

**UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND
INNOVATION, LUBLIN**

EVALUATION REPORT

June 2022

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Contents

1. Introduction	Page 3
2. Governance and institutional decision-making	Page 7
3. Quality culture	Page 11
4. Teaching and learning	Page 13
5. Research	Page 16
6. Service to society	Page 19
7. Internationalisation	Page 21
8. Conclusion	Page 24

1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the University of Economics and Innovation, Lublin (UEI). In Polish this is Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomii i Innowacji w Lublinie (WSEI). The evaluation took place in May and June 2022.

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 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; and
- support for improvement.

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

- decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management; and
- 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 Economics and Innovation, Lublin’s profile

UEI is a non-profit, private university, established by the OIC Poland Foundation and first approved by Central Government to register students from academic year 2001/02. UEI acts in accord with the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) of 2018 which gave Polish universities a greater degree of organisational management and financial autonomy.

UEI is located on a single, purpose built campus in a commercial suburb of Lublin. UEI has just under 8,000 students in total of whom 6,700, mainly part-time, are studying at undergraduate level. UEI offers postgraduate but not research programmes, so currently its awards are only across the first

two Bologna cycles. UEI has 98 full-time academic staff (about one third female, although seldom in the more senior roles) and 99 administrative staff (about three quarters female). In addition about 250 contract staff, often academic staff in other universities or practitioners in professions taught at the university, also teach at the university.

Lublin is the largest city in Eastern Poland with a population of under 350,000 but is also the capital of the Lublin Province with a population of over 2,100,000. Traditionally an area of lower incomes and higher unemployment (and hence migration) it has benefitted more recently from State and external investment, especially from the European Union (EU), and has grown closer to national averages. Employment has also moved focus from more traditional manufacturing to IT and service industries. Lublin is a Higher Education city with over 60,000 students in ten public and private institutions.

At the time of the evaluation UEI was in the process of updating its 2019-23 Strategy. UEI described its mission in its self-evaluation report as “to provide its students with the knowledge and skills to ensure that they are very well prepared to enter the labour market.....to make its degree (diploma) credible to employers.” The mission also emphasises UEI’s role in the socio-economic life of the city and region not just through its teaching of vocationally oriented study programmes but also through joint scientific research and development projects. UEI describes its vocational approach to teaching as the social dimension of its mission: “first and foremost to educate professionals who are well-prepared to take up employment in specific positions, thus contributing to the prosperity of the region.”

In more detail the current strategy highlights the following seven values as underpinning its mission:

- “1. partnership – is applied on a daily basis; WSEI provides its students with friendly studying conditions, taking into account their individual personal and economic situation as well as their needs and interests;
2. close connection of the educational process with the needs of employers and the labour market, which allows WSEI graduates to take up professional challenges;
3. professionalism – the WSEI research and teaching staff is experienced;
4. practical and academic experience – which translates into the quality of the didactic process;
5. ambition – thanks to which the University achieves success and competitive advantage on the educational market of non-public universities;
6. commitment – to the social life and development of the region;
7. social responsibility – which manifests itself in the implementation of the third mission, as a forum of social activity.”

Finally, in response to Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0), which has increased the stratification of Polish Higher Education, UEI stated that the development of its research and of its own doctoral programmes was to be a new part of its strategic mission.

1.3 The evaluation process

UEI senior management advised that an evaluation had been sought as the institution had not previously been inspected or evaluated by any non-Polish entity and so as to inform its revision of its 2019-23 Strategy and especially the proposed development of its research and of its own doctoral

programmes. UEI also saw the twentieth anniversary of its establishment as a timely opportunity for such an evaluation.

The self-evaluation process was led by a Self-Evaluation Group (SEG) of six members (four academic staff, one member of staff from professional services and one student) selected by the Rector and co-ordinated by the Vice-Rector (Research and International Co-operation). The SEG used a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, already prepared for the revision of the 2019-23 Strategy, and gathered information and views directly from a range of staff before drafting a self-evaluation report (SER) and appendices. This draft was placed with the Rector and Vice-Rector (Teaching and Student Affairs) for comment and then revised before being placed with the Chancellor, Deans and Directors of Research Institute for comment. The draft was not formally endorsed by Senate and was not widely circulated or made available to staff and students. The Vice-Rector (Teaching and Student Affairs) justified this limited circulation by reference to the radical considerations being aired in the SER. External stakeholders were not directly involved in the compilation of the SER but the SEG argued that they were more than conversant with the matters it addressed and the radical considerations it aired.

A number of the staff and students whom the evaluation team met had variable to no recollection of having seen the SER and not that much awareness of the purpose of the IEP evaluation and its likely factoring into the revision of UEI's 2019-23 Strategy. The evaluation team believed that UEI may have missed an opportunity to engage the internal and external stakeholder constituencies in the strategic development of the university.

Nevertheless the SER was concise (in some instances such as the omission of brief descriptions of standard quality processes perhaps too concise), relevant and frank and with a level of self-criticality. It was somewhat lacking in analysis of performance against institutionally approved indicators. It proved a good starting point for the evaluation team's discussions with staff and students, even though some of the proposed developments it described were not widely known and despite some of the strategic developments (such as the development of research and doctoral studies and possible incentivisation of staff research outputs) being works in progress rather than completed initiatives.

Supporting documentation in the form of appendices was sent to the evaluation team who also received a positive response when requesting other additional documentation and information after the first visit. UEI translated what it viewed as key documentation or extracts from documentation into English and was very positive in its response to additional translation requests from the evaluation team in preparation for the second visit.

The SER, appendices and additional documentation requests were sent in good time before both the first and second visits which took place from 10 - 12 May and from 21 – 24 June respectively. The evaluation team attempted to hold most meetings in English but in quite a number, where this was not possible, UEI provided an independent simultaneous translation service.

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

- Tatjana Volkova, Professor of Strategic Management and Innovation Management and formerly Rector, BA School of Business and Finance, Latvia, team chair

- Francesc Xavier Grau Vidal, Professor of Fluid Mechanics and formerly Rector, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Spain
- Anja Oskamp, Professor of ICT and Law and formerly Rector Magnificus, Open University of The Netherlands , The Netherlands
- Matej Drobnič, PhD Student, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
- Gregory Clark, formerly Associate Secretary, University of Salford, United Kingdom, team coordinator

The team thanks the Rector, Professor Mirosław Jarosz, for the original invitation to evaluate UEI. The team thanks the Chancellor, Teresa Bogacka, for hosting the evaluation. The team thanks all the staff, students and external stakeholders of UEI for their hospitality and their engagement in the evaluation process, and, in particular, Robert Chmura, for his tireless and always good humoured and unceasingly supportive and helpful contribution to the evaluation process as institutional contact person.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

UEI showed itself to be responsive to the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) and the national research evaluation exercise in terms of considering the possible adoption of a radically different strategic focus for the university. However UEI itself acknowledged a significant issue with implementing change management as the university had a culture of conservatism and of lack of staff engagement. There was therefore a consequent heavy dependence on a small cohort of motivated and engaged staff.

The team found there to be continuing strong influence from UEI's establishing Foundation including some original founders, not least the Chancellor, and from the Foundation-appointed Executive Board which oversaw the strategic direction and operation of the university. The Chancellor's role was unusually prominent in a Higher Education institution, in effect combining that of Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer. That role was exhaustively discharged even down to authorisation and sign off of matters which seemed to the team to be at a level of detail or so routine as not to justify the intervention of the Chancellor. Moreover the role seemed to encroach at times into the academic realm in such areas as an influence upon academic matters such as the recruitment, appointment and promotion of academic staff. The team saw a need for a clearer definition of the role of the Chancellor specifically in relation to ensuring the full independence of the Rector's role of oversight of academic matters.

Executive management of UEI is through the Executive Group, led by the Chancellor and Rector, who themselves are appointed by the Executive Board, also referred to as the "Convention". The Chancellor has been in post since the inception of UEI. The current Rector is soon to step down having returned to the role to assist the university following the departure through ill health of the previous incumbent. Executive Group, which includes the Deans of UEI's three faculties, meets frequently and discharges its remit effectively and communication between its members is good. However the team identified a perhaps redundant complication of an otherwise appropriate flat structure. The Rector and the two Vice-Rectors each held an historically determined "guardian angel" oversight role for one faculty. Senior UEI staff themselves acknowledged this to be one of the areas where a better defined structure and clearer role remits could be adopted lest the delegated the freedom of action of the Dean be compromised.

Senate is the highest deliberative committee for academic matters and includes a range of appointed, elected, ex officio and student members. Senate also works through lower deliberative committees such as the University Quality Assurance Committee and the Faculty Quality Assurance Committees. Senate duly meets but in the team's view was confirmatory and operational in nature, debating issues placed before it by Executive Group members, especially the Chancellor and Rector, and then endorsing these. The Senate members whom the team met were unable to identify neither significant matters initiated by Senate itself nor issues placed before Senate which were not then endorsed. The description of Senate's role also overlapped somewhat with that of Executive Board. The team also saw the need for some review of the relationships between Executive Board, Executive Group and Senate, including potential conflict of interest of members, for example, whether it was appropriate for a Dean of Faculty to chair the Executive Board which appointed Chancellor and Rector. UEI could additionally develop and apply an internal "code of ethics" to avoid such conflicts of interest.

UEI is organised in three faculties: Faculty of Administration and Social Sciences; Faculty of Transport and Computer Science; Faculty of Human Sciences. The Dean is the academic lead of the faculty and key to academic governance at the level below the institution. For its current size the faculty is

probably the appropriate sub-institutional level but if UEI were to expand or be granted research “academy” status, a defined departmental role, beyond merely academic peers co-operating within an area of knowledge, might be required. Although notionally there are “departments” already in one faculty, this was described as chiefly so as to enhance the status of, and secure the retention of, particular postholders who could then enjoy the title of “head of department” and represent UEI externally under that nomenclature. A research institute with a Director is embedded in each faculty but the Rector advised the team that finance and personnel matters remained at faculty level. The research institute is a way of managing a faculty’s research effort, centred on existing research strengths and to some extent providing a branding externally of UEI’s research.

Administrative departments, which are all under the direction of the Chancellor, are small and diversified with some obscure titles such as “Employee” rather than “Human Resources” Department. The team found administrative departments to be operational rather offering constructive and formative input to strategic direction within UEI. Little evidence was offered of how administrative departments might need to change to assist the development of any new doctoral school. The ad hoc and incremental way in which an unexpected influx of foreign full-time students had been handled by administrative departments also suggested a culture of reactivity rather than proactivity.

The team identified that more scope was needed to allow external stakeholders to inform UEI’s strategic direction. Employer input to study programme design and amendment was an obvious strength but this was done at a study programme level. The team saw merit in UEI considering an Advisory Board or Employers’ Council for its portfolio of disciplines and study programmes, with international peer input as well as regional employer input. In the same vein, there was limited formative influence of key external stakeholders in the new focus upon research. For instance, in the meeting with external stakeholders the team heard a convincing case by the City Mayor on how that new focus might enhance policy making in the city and the region. Whilst the consensus was that it would be “a good thing”, there had been no discussion with them as external stakeholders on how that change of strategic direction might benefit both parties.

UEI was not included in a recent federal initiative of Lublin Higher Education institutions. This was attributed to the current lack of a research presence and to the residual “second class” nature popularly attributed to private universities. However there was no evidence of UEI having sought future strategic partnerships which might help the development of a new doctoral school if the university is approved for doctoral provision.

UEI is actively considering renaming itself, if approved for doctoral provision, retaining some elements of the current title. The team however was unsure whether this retention of the branding which looked back towards its establishment as a vocational institution would put across its new standing as a research-active institution with a doctoral school. The team anyway thought the current title of the institution and its constituent faculties arguably no longer reflected either the future broader mission and vision as currently expressed or the wider range of disciplines now offered within those faculties, not least as, even if as claimed UEI had been a national pioneer in introducing entrepreneurialism to the curriculum, there was little overt articulation of “Innovation” as a continuing key part of that mission and vision.

UEI’s current approach to strategic planning does not set clear objectives but rather is mainly expressed in a task-oriented manner. Although its 2019-23 Strategy claimed there to be detailed operational descriptions for “four specific goals”, when the team requested evidence of these descriptions prior to the second visit, the UEI response was that “the University does not have

formally adopted key indicators of effectiveness". The team saw a clear need to clarify these objectives through transparent and monitored key performance indicators (KPIs) or targets, perhaps SMART objectives: Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. There are a limited number of instances where UEI does use and monitor such KPIs, such as withdrawal rates, but they are not a general standard practice.

As a relatively small institution the budget is mainly centralised. In the context of the limited scope as a private university to apply for State funding available to public universities (a matter repeatedly cited by the Chancellor), there was a heavy dependence on EU funding but some acknowledgement that this might prove more difficult to draw down in future. Nevertheless the previous successful drawing down of a wide range of EU project income was also evidence of UEI's adaptability and flexibility in diversifying income. EU and other research projects were relied upon for significant investments such as the development of the study programme portfolio and for the acquisition of equipment. UEI's expectation was that research status might provide an enhanced revenue stream but the team was offered no evidence of any costed plan for this crucial new initiative: likely outlay and predicted income.

UEI staff both in meetings with the team and in the SER acknowledged that there was a need for UEI to ensure better integration of its management information as soon as practicable. A simplified and/or graphical presentation of outputs and analysis would make useful information more useable and accessible to staff. Such integration would be all the more important were UEI to adopt the suggested transparent and monitored key performance indicators. The team noted that the timescales applying to different strategic documents were not aligned and saw little evidence of the cross-institutional integration of policies and procedures.

Again the relatively small size of UEI and its flat structure should facilitate good internal communication but the team noted variable levels of interest and engagement amongst staff in matters not of immediate interest to them in their individual roles. The team heard of some non-compliance with policies and procedures by individual staff within the institution and noted an internally inconsistent use of terminology, often of terminology not as generally used in European Higher Education.

The team recommends that UEI:

- develop a more "big picture" view and alignment of its strategic development and documentation supporting that development, also considering a broadening of that view through an Advisory Board or Employers' Council.
- begin using SMART objectives (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) and transparent and monitored key performance indicators (KPIs).
- clarify the role of Executive Board in relation to Senate and of the Chancellor in relation to the Rector's oversight of academic matters.
- review the necessity of Rector/Vice-Rector oversight role of an individual faculty.
- review the titles of the institution and its faculties to reflect research-oriented strategic direction and current study programmes.

- in the event of obtaining "academy" status, consider the establishment of departments with actual functions, within faculties.

3. Quality culture

The UEI Quality Policy was approved in 2013 and updated in 2020. It is overseen by Rector. The Quality Policy as stated in the SER was to be linked to its 2019-23 Strategy and was informed by the SWOT analysis conducted for that strategic development purpose. The 2019-23 Strategy was said to be available to all staff (although with an acknowledgement that non-full time academic staff who are practitioners might have minimal interest in it) and to focus on four areas, the four areas of UEI's strategic objectives: Teaching, Research, Internationalisation and Institutional Development. In practice this conflation of Quality Policy with Strategic Planning was more of an aspiration than a formalisation of a cross-institutional policy – essentially saying merely that whatever UEI does it should aim to do well. It was almost inevitable that UEI would report internal and external disengagement with Quality when its articulation and promotion lacked transparency.

Senior staff and the SER acknowledged to the team that Quality Policy was perceived by some as bureaucratic. The team found no evidence of the promotion or building of a culture of Quality or any approach on how to overcome staff inertia with regard to a culture of Quality. The Education Quality Handbook appears to be an attempt to do this but only in the area of Teaching. The Education Quality Handbook covered all aspects of Teaching and has moved to an online version, readily accessible to all staff. A “plenipotentiary” had been appointed to lead on Education Quality. Despite the intended increased research activity and proposed doctoral school no similar “Research Quality Handbook” had been articulated nor a lead on Research Quality appointed for research. Indeed there was no evidence of an overarching approach to Quality across all UEI activities, such as Service to Society or Internationalisation.

Teaching Quality was overseen by University and Faculty Quality Assurance Committees under the Vice-Rector (Teaching and Student Affairs) and Deans respectively. UEI had in place processes for programme approval and programme amendment and review but not internal cross-institutional level review. The holistic “comprehensive evaluation” under the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) had also yet to be rolled out nationally. Until the development of the Education Quality Handbook, meeting the external quality requirements of the Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA) and, for Nursing, of the National Accreditation Council for Schools of Nursing and Midwives (KRASzPiP), had dominated UEI's approach. UEI however reported that preparation for the most recent PKA study programme evaluations had noticeably been facilitated by the existence of an operating Education Quality Handbook. UEI had little other experience of external quality systems other than EU audits and no mention was made of engagement with any professional bodies. The SER and appendices did however offer examples of how UEI benchmarked against national and regional competitors.

Contradictory claims were made about the existence or not of a formal system of academic staff appraisal or of collating academic staff development needs so that UEI could systematically put in place appropriate training and competence development. The team concluded that neither process was systematically in place nor was anything of that sort in place for professional services staff. Academic staff teaching was monitored through student surveys and peer observation. Academic staff research outputs were monitored but chiefly so as to determine if nationally set criteria had been met

The student surveys at the end of each module were focussed mainly on teaching and the performance of individual lecturers. Students reported these surveys to be consistently applied and probably worthwhile, although the response rate was variable and there was no knowledge of how

the results were collated and analysed and no awareness of feedback on any results. No longitudinal studies were undertaken of results to gauge whether the situation was improving over time. There was no evidence of systematic quality monitoring conducted with employers, academic staff and alumni and monitoring of consequent feedback.

There was student representation on Senate and its lower committees but a seemingly dormant Student Council, attributed to the mainly part-time nature of the student body. The vocational nature of study programmes and high level of graduate employment was the main “unique selling point” (USP) for part-time students. Foreign full-time students were mainly initially attracted by fee waivers for newly developed study programmes financed by EU project monies. Lublin was also a less expensive option in terms of the cost of living than elsewhere in Poland. The team heard some examples of nascent self-organisation by the full-time student body, especially foreign students and UEI had somewhat belatedly made some effort to enhance the student experience of full-time and especially foreign students.

Students are generally supportive of UEI and its offer to them. The team found there to be good staff:student relationships; good accessibility to and responsiveness from academic staff; no complaints about assessment and assessment feedback; about class sizes (both classroom and practical rooms); about academic workload; about general student services (although these were not obviously located and identified to new and foreign students); and about learning resources. Students confirmed that English language support was available to them on request. Personal tutoring arrangements and wellbeing and psychological support for students were in place. Overall students were satisfied with the placement opportunities and integration of study programmes with future employers’ demands of graduates as offered by UEI. There was some student dissatisfaction voiced with what was perceived as insensitive timetabling with late changes, large gaps between lectures, failure to consolidate delivery into the same sessions (leading to unnecessary attendance for minimal delivery) and failure to take account of work commitments for part-time students. UEI’s approach on this matter was seen to be for institutional convenience rather than to be student centred.

The team recommends that UEI:

- develop an overarching, cross-institutional, system of Quality Assurance, including associated governance arrangements.
- further develop and apply an institutional Quality Culture.
- improve internal and external engagement through greater transparency.
- introduce progress monitoring of UEI activity, via longitudinal studies of quality outcomes, of employers, academic staff and alumni and the institutional dissemination of results.
- ensure all staff engage with a formal system of appraisal and of the collation of staff development needs with appropriate training and competence development.

4. Teaching and learning

Since its establishment UEI has placed consistent emphasis on the vocational nature of its study programmes, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and their shaping at programme approval and programme amendment and review by input from employers, so that UEI awards are “credible to employers”. This was definitely a strong point of UEI’s offer and the team saw opportunity for this to be developed even further by potentially extending this approach so that, working with public bodies, societal needs (service learning) and not just employer needs were met. This liaison is carried out at a study programme level, with the Education Quality Handbook prescribing a consistent approach for the gathering of this external input and feedback.

UEI’s academic offer across the range of disciplines within its three faculties is at postgraduate (since 2006) and at undergraduate level and is consistent with the first and second Bologna cycles. In addition “post-undergraduate” professional diplomas with a highly vocational purpose are offered. These professional diplomas are common within the Polish Higher Education system and are accredited by the institution itself. They attract an older, working student clientele seeking to study part-time so as to gain professional advancement. UEI is yet to be approved to offer doctoral programmes consistent with the third Bologna cycle.

Study programmes are modular in nature, articulate learning outcomes and use ECTS credits. However in sample syllabuses viewed by the team there was often discrepancy between assessment and learning outcomes, with some more conservative staff preferring to continue to offer a cross-module grade rather than assessing individual learning outcomes. Senior staff were aware of this issue, not least as it had similarly been picked up in a recent PKA mandatory evaluation of a study programme. The team also noted that in some instances reading lists had not been updated and cited out-dated literature.

UEI allowed for some flexibility in study modes and transfer between them but was more limited in the approach to interdisciplinarity and the choice of elective options from other disciplines within study programmes. Senior staff attributed this to the restrictive nature of national legislation on the issue. Delivery of study programmes was mainly in Polish with an increasing amount in English. Also some study programmes, although delivered in Polish, had individual modules delivered in English. Student entry standards were at least compliant with national minima and detailed processes were in place for the prior assessment of English language competence.

UEI fully complied with the periodic mandatory external evaluation of study programmes by PKA. Teaching and learning were overseen by the Vice-Rector (Teaching and Student Affairs) at institutional level and by the three deans and course co-ordinators at faculty level, working respectively with Senate and the University Quality Assurance Committee and with the Faculty Quality Assurance Committees on such matters as the processing of programme approval, amendment and review. Those processes had limited advisory input from professional services departments into the processing of programme approval, amendment and review but, as already highlighted, had exemplary levels of input from external employers.

The team learnt of sound examples of current practice in UEI in relation to improving its study programmes through research-informed teaching. However this seemed to result from individual staff initiatives rather than a co-ordinated institutional approach. The team was disappointed that little thought seemed to have been given firstly to the development of such an approach if UEI became more research active with “academy” status opening up further opportunities and secondly

to how such an approach might be operationalised within the rump of non-Research active disciplines.

The assurance of the quality and standardisation of the delivery of teaching was viewed to be mainly matters for the three deans and course co-ordinators to manage at faculty level. As UEI has a high proportion of part-time practitioner lecturers the team would have expected more institutional oversight as to how UEI identifies staff development needs and how it ensures take up of identified needs, again especially amongst part-time, practitioner and guest lecturers. Again the team did learn of some examples of the promotion good teaching practice and innovation in teaching (forums, workshops, and staff development opportunities) often linked to the successful acquisition of EU project funding. UEI also set aside a budget for external staff development applications by individual staff. This was overseen by Chancellor who might sign off a contribution of up to 80%.

Similarly the team did learn of some examples of the development of student-centred learning, again partly individual staff initiatives and partly institutional examples linked to the successful acquisition of EU project funding. In general (other than the insensitive timetabling issue already cited in Section 3 above) students did perceive UEI to have a student-centred approach, although there was some desire amongst students that study programmes had a more entrepreneurial emphasis and facilities such as business incubators.

UEI had continued to develop its blended learning, not least because of the importance of remote learning in allowing UEI to cope with the exceptional demands of the recent pandemic. Students generally complimented the IT support accorded them and the standard of UEI's virtual learning environment, although they also reported that consistency with that standard could vary according to which individually lecturers were delivering the modules.

The standard number of contact hours a year for academic staff is 240 hours, excluding preparation and student meetings. However some staff far exceeded that number of hours, especially if teaching both on full-time and part-time study programmes as the latter tended to be delivered entirely at weekends. Research hours were not as exactly quantified. The team saw no evidence of an institutional workload balancing model. However the staff whom the team met, including research-active staff, perceived the workload to be onerous but not unfairly distributed between individuals.

The team undertook a tour of parts of the UEI campus on each of its two visits and was aided by a comprehensive description of the campus and its infrastructure which accompanied the SER. UEI had recently acquired new student residences which would allow better recruitment of more full-time students. As UEI's weekend part-time provision was significant, this permitted the shared use of the campus with local secondary schools and community users, such as the University of the Third Age, during the week. Overall the team viewed campus and infrastructure as suitable for purpose.

The team also learnt about plans to open a UEI Nursing campus in Warsaw. The team heard the outline of the business case and initial thoughts on the management of the campus. However, at the time of the team's visits, plans were at a very early, pre-approval, stage.

The Library is housed in a relatively small, purpose built space with a bookstore beneath but few individual study places. Loans are sourced by electronic requisition through Library staff rather than directly by students. There is physical room for the expansion of the Library which may well be necessary as greater numbers of full-time (and possibly doctoral school students) are recruited.

Students have access to national collections including journals and to other university libraries by reciprocal agreements. Students have access to e-journals in the Library. Library staff liaise with

Deans on acquisitions and individual lecturers may also request acquisitions. In view of the constrained size of the premises Library staff monitor the updating of learning material either updating and removing the old edition if a new edition is available new edition or archiving if a new edition is not available.

The team recommends that UEI:

- eliminate the discrepancy between assessment and learning outcomes.
- invite all faculties to develop plans for further research-informed teaching, across the whole institution, if “academy” status opens up such further opportunities.
- ensure part-time practitioner lecturers are engaged in staff development, especially in relation to innovation in teaching.

5. Research

UEI's application to be granted "academy" status within a stratified Polish Higher Education system, so that it may deliver Bologna third cycle programmes within a doctoral school, may well be the most important strategic change for the institution since its establishment. Otherwise research had been seen as akin to UEI's former role in administering regional disbursement of EU development funds – a useful, educationally related way of diversifying income. UEI believed that such status would improve its chances of applying successfully for State research funding as well as potentially boosting existing levels of EU research funding. In addition that status would also mean that UEI's current pockets of high level research activity would be recognised

UEI's research is hosted within a research institute in each faculty: the Institute of Public Administration and Business in the Faculty of Administration and Social Sciences; the Institute of Information Technologies and Innovative Technologies in the Faculty of Transport and Computer Science; and Institute of Psychology and Human Sciences in the Faculty of Human Sciences.

UEI has just updated its Research Strategy which is in fact more akin to an exposition of UEI's current research position and an options paper. In brief until the application to be granted "academy" status the UEI approach had been to use its areas of research expertise, now grouped as research institutes, to generate income through external research projects, mainly EU sponsored, as the institution was currently seldom successful, in the absence of that status, when applying for State research funding. Such external research projects also allowed UEI to enhance and develop its infrastructure through the acquisition of high value research capital equipment, although in the longer term this could bring into play revenue problems in relation to maintenance costs and the training of sufficient operators. UEI also had some limited internal funds to start off nascent projects with the aim of progressing to a successful external bid. External applications tended to chase the available funding and to be aimed not just at sponsoring the research itself but also at enhancing UEI's infrastructure and equipment. The options or scenarios set out had been accompanied by ballpark costings but UEI did not agree to the team's request to share the costings with them.

The options or scenarios included what UEI should do if the application for "academy" status were unsuccessful and how UEI might take advantage of a successful application. Senior and other staff expressed personal views on which option they might individually favour but there was no determined institutional position at the time of the team's visits whilst the outcome of the application was awaited. Staff were generally supportive of the acquisition of the status and welcomed the cachet then to be enjoyed by UEI but had not necessarily thought through the profound impact it would have on the operation of the institution. It was claimed that the institutional position would be determined only once the outcome were known. The team wondered whether more decisiveness and clarity was need, even before the outcome of the application were known, as arguably research tended to flourish when protected by long-term stability and funding.

The team could see a positive case being made for the benefits of "academy" status: institutional prestige; greater ease of securing collaborative partnerships; access to State research funding; more research-informed teaching and joint research and publications with students; new avenues for collaboration with industry and policy formation with regional and City authorities; participation in research-based consultations on regional initiatives. However the previous history and culture of UEI meant not all staff saw research as mainstream activity. One prominent example of this was the very low presence of research in the institutional mission statement and on the institutional website.

In broad terms UEI expected, in the event of a successful application, a significant impact on the academic staffing base and heightened salary costs in relation to academic staff. Potentially UEI intended to recruit new and to develop existing academic staff, perhaps eventually even research only staff and a draft policy on Initiative and Financial Reward Policy for Research had been written. At the moment, whilst academic staff would receive a lighter teaching load if research-active, might improve their career development and promotion prospects and would be able to use some of the income generated for, say, enhancement of equipment and conference attendance, there was no direct financial reward to the individual member of staff. UEI also recognised the potential impact on the rump of non-research active disciplines, especially in the context of the divide between a highly active core group and the more inert majority of academic staff reported in the SER. However no detailed solutions to this last issue were articulated.

The team had some concerns that UEI saw the benefit of the prize of “academy” status but not necessarily all the costs of that prize: the need to set up a comprehensive ecosystem to support Research; a dedicated project identification and bidding support office; support for the knowledge transfer, spin off or other exploitation of research; and the establishment of an institution wide, fully functioning doctoral school. However, as mentioned in Section 2 above, there was no evidence of UEI having sought future strategic partnerships which might help the development of a new doctoral school. This would be a task of some complexity if it were to have appropriate standards of admission, supervision, support, training and assessment. Senior staff did suggest that, at least initially, some of the complexity and cost could be delayed by operating a doctoral school on an extramural basis only: that is with students embedded in partner external employers.

The Vice-Rector (Research and International Co-operation) and the Research Institute Directors were responsible for the management of research. Although the acquisition of “academy” status would be a step change, UEI was not building from scratch. UEI, through its research institutes, cited experience of examples, and provided detail of, successful international research projects, usually EU funded. UEI did already have in place mechanisms for monitoring research activity amongst staff: publications, impact factors, income but these metrics were mainly gathered for the completion of national returns. There was little evidence of the setting and monitoring of research output targets for internal review. UEI also had some mechanisms in place for supporting research-active staff: English language support, translation services, advice and encouragement on publication in higher ranked journals and funding of conference attendance.

UEI had an in house publishing company for both internal and external, including international, research outputs. UEI had experience of some international research partnerships through successful research projects. UEI was also already experienced at working with regional employers on more consultancy-based and commercial research. However the step change would require a systematic approach to partnership building, to publication in higher impact journals, to the transition from merely consultancy partnerships with external employers to research and consultancy partnerships and to the regular and calibrated measurement of individual research performance. Moreover UEI would have to expand its base of research-active staff, whether by developing existing staff to undertake a balanced portfolio of teaching and research and engagement with employers or by recruiting new staff.

The team recommends that UEI:

- ensure that the strategic planning for “academy” status is consistent with the recommendations already made on strategic development: SMART objectives and transparent and monitored KPIs.

- initiate the regular and calibrated individual assessment of research performance of staff.
- set up a comprehensive ecosystem to support research, including an enhancement of a dedicated project identification and bidding support office and support for knowledge transfer, spin off or other exploitation of research.
- secure strategic partnership(s) which might help the development of a research presence, including the establishment of a new doctoral school.

6 Service to society

Service to regional employers was the key purpose behind the original establishment of UEI and remains their headline purpose as stated in the SER, “WSEI mission is to provide its students with the knowledge and skills to ensure that they are very well prepared to enter the labour market.” The team would commend UEI highly for its exemplary engagement with external employers on study programmes. However, as mentioned Sections 2 above, the team also saw merit in facilitating the more formative involvement of external stakeholders in informing the strategic direction and planning of the institution.

The external employer partners whom the team met were very supportive of UEI and confirmed UEI’s claims about regular engagement with them and cited several examples of collaborative work:

- influence on the design and maintenance of up-to-date industry and practitioner-related curricula for new and existing study programmes, usually by direct contact between faculty staff and employers;
- responsiveness of the curricula to industry-identified needs;
- mutually beneficial placement opportunities which were often a prelude to permanent recruitment;
- contributions by individual external stakeholders as guest practitioner lectures, workplace mentors or at industry open days;
- joint consultancy work on the real world issues of regional commerce and industry;
- retention of educated and talented graduates in the region and the creation of an employable pool of skilled staff for current and future enterprises.

However the examples cited were usually generated through faculty or even study programme level contact. The team did not see how UEI strategised and co-ordinated its Service to Society, both in terms of individual relationships and increasing the diversity of activities with an established partner or finding new partners. There would be clear benefits for UEI in doing so, not least the generation of diverse and sustainable income streams. This was particularly so if UEI obtained “academy” status and had greater scope for joint research with external partners.

The team saw and heard evidence of existing engagement with regional employers on more consultancy-based and commercial research. UEI hosts specialist measurement and calibration services and offers a range of specialist laboratories but it was less clear to the team how such services were widely marketed or used. The team also noted the role played by UEI, working with regional employers, in the continuous professional development of existing employees and the training of potential new employees, through professional diplomas and some commercial short course provision.

UEI might wish to consider some form of systematic customer relationship management and thereby be better placed to oversee the appropriate level of contact, institutional or faculty, with external stakeholders, and to ensure the internal exchange of information and good practice across UEI. Such a systemic approach would also allow the readier identification of employer and business needs and allow UEI to monitor the compatibility of its offer with those employer and business needs. Not least it would encourage the generation of diverse and sustainable income streams and a

broader base of stakeholder engagement, so ensuring a good alignment with the overall development of the university. This even includes the potential for UEI yet further to enhance its already proven expertise in informing the design and amendment of curricula for study programmes, for example by ensuring that societal needs such as Health and Wellbeing were fully identified (see Section 4 above). Indeed it would provide UEI with the opportunity more widely to disseminate the considerable level of its overall Service to Society which in its SER (and even in discussion with staff) was perhaps somewhat understated.

Similarly, although the team heard of particular examples of such engagement, there was no systematic engagement with alumni or any alumni association or similar. It might be particularly beneficial to UEI, as it sought to build its international presence, to maintain links with foreign graduates especially. The team heard several current foreign students confirm that word of mouth had been an important determinant in them initially selecting UEI.

UEI also has sound relationships with other non-business regional and civic entities. This partly derives from its previous involvement in administering regional disbursement of EU development funds but also from UEI's activities in teaching and research in public-facing services such as Health and Education, for example hosting a specialist Mental Health clinic. UEI also remains closely identified with its establishing Foundation which itself provides business and legal support for regional small and medium enterprises. Through the Foundation, UEI has close links with two secondary schools. UEI is the regional hub for the University of the Third Age and, with its high availability of premises during the week because of its mainly part-time student clientele, is the venue for the delivery of University of the Third Age provision. UEI also cited a number of direct voluntary and charitable actions undertaken by the institution and by its students.

The team recommends that UEI:

- systematise its customer relationship management arrangements.
- systematise its links with graduates, perhaps through an alumni association.

7. Internationalisation

UEI does not have a discrete Internationalisation Strategy but does embed Internationalisation within its 2019-23 Strategy. In its SER three key Internationalisation areas are identified:

- programmes of study delivered in Polish
- programmes of study delivered in English
- externally funded research and other projects.

However the SER goes on to confirm that these and other related activities are not formalised strategically but expressed as operational activities. UEI knows these activities have an Internationalisation dimension and duly carries them out but without setting clear objectives, mainly expressing those objectives in a task-oriented manner. See Section 2 above.

The team considered that the two most recent strategic challenges to UEI, the influx of full-time foreign students and the application for “academy” status with more focus on research, were both intrinsically dependent on the greater Internationalisation of the institution. The team therefore believed that UEI needed to ensure the systematic implementation of Internationalisation through co-ordinated and monitored oversight at central level. In essence there is existing practice within UEI which can be built on for the more systematic development of that Internationalisation, for example, as already cited in Section 5 above, in the research sphere, research-active academic staff do publish research outputs in English, do attend and host international conferences, are members of international networks, and they do collaborate with international peers on publications but not within the context of a co-ordinated ecosystem of support for research staff..

UEI has a large number of international partnerships but reports that some do not go beyond an agreement in principle to co-operate. The acquisition of “academy” status might offer UEI the opportunity to build on existing collaborations, even if merely at a currently low level of activity, perhaps with a view to research collaborations and the creation of joint awards including doctoral awards. The identification of new and the strengthening of existing collaborations could be one of several facets of activity to benefit from the suggested systematic implementation of Internationalisation.

Those existing international partnerships include bilateral agreements on staff and student exchanges. The team heard of individual examples of academic staff exchange and of academic staff experience of foreign universities. The team also met non-Polish academic staff at UEI but did not hear of systematic plans to recruit a more international academic staff base, even though a transition to a more research-focussed institution and an institution with more English language delivery was proposed. English language support is available to academic staff upon request and UEI has previously secured EU project funding to improve academic staff English language competence and other teaching skills. In mitigation of the low level of staff exchanges and of attraction of foreign staff, senior UEI staff mentioned the comparatively low level of salary in Polish Higher Education and the comparatively weak Polish currency exchange rate as inhibitors.

UEI had ambitions to develop more study programmes delivered in the English language. Again the team did not hear of systematic plans to recruit more academic staff with English language competence or of anything other than voluntary opportunities for existing staff to attain the required level of English language competence. Each faculty currently has one undergraduate study programme each delivered in English and there is one postgraduate study programme delivered in

English. Additionally some study programmes delivered in Polish have individual modules delivered in English. English language support is available to students upon request.

Staff and student exchanges under ERASMUS are relatively low in volume. This was attributed to the high number of part-time staff and students at the institution as well as again to the relatively low level of the Zloty against most other European currencies. However UEI has benefitted recently from the recruitment of a larger number of full-time foreign students, mainly attracted by fee waivers applied to newly initiated study programmes developed with EU project monies. To some degree the successful recruitment of these students was at a level not expected by UEI, although they had applied to the Ministry of Interior and Administration to be allowed to register foreign students, and the institution was playing catch up, adapting existing systems for a cohort of very different students from the normal clientele.

UEI has produced a Foreign Students Strategy (“Strategy for the development of studies provided in English”) in reaction to the influx of full-time foreign students. The document is thoughtful and well researched internally. It mainly sets out in detail the current situation and issues. It does identify nine specific objectives but does not then fully deliver on its claim also to have identified the way to achieve those objectives. Despite that Strategy the team noted that few front line staff in the Library or reception areas had sufficient English language competence to cope with enquiries from foreign students; that signage on campus was usually in Polish with only occasional English translation; that there was a need for more welcoming design for the entrance to the campus and building; that foreign students reported a lack of clarity on who provided services to foreign students – sometimes bespoke and sometimes through general support for all students; that there was only limited awareness-raising amongst staff and students of diversity and multicultural issues and, other than the new student residences, there was little provision for full-time students in terms of the typical full-time student experience of socialisation and extra-curricular activity.

Nevertheless the full-time foreign students whom the team met believed that, whatever the shortcomings, UEI was doing its best to accommodate them, for example with Polish language support available on request, although some of the socialisation and acclimatisation initiatives seemed to come more from the foreign students themselves rather than the institution and the somewhat dormant Student Council. The team heard that the current student experience of Lublin as a welcoming University city was positive but UEI will need to ensure a continuing good relationship with the local community if the recruitment of a diverse full-time student clientele increases. Another challenge facing the University may well be how best to sustain that level of recruitment when fee waivers no longer apply. The team heard that some foreign students had selected UEI based on word of mouth from peers but the institution will want more systematic and more widely disseminated mechanisms to attract applications to sustain recruitment levels, especially if without fee waivers.

The team’s experience of the university and its campus did not suggest an institution with Internationalisation high on its agenda. UEI might wish to look for a number of ways, some of which would have minimal if any direct cost, through which to raise the profile of Internationalisation and promotion of all forms of Internalisation opportunities for staff and students: ERASMUS, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), virtual international weeks, participation in international student fairs, and the resourcing of international guest lecturers – amongst others at UEI’s discretion.

UEI had no detailed student recruitment strategy but expressed the approach to be that all students were welcome. There were however no target markets specified, national or international, as such. Marketing material was however attractively and informatively set out, both in print and online.

Management responsibility for Internationalisation rests with the Vice-Rector (Research and International Co-operation) at institutional level and the Deans at faculty level. However the operational arrangements supporting Internationalisation (including support for foreign students) were somewhat diffuse across the institution, covered within the remits of a number of staff and discharged in a number of units such as “the English Language Studies Office” so that foreign students had to seek support in some aspects of the student journey from units servicing all students and in other aspects from units dedicated solely to them. The co-existence of a Dean’s Office in each faculty serving the Dean but also a cross-university “Dean’s Office” offering support services for students was confusing for the team and must be even more confusing for a newly arrived foreign student. If UEI does indeed seek the systematic implementation of Internationalisation through co-ordinated and monitored oversight at central level, a clarification and perhaps consolidation of staff remits and a more clearly defined organisational structure in this area would be important within that context.

The team recommends that UEI:

- ensure that the strategic planning for Internationalisation is consistent with the recommendations already made on strategic development: SMART objectives and transparent and monitored KPIs.
- ensure all front line staff dealing with foreign students have sufficient English proficiency to understand issues and to explain solutions.
- actively promote all forms of Internationalisation opportunities for staff and students: ERASMUS, MOOCs, virtual international weeks, participation in international student fairs, and the resourcing of international guest lecturers.

8. Conclusion

The team found UEI to be a successful private university which was well regarded regionally and was seeking to build a profile nationally. Overall UEI was managed in a business-like manner and flexible when seeking the resources to run and develop the university. Having originally been founded with a mission emphasising practical teaching and learning and with a high degree of employer engagement, UEI was now considering a major change in strategic direction. In response to the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) UEI was looking at reorienting more towards research

In the same period UEI had had to react to other major challenges, such as the unprecedented demands of Covid 19 and the influx of a number of foreign full-time students. UEI has relied on the professionalism of its executive level academic staff, supported by the Chancellor, to approach these challenges. UEI had a relatively flat structure and a mixed academic staffing base with a significant proportion of practitioner and part-time staff. Traditionally it had mainly served part-time and Polish students but now was looking to increase numbers of full-time and foreign students. Students valued UEI's emphasis on practical teaching and learning; the practitioner experience of many academic staff; and the high level of graduate employment. External stakeholders, especially regional employers, were very supportive.

However UEI itself in the SER was candid that only a minority of staff had been involved in initiating and designing change. The majority, whilst not necessarily opposing change and whilst adopting such change when this eventually impacted on their usual activities, had not been involved at a formative stage in its initiation and design. There was no overarching and distinctive quality culture within the institution to help foster the desired formative involvement of staff. The staffing profile of the institution had not radically changed. Its processes had undergone incremental rather than radical change. In particular its strategic planning had not enabled a ready way in which to monitor and measure progress towards implementation of changes.

Moreover the consequences of further proposed changes would bring further challenges (the establishment of a functioning doctoral school; the loss of staff time for teaching as research expands; the expansion of delivery in English; and the sustainable recruitment of continuing cohorts of foreign students) and it would be unwise for UEI to rely too heavily on the inner core of engaged staff to meet these.

Through its reorienting towards research UEI aims to increase its undoubtedly excellent service to its region, to build on its nascent national profile and to develop an international profile. It is at a point of transition and UEI may wish to take this opportunity to consider the team's recommendations in this report with a view to factoring them into its updating of its 2019-23 Strategy, thinking through the strategic and operational implications of the reorientation and development processes it is currently undertaking. The recommendations take account of the environment within which UEI operates and offer UEI scope to maximise the potential benefits of that reorientation and development.

The team wishes UEI well on its future journey and finally just reiterates that EUA IEP offers shorter form, "follow-up" evaluations to previously evaluated institutions should the university wish to reflect once again on the changes in strategic direction three or so years into that journey.

Summary of the recommendations

The team recommends that the university:

- develop a more “big picture” view and alignment of its strategic development and documentation supporting that development, also considering a broadening of that view through an Advisory Board or Employers’ Council.
- begin using SMART objectives (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) and transparent and monitored key performance indicators (KPIs).
- clarify the role of Executive Board in relation to Senate and of the Chancellor in relation to the Rector’s oversight of academic matters.
- review the necessity of Rector/Vice-Rector oversight role of an individual faculty.
- review the titles of the institution and its faculties to reflect research-oriented strategic direction and current study programmes.
- in the event of obtaining "academy" status, consider the establishment of departments with actual functions, within faculties.
- develop an overarching, cross-institutional, system of Quality Assurance, including associated governance arrangements.
- further develop and apply an institutional Quality Culture.
- improve internal and external engagement through greater transparency.
- introduce progress monitoring of UEI activity, via longitudinal studies of quality outcomes, of employers, academic staff and alumni and the institutional dissemination of results.
- ensure all staff engage with a formal system of appraisal and of the collation of staff development needs with appropriate training and competence development.
- eliminate the discrepancy between assessment and learning outcomes.
- invite all faculties to develop plans for further research-informed teaching, across the whole institution, if “academy” status opens up such further opportunities.
- ensure part-time practitioner lecturers are engaged in staff development, especially in relation to innovation in teaching.
- ensure that the strategic planning for “academy” status is consistent with the recommendations already made on strategic development: SMART objectives and transparent and monitored KPIs.
- initiate the regular and calibrated individual assessment of research performance of staff.

- set up a comprehensive ecosystem to support research, including an enhancement of a dedicated project identification and bidding support office and support for knowledge transfer, spin off or other exploitation of research.
- secure strategic partnership(s) which might help the development of a research presence, including the establishment of a new doctoral school.
- systematise its customer relationship management arrangements.
- systematise its links with graduates, perhaps through an alumni association.
- ensure that the strategic planning for Internationalisation is consistent with the recommendations already made on strategic development: SMART objectives and transparent and monitored KPIs.
- ensure all front line staff dealing with foreign students have sufficient English proficiency to understand issues and to explain solutions.
- actively promote all forms of Internationalisation opportunities for staff and students: ERASMUS, MOOC

s, virtual international weeks, participation in international student fairs, and the resourcing of international guest lecturers.