and development, as well as internationalisation. It also outlines the measures to implement to achieve the set goals.

The mission of UCT Prague is to educate highly qualified professionals for industry, public administration, and research. This mission is grounded in comprehensive research activities—from basic science to industrial innovation—and strong collaboration with both domestic and international partners, especially in Europe.

The university's vision is to be a leading educational and research institution in both basic and applied sciences, with a strong societal impact in the Czech Republic and Central Europe. It aims to be a globally competitive, 21st-century technical university—open, fair, internationally engaged, and responsive to the challenges of sustainable development.

Although UCT Prague enjoys significant autonomy under national law, the team was told that its strategic plan must align closely with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) strategy for the university to have a chance to apply for funding linked to the national level strategic priorities.

The necessity for this alignment makes the strategic plan very heavy and detailed, making it challenging to define a distinct set of institution-specific key objectives and performance indicators. This concern has also been raised by the university's International Advisory Board, and the university has been recommended to consider drafting an additional internal document with a much more limited number of key priorities to guide the strategic direction of the university.

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

Governance structures

The university's highest decision-making body is the academic senate, composed of 27 members elected for four-year terms (two years for student representatives) from the faculties and central departments. Each faculty has four staff and two student representatives, while the central departments elect two staff and one student member. Senate members cannot simultaneously hold leadership positions such as vice-rector or dean. The academic senate decides on key institutional matters, including the university's strategic plan, statutes, and the budget.

Executive authority lies with the rector, elected by the senate for a maximum of two four-year terms. The university has five vice-rectors, appointed by the rector: Vice Rectors for Education, Research and Development, External Relations and Communication, Doctoral Studies, and Strategy and Development—the latter currently held by the rector. The rector also has the power to appoint non-portfolio holding vice rectors; at present, such a post is established to coordinate the development of the doctoral school. Supporting the rector are the bursar, responsible for financial administration, and the Rector's Collegium, which includes vice-rectors, deans, the senate chair, key administrators, and a student representative.

UCT Prague also has several advisory and governance bodies at the central level. The Board of Trustees, appointed by the MEYS in consultation with the rector, serves a supervisory role and consists of nine members serving four-year terms. The International Advisory Board (IAB), established following the 2020 nationally mandated external evaluation, comprises seven members appointed by the rector to advise on strategy, research, education, and internationalisation. The Scientific Council, chaired by the rector, includes internal and external experts and focuses on academic and research matters. Additional bodies with more specific mandates include the Internal Quality Evaluation Board (IQEB), the Ethics Committee, and the Disciplinary Committee, all contributing to the university's comprehensive governance framework.

The faculties of the university operate with a high degree of autonomy; their governance structures largely mirror those on the central level. Each faculty is led by a dean and vice-deans with defined portfolios, and has a faculty academic senate composed of elected representatives. Faculties are further divided into departments, each headed by a department chair and responsible for the practical delivery of education and research. The number and size of these departments have been a subject of ongoing discussion within the university. In its 2020 external evaluation, the expert panel

recommended that the university consider consolidating its numerous departments into larger, more cohesive units to enhance efficiency and collaboration. The team understands, however, that the idea of departmental mergers has not been met with universal support. The team was told, for example, that similar-sounding departments may in fact have very different research approaches.

Finance

Approximately 86% of the university's annual income comes from public sources, with the remaining share coming from non-public sources such as contract research. Around half of the university's total annual income is provided as a lump-sum institutional budget by MEYS. This institutional funding — primarily intended to cover operational costs and, to a limited extent, investments – is decided by MEYS on an annual basis. The members of the university community identified this short funding cycle as constraining UCT Prague's institutional autonomy and limiting its capacity for long-term planning.

Competitive research grants account for 26% of the university's public funding. A substantial portion of this funding stems from successful national and international project applications, including European Union funding sources such as Horizon projects. These research grants enable the university to recruit dedicated project staff but also provide a means to supplement the relatively modest basic salaries of academic staff involved in funded projects.

Despite the potential volatility caused by the short-termism of the institutional funding and the dependence on competitive grant funding, the university's financial situation has nevertheless been relatively stable over recent years. The university has achieved approximately a 20% budget increase in the past five years, pertaining both to the institutional funding and to the competitive research funding.

The internal budgeting process begins with faculties and central departments preparing their individual budget proposals, which are then consolidated into a draft university budget. This draft is reviewed by various university bodies before being approved by the academic senate and proposed to MEYS. Once the ministry allocates its budget to the university, internal allocations to faculties and central departments are made using a funding formula that incorporates performance indicators related to teaching and academic output, as well as costing of required teaching resources. Final allocations are formalised through agreements between the rector and the deans, who hold considerable authority in distributing funds within their faculties.

Staffing

In 2023, UCT Prague employed 1,292 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, including 683 permanent academic staff and 191 research staff on fixed-term contracts. Among the academic staff, 77 held full professorships, 111 were associate professors, and 290 were assistant professors. The remaining 418 FTE staff members worked in professional, administrative, and support functions. The university's self-evaluation report highlights a persistent gender imbalance in senior academic roles, with men representing a majority in most faculties, though the Faculty of Food and Biochemical Technology reports a slight female majority. A notable proportion of staff have pursued both their studies and academic careers within the institution.

The university has been actively working towards fair and transparent recruitment procedures. The university is committed to the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment, and has been awarded the HR Excellence in Research Award by the European Commission in 2023. The university has implemented internal guidelines covering recruitment conditions, payroll regulations, career progression, and performance evaluation. The Personnel Department has recently been tasked with staff development, offering professional training, language courses, and instruction on IT systems. Recently, the university has made investments in pedagogical training, including the establishment of a Teaching Skills Development Centre. Additionally, the university has appointed an ombudsman to address concerns related to unfair treatment and discrimination among staff and students.

Facilities

The university is located in the Dejvice district (Prague 6) on a shared campus with the Czech Technical University (CTU) and the Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry (IOCB), which is part of the Czech Academy of Sciences. The Dejvice campus also houses some faculties of the Charles University. The university is located next door to the National Technical Library, a facility which is shared with the CTU and the IOCB. The lively campus with many events and a large number of students boasts an active student life and offers a solid framework for interinstitutional collaboration.

The university currently comprises only two buildings in Prague, as well as dormitories, Technopark, and other facilities further away. However, it faces a significant shortage of space, for example, in terms of student common areas and expanding laboratory infrastructure. The lack of informal spaces for students to spend time between classes was noted by many interviewees as a pressing concern. In response, the university is planning the construction of a third on-campus building to address these spatial limitations. However, both planning permission and funding for the project remain unresolved.

2.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The university's operations are governed by a complex and detailed framework of internal rules and guidelines. Foundational documents, such as the university statutes, require endorsement by the MEYS, while strategic and operational guidelines—such as the university strategy—are adopted by the academic senate. More specific or procedural rules may be adopted directly by the rector, either independently or after a discussion at the academic senate.

A number of central university departments are responsible for data collection and analysis: the Department of Education manages student data and feedback, the Research and Technology Transfer Office tracks research outputs, and the Department of Strategic Planning oversees the implementation and reporting of institutional strategies. However, both the SER and many people met by the team noted that data is still compartmentalised, which causes challenges for oversight. The university has taken steps to remedy this, for example by establishing a Data Centre at the Department of Strategic Planning to provide the university with information on its key performance indicators. However, the team was unable to determine whether the university's current level of data aggregation and analysis is sufficiently advanced to support comprehensive, performance-

driven strategic decision-making with systematic tracking across all operational areas, anticipating developmental trends, and prioritising resources.

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

The team recognised the following strengths pertaining to governance and institutional decision-making at the UCT Prague:

- The relationship between the rector, vice-rectors, deans, and the academic senate is collegial and constructive, based on a shared vision for the university's development.
- The governance structures are well-suited to the university's size, benefiting from efficient informal communication.
- The university is guided by a robust set of internal policies that ensure regulatory clarity.
- UCT Prague benefits from a well-functioning academic senate, with a balanced distribution of authority between the academic senate and the rector.
- The International Advisory Board is an asset to the university, offering valuable external perspectives to support the university's development.
- The university systematically collects a wide range of quantitative data, providing a strong foundation for informed institutional management.

However, the team also recognises some weaknesses:

- There is potential to strengthen data-informed management practices, particularly by improving the quality, integration, and timeliness of institutional data.
- Structural fragmentation within the university presents challenges to cohesive governance. Significant autonomy at the faculty level, combined with a high number of often very small departments, can hinder strategic coordination at the institutional level.
- The process for awarding research-based bonuses lacks transparency, which may affect perceptions of fairness and motivation.
- Staff evaluations are currently limited to a paper-based process and do not incorporate peer review, reducing the depth and robustness of performance assessments.
- The university's strategic plan is large, comprehensive, and detailed, making it difficult to clearly identify and communicate key institutional priorities.
- There is room to enhance collaboration with campus partners, which could strengthen synergies and resource sharing.
- The university's future development is constrained by a shortage of physical space, limiting its capacity to expand academic and research activities.

Finally, the team suggests the following recommendations for the university's consideration:

- Enhance the quality and strategic use of institutional data by reducing data compartmentalisation and supporting qualitative interpretation alongside quantitative analysis. Support the Department of Strategic Planning and Data Centre in providing a more coherent picture.
- Consider restructuring academic units to reduce departmental fragmentation to strengthen institutional coherence and strategic alignment.
- Improve transparency of salaries, especially allocation of research-based bonuses by clearly communicating procedures and criteria to staff.
- Enrich the current paper-based staff evaluation for both academic and administrative staff by incorporating regular individual development discussions that focus on professional growth and support, and offer a space for dialogue and growth.
- Foster a shared vision for the university through both bottom-up and top-down engagement. Building on the International Advisory Board's recommendation, consider developing two complementary strategic plans: one aligned with ministry requirements, and another focused on a small set of strategic priorities supported by clear, measurable KPIs. Ensure these priorities are regularly reviewed and evaluated.
- Strengthen collaboration with campus partners to form a local multidisciplinary powerhouse that enhances innovation and shared resources.
- Explore alternative funding sources and shared use of facilities to support the development of the planned third campus building, addressing the university's critical space constraints.

3 Quality culture

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

Ensuring high educational quality and excellence across all activities is a central priority for UCT Prague. The development of quality assurance methods and the verification of learning outcomes are key operational objectives. The university wishes to enhance its quality assurance system through greater international collaboration and involvement of domestic and international experts. The university also aims to harmonise standards across its Czech and English-language programmes.

To strengthen its internal quality mechanisms, the university wants to conduct a process audit and clarify roles and responsibilities in quality assurance. The university wishes to expand the remit of the Quality Assessment Department, particularly in education evaluation, quality monitoring, and accreditation support. Discussions with the representatives of the university confirm the team's understanding that the university strives both to cater for stakeholder satisfaction in education, by providing a knowledgeable labour force, especially to the Czech labour markets, as well as to achieve recognition and excellence in terms of research and innovation.

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

In 2019, UCT Prague was granted institutional accreditation in the fields of 'chemistry' as well as 'chemistry and food technology', allowing it to self-accredit programmes in these areas. A limited number of programmes—most notably those offered by the School of Business as well as the

university's joint degrees—remain subject to national accreditation. The institutional accreditation is valid for ten years, while a programme accreditation is valid for five or ten years. The first self-accredited programmes are scheduled for re-accreditation in 2026. The university's quality assurance framework is governed by two key internal documents: the *Rules on Quality Assurance and Internal Assessment for Educational, Scholarly, and Related Activities* (due for revision in 2025) and the *Quality Assessment Indicators* (revised in 2022). These documents define the responsibilities of various university bodies and outline the procedures for maintaining academic standards.

The Institutional Quality Evaluation Board (IQEB), chaired by the rector and comprising internal, external, and student members, plays a central role in programme accreditation. It conducts the prescreening of planned new programmes, appoints evaluation panels for each programme seeking accreditation, grants accreditation, and ensures compliance with national regulations. The current accreditation process is paper-based and does not include site visits or stakeholder interviews. The university states that the IQEB has also begun extending its oversight to research quality, using indicators such as publication output and grant success. The Department of Quality Assessment provides administrative support for the IQEB and ensures alignment with national standards. Together, these bodies form the backbone of UCT Prague's evolving quality assurance system.

3.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

UCT Prague monitors its performance across multiple levels—individual programmes, faculties, and the institution as a whole—through a structured reporting system. Reports from smaller units are aggregated into broader institutional overviews and discussed by key governance bodies, including the academic senate. The Internal Quality Evaluation Board (IQEB) ensures that programme-level reports align with their original accreditation plans. At the institutional level, the university is required by the national legislation to publish a comprehensive Internal Quality Assurance Report every four years, supplemented by annual updates. These reports, prepared by the IQEB, provide a detailed account of educational activities, including student admissions, programme development, results from student surveys, and internationalisation efforts. In addition to education, the reports evaluate scholarly activities through indicators such as publication output, grant performance, and doctoral research, as well as infrastructure, staffing, digital resources, and student support services. Trends are analysed over a five-year period, with recommendations for future action. This reporting cycle, supported by systematic data collection, offers the university a potentially comprehensive view of its development and progress toward strategic goals. The reports are publicly available on the university's website.

The university gathers annual student feedback on courses, teaching, and facilities through an online survey. The response rates are generally very low; this finding was confirmed by both staff and students met by the team. The results are accessible via the university's portal, where instructors and programme coordinators can also respond to comments. Some students met by the team mentioned that they occasionally consult the feedback when selecting courses. Student feedback is aggregated at the programme level and forms part of the annual reporting of the programme's performance. Academic staff performance is primarily assessed through quantitative indicators; however, many stakeholders expressed a preference for more dialogue-based evaluations, such as development discussions, to foster a more balanced and improvement-oriented approach.

Externally, the university benchmarks its performance through participation in major international ranking exercises, such as the Times Higher Education Ranking and QS World University Rankings, as well as more specialised rankings. These rankings provide valuable external validation of the university's quality and competitiveness. UCT Prague aspires to maintain its position among the leading Czech institutions in these global evaluations.

While the breadth of available data at the university is evident, it was less clear to the team how this data is systematically analysed and translated into strategic decision-making. A mature quality culture would require that data collection and analysis are explicitly aligned with the university's key objectives, supported by clear procedural steps and a feedback loop that enables actionable improvements. A widely shared sense of ownership of quality across the community is also essential.

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

The team would like to point out the following strengths in terms of quality culture:

- The university has taken meaningful steps toward fostering a quality culture, demonstrated by a clear recognition of its importance in both education and research, a strong commitment to continuous improvement, and an approach well-suited to the institution's size.
- A committed Internal Quality Evaluation Board (IQEB) with broad representation and external experts supports the university's quality assurance efforts.
- The university has established clear regulations for the accreditation of study programmes, ensuring procedural consistency and compliance.

The team would like to remark on the following weaknesses in terms of quality culture:

- Evaluation of the quality of research and services remains limited and would benefit from more systematic approaches.
- Internal quality evaluation processes rely solely on paper-based audits, lacking more dynamic or interactive elements.
- Student surveys are the primary source of data on teaching quality, yet response rates are consistently low, which limits their effectiveness.
- The division of responsibilities between the management functions and quality assurance functions at study programme level is not clearly defined.
- Programme-level quality measures are underdeveloped and could be strengthened to better support continuous improvement.

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

- Ensure that systematic quality evaluation and analysis also include research, academic services, and other core activities.
- Enhance the self-accreditation process by incorporating qualitative, enhancement-oriented elements such as interviews or structured dialogues.

- Introduce additional methods for evaluating teaching quality, including peer reviews and collaborative feedback mechanisms.
- Explore strategies to improve student survey participation in order to strengthen the comprehensiveness of feedback data.
- Clarify and, if necessary, separate the responsibilities of management and quality assurance functionaries in the evaluation of study programmes.
- Strengthen programme-level quality measures by integrating teacher feedback and systematically engaging with industry and community stakeholders.

4 Teaching and learning

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

According to its vision, UCT Prague wishes to provide high-quality education at all levels, but especially in master's and doctoral education, offering postgraduate programmes that are attractive to students from both Czech and international institutions. The university also wishes to deepen collaboration with industrial partners, particularly in regions with key industrial sectors like chemical, pharmaceutical, food, and environmental technologies. This vision is supported by key priority objectives in the strategic plan, such as: "Develop competencies directly relevant to life and practice in the 21st century" and "Improve the availability and relevance of flexible forms of education".

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

The coordination and development of new study programmes is primarily the responsibility of the faculties. The process typically begins at the faculty level, where the dean, in consultation with the faculty's Scientific Council and academic senate, submits a proposal to the Institutional Quality Evaluation Board (IQEB). A central role is also played by the designated programme coordinator, who, with support from the Department of Education, prepares the programme documentation. This includes details on the programme's title, target audience, curriculum, societal relevance, and alignment with the university's strategic priorities. Resource requirements are also considered, and the introduction of a new programme may be accompanied by the phasing out of an existing one.

Once the IQEB has shown a green light for the programme, the programme coordinator is responsible for preparing the full accreditation documentation. The team understands that the accreditation process is currently paper-based and does not include site visits or stakeholder interviews. Following accreditation—either by the IQEB or, in the case of nationally accredited programmes, the National Accreditation Board—the coordinator oversees the implementation of the programme. The coordinator is also responsible for ongoing quality oversight; this includes annual reporting and, together with the head of department, addressing potential issues raised through student feedback. Thus, while the role of the programme coordinator is pivotal in ensuring the quality and smooth running of the programme, it is also a demanding and time-intensive responsibility.

One of the key challenges UCT Prague faces in student recruitment is the limited pool of secondary school graduates with strong foundations in mathematics, chemistry, and physics. To address this,

the university collaborates with secondary schools and teachers to foster interest in chemistry and related fields and offers preparatory courses for prospective applicants. Despite these efforts, the university experiences relatively high dropout rates among first-year bachelor's students, particularly in basic courses such as mathematics and physics. However, the team was told that many of these students go on to complete their studies successfully at other institutions. Furthermore, the drop-outs essentially only take place in the first year, and after that, fall to a negligible level. To support student success, the university provides remedial courses in core subjects and offers a range of counselling and academic support services.

Teaching at UCT Prague combines lectures with seminars that are often structured around problem-solving tasks. Additional teaching materials are made available to students through an online platform. The university places strong emphasis on practical, hands-on learning, with approximately 50% of learning activities taking the form of laboratory work. This approach reflects the institution's commitment to producing highly skilled professionals but also constitutes a significant workload for teachers supervising the students' laboratory work. Some programmes include short internship periods of around two weeks. While there is no centralised system for coordinating internships, individual academics and course coordinators often help students find internships through their networks. The team was also told that interning at the university is also a possibility.

As students advance in their studies, their learning paths become increasingly flexible, allowing students to focus on their specific interests. This culminates in the completion of a master's thesis. The team understands that many theses are eventually contributing to publications in scientific journals. Students interviewed by the team greatly appreciated the practical, laboratory-based approach. There were, however, some voices that considered the studies to be rather theoretical, or wished for more time for problem-solving projects rather than replicating laboratory experiments from books.

The team understands that the development of pedagogical skills among teaching staff is still at an early stage. While some voluntary training courses in didactics have recently been introduced and small grants are available to support pedagogical development, there is currently no coordinated institutional approach to ensure that all teaching staff receive training in pedagogical skills. Furthermore, the team understood that there are no formal mechanisms in place for peer feedback on teaching.

The university demonstrates a clear commitment to supporting the overall student experience, not only through its educational provision but also via a range of support services. These include career and psychological counselling, student dormitories, and implementations of a voluntary tutoring programme. When encountering any challenges, students can also turn to faculty help desks, and to the university ombudsperson. While not all students interviewed by the team had used these services, those who had were appreciative of the support received.

4.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

In addition to student feedback discussed above, the university collects information on the quality and fitness for purpose of its education through graduate surveys. The graduates are surveyed two years after graduation. While there is no systematic approach to gathering feedback from PhD

graduates, the team understands that many doctoral graduates maintain informal ties with the university, often returning for events, which provides an informal channel for gathering qualitative insights into their experiences.

The university also seeks to engage employers in discussions regarding graduate competencies and future training needs. However, the team was told that such engagement is often based on individual academic staff contacts rather than a coordinated, institution-wide approach. Recognising this gap, the university has recently established the Industry Council of UCT Prague. This advisory body is intended to strengthen collaboration with industry stakeholders and enhance the flow of information regarding labour market expectations.

The team learned that new programmes are typically accredited for five years, while established programmes receive accreditation for ten years. During the accreditation period, the university is permitted to make slight adjustments to teaching methods and course content. However, significant changes to programme structure or qualifications would require a new accreditation process. In cases where reaccreditation would not be granted, the programme would be discontinued, and enrolled students transferred to alternative programmes.

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

The team perceives that the university exhibits the following strengths in terms of teaching and learning:

- Students are overall content with the quality of teaching and programmes.
- The university's academic reputation and quality attract talented prospective students.
- Practical components of programmes are highly valued by students.
- Early involvement in research enhances student engagement and skills.
- Where appropriate, there is a close cooperation between industry and academia.
- Students appreciate the accessibility and support of their supervisors.
- Student support services are strong and well-attuned to student needs.
- Campus life is vibrant and contributes positively to the student experience.

The team would also like to point out, however, some weaknesses in terms of the university's teaching and learning function and activities:

- High drop-out rates persist in the first year of study.
- Academic supervisors face significant workload pressures.
- Teaching remains largely traditional in approach with fewer problem-solving activities.
- Availability of study and laboratory space is limited.
- Pedagogical training opportunities for academic staff are insufficient.

The team would like to present the following considerations for the university:

- Explore further support mechanisms for first-year students to improve retention and academic success.
- Review and balance the workload of academic supervisors to ensure effective student guidance and fair work distribution.
- Continue developing teaching methods by incorporating innovative, learner-centred approaches such as project-based learning, and by recognising and rewarding excellence in teaching.
- Continue adapting and expanding learning and laboratory spaces to better accommodate the needs of students and staff.
- Enhance pedagogical training opportunities for academic staff.

5 Research

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

UCT Prague defines itself as a supra-regional, research-oriented technical university, with a strong focus on high-quality basic and applied research closely linked to its educational mission. Its strategic plan outlines priorities such as strengthening research, development, and innovation management, fostering international collaboration, and promoting research excellence.

A key strategic focus for the university is the improvement of doctoral education. The university supports early-career researchers, including PhD students from its own graduates and other institutions, and seeks to attract experienced academic staff, especially with international backgrounds. To better coordinate doctoral studies, UCT Prague wishes to establish a doctoral school—an initiative recommended in the 2020 external evaluation and strongly supported by university leadership and the International Advisory Board.

The university's research priorities, as outlined in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), include efficient energy use (e.g., hydrogen production and energy storage), health and safety (e.g., food science, pharmaceuticals, and environmental protection), and materials and chemical specialities (e.g., 3D printing, nanotechnology, and advanced chemical technologies).

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

UCT Prague's research infrastructure consists of both central-level laboratories and group-specific facilities. Research staff interviewed by the team were appreciative of the current infrastructure, but also acknowledged the need to keep pace with rapid technological developments. Additionally, research support is provided by the Centre for Information Services, which facilitates access to international databases, and the Computer Centre, which maintains the IT infrastructure. However, limited physical space constrains the expansion of research activities. While collaboration with institutions such as the CTU and the IOCB offers valuable synergies, the university is strongly committed to the construction of the third building. Should the plan be successful, the university plans to move administration and teaching activities to the new building and construct more laboratory space in the current two buildings.

The research activity of the university is dependent on success with competitive research project applications. The university has established a Project Centre to support researchers in terms of funding opportunities and grant management; however, it does not have the capacity to offer grant writing services. The university also operates an internal grants agency that supports smaller-scale research projects, for example, by graduate students.

PhD students make up around 20% of the student population at UCT Prague, highlighting the important role of doctoral education in the university's student and research profile. Doctoral candidates contribute a substantial share of the university's research output. Currently, full-time PhD students receive a modest stipend, but the team was told that a national plan is in place mandating an increase in the amount. The team understands that while at present the stipend is covered by faculties, the research groups are expected to take on more of this financial responsibility in the future. This may require them to either reduce the number of doctoral students or secure additional external funding. Another national reform aims to remove compulsory coursework from doctoral programmes, allowing for more flexible and individualised study paths. UCT Prague has already begun adjusting its programmes in line with this direction.

The university currently offers 22 accredited doctoral programmes, each overseen by a doctoral board made up of academics from outside the institution. In practice, doctoral students are embedded in research groups, which means the scope and quality of training in transversal skills can vary. To address this, the university is planning to establish a doctoral school to provide more consistent coordination and support. A vice-rector without portfolio has been appointed to lead this initiative. The doctoral school is expected to be operational by 2028 after completion of the next accreditation cycle and the upcoming national changes to doctoral education. The team understands, however, that the new doctoral school would not significantly reduce the number of doctoral programmes or consolidate them into larger units.

The team understood that the coordination of research activities at UCT Prague is overseen by the Vice-Rector for Research and Development, supported by the Scientific Council and the faculty vice-deans responsible for research. At the operational level, research is primarily organised within faculties, departments, and research groups. However, the team was not able to gain a clear understanding of how coordination functions across these various levels and bodies. In particular, the balance between strategically guided research priorities and curiosity-driven initiatives remains somewhat opaque.

5.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

UCT Prague regularly monitors its research activity through numerical indicators such as publication output, patents, research projects, and industrial applications. These metrics are used in annual staff evaluations, alongside teaching and societal engagement. Doctoral education is overseen by programme-specific boards responsible for monitoring student progress and academic standards.

The team noted in the documentation provided by the university a slight decline in high-quality publications indexed in Scopus in recent years, both in total and relative to staff numbers. The team was told that the trend may be due to lingering effects of the COVID years, and the latest figures available were from 2023. However, the trend is a cause for some concern.

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

The team observed the following strengths pertaining to research function and activities of the university:

- The university demonstrates a high standard of research, with a strong reputation both nationally and internationally.
- A significant proportion of the student body consists of PhD candidates, reflecting the institution's research intensity.
- The university library offers excellent information infrastructure, effectively supporting the needs of researchers.
- Access to high-quality equipment enables the production of advanced and impactful research.
- The research staff are highly motivated, committed, and recognised for their academic merit.
- The institution has demonstrated capacity to secure competitive EU research funding.

The team similarly observed some scope for further improvement:

- There is a slight decline in high-quality publication indicators in recent years.
- The organisation and coordination of research activities across levels remain difficult to clearly discern.
- Doctoral programmes appear somewhat fragmented, with varying structures and experiences across disciplines.
- Progress on the planned doctoral school reform appears slow.
- Rapid technological developments may challenge the university's ability to maintain cutting-edge research infrastructure and practices.

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

- Ensure that up-to-date data on key research performance indicators is regularly collected and analysed to understand underlying patterns and to inform strategic decisions.
- Making use of a coherent, data-informed process, ensure that the university's research policy, support structures, and execution of research are aligned.
- Make use of the development of the doctoral school as an opportunity to strengthen doctoral education by organising programmes into larger, more synergistic structures; developing a clear, internationally benchmarked vision for the school; and considering ways to speed up its implementation.
- Establish a structured process for regularly reviewing and prioritising investments in research infrastructure at both central and faculty levels.

6 Service to society

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

According to its strategy and self-evaluation report, UCT Prague places strong emphasis on its societal role. The university engages in a wide range of external activities, including partnerships with industry to address scientific and technological challenges, the provision of lifelong learning and reskilling opportunities, and active public outreach through events and media engagement. Four key priorities are mentioned in the self-evaluation report: the popularisation of science and technology, dissemination of reliable information, technology transfer and applied research collaboration, and the development of lifelong learning initiatives. However, it is the team's understanding that not all of these missions have as yet achieved maturity in the university's operations.

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

Given the relative shortage of prospective students with requisite competencies in basic sciences, the university has established good practices of working with secondary schools to support basic competencies. These include chemistry summer camps, teacher training courses held across the country, and hands-on activities for younger students in the university's new teaching laboratory. The university has also established a social media presence with the aim of creating content that appeals to younger audiences and prospective students.

Furthermore, the university has established a Technology Transfer Centre to support the research community on technology transfer and other activities such as preparing patent applications. The Technopark located in Kralupy nad Vltavou, close to a strong cluster of the Czech chemical industry, is further intended to support innovation and collaboration with local industries. It also promotes scientific disciplines in the region, aligning with the university's efforts to attract prospective students and support their competences.

The university offers around 60 lifelong learning (LLL) courses. Some are aimed at upskilling professionals, partially developed in collaboration with employers, and some aimed at interested individuals. The team understands that the LLL offer ranges widely in scope and duration, with some longer courses qualifying as micro-credentials. Quality assurance processes largely mirror those of accredited programmes. However, the team understands that the coordination and promotion of lifelong learning remain limited. Although these activities at present generate modest income, there is potential for growth. Some of the income is allocated as additional pay for instructors; however, participation in providing instruction on lifelong learning courses is not currently recognised in academic career progression, which may limit staff engagement.

6.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The UCT Prague has recently established two additional bodies that support the university to monitor and enhance the quality of its societal services. The Industrial Advisory Board, chaired by the rector and composed of industry representatives, advises on research relevance, technology transfer, educational alignment with labour market needs, and lifelong learning. The Lifelong Learning Board, created in 2024, is tasked with quality assurance of non-accredited educational offerings. As both structures are still in early stages, there is at present little information about their

work. While the university leadership maintains strong informal connections with national and academic stakeholders, there are currently no formal mechanisms to assess regional needs or define shared objectives beyond these personal networks.

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

The team identified the following strengths in terms of the outreach and service to society:

- The university demonstrates clear priorities and capabilities in contributing to society.
- It makes an important contribution in popularising chemistry through activities such as teacher education, high school classes, summer camps, and science communication publications.
- The university has established strong relationships with industry in terms of teaching and research collaboration.
- The recently established Industry Council is hoped to provide a platform for structured dialogue with employers.
- There is a clear intention to collect more systematic information on industry needs to inform programme development and research directions.
- The university is actively engaged in lifelong learning, offering a range of courses for professional development.

The team also identified some weaknesses:

- The university lacks a structured framework for sustained and systematic dialogue with industry partners, not just on institutional but also on programme level.
- Relationships with regional authorities remain informal, with no established mechanisms for identifying shared priorities or long-term collaboration.
- Lifelong learning activities are not yet fully supported by a coherent institutional framework, with gaps in areas such as market analysis and strategic coordination.
- Academic staff involvement in lifelong learning is not formally recognised in career advancement, which may limit broader engagement.

The team would like to offer the following recommendations for the university to consider with regard to outreach and service to society:

- Consider establishing a central office for industry and community relations to coordinate systematic dialogue with industry, build formal relationships with regional authorities, and support the marketing of LLL activities.
- Explore ways to formally recognise academic staff contributions to lifelong learning in workload models and promotion criteria, to encourage broader participation and sustained engagement.

7 Internationalisation

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

According to its strategic plan and self-evaluation report, UCT Prague has five key priorities in terms of internationalisation: developing global competencies among students and staff; internationalising study programmes; simplifying the recognition of foreign education; fostering an international campus environment and promoting it abroad; and strengthening the strategic management of internationalisation. These priorities reflect both institutional ambitions and national policy alignment, the latter mandated by the national 'Monitoring Internationalisation of Czech Higher Education' (MICHE) project. In addition, UCT Prague aspires to strengthen its international visibility and recognition through deeper international collaboration. This includes actively seeking to participate in a European University Alliance as well as in other strategic initiatives.

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

Internationalisation policy is coordinated by the Vice-Rector for External Relations and Communication. The university has established around 300 memoranda of understanding with institutions across Europe and beyond. While efforts to join a European University Alliance have not yet been successful, UCT Prague has been able to successfully participate in other European initiatives, such as in a European Institute of Innovation and Technology-initiative. The university has had some success in securing competitive international funding, including Horizon grants, and is working to strengthen support services for researchers in grant acquisition and management.

Recruiting international staff to permanent positions remains challenging due to Czech being the predominant teaching language, as well as relatively low base salaries and a complex salary system. Nonetheless, the university has attracted some international academics to its staff, often with prior personal or professional ties to the Czech Republic.

International student recruitment is also important for the university. Some academics met by the team noted that while doctoral programmes are more accessible to international candidates, bachelor's and master's programmes offer fewer English-taught options and are thus less attractive. Joint degree programmes, such as Erasmus Mundus, help expand the university's international offer. The university has established support for international students and staff, including a welcome office, guidebooks, and a buddy programme. Erasmus+ exchange is considered an important opportunity. The team understood that a key challenge of Erasmus+ mobility was related to the high specificity of the courses taught at the UCT Prague, and the relatively low share of optional courses in the programmes. This meant that it was hard for students to find equivalent courses abroad, and those who did complete an exchange period often ended up prolonging their studies by a semester. Despite there being university level guidelines pertaining to recognition of credits, the students reported varied success in getting courses completed abroad recognised. Doctoral students are currently required to spend one month abroad, though plans are in place to extend this to three to six months.

7.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The International Advisory Board and its working groups contribute meaningfully to the university's internationalisation efforts by offering strategic guidance on partnerships and activities. The university has established mechanisms to systematically collect quantitative data on internationalisation, including numbers of international staff, research grants, degree students, and Erasmus+ mobility. These indicators are tracked over time and integrated into annual reporting processes.

During the evaluation visit, international staff members met by the team expressed a high level of satisfaction with their experiences at the university. However, it was not evident that the university systematically collects qualitative feedback from this group to inform institutional development. International students can provide course-related feedback via the online student survey, though it was not clear to the team whether broader aspects of their experience, such as integration, are captured. Open campus events support informal interaction between local and international students. Many of the local students met by the team, however, felt that the links between local and international students could have been stronger. They also wished for more international staff and courses taught in English to enhance their English competences.

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

The team would like to point out the following strengths regarding internationalisation function and activities at the university:

- There is a strong institutional commitment to internationalisation, with notable progress achieved.
- The university has well-established mobility programmes for both students and staff.
- International staff and students report feeling welcomed and supported.
- The university provides effective services and guidance, which contribute to a positive international experience.

At the same time, however, the team believes that the internationalisation function and activities have certain weaknesses:

- The university's international profile remains limited, with insufficient recognition within the global academic community.
- Efforts to join a European University Alliance have faced challenges, limiting strategic integration at the European level.
- Attracting and retaining skilled international staff is difficult, partly due to limited career progression opportunities and uncompetitive salaries.
- Recognition of credits earned during Erasmus+ study periods remains inconsistent, creating barriers to student mobility.

- Opportunities for meaningful interaction between Czech and international students are limited, hindering community-building and intercultural exchange.

In order to help the university improve its internationalisation capacity, the team would like to offer the following recommendations for the university's consideration:

- Strengthen the university's international visibility and recognition by engaging in local and international consortia as a pathway to deeper European integration.
- Broaden recruitment strategies beyond Europe and consider allocating strategic funding to attract international scholars and globally experienced Czech nationals.
- Consider allocating a strategic budget to support the recruitment of international scholars and internationally experienced Czech nationals.
- Ensure consistency and clarity in the recognition of credits earned during study abroad, including clearer institutional responsibilities.
- Explore ways to expand internationalisation at home for Czech students, such as introducing English-taught courses within Czech-language master's programmes and promoting co-teaching between Czech and international faculty.

3 8 Conclusion

UCT Prague is a small-sized research university with a strong reputation, benefitting from its motivated and high-performing staff, as well as engaged and active students. The leadership demonstrates clear awareness of the strategic challenges and opportunities ahead. While the university is rooted in strong academic and institutional traditions in the domestic arena, its future growth will depend on expanding its perspective beyond the Czech context. To build and sustain momentum, the university is encouraged to benchmark key activities with international partners and to actively involve the entire university community in shaping a shared vision for its international future. The team would like to wish the university the best of luck in all its future endeavours.

Summary of the recommendations

Governance and institutional decision-making

- Enhance the quality and strategic use of institutional data by reducing data compartmentalisation and supporting qualitative interpretation alongside quantitative analysis. Support the Department of Strategic Planning and Data Centre in providing a more coherent picture.
- Consider restructuring academic units to reduce departmental fragmentation to strengthen institutional coherence and strategic alignment.
- Improve transparency of salaries, especially allocation of research-based bonuses by clearly communicating procedures and criteria to staff.

- Enrich the current paper-based staff evaluation for both academic and administrative staff by incorporating regular individual development discussions that focus on professional growth and support, and offer a space for dialogue and growth.
- Foster a shared vision for the university through both bottom-up and top-down engagement. Building on the International Advisory Board's recommendation, consider developing two complementary strategic plans: one aligned with ministry requirements, and another focused on a small set of strategic priorities supported by clear, measurable KPIs. Ensure these priorities are regularly reviewed and evaluated.
- Strengthen collaboration with campus partners to form a local multidisciplinary powerhouse that enhances innovation and shared resources.
- Explore alternative funding sources and shared use of facilities to support the development of the planned third campus building, addressing the university's critical space constraints.

Quality culture

- Ensure that systematic quality evaluation and analysis also include research, academic services, and other core activities.
- Enhance the self-accreditation process by incorporating qualitative, enhancement-oriented elements such as interviews or structured dialogues.
- Introduce additional methods for evaluating teaching quality, including peer reviews and collaborative feedback mechanisms.
- Explore strategies to improve student survey participation in order to strengthen the comprehensiveness of feedback data.
- Clarify and, if necessary, separate the responsibilities of management and quality assurance functionaries in the evaluation of study programmes.
- Strengthen programme-level quality measures by integrating teacher feedback and systematically engaging with industry and community stakeholders.

Teaching and learning

- Explore further support mechanisms for first-year students to improve retention and academic success.
- Review and balance the workload of academic supervisors to ensure effective student guidance and fair work distribution.
- Continue developing teaching methods by incorporating innovative, learner-centred approaches such as project-based learning, and by recognising and rewarding excellence in teaching.
- Continue adapting and expanding learning and laboratory spaces to better accommodate the needs of students and staff.
- Enhance pedagogical training opportunities for academic staff.

Research

- Ensure that up-to-date data on key research performance indicators is regularly collected and analysed to understand underlying patterns and to inform strategic decisions.

- Making use of a coherent, data-informed process, ensure that the university's research policy, support structures, and execution of research are aligned.
- Make use of the development of the doctoral school as an opportunity to strengthen doctoral education by organising programmes into larger, more synergistic structures; developing a clear, internationally benchmarked vision for the school; and considering ways to speed up its implementation.
- Establish a structured process for regularly reviewing and prioritising investments in research infrastructure at both central and faculty levels.

Service to society

- Consider establishing a central office for industry and community relations to coordinate systematic dialogue with industry, build formal relationships with regional authorities, and support the marketing of LLL activities.
- Explore ways to formally recognise academic staff contributions to lifelong learning in workload models and promotion criteria, to encourage broader participation and sustained engagement.

Internationalisation

- Strengthen the university's international visibility and recognition by engaging in local and international consortia as a pathway to deeper European integration.
- Broaden recruitment strategies beyond Europe and consider allocating strategic funding to attract international scholars and globally experienced Czech nationals.
- Consider allocating a strategic budget to support the recruitment of international scholars and internationally experienced Czech nationals.
- Ensure consistency and clarity in the recognition of credits earned during study abroad, including clearer institutional responsibilities.
- Explore ways to expand internationalisation at home for Czech students, such as introducing English-taught courses within Czech-language master's programmes and promoting co-teaching between Czech and international faculty.