TED UNIVERSITY, ANKARA, TURKEY

EVALUATION REPORT

June 2016

Team:
Professor Tatjana Volkova, Chair
Professor Carmen Fenoll
Jonne Kettunen
Gregory Clark, Team Coordinator

Contents

1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of TED University, Ankara. Turkey. The evaluation took place in February/March and May 2016 at the request of the University and to assist the University to benchmark its development against broader, international reference points.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme

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

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:
- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:
- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a "fitness for (and of) purpose" approach:
- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 TED University's profile

TED University was established under Turkish Higher Education law as a private, not-for-profit foundation University by the Turkish Education Association – Higher Education Foundation which in turn was founded by TED (The Turkish Education Association), a long established network of primary and secondary school education across the Republic of Turkey. The first enrolment of students at the University took place in the academic year 2012/13 and at the time of the self-evaluation report around 1,500 students were enrolled.

TED University is situated in Ankara, capital city of Turkey. As the governmental and administrative centre of Turkey, Ankara provides employment opportunities in both the public and private sectors for TED graduates in such fields as community, social and personal services as well as in commerce and manufacturing.

In its self-evaluation report (SER), the University describes itself as 'a student-oriented and innovative institution bringing Turkish Higher Education a new scope through its educational profile, quality culture, international links and top quality academic staff'. The University seeks to differentiate itself from state and private competitors in a number of ways: by deliberately retaining a relatively small size in terms of student numbers (4,000+); by the variety of its progression pathways and especially the breadth of its elective courses; and by delivery at undergraduate level and above in English.

The University operates within the context of Central Government regulation of Higher Education through a Higher Education Council (HEC) which oversees arrangements for the initial formation of a university and the ongoing standing of University departments and study programmes. HEC regularly visits, audits and monitors universities and convenes meetings for university chief officers. University Teacher Training provision is regulated by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and university research activity is in part funded by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK).

The SER articulates the University's vision, mission and core values as well as current strategic areas, goals and targets. However, at the time of the evaluation, a newly appointed Rector was leading the creation of a new strategic plan and welcomed the evaluation as a potentially formative influence on the new strategic plan 2017-22 to replace the University's first, developmental, strategic plan 2012-17.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by the formation of a self-evaluation steering committee with eleven members, appointed by the Rector and the University liaison person, comprising eight academic staff, a research assistant, a student and a member of professional services staff. The steering committee had incorporated a SWOT analysis into the self-evaluation process and report.

The SER itself was limited in the description of how the University community was engaged at a formative stage in its creation other than the statement that it was 'shared with the whole academic and administrative personnel' and that it was duly amended after consideration of feedback received. In its meetings with different constituencies of the University community, the evaluation team found that statement to be broadly accurate.

The SER of TED University, together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team in January 2016. The visits of the evaluation team to TED University took place from 29 February to 2 March 2016 and from 23 May to 25 May 2016. In between the visits TED University provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation. The visits comprised a

series of structured meetings, almost exclusively in English, with key University postholders, staff, students and other interested stakeholders as well as two tours of the university campus.

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

- Tatjana Volkova, Professor, BA (Banku Augstskola) School of Business and Finance, Riga, Latvia, team chair
- Carmen Fenoll, Professor of Plant Biology, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Spain
- Jonne Kettunen, student, University of Oulu, Finland
- Gregory Clark, formerly Associate Secretary, University of Salford, United Kingdom, team coordinator

The team thanks the current Rector, Prof Murat Tarimcilar and all his staff and students at TED University for their engagement with the process, and, in particular, thanks the University for its very welcoming hospitality; thanks the current Rector and the Board of Trustees for their invitation to the team and visible support for the evaluation process; thanks the former Rector and current member of the Executive Board, Prof Öktem Vardar, for his assistance; and thanks the liaison person, Prof Julide Yildirim, for her outstanding commitment and tireless and dedicated support throughout the process.

2. Governance and Institutional Decision-making

The University's governance and management arrangements are compliant with Turkish Higher Education law which applies to both state and private universities. The appointment of the Rector and Faculty Deans has to be confirmed by HEC but, otherwise, the University has broad discretion to manage itself in accordance with the regulations approved by its Senate and Board of Trustees.

The University's Senate is its supreme authority on academic matters. Its membership, which must comply with HEC requirements, comprises the Rector, other senior academic staff, elected academic staff, who serve a three year term of office, and the General Secretary, who is the lead member of professional services staff. Other staff are invited to be in attendance: the Director of the English Language School, the Director of the Basic Sciences Unit, the Dean of Students and representatives of professional services staff and of research assistants. There is no student member of Senate but, again, a non-voting student representative is invited to be in attendance. The team was advised that student membership of Senate was not precluded by Turkish Higher Education law but that few Turkish university senates had student members or even, unlike TED University, had students in attendance. The Senate oversees the University's teaching, learning and research activities and governs these activities through the University academic regulations, which it determines.

The Rector is assisted in his management of the University by the University Executive Board. Its membership comprises the other senior academic staff, the General Secretary and three professors appointed by Senate to a four year term of office. Again, key staff and student representatives, though not members, are invited to be in attendance. The University Executive Board is the locus of responsibility for the operationalisation of strategic plans determined by Senate, for financial planning and budget setting, and for oversight of the University's professional services staffing.

In practice, the team found that the Senate met infrequently; that there was overlap between matters dealt with by Senate and by the Executive Board; and that the proportionately significant number of senior staff potentially inhibited 'ordinary', that is non-senior staff, in contributing at meetings.

The recently appointed Rector had additionally sought to strengthen executive management by the appointment of three vice-rectors, although, at the time of the team's visit, only two vice-rectors were in role and two Deans served as deputy vice-rectors. The team accepted the University's argument that these appointments would allow the Rector to concentrate more on key University strategic tasks.

Oversight of the University's governance is provided by the Board of Trustees which currently operates with 18 external members including senior civic, commercial and academic figures as well as the former Rector. The current Rector is additionally an ex officio member. Whilst the Rector and Executive Board felt themselves well supported by the Board of Trustees, both

on strategic and operational issues, and whilst the team were confident of the Rector's and Executive Board's competence to lead and to manage the University, the team felt that the frequency of Board of Trustees' meetings and the nature of matters considered at those meetings was beginning to go beyond appropriate oversight and to stray into an encroachment upon the Rector's and Executive Board's freedom to manage the University.

Each of the University's four faculties (Architecture; Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences; Education; and Engineering) is led by a Dean who reports to the Rector and is responsible for the implementation of University decisions at the local level. The Rector aspired in due course to increase the level of autonomy and discretion accorded to individual Deans and their Faculties. However, the team heard that, to some extent, there was already differentiated application of University requirements in areas such as academic quality assurance. Each Faculty also operates a Faculty Board and Faculty Administrative Board which mirror the Senate and University Executive Board at local level. Nominally, Departments operate below Faculty level but these are in effect groupings of staff responsible for the management of individual study programmes.

The University was fortunate to be operating in a relatively favourable financial environment, in that its current stage of development was underwritten by the parent TED Association which expected the University to achieve financial sustainability only when it had reached its optimal size of 4,000+ students. There had so far been little diversification of the University's income streams. The parent TED Association's initial prime motivation in establishing a University had been to secure a means of developing teacher training for its extensive network of primary and secondary schools. Turkish Higher Education Law requires a university to have at least three faculties and so TED University developed so to permit a TED-oriented Faculty of Education. The Rector, other senior staff members of the Board of Trustees (the University's governing body) and representatives of the parent TED Association all emphasised that, whatever TED's initial prime motivation, there was a continuing commitment to the development and success of the University as a whole.

The Rector and senior staff were confident that the parent TED Association would give sympathetic hearing to any well argued business case which sought financial support for a new development or initiative at the University. They also emphasised that admissions to the University were open and not skewed to students progressing from TED schools and that graduates, especially teaching training graduates, were not specifically destined for employment in TED schools.

The University finds itself at a watershed in terms of its strategic planning. The first, developmental, strategic plan 2012-17 is running out and a new strategic plan is being consulted upon to take the University to its optimal size over the period 2017-22. That optimal size nevertheless signifies quite ambitious aims for very rapid growth and development and therefore makes effective strategic planning all the more important. This change in strategic plan has coincided with a change in leadership style, with the founding Rector playing an inspirational and talismanic role in developing the University from the start

by an across the board involvement in all aspects of University life and the newly appointed Rector seeking to systematise and delegate more in the context of a more mature institution to allow him to concentrate to a greater extent than previously on specific key tasks such as increasing the national and international profile of the University.

Whilst the team fully acknowledges the achievement of the former Rector and his staff in bringing the University through from new to its current stage of development, it found the vision, mission and strategic objectives, as expressed in the SER, to be somewhat limited in scope and not fully articulated in terms of how implementation and effectiveness would be monitored. The vision that 'TED University will provide the best educational experience to its students and become on the leading private, not-for-profit universities in Turkey' is narrow. The accompanying mission and core values are fuller, explaining the type of graduate the University wishes to develop and the means by which it will do so. These are supplemented by quite detailed strategic goals across Undergraduate Studies; Postgraduate Education and Research; Community Services; Financial Structure; and Internationalisation and Quality Culture. However, these strategic goals came across as admirable aspirations rather than specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-limited in the achievement of the stated strategic aims. The aspirational nature of current strategic planning is evidenced further by the existence of 'ghost' units and support posts within the structure such as those for Quality Assurance and for Institutional Analysis.

The recently appointed Rector shared with the team his invitation to the wider University community to engage in his consultation upon the new strategic plan 2017-22, a timeline for that process, which includes detail on how members of the Board of Trustees are to be involved, and his mechanism for the process: a central Strategic Planning Advisory Council, comprising eight staff members and responsible for developing and writing the strategic plan, and three or four Working Groups of between six to ten members drawn from all University constituencies including students to delve more fully into key topics such as Student Focus; Research and Scholarship; Public Engagement; Innovation and Technology. The Rector also proposed that local level strategic plans will be developed, according to a structure and process determined locally, but to coincide with the overall University strategic planning process.

The team endorsed the Rector's participative approach to strategic planning and found widespread recognition and appreciation amongst academic staff of the democratic and consultative ethos of the University. However, the team also found that recognition and appreciation counterbalanced by a feeling amongst some academic staff that executive management was not as strong on feeding back to academic staff on the decisions eventually taken. The team also heard that workload constraints upon academic staff meant that there was some reluctance to expend effort on institutional level aspects such as strategic planning, when there was perceived to be already insufficient time to manage core teaching and research activities. The Rector will want to factor those counterbalancing elements into his approach to the process of strategic planning.

The University's professional services are provided through small-sized, discrete units with oversight by the University Executive Board through the General Secretary. These units concentrate mainly on administrative processes and maintaining statistical, financial and other support information without any strong advisory function in relation to strategic decision making. The recent appointment of a new General Secretary may present the University with the opportunity for greater integration of professional services including the development of protocols on how to cope with any unplanned periods of absence of key staff so as to decrease potential institutional vulnerability arising from such absence in what are small-sized units and to allow professional services staff to become more self-managed and self-motivated and better able to offer informed advice on process improvement and strategic options.

The team learnt of initial steps taken by the General Secretary to improve internal networking within University professional services and felt that, if this were more formalised by due recording and actioning, this would aid the desired greater integration.

Finally, the team heard of the difficulty the University was experiencing in differentiating itself from the parent TED Association's widely known and well regarded school provision. Whilst the University undoubtedly enjoyed many benefits from the sponsorship of and identification with the TED Association, the disadvantage to this was that this brand was so strong that it inhibited a separate public awareness of the profile of TED University. The University needed to be able to position itself by the development of a separate Higher Education identity whilst still enjoying the reflected prestige of a connection to the parent TED brand. The Rector had already advised the team of his desire to work personally on increasing the national and international profile of the University and the team was all the more confident therefore that the task of engaging sensitively with the parent TED Association on this matter was one which the Rector was best placed to discharge.

The team recommends that the University:

- Ensures that the consultative process on the creation of new strategic directions for development begins with the appropriateness and breadth of the University's vision and mission.

- Enhances the strategic goals for 2017-22 by articulating clearer key performance indicators, informed by benchmarking, both at measurable stages and at final outcomes for all major University initiatives.

- Ensures that Senate fully discharges a meaningful, strategic role, adding value to the University as a whole.

- Reviews Senate's membership (including possible student members), its level of invited attendance of senior staff and the frequency of its meetings.

- Ensures that the Rector, Executive Board and Senate are able and free, without direct involvement of the Board of Trustees, to carry out their respective responsibilities.

- Through the Rector, engages with the parent TED Association to permit the distinctive branding and marketing of the University as a higher education institution differentiated from the Association's school provision.

3. Quality Culture

The SER reports that the University's Quality Assurance Document or Quality Handbook, which was originally formulated by a University Committee, is aimed to cover the full range of University activities including teaching, research, professional services and management. The SER also reports that there is a TED University Quality Enhancement and Assurance Strategy which mixes 'fitness for purpose' and 'compliance with international standards', by which is meant consistency with the Bologna Process and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

The team found that, although the Quality Handbook did indeed cover a wide range of academic, operational, administrative and financial processes in a 'Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Development' format, it was still a work in progress and not yet comprehensive. The team also believed that particular processes, as currently set out, might not be fully appropriate for the future, significantly larger, University.

While in meetings with staff the team was able to verify the claims in the SER that quality assurance processes were well known throughout the University, the team also learnt that there was some variance in practice in the level of internal compliance with those processes. The team noted that the mooted Quality Assurance Unit had yet to be established and that there has been no appointment to a post of Director of Quality Assurance. To some extent, that lack of a dedicated quality assurance unit or lead quality assurance person was mitigated by the clear responsibilities other postholders had in their role descriptions and the quality assurance processes themselves.

The University places great reliance on its general annual reporting process where detailed reporting from successive lower to higher levels took place, for example, in annual reporting on study programmes from programme level staff, to Department, to Faculty, to Rector, to University Executive Board and, eventually, via a University self-evaluation report, to the Board of Trustees. The annual reporting process also extends to other institutional and professional services units and key postholders such as the Dean of Students. The process is guided by Quality Frameworks, instituted by the founding Rector, for Teaching and Learning, Research and (Professional) Services. These include reference back to the University's strategic vision, mission and goals and, to some extent, offset the lack of organisational monitoring at institutional level of the operationalisation of these areas reported above in Section 2, Governance and Institutional Decision Making. The process is supported by complementary data collection and analysis.

The University also seeks to mitigate that lack of a dedicated quality assurance unit or lead quality assurance person by ad hoc mechanisms, such as a Quality Focus Group, comprising interested academic staff, to review the University's delivery of teaching in the context of the Bologna Process and the ESG and the University's own intention to differentiate itself by innovative delivery of its study programmes. However, the University needs to think through whether it designs and monitors its quality assurance systems in a manner which requires

central, bespoke oversight, as suggested by a Quality Assurance Unit and Director, or in a manner which more extensively devolves responsibility for oversight to key postholders such as Deans. In the latter case, there must nevertheless be some mechanism at institutional level to actively monitor due and equal compliance.

The students whom the team met had an awareness of and valued the University's Student Council and, despite the lack of full voting membership of the University's lead academic and management bodies, they felt that attendance rights and the consultative nature of the University allowed the student voice to be heard and acted upon.

Students viewed the University's electronic and hard copy information as adequately informative and accurate and reported satisfactory induction arrangements. The students reported a good student/staff relationship and were more than satisfied with academic staff, especially praising the University's small class sizes and responsiveness, and the usefulness and timeliness of assessment feedback. The students expressed general satisfaction with their experience at the University, including with the University's distinctive approach to teaching and learning.

Students were aware of, and had duly completed, evaluation questionnaires after each module but were less clear about what use was made of their views and about the transparent electronic publication of the information gathered, which was reported to the team by the Rector. Students had no other involvement in the University's quality assurance processes, such as the formal processes of study programme amendment and review. Students were aware of where to find information and where to raise a query or complaint or lodge an academic appeal. The only general dissatisfaction raised with the team was the perceived lack of private study spaces and certain library and IT limitations.

Finally, the team welcomed the University's initiative in establishing a benchmarking arrangement with a compatible foreign university, the University of New Haven in the USA, and saw evidence of some of the useful ways in which the arrangement was developing.

The team recommends that the University:

- Determines whether the design of its quality assurance processes requires a centralised Quality Assurance Unit and Director:

    - and, if it does, establishes the Unit and appoints a Director;

    - but, if it does not, confirms an institutional level mechanism to monitor due and equal compliance with those processes.

- Keeps the University's quality assurance and data collection and analysis under ongoing review so as to ensure they holistically monitor the University's rapid growth and development.

- Develops the University's quality assurance processes so that students are more fully engaged with them.

4. Teaching and Learning

The University seeks to differentiate its Teaching and Learning provision in five ways:

a) A student-centred approach to teaching

b) Use of new learning and teaching methodologies

c) Liberal arts education

d) Integrative education philosophy

e) Emphasis on research-based education

In discussion with staff and students and by consideration of detailed programme documentation, the team was satisfied that the University was indeed broadly delivering teaching and learning in the manner it proposed. Staff and students were readily able to cite practical examples of student-centredness and innovative teaching methodologies, although comparison was often in relation to provision at competitor Turkish universities. For example, the team heard of group tasks, use of real and relevant learning resources, unusual classroom layouts, flipped classrooms, project work, modelling, critique of learned articles, mock consultancies and problem-based learning.

Staff and students confirmed the careful integration of theoretical and practical study elements and the detailed syllabi and programme specifications confirmed that study programmes comprised a foundation year followed in subsequent years by specialisation but with a mix of core and elective courses (modules). There were misgivings amongst some students and, to a lesser extent, staff about the perceived dilution of disciplinary integrity of the inclusion of non-disciplinary courses. However, this is an overt and fundamental principle of the University's offer, clearly expressed throughout its publicity material. Moreover other students highlighted the breadth and liberality of the curriculum as a major driver in their initial choice of TED University and their satisfaction with their student experience.

The University does not currently have a broad study programme portfolio and has limited growth plans for student numbers, preferring to aim for an optimal size, not least so as to protect the University's differentiated approach to learning and teaching. New postgraduate taught programmes are in development, with the Rector assuring the team that academic staff developing the new programmes would be granted remission from other duties for this purpose. Currently, the University only offers a Masters in Education and a Masters in Engineering Management but aims to offer niche and interdisciplinary taught masters and eventually postgraduate research programmes.

The University operates in a manner consistent with the three higher education cycles of the Bologna Process and academic staff demonstrated a broad awareness of its underpinning board curricular aspects (employability/social relevance, research mindedness/innovation, democratic citizenship, personal development) in the design of study programmes and in

their delivery. The team did, however, detect some variability across faculties, from the sample programme specifications viewed, in the number and clear articulation of learning outcomes in different study programmes. The University credit system is compatible with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Students showed a full awareness of the University's approach to student learning including learning outcomes, the credit structure and clear assessment criteria.

The University's approach to the Bologna Process does not inhibit necessary compliance with HEC national requirements for study programme accreditation. The University's Education Faculty and programmes are also subject to a greater level of Central Government regulation through the Ministry of National Education. Internal programme approval and amendment is overseen by Faculty Boards and Senate, which approves new proposals put forward by Departments. The University's emphasis on its annual reporting process is described more fully above in Section 3, Quality Culture. This process is also applied to study programmes via 'course evaluation reports' whereby a lead tutor reports on alignment with programme learning objectives, teaching methods and assessment to the Department which looks at improvements and enhancements to be submitted to Faculty Board and Senate for approval. The sole student input to this annual monitoring of study programmes is the factoring in of 'instructor and course evaluation forms' which are completed by students at the end of each semester. They are also factored into each Department's annual report.

The students whom the team met confirmed that there was good engagement with the 'instructor evaluation form' process and felt able to raise any topics not covered by that form separately and directly with the University. Whilst all students were generally satisfied with their teaching and learning experience and the University's distinctive approach to teaching and learning, some students, especially those with experience of study abroad through ERASMUS, felt that the University should perhaps do even more in such aspects as case studies and other approaches to student-centred teaching and learning.

The University monitored student achievement through assessment. In the context of a relatively small institution, this meant that study programme level and institutional level oversight were effectively concurrent. The University's student retention rates were good. As the University moves towards successive graduating cohorts, it will also want to put into effect systems which allow it to evidence student achievement through graduate and employer surveys to monitor employability and the continuing vocational relevance of its study programmes. The affinity with the parent TED Association and, within that context, a TED University alumni association offer the University every opportunity to carry out that monitoring productively.

The University supported its study programmes by a virtual learning environment and greater use of this, perhaps in a blended learning context, might offer the University the opportunity to meet student demand for greater flexibility in modes of attendance. The University recruits from a broad base of students and, with the support of the parent TED Association, is generous in its provision of student bursaries. However, the team heard from the students it

met that accommodation and subsistence costs in Ankara, as a capital city, could be expensive and there was some student demand for modes of attendance which might allow students to work and study simultaneously. Even though the University does not wish to grow beyond a stated optimum size, more flexible modes of attendance with more blended learning might allow the University to extend its client base to employed students and to be able potentially to respond to employer needs.

In addition to some academic staff misgivings about the balance of disciplinary and non-disciplinary elements in overall study programmes, the team also found internships and other work experience provisions and other support for student employability, such as careers guidance and self-presentational support, to be generally available but not to have particular emphasis. In Turkish higher education, the accreditation of study programmes and a strong vocational influence on curricula by professional and statutory bodies, such as in engineering, is not as pronounced as in some Western European countries. Taking all these matters together, and whilst respecting the University's fundamental approach to interdisciplinarity, the team, having also heard student representations on the matter, felt that the University might wish to strengthen the disciplinary elements of its study programmes without reneging on its approach to interdisciplinarity. This could be done firstly by considering some measure of elective course relevance and appropriateness to the cognate discipline, especially in the later years of study programmes, and secondly by better standardising and quality assurance in its internship and work experience arrangements within its study programmes so as to provide a programme-related, professional, and equivalent internship and work experience to all students.

The University delivers its higher education in English. The University's intake is diverse, both in terms of academic achievement and English language proficiency. Students not attaining the required level of English language proficiency are required to attend the University's English Language School for at least a semester. The University also provides additional and remedial support for students through a Basic Sciences Unit. The team found the University's use of English in its higher education delivery and support to be comprehensive and there to be a generally very high level of English language proficiency amongst academic staff and students.

The team heard that some students, especially, but not solely, those transferring from the English Language School after improving their proficiency, were initially unprepared to respond effectively to the University's innovative delivery methods for teaching and learning. Some limited initial steps had been taken to apply similar delivery methods in the English Language School but the team felt that the English Language School, and, as appropriate, the Basic Sciences Unit, should ensure that their teaching and learning delivery reflected the main University's approach and that this provision served both to improve proficiency but also to prepare students for their higher education study. Badging such provision under some term such as 'Foundation' might assist in its proposed greater integration with the University's higher education provision.

The team learnt that effective support was available through the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), including mandatory induction for new staff, to assist academic staff in understanding the University's approach to teaching and learning and especially to innovative delivery methods. In discussion with academic staff and by reference to CTL material, the team was satisfied that support for academic staff was well developed and well received. However, three areas of underprovision were identified. Firstly, CTL concentrated especially upon training in general pedagogy and academic staff reported less facilitation of discipline-based continuous professional development. Secondly, sessional or 'hourly-paid' staff were paid to teach rather than to develop their teaching so as to be consistent with the University's approach to teaching and learning activity. The University might wish to consider paying for sessional teachers to attend more CTL provision or alternatively using more permanent part-time staff, more conversant with the University's approach, to deliver in place of sessional staff. Thirdly, similar CTL provision should also be fully extended to the English Language School and the Basic Sciences Unit.

Finally, the team was offered tours of both the University's existing and its newly acquired and commissioned buildings. The team found the University's campus to offer good accommodation and facilities for higher education in large, purpose-designed, new and adapted buildings with scope to cope with the planned increase in student numbers. Lecture rooms were capable of flexible arrangement to support innovative teaching; academic staff had sufficient office space; and library provision, both hard copy and electronic, and IT support appeared adequate.

The team recommends that the University:

- Develops and applies a mechanism to balance the University's interdisciplinary approach with the relevance and appropriateness of elective courses

- Develops and standardises quality assurance mechanisms for its internship and work experience arrangements to create a programme-related, equivalent professional experience for all students.

- Systematically applies teaching and learning methods in its English Language School and its Basic Sciences Unit to enable students to be duly prepared for higher education study.

- Facilitates more discipline-based continuous professional development for academic staff.

- Resources greater attendance of sessional or 'hourly-paid' teaching staff on Center for Teaching and Learning pedagogic provision and/or offers more teaching by part-time permanent staff.

5. Research

The University's approach to research is to seek to exploit 'niche interdisciplinary research areas', for example, through its sole research centre, the Trade Research Center. However, perhaps inevitably for a newly established university, the level of research activity is low with Research Support counting as only 1.2% of the current University budget. The team found the overall prominence accorded by the University to research in its internal documentation and outward-facing information to be relatively low. For example, there was no strong articulation or reflection if its expectations in relation to research activity in its vision or its mission.

The University does monitor research outputs, in part to comply with national requirements with regard to the appointment and promotion of academic staff and research assistants. As with much of its management information, consistent with its ethos of transparency, research activity and outputs are available in detail on the University website. Some research grant income has been obtained from external, mainly Turkish governmental, sources, although the University does participate in one European Union funded project.

The prime mechanism for monitoring individual academic staff research performance is staff annual evaluation, and good performance in research is widely regarded by academic staff as the prime factor in achieving promotion, enhancing salary and renewal of contract even though, simultaneously, they believe that the University's prime call upon their working time is the delivery of study programmes. The University has already made available some limited research support funding to encourage conference participation and research publication as well as internal 'seed' funds for research projects, but the team was advised by the University that internal monies were only available for new projects. During the second visit, the University also advised the team of the welcome news that, following through on the analysis the University had already carried out on how best to improve research capacity and activity, a Research Project Office had been established to assist academic staff.

Whilst the University is supportive of academic staff's research and indeed expects research outputs from them, this support does not extend to the allocation of sufficient time for research or even the identification of time spent on research within a clear workload allocation model. This problem is exacerbated by the University's distinctive approach to innovative and student-centred teaching and learning which, in its own right, places significant additional demand upon academic staff time.

The University has again in its strategic goals for research identified areas for action to improve the level of research activity but, once more, without key performance indicators and measurable stages and formal outcomes. In that light, when addressing the team's recommendations on strategic planning in Section 2, Governance and Institutional Decision-Making above, the University will want to give particular attention to the place of research in the University's overall strategy and how realistically the University's research activity might be improved over the life of the next strategic plan. The team recognises the challenge the

University faces in building research capacity from a relatively low base but the team's recommendations in relation to research all flow from the primary recommendation that the University conduct a full research mapping and articulate clearly what expectations the University has in relation to research in its strategic plan.

Included in that mapping might be the identification and prioritisation of other niche areas where the University's current low research capacity might nevertheless be maximised by the creation of further research groupings/centres. Allied to this might be consideration of where on the research spectrum the University would most advantageously concentrate: the more consultancy-focused end and synergies with the University's service to society (as suggested by the proposed Technology Transfer Office) or purer research perhaps in collaboration with external partners. The University will also want to take account of which of these approaches might best serve to assist in its development of postgraduate research programmes.

The University's desire to present a unique offer in terms of its teaching and learning delivery and its newness as a university have meant that it has limited experience of active collaboration with external university partners but it is such collaboration which might enable the University to develop its research capacity. The University should seek to extend its network of national and international university partners, not just for individual research project applications but also, for example, to develop postgraduate research programmes and post-doctoral provision. One means of building up such a network might be the maximisation of existing individual and institutional networks and contracts as part of a stakeholder relationship management function within the newly established Research Project Office.

The team recommends that the University:

- Gives more visibility to research in the University's vision, mission and communication/image.

- Conducts a full research mapping within the context the new strategic plan so as to set out clear research expectations.

- Includes in that research mapping the identification of further potential areas for niche interdisciplinary research groupings/centres and the consideration of the type of research activity the University should exploit.

- Reviews the reported restriction on the use of internal research funding for new projects only.

- Develops a transparent workload allocation model which duly allows academic staff sufficient time for research.

6. Service to Society

Arguably, the University's prime driver could be identified as service to society in terms of its direct link back to the founding principles of the Turkish Republic through the parent TED Association and its efforts to remain consistent to those principles. In meetings with representatives of the parent TED Association and of the Board of Trustees, as well as with staff, the team learnt that the University was established as part of that Association's mission to serve Turkish society.

The University also reported a good working relationship with the Local Municipal Authority which had been supportive to the University in the acquisition and development of the campus.

Whilst fully respecting that higher societal aim, the team found that the University was somewhat lacking in terms of the more operational links a university might be expected to maintain with external stakeholders, such as employers, in order to:

− influence the formation and maintenance of up-to-date and practitioner-informed curricula for new and existing programmes, often by direct contact between academic staff and employers,

− respond through study programme curricula to industry-identified needs,

− as referenced in Section 5, Research above, respond to industry-identified needs through consultancy-focused research and technology transfer,

− maximise mutually beneficial internship and work experience opportunities, which are often a prelude to permanent employment, as cited in Section 4, Teaching and Learning above,

− meet the practical, problem-solving and vocational ambitions of the University's students.

The team was advised that the intended Faculty and Department Advisory Committees, which were designed to serve such a purpose, were not really in operation. Some guest lecturing by practitioners did take place and several academic members of staff on their own initiative were engaged with professional associations, were expert advisors to vocational sectors, or contributed to their disciplines in roles such as members of editorial boards. However, the team found this reflected individual initiative rather than a systematic institutional approach.

The team learnt that the University was hosting and working with an independently-funded Social Innovation Centre which sought to become 'an impact hub, social entrepreneur and actor', located within the University offering innovation and solutions to the region, the city of Ankara and their respective communities. Both University staff and staff from the Centre spoke of the opportunities this offered the University to become more entrepreneurial, for example, in the development of curricula which complemented and exploited the work of the

Centre. The University had similarly recognised, in its SER, the sound potential that the campus' city centre location had for service to society.

The team recommends that the University:

- Develops, either through the dormant Faculty and Departmental Advisory Committees or by other means, a systematised stakeholder relationship mechanism, to foster a mutually beneficial network of external partnerships.

- Includes in the recommended research mapping the potential synergies between service to society and research.

7. Internationalisation

The University has already identified the need for internationalisation within its existing strategic plan, seeking aspirationally to develop joint study programmes and cooperations with international partners as well as increased recruitment of foreign students. However, success has been limited other than in relation to some external research funding and staff and student international exchanges, especially ERASMUS, which is coordinated by an International Partnerships Office. Again, it was difficult for the team to discern a systematic institutional approach, as opposed to individual academic staff initiative, as the driver. There was no obvious institutional template for what the University sought when determining the suitability of potential international partners. There was no evidence of how the University approached the further exploitation or strategic coordination of existing partnerships with a fuller range of joint activities, such as joint study programmes. The University did not appear to give sufficient consideration to the potential multiplier effects of such partnerships. Mention has however already been made of the University's initiative in establishing a benchmarking arrangement with a compatible foreign university in Section 3, Quality Culture, above.

With University encouragement, there has been a gradual growth in staff and student international exchanges, especially outgoing exchanges.   Incoming exchanges are less frequent, arguably as a result of the adverse effect on incoming recruitment from the destabilising impact of conflict and terrorism in the region. For example, the team was unable to meet any incoming ERASMUS students as several had returned early because of recent terrorism incidents in Ankara itself.

Outgoing students whom the team met welcomed the larger range of international partners with whom the University had now forged links and the support offered by the University in preparation for their exchange experience. However, having undergone that experience, they regretted that, once back at the University, there was limited exposure to incoming international lecturers and students. As already reported in Section 4, Teaching and Learning above, the experience also gave students an appetite for even more student-centred teaching and learning.

The University did not report the same uptake of international exchange opportunities by Professional Services staff and if, as mentioned in Section 2, Governance and Institutional Decision-Making above, those staff are to become more self-managed, self-motivated and better able to offer informed advice, the University may wish to encourage international exchange also amongst that category of staff.

The team found that the University's focus in recruiting international students was to its higher education study programmes. However, in its Basic Sciences Unit and English Language Schools, the University has a preparatory offer which could be attractive not only to Turkish students from beyond the University's normal catchment area of Ankara and its neighbouring regions, but also internationally.

The team recommends that the University:

- Considers how to more strategically coordinate and maximise existing international partnerships.

- Establishes criteria for the selection of new international partners.

- Considers packaging its English Language School and Basic Sciences Unit as part of the University offer to potential international students.

- Actively extends the encouragement to staff and students to undertake international exchanges so that Professional Services staff are also included in the uptake of international exchanges.

8. Conclusion

The team acknowledges that the University faces challenges because of its newness and relatively small size in securing a higher national and international profile.

However, in only a short time, the University has become established and developed successfully to a certain level of maturity. The University can continue to draw on sound executive leadership, good support from its founding body and an able and professional academic staff to meet those challenges.

The University is at a point of transition with its first change of Rector and with a new strategic plan in development. The University may wish to take this opportunity to consider the team's recommendations in its report as a means of thinking through the strategic and operational implications of that transition and the change process it will necessitate. The current strategic planning process and ongoing active monitoring and evaluation of the eventual strategic plan 2017-22 should assist the University to build a strong base for its future by ensuring the commitment of staff and students, of the founding body and, as the University develops its networks, of external stakeholders and partners.

Summary of the recommendations

That the University:

- Ensures that the consultative process on the creation of new strategic directions for development begins with the appropriateness and breadth of the University's vision and mission.

- Enhances the strategic goals for 2017-22 by articulating clearer key performance indicators, informed by benchmarking, both at measurable stages and at final outcomes for all major University initiatives.

- Ensures that Senate fully discharges a meaningful, strategic role, adding value to the University as a whole.

- Reviews Senate's membership (including possible student members), its level of invited attendance of senior staff and the frequency of its meetings.

- Ensures that the Rector, Executive Board and Senate are able and free, without direct involvement of the Board of Trustees, to carry out their respective responsibilities.

- Through the Rector, engages with the parent TED Association to permit the distinctive branding and marketing of the University as a higher education institution differentiated from the Association's school provision.

- Determines whether the design of its quality assurance processes requires a centralised Quality Assurance Unit and Director:

- and, if it does, establishes the Unit and appoints a Director;

- but, if it does not, confirms an institutional level mechanism to monitor due and equal compliance with those processes.

- Keeps the University's quality assurance and data collection and analysis under ongoing review so as to ensure they holistically monitor the University's rapid growth and development.

- Develops the University's quality assurance processes so that students are more fully engaged with them.

- Develops and applies a mechanism to balance the University's interdisciplinary approach with the relevance and appropriateness of elective courses

- Develops and standardises quality assurance mechanisms for its internship and work experience arrangements to create a programme-related, equivalent professional experience for all students.

- Systematically applies teaching and learning methods in its English Language School and its Basic Sciences Unit to enable students to be duly prepared for higher education study.

- Facilitates more discipline-based continuous professional development for academic staff.

- Resources greater attendance of sessional or 'hourly-paid' teaching staff on Center for Teaching and Learning pedagogic provision and/or offers more teaching by part-time permanent staff.

- Gives more visibility to research in the University's vision, mission and communication/image.

- Conducts a full research mapping within the context the new strategic plan so as to set out clear research expectations.

- Includes in that research mapping the identification of further potential areas for niche interdisciplinary research groupings/centres and the consideration of the type of research activity the University should exploit.

- Reviews the reported restriction on the use of internal research funding for new projects only.

- Develops a transparent workload allocation model which duly allows academic staff sufficient time for research.

- Develops, either through the dormant Faculty and Departmental Advisory Committees or by other means, a systematised stakeholder relationship mechanism, to foster a mutually beneficial network of external partnerships.

- Includes in the recommended research mapping the potential synergies between Service to Society and Research.

- Considers how to more strategically coordinate and maximise existing international partnerships.

- Establishes criteria for the selection of new international partners.

- Considers packaging its English Language School and Basic Sciences Unit as part of the University offer to potential international students.

- Actively extends the encouragement to staff and students to undertake international exchanges so that Professional Services staff are also included in the uptake of international exchanges.