

EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme 2013-2014 Evaluation Round: Main Findings and Recommendations

Andrée Sursock

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Structure of the cluster report

- Introduction, including a presentation of the institutions
- Governance, including quality assurance
- Teaching & learning
- Doctoral education and research
- Service to society
- Internationalisation
- Concluding remarks

	The universities		1st round	2nd round	3rd round
Total			11	30	17
Size	< 5 000 students		-	17	9
	5 000 to 10 000 students		3	6	4
	10 000 to 20 000 students		3	6	4
	> 20 000 students		5	1	-
Type	Multidisciplinary		3	7	15
	Specialised		8	23	2
		Artistic/creative institutions	-	7	-
		Agriculture/veterinary sciences	1	3	-
		Medicine and allied health	3	3	-

National context

- An ever changing legal framework... although less legislative change this evaluation cycle than in the two previous rounds
- The worst period of austerity seems over... but the compounded results of the economic crisis and declining demography are hitting some institutions very hard



Governance

(1) Decision-making structures and processes

- Senate, Administrative Council and rector
- Senate commissions and vice rectors
- Private institutions: role/place of Founders' Council



Governance: recommendations

- ✓ Review the current legal framework that regulates the relationship between the Senate, the rector and the Administrative Council
- ✓ Make the rector a non-voting member of the Senate in order to ensure that the Senate's agenda is informed by the Administrative Council's work
- ✓ Focus the remit of the Senate to core academic issues of integrity and standards
- ✓ Expand Senate membership to include administrative staff and external stakeholders
- ✓ Clarify the role and place of Founders' Council

Governance (2)

(2) Faculties and departments

(3) Students and administrative staff

(4) Human resources

(5) Financial resources

- Level of public and private funding is low
- Demographic trends are declining
- Evidence of efforts to do better with less resources

Some institutions
in a survival mode

- ✓ Need internal allocation models that support institutional strategy

Governance (3)

(6) Mission/vision and strategy

- Some elements of good practice
- But more experience is needed in this area to strengthen content and process

(7) Streamlining the universities

- Fragmented universities
 - Several layers of approval
- ⇒ is this leading to lack of ownership of decisions at the right level?
- ⇒ Is this leading to red tape?



Governance (4)

(8) QA:

- a) Lots of developments in this area: vice rector for quality, students' involvement, questionnaires (course evaluations, exit questionnaires, employers and alumni surveys), etc.
- b) But:
 - A sense that QA culture is bureaucratic and compliant
 - Ethical issues: fairness of examination; scientific misconduct
- c) Recommendations:
 - ✓ Deal with ethical issues at national and institutional level
 - ✓ Change external QA to a trust-based, improvement approach
 - ✓ Develop a quality culture



Developing a quality culture

QUALITY CULTURE

Formal quality
assurance processes

Tools and processes to
define, measure, evaluate,
assure, and enhance quality



Quality commitment
Cultural element

Individual level: personal
commitment to strive for
quality

Collective level: individual
attitudes and awareness
add up to culture

Creating a sense of ownership



Success factors

The most successful internal QA systems are:

- Closely linked to institutional strategies
- Grounded in effective internal decision making processes and structures
- Context-sensitive: take into account different organisational/disciplinary cultures
- Not punitive but developmental
 - They reflect institutional autonomy and self-confidence
 - They reflect commitment of institution to its staff and students

Evidence of strong commitment to teaching and learning

- ▶ Learning-outcome approach and new pedagogies
- ▶ Students internships
- ▶ Access to academic staff
- ▶ Innovative study programmes
- ▶ Focusing on “soft skills” development and adapting to the evolving needs of employers
- ▶ Reducing costs by providing core courses across the faculties
- ▶ Offering staff development and student support services
- ▶ Offering a multilingual education (e.g. English, French, Hungarian) and language courses
- ▶ Offering enrichment activities to the best students
- ▶ Supporting extracurricular activities

Teaching and learning: recommendations

Future efforts should focus on:

- ✓ Learning outcomes and aligning the exams to this approach
- ✓ More active and autonomous learning and better balance between theoretical / practical courses => adjusting student & staff workloads
- ✓ Interdisciplinarity and flexibility (optional courses) via cooperation across faculties
- ✓ Identifying and supporting at-risk, first-year students
- ✓ Pastoral care and student engagement
- ✓ Tracking students whilst at university and after
- ✓ Developing e-learning and b-learning
- ✓ Academic staff development

Doctoral education and research

- ▶ Major challenges:
 - The scarcity of financial resources (concentration of national funding, increasingly competitive EU funding)
 - The scarcity of research equipment
 - The requirements for PhD supervision => limit the number of supervisors and the number of PhD candidates
 - The heavy teaching workloads
 - The layered administrative structures, even in small institutions + the small number of administrative staff => academics do not have enough time for research
 - Too many research centres
 - Little cooperation across faculties and institutions=> critical mass issues

Doctoral education and research: recommendations

- ✓ Focus on improving teaching and learning
- ✓ Develop research capacity in a realistic and step-by-step fashion **and**
- ✓ With a view of strengthening the link between research and teaching



Service to society

Good practices but not equally spread -> three categories of universities:

- With limited community engagement
- With individual, ad hoc initiatives
- With an institutional strategy for this area

Variation linked to institutional type, status and location



Service to society: recommendations

- ✓ Improving the connection with secondary schools.
- ✓ Scaling up the efforts to prepare students for employment, e.g.:
 - courses on entrepreneurship
 - careers office
 - Internships
 - Improving links with employers
- ✓ Developing further lifelong learning activities and distance learning.
- ✓ Responding to regional needs through the following steps:
 - Mapping possible partners in the region.
 - Developing multi-disciplinary research
 - Creating an “entry point” for external partners

Internationalisation

- Internationalisation is an important strategic objective for many institutions
- Some good developments: VR international, international office, language courses, sections in FR/EN, networking and benchmarking, institutional agreements, etc.



Internationalisation: recommendations

1) for institutions:

- ✓ Strengthen institutional strategies by identifying: the goals, the rationales, the geographical targets, staff skills, the measurement tools, etc.
- ✓ Review international agreements and focus on quality rather than quantity
- ✓ Develop staff expertise, including language skills

2) for national authorities:

- ✓ Develop a national strategy that would support institutional strategies



Conclusions:

5 recommendations to universities

1. Engage the academic and administrative staff as well as students in a discussion of university wide strategic goals and priorities.
2. Engage a wide variety of external stakeholders in a dialogue about their expectations of higher education and research.
3. Develop a coherent internationalisation strategy.
4. Develop an information strategy to support e-learning, e-research and the management of the university.
5. Create good conditions for research and teaching through a range of actions: e.g. streamlining structures, offering staff development and student support services, etc.

Conclusions:

5 recommendations to national authorities

1. Provide incentives for structural changes and consolidation at regional level via mergers. At minimum, regional cooperation of institutions should be encouraged.
2. Improve conditions to encourage public and private organisations to engage with university research.
3. Consider staffing issues in the context of massive retirements by focusing on young academics and ensuring quality work conditions.
4. Reframe academic staffing policies by allowing universities to provide individualised and evolving contracts to academic staff members as each of them progress in his/her career.
5. Address such constraints as financial management requirements, detailed organisational structures, etc.