

**Wroclaw University of Economics**

***EVALUATION REPORT***

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## **1. Introduction**

This report is the result of the evaluation of the Wroclaw University of Economics in Wroclaw, Poland. The evaluation was started in 2018 and completed in 2019. The findings presented in this report are based on the university's self-assessment report submitted in February 2019, and on two site-visits, one in March 2019 and one in June 2019.

### **1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme**

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

The distinctive features of IEP are:

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

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

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

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

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

## **1.2 Wroclaw University of Economics's profile**

The Wroclaw University of Economics (WUE) was originally founded in 1947 as the Higher School of Trade following an initiative of the Wroclaw Association for the Advance of Economic and Trade Sciences. It was originally only a single faculty trade school that became the national Higher School of Economics in 1950, and the university gradually grew over time. Today, the university consists of four faculties: the Faculty of Economic Sciences; the Faculty of Management, Computer Science and Finance; the Faculty of Engineering and Economics; and the Faculty of Economics, Management and Tourism, which is located on a second campus in Jelenia Góra. According to the university website, the university currently has more than 11,000 students enrolled at the Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels.

WUE sees its mission as a leading centre of creative thought and economic education in its region of Europe. Internationalisation becomes an increasingly important part of this mission, and WUE is currently managing the transition from an institution that was mostly catering to the needs of the local community to one that is firmly embedded into a university with an international outreach. As part of this process, WUE has obtained a number of international accreditations on the programme and institutional level (e.g. EPAS, IQA CEEMAN, ACCA, with AACSB in progress).

It is however notable that WUE is currently undergoing another substantial transition, although not by its own choosing: due to a major reform of Polish higher education law, the university must completely change its statutes, its strategic priorities and also its organisation structure. As the legal reform is also linked to considerable budgetary consequences, the university appears to be under a lot of duress, with an outcome yet to be determined.

## **1.3 The evaluation process**

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a self-evaluation group formed by members of the university's International Cooperation Centre. The Centre was also in charge of organising the site visits. Other units, as well as members of the academic staff, were invited to contribute data, information and their views for the self-evaluation report. The SWOT analysis was largely based on the views of the university's students regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the institution. This also meant that the issues raised in the SWOT analysis were only partly in compliance with SWOT-type issues raised by other stakeholders during the interviews or as part of other strategic documents. Overall, the IEP evaluation team (hereinafter referred to as the team) found the self-evaluation report compact and informative, but not overly analytical. Additional material, however, was readily organised by the university and the evaluation team was able to obtain a rather comprehensive view of the institution and its areas of operation.

The self-evaluation report of the university, together with the appendices, was sent to the team in February 2019. The visits of the evaluation team to the university took place on 18-20 March 2019 and on 10-13 June 2019, respectively. In between the visits the evaluation liaison persons provided the evaluation team with additional documentation. During the visits, WUE

showed an astonishing level of self-awareness and reflectivity and was very willing to constantly learn more about itself. All the interview partners were very open and forthcoming with information. It is also important to note, however, that the very important changes taking place in the university's environment, and the university itself due to the new law, was also impacting the evaluation as such. The university being evaluated was constantly changing even during the evaluation – hence, the team is only able to provide a snapshot of how it sees the current situation and future development.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Professor Dr. Tatjana Volkova, former Rector, BA School of Business and Finance, Latvia, team chair
- Professor Ir. Hans Beunderman, former Vice Rector and Dean, Delft University of Technology, Netherlands
- Professor Dr. Francesc Xavier Grau, former Rector, University Rovira i Virgili, Spain
- Matthew Kitching, student, Heriot-Watt University, United Kingdom
- Dr. Oliver Vettori, Dean Accreditations & Quality Management / Director Programme Management & Teaching and Learning Support, WU Vienna, Austria

The team greatly appreciated the collegiate atmosphere and all the support it received during its visits. It wishes to thank everyone involved in the preparation of the SER and the visit, and most notably Rector Professor Andrzej Kaleta and Vice-Rector Professor Boguslawa Drelich-Skulska and the team from the International Cooperation Office for all their efforts and dedication.

## 2. Governance and institutional decision-making

As mentioned in the introduction, WUE is currently undergoing some major structural and processual changes due to the new higher education law. Overall, the team found a university that mostly embraces this change and which is working on establishing the necessary foundations until the legal change comes into effect. It is also acknowledged that the uncertainties evoked by the new law and how it is being implemented by the government, is making things even more difficult.

More specifically, the new law has considerable impact on the university's funding (incentivising research, indirectly putting a cap, from a budgetary perspective, on the number of students that should be enrolled), on the leadership roles (e.g. strengthening the rector's competence) and on the way teaching and research are organised. WUE has already finalised its new university statutes that pave the way for implementing most of the changes. In terms of governance and decision making, some of the most crucial changes concern the re-constitution of the faculty in Jelenia Góra as a so-called "educational branch" (losing the status of a full faculty), and the introduction of a new matrix structure that hands over responsibilities for teaching and learning from the faculty deans to a dean of studies and programme directors who report to him/her.

The team regards the restructuring as a major opportunity for the university, as there is presently a considerable overlap in responsibilities due to the rather complex overall organisation structure which has grown over time. The team understands that many of these issues will be addressed in the next stage of development and that WUE has many strengths to build upon. Of particular importance is the strong participative culture and collegiate climate which certainly ensures faculty collaboration.

One of the big questions in relation to this strength is, however, if this collegiate culture will also ensure faculty buy-in with regard to top-down decisions. At present, the same culture is very much one of bottom-up ideas and initiatives with all the benefits and disadvantages this brings.

The team also found what was also confirmed by one of the interview partners, who is quoted as stating: "A lot of things are going on – but they are not systematically coordinated and if the project funding stops, they might fizzle out". In this regard, there is a certain risk that the university may be bound to pursuing as many directions as there are actors with drive and initiative.

Thereby the team emphasises that *the recent re-organisation process should be used as an opportunity to also re-evaluate bottom-up initiatives from the past and present and aim to align them with the overall strategy. Priorities need to be defined (and budgeted accordingly), overlappings reduced and responsibilities clarified.*

In addition, despite the experience of strategic plans being outdated rather quickly, it is recommended to *develop long-term directions with clear interim milestones, KPI and*

*indicators of success that can be continuously and smartly monitored via management dashboards.* This will also help the senior management team to establish if the university is still on track or if some of the plans need to be re-calibrated, which is very much in line with the philosophy of emergent strategising shared by the rector. *The strategic directions should be regularly revisited with clear annual action plans attached to them.*

It is understood by the team that the new organisation structure will unlock a great deal of potential. Considerable hope is projected into the future and the general spirit of optimism is should be commended. But with the speed at which things are progressing there are also considerable risks involved: financial risks (there is a failsafe in the law guaranteeing that the budget cannot drop by more than a few percentage points from one year to another, but this will not help in the long-term); risks for the culture and climate of the university (categorising staff and adding an implicit competitive element through the strong links between budget and research, for example, could well eventually endanger the tight-knit community and create conflict) or political risks (there will be new elections for senior management very soon after the new law has come fully into effect). Despite the high level of self-awareness in the institution, the team missed an assessment of such risks. The team thereby advises *the introduction of tools and processes for formal risk assessment and risk management and a (re)-evaluation of current and future strategic choices from such a perspective.*

The academic and administrative staff whom the team met all seemed fully committed to WUE and their work and want the university to thrive. However, the current human resource management relies heavily on financial incentives (such as bonuses, Rector's awards, etc.). From the perspective of the evaluation team it appears even more prudent to *align hiring policies with the university's strategic goals as new recruits will probably be one of the most important levers for increasing research output and new educational provisions.*

Focusing on more systematic human resource management will also have some impact on the freedom currently enjoyed by the academic units, as *staff development should be formalised and based on periodical evaluations for all staff categories.* There are already a number of elements to build upon, but currently responsibilities are fragmented and the new matrix structure where different managers are responsible for different parts of academic staff time requires a clear policy that guides the various actors and creates some degree of expectability as well as enabling long-term planning. The team also recommends to *develop a workload system for the academic staff including postgraduate teaching that will help manage and distribute resources in order to meet the university's research and teaching provision goals.*

Last but not least, the team would like to underline that the efforts of "re-inventing" WUE as an internationally oriented university rather than a locally focused business school should not play a secondary role to the externally induced changes – although the immediate "to dos" from the legal reform certainly have the highest priority. The creation of an institutional identity (also visually in terms of branding) as a university beyond the traditional "schools of thought" and faculties/departments will be an important basis for communicating

institutional efforts and for attracting students, academic staff and external partners in the future.



### 3. Quality culture

According to the SER, WUE started to develop its internal quality assurance system almost a decade ago, in 2010, with the goal to continuously improve the quality of all educational efforts. Other areas such as research, service to society, management etc. were decidedly not focused upon. The main stakeholders that are involved in the quality assurance (QA) processes are students and employers – and the focus is clearly on teaching and learning.

The team found that WUE has some considerable strengths, where other institutions are struggling, i.e. when it comes to the “buy-in” of academic staff into quality assurance. Over the course of the last ten years, the university has built an elaborate structure with various bodies (mostly commissions and committees) at the faculty and university level. As many members of the academic staff are members of such bodies and committees, the level of involvement is considerable, and the entire communication architecture of the system mirrors the strong participative culture mentioned above. In the view of the team this will be a major asset for the road towards developing the system into a fully-fledged quality culture.

Yet, the team also regards the current structure as complicated and resource-intensive, creating a curious mixture of overlappings and fragmentation. Effective interplay by the different actors and bodies requires a considerable level of coordination, and currently there is no professional unit charged with this function. However, WUE seems to be highly aware of this situation, and during the interviews it became clear that the new structure that will come into effect in October 2019 will also bring some major changes (and structural simplifications) with regard to the QA system and its building blocks. In order for this new structure to be as effective and sustainable as needed, the team advises WUE to *ensure that each unit and/or committee within the new QA structure, led by the senior management team, has a distinct and clear role and remit within a comprehensive QA system covering education, research, life-long learning and other areas of WUE activities*. Developing the system beyond the current focus on educational matters seems of particular importance in this regard. In addition, an integrated QA system would also help to better align internal QA and external QA processes and could provide valuable input into the institutional decision-making processes already mentioned above.

QA is by no means trivial, and the interviews showed that the academic staff involved in the QA system were, on the one hand, engaged and reflective, but, on the other hand, not overly familiar with the respective QA discourse, e.g. the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) or specific methodologies. *Key actors should thus be systematically prepared for their responsibilities, including updates on international developments and the professional QA discourse*.

With regard to the current evaluations of teaching, the IEP was impressed with the high level of student satisfaction, as well as with a communicative culture where students can freely address their concerns and are listened to. The feedback mechanisms these is built upon are, however, very informal, and their functionality and effectiveness are difficult to assess.

Formal feedback mechanisms, on the other hand, struggle with low response rates in some courses (amplified by rather small class sizes) and an unclear quality of relevance for decision making or institutional development. The team thereby finds it reasonable to *explore alternative instruments and evaluation methodologies that are less survey-based but create added value. This seems particularly advisable at the programme level.*

Last but not least, the entire climate of reflection that characterises the university could also be supported by the QA system and respective mechanisms. *Regular institutional self-assessments or internal audits in all areas, involving external perspectives, would help to assess the QA system's effectiveness and impact and provide impulses for its further development.*

#### 4. Teaching and learning

WUE has quite a comprehensive portfolio of educational offers and it took the team some time to fully understand the logic behind the portfolio, in particular with regard to the kind of courses the university considers to be “post-graduate”. There are several structural layers to the portfolio (Bachelor, Master, Doctoral; full time and part time; regular programmes and postgraduate, i.e. lifelong learning programmes; additional courses offered through the Third Age University, which are in fact, another group of lifelong learning courses for another target group, etc.)

So far, processes for designing and approving study programmes have been set up, but the entire portfolio seems to have emerged over time, rather than being the result of careful strategic planning. There are even some overlaps, mirroring the structural overlaps owed to similar units in different faculties. This is expected to be remedied as part of the new structure, which also aims for a matrix organisation, where the academic staff (and their research) are supervised by the faculty deans, whereas the programmes will be the responsibility of programme directors and a dean of studies.

Overall, the team finds that the comprehensive programme portfolio, as well as the current programme management scheme, provides considerable challenges and that not all of the programmes will be able to be maintained in the future, due to resources and student demand. The team thereby advises to *revise the entire portfolio, including postgraduate and doctoral offers, as well as clear responsibilities, criteria and processes for continuing a programme, closing a programme and opening a new programme – and to develop them soon, as the new matrix structure will only work with enough conceptual fuel and a concrete vision.*

Students overall seem satisfied and appreciate the openness regarding their feedback and concerns, as already been mentioned above. There are a number of interesting initiatives such as the ‘Individual Business Studies Program’, a wide variety of student clubs and plenty of opportunities to establish early contacts with future employers. It became clear, however, that there might even be too many opportunities for students (many of which they were barely aware) and that most extracurricular offers were clashing with their regular studies and work obligations. In a nutshell, the students’ overall learning experience seems to simply happen rather than being directed. Therefore, it is recommended to *better align curricular and extracurricular activities, also with regard to their scheduling. Creating a guideline or platform that informs students about all options and their potential benefits would make it easier to navigate through the vast number of offers.*

Employers were also in general satisfied, yet most of them reported that they saw deficiencies, not so much with regard to knowledge and skills, but related to the mindset and attitude of the graduates. The team believes that *the curricula - including the teaching and learning (T&L) formats, assessment forms and learning outcomes catalogues – should reflect the outside world’s expectations with regard to the graduates’ mindset.* This would also

provide the learning outcome catalogues with some much needed focus, as there are currently sometimes several dozens to be pursued within a single programme. Orienting the entire curriculum and pedagogy at the intended graduate profile is regarded by the team as an area for improvement – and will also help the university in relation to its competitors.

Academic staff are well committed to their teaching, even if somewhat overloaded with teaching, especially as teaching in the postgraduate (lifelong learning programmes generates additional income. Evidence also suggests that teaching formats are to a large degree rather traditional. *Pedagogically, the principle of student centred learning should be more closely followed across the various programmes*, as the team and students alike perceive a strong reliance on lectures and inputs. More interactive formats, exercises and innovative course delivery will also help to develop academic key competences such as critical thinking and reflection, which are also competences highly sought after by the labour market. The team believes that *a clear T&L policy that also helps academic staff development and support would be of benefit in developing new pedagogical principles and didactic approaches.*

## 5. Research

The current legal reform in Polish higher education has a major impact on the university's research activities and strategic orientation. Owing to the fact that the number of an institution's international publications will be a strong indicator within the new university budgeting scheme, increasing the number of international research publications is very high on WUE's strategic agenda. By the time this report is written, however, it is not fully clear how exactly the Polish government will take the publications into consideration. As the evaluation team learned through the interviews, only a capped number of publications per academic staff member will count, requiring more academic staff members to reach at least a minimum output quota.

WUE has already started many initiatives in the last couple of years in order to prepare for this. Many of these are the incentive mechanisms developed by the current senior management team that reward international publications, such as premiums and awards. In this regard, the team also would like to commend WUE on its manifold and well-developed research support services.

On the other hand, the team found the university to be more reactive than pro-active, responding to changes in the law rather than developing a distinct research profile. Research often has its origin in individuals/single departments and its output varies immensely across disciplines. There even seems to be a recent decrease at the level of the whole institution (although the evaluation team is well aware of the fact that publication numbers may vary from one year to another due to the long timespans an article takes before it is actually published in some disciplines).

The team thereby recommends to *develop long-term research goals around strategic priorities and potential new research opportunities to meet internal and external demands and open up new funding opportunities*. Setting qualitative and quantitative targets for the university, faculty and department level with additional support for achieving these target values will be an important part of this.

As has been mentioned above, the current approach relies heavily on financial incentives, but as they function as ex-post rewards, this will not be effective in the long term. In addition, the cap defined by the government with regard to individual outputs also renders any investment into rewarding publications beyond a certain number per researcher uneconomical. The team advises to *invest rather more in creating favourable conditions, such as providing seed money for projects and applications or incentivising team work and collaboration*.

Moreover, the maintenance and growth of doctoral programmes are essential elements of any university's research activities. Therefore, *a clear investment priority should be for PhD students by creating a fund for supporting them not only with stipends, but also by helping them to participate in international conferences, assist in their job placements, etc.*

Connecting students to research could also begin well before the doctoral level. In combination with the current efforts to modernise the curricula, some thought should be given to how to embed more sophisticated forms of research-led teaching or even undergraduate research. *Making research a bigger part of the education across curricula (e.g. student conferences, research lab formats) will not only support the creation of a new research culture but also provide a competence profile for future employability.*

During their visits, the evaluation team also found that the current research culture still seems predominantly fragmented and individualised, which may to a large degree also be due to the way the different faculties and departments have emerged over time. “Schools of thought” have historically played an important role in integrating research and ensuring collaboration to some degree, but current research modes might require different structural support. The team advises to *further change the current research culture by supporting and incentivising all kinds of collaborative research* (across departments, disciplines, with regional companies and researchers from abroad).

Last but not least, in order to support the creation of an institutional research profile, the team recommends *developing a system of research analytics and creating a climate where research quality is regularly discussed among peers, maybe even backed up by internally devised research evaluations.*

## 6. Service to society

The university's efforts with regard to ecological responsibility (e.g. the "green teams") are definitely to commend. The SER lists several achievements in this regard over the last years most notably the creation of a "green campus", the "green expenditure" projects, as well as various collaborations with the municipality or the German and Polish Chambers of Commerce.

The team also appraises WUE for doing excellent work in keeping contact with the local business world, on an institutional, as well as on an individual level. Initiatives such as the InQube programme, internships, or the professional mentorship programme show this dedication in an impressive manner. The local corporate representatives seemed to be very satisfied with "their" university and WUE is evidently one of the most important providers of graduates with a profile in business and economics in the whole region.

It also became clear during the interviews that the WUE is connected to local industry in various ways, but to a high degree also based on informal relations between staff and business representatives. Bodies such as the Enterprise Council or the new University Council advise the Rector, but it did remain unclear how this is linked to innovation and what impact it actually has on the university and its key provisions and processes. External input, in general, appears to still be underused on the programme, as well as at the institutional level. With business and work rapidly changing, the team thus believes it prudent to *establish a regular dialogue with employer representatives beyond the two councils, preferably on a programme level and to collect inputs systematically beyond individual opinions.*

The SER and the interviews also made it clear, however, that the regional labour market is the primary societal segment which WUE is catering to and that several other stakeholder groups are not really taken into consideration. In this regard, the team believes that WUE should *reflect further about how to serve society beyond the local economy agenda. Approaches such as service learning (i.e. the combination of learning and societal engagement) or community development projects embedded across curricula could be of help in this regard.*

It has been mentioned before that WUE's many initiatives lack direction in order to help them become attainable and sustainable. The Third Age University is a good example of this. In principle, the team is very positive about the idea of the Third Age University which has been in operation for many years and, according to the university, is quite successful. However, the initiative appears to not be used to its full potential and the team thereby recommends to *come up with a clear concept for the Third Age University and strategic priorities for its development.* The team also recommends to explore how this initiative can be developed even further with top management involvement as a clear cornerstone of the university's lifelong learning and third mission activities. *In this regard a general concept guiding all third mission efforts would be a good starting point altogether.*

The team came to understand that WUE is well aware of the importance of its alumni and there are several initiatives and clubs that support the alumni's networking among the members as well as with the university. However, the team believes that *relationship management with all graduates beyond the singular fragmented current alumni club activities will be a great investment in the future, also in terms of diversifying income*. Helping to organise additional alumni clubs and aligning/supporting them on an institutional level might be an important first step.



## 7. Internationalisation

Internationalisation plays an important role in the university's current strategic orientation and the last years have been characterised by considerable efforts in managing the transition from a mainly regionally oriented university to an internationally visible institution. There seems to be a clear commitment to this transition and the university members tend to regard internationalisation mainly as an opportunity. Much of this progress is owed to the engagement of the Vice-Rector for International Affairs and the well-organised International Office. Apart from an increasing inclination to participate in internationally renowned accreditations and rankings in order to gain access to international networks and business school communities, current internationalisation efforts are mainly geared towards facilitating faculty and student exchange, international research cooperations and the development of English language programmes.

What is less clear to the team, however, is what WUE wants to achieve by this and what strategic goals the university wishes to pursue. With internationalisation it is very easy to confuse ends and means. In this regard, it is also notable that the current "internationalisation strategy" somewhat resembles a declaration of intent and the key performance indicators (KPIs) named by the senior management (number of networking partners, number of accreditations) are not serving a clear developmental purpose. The team thus advises WUE to *revise its current approach to internationalisation and elaborate the main strategic directions emphasising the main strategic directions, also in terms of its outcome and impact*. With internationalisation being an issue that touches upon all areas of the WUE, the internationalisation concept should also make clear what role internationalisation plays with regard to T&L, research or external communication and in relation to the overall vision and mission for the WUE and the region.

In addition, WUE is also advised to *explore international partnership models beyond student and faculty mobility*: strategic partnerships, more joint and double degree programmes, as well as international research collaborations, will all help to take the WUE forward. Becoming more visible in the international business school community is certainly an important building stone of this new kind of relationship management. But considering the strong ties to the local economy it might also be worth considering to make those companies with international links (or which are branches of multinational corporations) a part of the overall internationalisation efforts.

Those companies will also require graduates who are prepared to work in an increasingly connected and global economy. The team therefore suggests that WUE *further reflects on how to instil a global mindset in all its graduates*. There are various ways that are available to achieve this, e.g. internationalisation at home, more English-taught programmes, stimulating studying abroad as outgoing students, eliminating recognition barriers, etc.

The team also points out that offering more programmes in English and catering to the needs of international students requires a more comprehensive institutional transformation than

providing English-taught classes. *A high level of English language proficiency among academic and administrative staff (on the road towards a bilingual institution), as well as an effective website, will be necessary foundations for this.* As has been agreed by the WUE members themselves, the current website is not able to function as a gateway for international stakeholders to learn more about the university and does not entice new staff or students.

During their visits the team noted several times that the terms and language used by WUE (e.g. “postgraduate courses” where most institutions would talk about “continued education”; “students” where other institutions would speak of mere “participants” in lifelong learning courses; “didactics” as a term for the whole area of “teaching and learning” etc.) can be confusing for partners with little local knowledge or understanding of the Polish terms that are translated here. Thereby, Last but not least, *participating more actively in the European or even global higher education community will also require the university to become more familiar with the respective professional language and terminology.*

## 8. Conclusion

In summing up, the team found that WUE has already achieved a great deal over the last years and there is a general commitment to making the university better. WUE appears to have a very good regional reputation among the business environment and students, which is an excellent basis to build upon. Equal strengths can be found in the strong collegiate culture and the high level of reflection and dedication shown by the academic and administrative staff. All those involved seem to be genuinely searching for external suggestions and welcoming new ideas.

WUE comes across as rather fast and efficient in its efforts to change and is apparently one of the first Polish universities to decide on the new Statutes. WUE's positive spirit and the "we can do it" vibe, as well as a well-respected Rector who remains calm in the face of all the challenges ahead will help the institution immensely in the forthcoming years.

However, the team also found much uncertainty which potentially could become a real problem for the university culture and staff well-being. WUE is presently undergoing a massive transformation with several considerable risks attached. The future will not be built on hope alone and there seems to be some denial of the possibility of things not going according to plan.

It would thus seem prudent to consider possible future landscapes (different scenarios with different potential outcomes) and to create a roadmap for the future institutional leadership. With the university currently so much focused on meeting the immediate deadlines and coping with the externally induced change, it also seems even more important to create a vision beyond the next years, including agreement on the values and aspects WUE holds important above all else; but it should also realise that sometimes less is more and not everything can be achieved at once.

However, overall, the team is confident that WUE will be able to find the energy necessary to face the challenges and keep up its spirit in order to improve continuously. The team wishes the WUE great success with its future endeavours.

### Summary of the recommendations

With regard to governance and institutional decision making:

- *Use the recent re-organisation process as an opportunity to also re-evaluate bottom-up initiatives from the past and present and aim to align them with the overall strategy. Priorities need to be defined (and budgeted accordingly), overlappings reduced and responsibilities clarified.*

- *Develop long-term directions with clear interim milestones, KPIs of success that can be continuously and smartly monitored via management dashboards.*
- *Regularly revisit the strategic directions with clear annual action plans attached to them.*
- *Introduce tools and processes for formal risk assessment and risk management and (re)-evaluate current and future strategic choices from such a perspective.*
- *Align hiring policies with the university's strategic goals as new recruits will probably be one of the most important levers for increasing research output and new educational provisions.*
- *Formalise staff development to base it on periodical evaluations for all staff categories.*
- *Develop a workload system for the academic staff including postgraduate teaching that will help the management and distribution of resources in order to meet the university's research and teaching provision goals.*

With regard to quality culture:

- *Ensure that each unit and/or committee within the new QA structure, led by the senior management team, has a distinct and clear role and remit within a comprehensive QA system covering education, research and other areas of activities.*
- *Systematically prepare key actors for their responsibilities, including updates on international developments and the professional QA discourse.*
- *Explore alternative instruments and evaluation methodologies that are less survey-based but create added value. This seems particularly advisable on the programme level.*
- *Introduce regular institutional self-assessments or internal audits in all areas, involving external perspectives, that would help to assess the QA system's effectiveness and impact and provide impulses for its further development.*

With regard to teaching and learning:

- *Revise the entire portfolio, including postgraduate and doctoral offers, as well as clear responsibilities, criteria and processes for continuing a programme, closing a programme and opening a new programme – and to develop them soon, as the new matrix structure will only work with sufficient conceptual fuel and a concrete vision.*

- *Better align curricular and extracurricular activities, also with regard to scheduling. Creating a guideline or platform that informs students about all options and their potential benefits would make it easier to navigate through the vast number of offers.*
- *Ensure the curricula - including the teaching and learning (T&L) formats, assessment forms and learning outcomes catalogues – reflect the outside world's expectations with regard to the graduates' mindset.*
- *Follow the principle of student centred learning more closely across the various programmes.*
- *Develop a clear T&L policy, that also helps academic staff development and support, would be of benefit in developing new pedagogical principles and didactic approaches.*

With regard to research:

- *Develop long-term research goals around priorities and potential potential new research opportunities to meet internal and external demands and open up new funding oppertunities*
- *Invest more in creating favourable conditions, such as providing seed money for projects and applications or incentivising team-work and collaboration.*
- *Make PhD students a priority by creating a fund for supporting them not only with regard to stipends, but also helping them to participate in international conferences, assist their job placement, etc.*
- *Make research a bigger part of the education across curricula (e.g. student conferences, research lab formats).*
- *Further change the current research culture by supporting and incentivising all types of collaborative research.*
- *Develop a system of research analytics and create a climate where research quality is regularly discussed among peers, maybe even backed up by internally devised research evaluations.*

With regard to service to society:

- *Establish a regular dialogue with employer representatives beyond the two councils, preferably on a programme level and to collect inputs systematically beyond individual opinions.*

- *Reflect further about how to serve society beyond the local economy agenda. Approaches such as service learning (i.e the combination of learning and societal engagement) or community development projects embedded across curricula could be of help in this regard.*
- *Devise a clear concept and strategic priorities for the third age university. A general concept guiding all third mission efforts would be a good starting point altogether.*
- *Establish a relationship management with all graduates beyond the singular fragmented current alumni club activities will be a great investment in the future, also in terms of diversifying income.*

With regard to internationalisation:

- *Revise the university's current approach to internationalisation and elaborate the main strategic directions emphasising the main strategic directions, also in terms of its outcome and impact*
- *Explore international partnership models beyond student and faculty mobility.*
- *Further reflect on how to instil a global mindset for all the university's graduates.*
- *Ensure a high level of English language proficiency among academic and administrative staff (on the road towards a bilingual institution), as well as an effective website.*
- *Become more familiar with the respective professional language and terminology in the European/global higher education community.*