Vlaamse Regering

Status of the audit report

> **This report is the outcome of the pilot project "Quality assessment and enhancement in higher education institutes of professional education in Croatia" of the Flemish Government executed by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) in collaboration with Croatian partners. The aims of this international pilot project are twofold:**
> - **enhancement of internal quality assurance systems in the Croatian Universities and University Colleges of applied sciences;**
> - **preparation for the external reviews as planned by the Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE).**
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> **In accordance with these aims NVAO has organised three institutional audits of the QA systems on institutional level, using its framework and procedures as aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). This report is the outcome and result of an investigation and site visit by an international panel of experts coordinated by NVAO. The report focuses on recommendations for further actions enabling the institution to manage, maintain and enhance its quality assurance system taking in consideration the Croatian and institutional contexts. Due to the project's aims, its pilot character and the legal competences of the NVAO the board has decided to take notice of this report and the panel's recommendations, but not to extend it into a formal decision on its assessments.**

INSTITUTIONAL   AUDIT

Panel Report

Country	Croatia
Location	Knin

Institution	University of Applied Sciences of 'Marko Marulić
Type	public institution for professional higher education

Application	6 September 2010
Site visit	25 and 26 October 2010
Panel report	16 December 2010

Institution (key representatives)
- Prof. dr.sc. Marko Jelić, dean;
- Prof. dr. sc. Mirko Gugić, president of the Governing Council;
- Emilija Friganović mag. ing.; lecturer; president of the Board for Quality Improvement;
- Ana Marić, bacc.oec.; head of the University Centre for promoting and securing a high-quality study;
- Prof. dr. Zlatko Cesić, vice dean for academic affairs;
- Nikola Blazević, iur, secretary;
- Ljubica Ukić, student; president Student's Union.

Audit panel
- Prof. Harry Martens, PhD, emeritus professor of Chemistry, Hasselt University, Belgium (*chair*);
- Prof. Ferdo Bašić, PhD, emeritus professor of Agronomy, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Zagreb;
- Šime Višić, student of Informatics and board member of the Student Council, University of Zagreb, and former board member of the Croatian Student Council and the European Student Union;
- Prof. Nevenka Breslauer, PhD, college professor in Kinesiology and dean of the Međimurje University of Applied Sciences, Čakovec (*Zagreb audit*);
- Prof. Dražan Kozak, PhD, full professor in Mechanics and Strength of Materials, and dean of the Mechanical Engineering Faculty, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Slavonski Brod (*Knin audit*);
- Prof. Zdravko Krakar, PhD, full professor in IT Management, Faculty of Organization and Informatics, Varazdin, University of Zagreb *(Slavonski Brod audit)*.

Observer
– Vesna Dodiković-Jurković, PhD, head of the Directorate for Quality Assurance, Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE), Zagreb.

Assisting staff members (NVAO – Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders)
– Michèle Wera, MA, policy advisor and process coordinator;
– Niek Pronk, MBA, policy advisor and secretary/project coordinator.

SUMMARY

A panel of peers conducted an institutional audit of the University of Applied Sciences of 'Marko Marulić" (the university) in Knin, Croatia. Judgements were made about the NVAO standards for institutional audits of Croatian institutions for professional higher education. Overall, the university's internal quality system is considered **satisfactory.**

As professional educational programmes are of high importance for the development of the Knin - Sibenik County, the university has the full support of the local, regional and state government. These favourable conditions, however, coincide with economic and financial constraints and the main concerns in recent years were related to sufficient staff and infrastructure. The institution under review is still a young university under construction. It has to cope with various difficulties related to basic teaching and learning provisions in a fragile political situation. Consequently, also the (formal) quality assurance system is still under construction although the informal lines of communication on quality are well developed.

The university has managed to introduce a basic quality system: a vision has been formulated and partially implemented; policy documents, procedures and regulations have been defined; the first surveys among students and staff were realised; an organisational structure is being set up involving most stakeholders. And last but not least, the university volunteered to participate in the NVAO project, and to undergo an institutional audit.

However, the university should invest more in monitoring its programmes in respect of both quality assurance and opportunities for quality enhancement. Due to the lack of useful quality-related information, the cycle of PDCA is not yet functioning properly. In the pioneer phase the university was founded and further developed under strong leadership which has many advantages but as a consequence quality issues are found to be dealt with frequently in an informal way. Some procedures are found to be in place nevertheless a formal quality system as such is not yet fully developed. Needless to say, the panel refers to the system as providing a framework for adequate quality management; the panel is not necessary looking for additional documents.

Strengths
– Considering the early stage of development, the college was successful in introducing three bachelor programmes fulfilling the immediate needs of the region.
– The university started with the development of a vision on the quality of its education and the team directly involved in quality matters works with enthusiasm and strong engagement.
– The early development and realisation of the Innovation Centre and the "educational" company Matica Ltd.
– Despite the financial and economic constraints, the university has managed to provide basic teaching and learning provisions.
– Staff members are highly committed to the university, and their engagement and loyalty is an asset to be valued.
– The university including all stakeholders is well aware of the importance of a good functioning quality system, and is prepared for further investments in the quality maintenance and enhancement of its programmes and activities.
– Students are satisfied with the quality of teaching and learning provisions.
– Staff are encouraged to upgrade their academic education to the doctorate level.

Weaknesses
– A shared vision on quality is not yet fully developed.
– Objectives on quality are not systematically defined in terms of short-term action plans and verifiable targets.
– The cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Act as a continuous process of quality improvement has not yet been fully realised.

- A systematic evaluation of the programmes by all stakeholders is not yet developed.
- The approach to improving the learning opportunities is too ad hoc and requires a more formal structure and clear procedures..
- The organisational structure for quality maintenance and enhancement seems too complicated with three Q-units in operation

Recommendations
- The overall strategy on building a system of quality assurance and creating a quality culture should be derived from a shared vision on quality
- A more prominent and active role for all relevant stakeholders is called for e.g. by involving external stakeholders on more structural basis.
- Having in mind the professional orientation of the programmes and the focus in the university's vision on scientific research, the university should find a good balance between scientific research and applied sciences.
- It is the feeling of the audit panel that the creation of three Q-units is too complex for a small scale university. It might be more effective to work with one or two Q-units (e.g. one Centre and one Board) also because possible overlap in activities and responsibilities can then be avoided.
- The university should differentiate more clearly between long-term and mid-term goals on the one hand, and short-term action plans on the other.
- Policy documents and annual plans for each area of interest should be developed. Operational or action plans should identify quantifiable targets. When composing these documents good use can be made of a format with standard components distinguishing between policies (aims and objectives) on the one hand, and procedures and rules (implementation) on the other.
- More focus on internationalisation by developing an explicit policy and involving staff and students.
- All staff members should be informed about the outcomes of student survey e.g. about the grading; for this the methodology for the surveys might need to be adapted.
- The introduction of a quality improvement plan alongside quality action plans should be considered.
- In time, the college should engage in benchmarking for performance improvement in terms of quality.
- Although informal communication on quality assurance is essential major processes should be formalised. It is desirable, therefore, that the university makes more systematic, effective and evident use of data and analyses in monitoring its processes.
- Information on quality assurance should be made easily accessible for all stakeholders for reasons of transparency and maximum involvement of all stakeholders. Launching a special webpage with all relevant documents (preferably also in English) on quality assurance might be a good start.

Assessment

STANDARD	ASSESSMENT
1 Vision	satisfactory
2 Policy	partially satisfactory
3 Results	satisfactory
4 Improvement policy	satisfactory
5 Organisation and decision-making structure	partially satisfactory
GENERAL CONCLUSION	**SATISFACTORY**

The Hague, 16 December 2010[1]

Prof. Harry Martens, PhD   Niek Pronk, MBA
(chair)   (secretary)

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[1] All the institution's comments on the draft report of 16 December 2010 were incorporated in this final version

AUDIT PROCESS

The University of Applied Sciences 'Marko Marulić' underwent an institutional audit 25 and 26 October 2010 as part of the pilot project "Quality assessment and enhancement in higher education institutes for professional education", coordinated by NVAO (Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders) and financed by the Flemish Government. Two other Croatian institutions for higher professional education participated in the project: the University College for Applied Computer Engineering in Zagreb and the University of Applied Sciences in Slavonski Brod. The purpose of the audit was to evaluate the institutions' internal quality system, and to contribute to the further development of institutional strategies for maintaining and enhancing the quality of their programmes.

The audit starts with the application of the higher education institution providing NVAO with a self-evaluation document (SED). This document is submitted to a panel of peers (the audit panel) carrying out the audit according on basis of the NVAO procedures and standards and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). During a two-day site visit the panel meets with management, staff, students and professional field, reads relevant documents, and visits premises and placement locations. The panel also makes use of a limited number of audit trails to provide more specific evidence. After completion of the audit the panel passes judgement on all standards resulting in an overall assessment. Scores used are satisfactory, partially satisfactory and unsatisfactory (standards), and satisfactory, conditionally satisfactory and unsatisfactory (overall assessment).

The panel reports the outcomes of the audit to NVAO describing the institution's strengths, weaknesses, and features on good practice. The report focuses on recommendations for further actions enabling the institution to manage, maintain and enhance the quality of its programmes. NVAO takes notice of the outcomes of the audit and the panel's recommendations. No formal decision is taken given the pilot character of the project and the prevailing national legislation.

Full details of the institutional audit process can be found in three documents published by NVAO (2010):
− Framework: *NVAO assessment framework for institutional audits of Croatian higher education institutes for professional education;*
− Procedure and guidelines for institutions: *Institutional audits of Croatian higher education institutes for professional education: assessment procedure and guidelines for structuring the institutional self-evaluation report;*
− Procedure and guidelines for panels: *External quality assurance of higher education institutes for professional education by NVAO with an audit panel appointed and assisted by NVAO.*

PRELIMARY REMARKS

The SED was well laid out, informative and useful in explicating the overall strategy of the university, the management structure and the organisation of quality assurance, however it is essentially descriptive and lacking in self-analysis. Appendixes are relevant and limited. Additional information and further evidence (e.g. a SWOT analysis) made available during the audit completed the picture.

The SED was a joint effort of a small quality task force consisting of representatives of the quality unit/board. There is no direct evidence that stakeholders made significant contributions to the self-evaluation other than via representatives in this unit/board. Although the SED does not fully correspond with the defined framework, the document is found to be well structured.

Meetings of the panel with various representatives concerned were very helpful for a more in-depth understanding of the university's aims and ambitions on quality and the quality system at large. The openness, enthusiasm and readiness of the dean and his team were much appreciated.

Two audit trails were defined covering (1*) student surveys*, and (2) the latest *SWOT analysis* in function of the document Development Strategy 2007 – 2011. The presentations and discussions were very instructive and helpful for better insight into the (development of the) university's quality system.

INSTITUTION UNDER REVIEW

The University of Applied Sciences "Marko Marulic" in Knin was established in 2005 by the Government's Regulation on the Establishment (OG 73/2005), with the intention of organizing and performing professional studies from three research programs, and teaching departments, namely: Economy, Karst Agriculture and Food Technology. The university's funds come from the state (95%), and from the region, EU/EC funds and the private sector (5 %)

At its 68th meeting, held on 19 January 2010, The National Council for Higher Education made the Conclusion in which it recommends the Minister to issue the Operating License to The University of Applied Sciences "Marko Marulic" in Knin for the performance of professional studies of Economy, Karst Agriculture and Food Technology. On 15th February 2010 the Minister of Science, Education and Sports issued the Licence for these three degree programmes. At present, the university offers three professional bachelor programmes (180 ECTS) in Economy (Commercial Business with Entrepreneurship), Karst Agriculture and Food Technology.
The first generation of students graduated in December 2008. The total enrolment of students in 2009-2010 is 411.

There are 40 staff members including 21 academics and 14 administrative staff. Of the teaching staff, four hold a PhD, three a MSc degree and one an University Master. The university also employs 130 part-time associates (lecturers and assistants). The staff-student ratio is approximately 1: 20.
The university also provides adult education programmes or so-called lifelong learning programmes.

Standard 1 – Vision
The institution has a broad vision of the quality of the education it provides and of the development of a quality culture.

The university's mission is to encourage developments based on human and natural resources of the city of Knin and its surroundings, Sibenik – Knin County and beyond. Its basic task is training of the experts more oriented towards professional practice in order to use their professional knowledge and specific scientific methods from the very beginning. As science and higher education are the most important developmental factors in the world, hence the university aims to contribute to the accelerated and prestigious development of Knin and its surroundings, as well as Sibenik-Knin County and beyond (SED, p.9)

The university aims to be a centre of excellence in dealing with highly skilled and scientific research in the areas of biotechnical and social sciences, which conducts quality and effective education based on learning outcomes and the concept of lifelong education. The vision of the university enforces the economic and social development of the region. This is obviously seen as the main target and although the quality of the individual education programmes is not the subject on review, there is evidence that these programmes satisfy the immediate needs of the region.
It should be clear though that the audit is not about assessing the quality of the programmes; the audit's objective is solely to assess the quality system of the university. Therefore the audit panel is positive about the statement in the university's vision statement that the highly skilled and scientific research "conducts *quality and effective education* based on learning outcomes and the concept of lifelong education".

With regard to the general mission statement of the university the audit panel finds the phrase: "The University of Applied Sciences "Marko Marulic" in Knin will be a centre of excellence in dealing with highly skilled and scientific research in the areas of biotechnical and social sciences" (SED, p.9) too ambitious, having in mind the professional orientation of the programmes offered by this university (of applied sciences).
A positive development is the realisation of the Innovation Centre, a specially organised department for research and innovative projects and also for practical and experimental work of the students. From the very beginning this centre has strong relations with regional and local enterprises and organisations (farms / SME's).
Another positive initiative with potential is Matica Ltd, an "educational" company for the development of the agricultural and food sector, founded in cooperation with the City Council of Knin. This company aiming at small (often agricultural) businesses is active in applied research and offers internships/practical work for students.

In the mission and vision statements the university's institutional vision on quality of its educational programmes is less emphasized. In the SED (p.10) eight strategic objectives are mentioned but none of these objectives are directly referring to the dimensions '*quality of education'* or '*quality culture'* on institutional level. However in the document "Development Strategy 2007 – 2011" the development of a Quality Assurance System is mentioned as one of the strategic goals. In the implementation of this goal the (performance) indicators for realising certain aims and objectives are established and also planning schedules and operational targets are indicated.

As mentioned one of the five strategic goals listed in the document "Development Strategy 2007 – 2011" refers to quality objectives on institutional level. This strategic goal "Quality Assurance System" (QAS) is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) – (p.20). The objectives in the development of the QAS are: 1. The organisation of a QAS; 2. The development of mechanisms

for quality assurance; 3. The development of procedures of quality judgements and 4. Publicity and communication.

Involvement of stakeholders at all levels in defining the university's vision, strategic objectives and quality goals is considered to be limited. Staff, students and external stakeholders emphasised the importance of quality education and quality assurance but they were not systematically consulted in the drafting process of the SED although one of the staff members (representative in the Quality Board) contributed to the SED The university has no tradition of involving external stakeholders in programme evaluation on a systematic and structural basis.

Although the audit panel is well aware of legal, economic and financial constraints, the university is urged to tinvest to more in the quality of education on institutional level. Indeed, it is the panel's firm believe that further investments in quality maintenance and enhancement is a feasible way to achieve the mission the institution has set for itself. The university is, therefore, invited to formulate a more explicit quality statement taking into account the input of all relevant stakeholders. A shared quality vision is also essential in creating a quality culture which at present is highly dependent on strong individual leadership of the university.

Assessment Standard 1: Vision – satisfactory

The university's mission to offer professional higher education for the further economic and social development of the region by encouraging developments based on human and natural resources, fully complies with the aims for the university set forth by the local, regional and state government. Trying to accomplish this mission, the university has defined a vision that aims to be a centre of excellence in dealing with highly skilled and scientific research in the areas of biotechnical and social sciences, which conducts quality and effective education based on learning outcomes and the concept of lifelong education. The audit panel expresses some concern about the focus in the institution's vision on scientific research having in mind the professional orientation of the programmes.

At present, stakeholders are not systematically involved in quality matters although developing a relationship with external stakeholders was given priority from the very beginning. Further elaboration of the quality vision in close cooperation with students, staff and external stakeholders is encouraged. A shared vision is also essential for creating a quality culture which at present can be further improved.

In the pioneer stage of the university the strong and informal leadership of the dean has proved to be adequate and effective. A more formal approach in the near future might be needed.

While building up the institution, management is faced with many challenges due to legal, economic, political and financial constraints. At the same time, the university should grasp the opportunity to introduce a quality system fit for purpose.

Standard 2 – Policy

The institution has an appropriate policy for the realisation of its vision regarding the quality of the education it provides. This will at least include: policy regarding teaching, staff, facilities, the anchoring of research in the education provided as well as the inter-relationship between the education provided and the (international) occupational field and the discipline.

The university's vision is described in the aforementioned document "Development Strategy 2007 – 2011" including five strategic goals. As stated before one of the strategic goals is the development of an overall Quality Assurance System. Various documents support the institution's overall strategic goals: study guides, book of regulations on internal quality system, codes and handbooks, annual reports, organisational schemes etc. As expected, these documents mainly deal with teaching practice, resources and facilities but only on a limited scale with implemented policies with regard to quality maintenance and enhancement.

The strategy document describing the development strategy has also the function of an action plan (p.6) that outlines specific tasks and measures for the period 2007 – 2011. In the SED the audit panel missed a SWOT analysis although this was mentioned as a performance indicator (to be delivered in November of each year) in the strategy document. On the second day of the site visit the latest SWOT analysis (July 2010) was presented to the panel in an audit trail. This SWOT analysis report covers the academic year 2009/2010 and all teachers from the three departments (Economis, Karst and Food Technology) were involved in the process.

The implementation policy for the QAS is described in the strategy document. The four related subgoals are: 1. organisation of the quality assurance system. 2. development of mechanisms for assurance. 3. development of procedures of quality judgements. 4. public work and communication. For each goal the performance indicators, the task description, the responsible person(s) and the deadline for implementation are indicated. Having in mind the planning period 2007 -2011 the audit panel is not fully satisfied with the available plans on operational level (action plans / annual plans) resulting from the strategic process. At the end of 2011 when a new dean will be nominated also the new development strategy for the next period (2011 – 2015) will become available (as part of the procedure). It is however the feeling of the audit panel that strategic planning and development should be a continuing, integrated process not depending on the nomination of a new dean.

Although the development of a QAS is one of the strategic goals the audit panel establishes that the quality (performance) indicators that have been identified have a rather qualitative character. In order to realise proper improvement, the university needs to identify measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). These measurements are needed for appraising and monitoring the quality of the programmes. Policies and action plans for each area of interest (e.g. teaching, staff, facilities, research, collaboration, and quality assurance) should be developed in which quantifiable targets are clearly defined. At present, most of these short-term policy documents and operational plans are missing. An example is the situation regarding the high drop-out rates of students (from 1st to 2nd year) especially in the programme in Food Technology. There is no selection procedure (with appropriate criteria) for enrolling students and also an explicit policy for improving these drop-out figures is missing.

The organisation of the Quality Assurance System as described in the strategy document is one of the (strategic) subgoals. In order to reach this goal a number of tasks has to be fulfilled. The realisation of three quality units (Q-units) is one of these tasks. These Q-units are: 1. The University Centre for promoting and securing a high-quality study. 2. The Board for quality improvement. 3. The Board for monitoring and improving study and relations with students.The structure and function of these units are described in the "Book of Regulation for the Quality System" at the University of Applied Sciences 'Marko Marulic' in Knin.

From the very beginning the university had a successful policy to develop and enforce the relationship with business and industry in the region. One example as mentioned is Matica Ltd, a company for the development of the agricultural and food sector, founded in cooperation with the City Council of Knin. The company was founded in 2006 and became operational in 2007 and has a consulting function for the region with input from students (internships / practical work) and teachers (technical assistance in (research) projects).
Another reason to establish the company Matica Ltd. is the situation that at present the budget not coming from the Ministry of Education is approximately 5%. So there is huge dependency on the financial resources provided by the State. The financial constraints of the university (mainly due to the recent start of the university and the economic situation in the country) are serious. By increasing the LLL activities and by realising a spin off effect of the activities of Matica Ltd the university aims to increase its own income.

Another pro-active initiative of the university is the foundation of the Innovation Centre (with features of a technology park) with educational functions for students (practical and experimental work) and for staff (research and innovative projects). The audit panel is positive about these developments although it still has no clear on the reason - apart from financial engineering - to create two separate entities which quite similar tasks.

The university is - on a limited scale - active in international projects e.g by participating in a EC programmes from which substantial funding was realised. The management acknowledged that the university being a young institution has not yet developed international co-operation to the desired level due to the lack of staff and infrastructure. Internationalisation was mentioned in the SED but is not a priority in the strategic document. In a new strategic document (2012 - ...) this should be considered.
A clear explicit vision on internationalisation would be helpful for a better understanding of the international ambitions and the link to quality aims. One of the findings of the audit panel for instance was the fact that students were not aware of concepts such as the ECTS and the diploma supplement and its importance for mobility.
A policy document on internationalisation document could include the university's ideas, resources and arrangements for a systematic approach to further cooperation starting within the region (incl. Bosnia and Herzegovina) and wider Europe.

From its scrutiny of the available documents and its various meetings, the panel understands that the university itself and also the quality system are still 'under construction'. Despite the apparent lack of some required policy documents and annual plans with KPI's, there is evidence that the university aims at improving its overall quality. Several surveys among students and staff are operational now, the staff and students are enthusiast and motivated and during this pioneer period the dean is obviously a charismatic, informal leader. The audit panel advises the university to formalise its quality procedures more in line with ESG and to keep the momentum after the pioneers phase also in the coming phase of "steady state".

Overall, the university is advised to further invest in a quality system and to focus on the quality of the educational programmes. Such system requires documents facilitating the processes for approval, monitoring and review in collaboration with all stakeholders. Key documents on quality should differentiate between long-term and mid-term goals, and short-term action plans. When composing these documents good use can be made of a format with standard components distinguishing between policies (aims and objectives) on the one hand, and procedures and rules (implementation) on the other. As the university already has some experience with templates in the context of ISO procedures, the suggested method is in line with existing practice

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Assessment Standard 2 Policy – partially satisfactory
The strategy document and several procedural documents that are available only partially focus on quality aims. This is partly due to the recent start of the university and quality assurance not being the first priority given the demanding circumstances . By formalising initiatives and quality practises which are developed from bottom up the university can take an important step forward. There is evidence that the university aims at improving its overall quality and that the first results are promising.

For educational programmes in a university of applied science the realisation of a professional profile is an important element. In this context the Innovation centre and its role in the quality assurance system and also the establishment of the (educatonal) company Matica Ltd. are a positive developments.
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In order to further improve the quality of its education, the university is urged to invest more convincingly in an overall quality system in accordance with ESG. Policy documents per interest area (e.g. internalisation and study progress/success rate) and with measurable targets will facilitate the processes for systematic monitoring and review.

The SWOT-analysis clearly marks the areas requiring future attention but at present appropriate follow up actions/plans are missing.

Standard 3 – Results
The institution has insight into the degree to which its vision regarding the quality of the education it provides is being realised and it regularly measures and monitors the quality of its programmes by gauging the views of students, staff, alumni and representatives from the occupational field.

Due to the limited availability of action plans with verifiable targets as indicated previously (ref. standard 2), the university is only partially in a position to measure the results and to monitor the quality of the programmes. Not all quantitative indicators such as KPI's,are readably available.
Also because the (quality)management at the university has a rather informal character this has similar consequences for the QAS,. Some matters regarding procedures and documents are covered by the ISO requirements (recently introduced at the university) but these do not relate directly to the quality of the teaching and learning process. The SED mentions several quality related issues (e.g. continuing professional development, research activities of the staff, learning resources and student support), but some essential quality processes and practices are not yet operational.

The Expert Council (EC) is an important body with representatives from all stakeholders. The professional field has only an ad hoc representation via an (external) consultant. There is evidence that quality issues are systematically discussed in the EC although not as separate agenda point rather as an integrated element of other issues.
The students are informed about teaching plans (including intended learning outcomes – ILO's) via the web and teachers had a short introductory course to generate these ILO's in a special format.

The university makes use of an information system to collect data about educational processes. During the audit trail on student surveys, for example, statistical data, analyses and regulations on the procedures were presented. These data are based on questionnaires for all courses each semester. The latest surveys in May 2009 and May 2010 showed a response just below 50%. In the preparation and follow up of the surveys the Q-Board and the Expert Council are involved. Via student questionnaires the quality of teachers and the teaching process are evaluated annually.The (national) ISVU information system provides an effective management of the student records including registration and examination via computer as well as the direct entry of the test results. The students the panel met were in general quite satisfied with the quality of teaching and learning provisions. The questions concerning the courses also cover the teaching process. The teachers are only informed about the grading of their course(s) in case the score is below 3 (scale 1 – 5) therefore the feed back to staff members concerning the student surveys is considered to be incomplete.

The audit panel emphasizes that although informal communication on quality assurance is essential major processes should be further formalised now the university gradually comes in the phase of "' steady state". The university should therefore make more systematic and effective use of data and analyses in monitoring its processes.

Assessment Standard 3: Results – satisfactory
On strategic and operational level the university has done serious investments in realising a viable quality assurance system. At present, the university has not yet a complete overview of the effects of its quality vision and policies although some quality procedures, processes and practices are available and/ or operational e.g. surveys among students and teachers.

A systematic evaluation of the courses/ programmes by the stakeholders is not yet fully developed. As a result, the university has limited access to quality-related information necessary to manage and enhance its educational programmes.

Standard 4 – Improvements
The institution can demonstrate that it systematically improves the quality of its programmes when necessary.

At institutional level, the university undertakes various actions to improve the quality of its study programmes and activities. The university clearly invests in the basic teaching and learning provisions focussing on human resources and infrastructure.

During the audit trail the SWOT-analysis presented during the audit was examined and the cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) was looked at. Although it is unclear whether the SWOT-analysis or other evaluations actually lead to a systematically improvement of the quality of the university's programmes and activities, some promising results were presented to the audit panel e.g. improvement and revision of curricula based on noticed indicators of quality and in the near future introducing new programs in accordance with market needs.
 Also the university has an active policy with regard to underachieving - resulting from the student survey - teachers. After discussions with the teacher involved eventually possible solutions are offered but finally - as happened - sanctions can be taken.
Positive is the professional development of the teaching staff e.g. by encouraging the upgrading of their academic education to the doctorate level. Another positive example is the ongoing process of collecting, analysing and using of relevant information for effective management of teaching.

Management and staff are aware of the importance of internal and external evaluations and assessments. The university is currently in the process of documenting and monitoring all processes and related work flow, and all functions of quality management according to ISO 9001:2008 standards in order to maintain constant levels of quality and its continual improvement (SED, p.22). As known ISO's focus is primarily directed towards the flow of documents, and the design of rules and regulations.

Many regulations on the quality system have to be made. Also at present the university is working on a self-evaluation needed to meet the process of re-accreditation and external evaluation which is to be conducted in

accordance with the provisions of the Law on Science and Higher Education. The reaccreditation process of the university will be conducted at the beginning of 2011.

In this context the university started the documenting and monitoring all the processes and also evaluating and verifying all the documents and records for the purpose of introducing a quality management system (QMS) according to the requirements of ISO 9001. At the same time, as a higher education institution the university should be aware that ESG require a different quality approach. ISO does not cover, for example, the introduction of new programmes, staff development or measurement of improvements. The management acknowledges this dilemma but argued that for a comparative analysis there was not enough time. A flow chart for all procedures will be made in the near future.

The audit panel is positive about the preparation of the "Manual on the quality assurance system" in accordance with the guidelines of ESG, which will be available in January 2011. This Manual will take into account the organizational structure and functioning of the university with regard to the QAS.

Efforts are made to support academic staff participation in scientific or other research projects, to prepare students for the labour market, to encourage professional and academic development of the staff, to increase participation in domestic and EU projects, to enhance mobility and cooperation with international partner universities, and to implement ESG. The audit trail showed however that a systematic approach to improving the learning opportunities is still lacking as there is no adequate description of a PDCA cycle to identify and solve quality issues. Nevertheless there is evidence of improvement measures all be it not always in a systematic way.

The audit as part of the NVAO pilot is crucial for the university in obtaining information on its own performance set against international standards. In the course of its short existence, the university felt confident enough to participate in the project. The SED explicitly refers to the institutional audit that has the objective "to contribute to quality enhancement of the university by reinforcing the process of external quality assessment process".

Changes for improvement over a longer period of time are also subject of internal and external evaluations. Areas of attention have been identified in the SWOT-analyses. Management is well aware of the challenges and opportunities but actions plans per interest area with measurable targets are still missing. Although the university claims - and indeed the audit panel did see some evidence - that in practice improvements are realised, this was not always documented and formalised. The introduction of a quality improvement plan together with these quality action plans should therefore be considered.

Anticipating the outcomes of the NVAO pilot, a major point of attention will be the further development of the university's internal and external quality assurance system in accordance with ESG. The NVAO pilot is expected to contribute to the realisation of this goal. The university is particularly encouraged to use more explicitly the ESG as leading principle in all quality matters and not only in strategic documents but also in (policy) documents aiming at implementation of the QAS .The audit panel is confident that further improvements will be realized and refers to the many activities and promising results - since March 2010 - with regard to the further development of the university's QAS. For the implementation of the necessary decisions on major issues a charismatic leader can have a catalyst function but also the broader commitment of all stakeholders based on a shared quality vision is needed in the near future.

Assessment Standard 4: Improvements – satisfactory
Although evidence is given of improvements measures taken by the university to enhance the quality of its study programmes and activities, the cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Act as such is not yet a continuous process of quality improvement.

It is desirable, therefore, the university introduces a quality improvement plan alongside the quality action plans per interest area in order to better monitor improvements actions. In general, the university is encouraged to use more explicitly the ESG as leading principle in all quality matters and not only on paper. The real challenge lies in combining a more formalised quality system with a pragmatic and realistic approach to quality assurance.

Standard 5 – Organisation and decision-making structure
The institution has an effective organisation and decision-making structure regarding the quality of its programmes, in which duties, authorities and responsibilities are clearly delineated and of which the input of students and staff constitutes a part.

According to the SED, the organizational structure of the quality system is well structured comprising the Governing Council (management board), the Dean's office, the Expert Council (professional body), the Student Union, the Departments and three Quality units: the *University Centre for promoting and securing a high-quality study*, the *Board for quality improvement* and *the Board for monitoring and improving study and relations with students*.
The audit panel establishes that the aforementioned Q-units are operational and that students are represented. The representation of students in the Expert Council should be at least 15%. but at present the representation is 25%. However the representation of external stakeholders (e.g. from local economy and government) in these Q-units is not structural although in the Expert Council an external consultant functions as link with the local economy. It is the feeling of the audit panel that the creation of three Q-units is too complex for a small scale university. It might be more effective to work with one or two Q-units (e.g. one Centre and one Board) also because possible overlap in activities and responsibilities can then be avoided.

The evaluation and monitoring of the studies programmes at the university is done by the *Centre for promoting and securing a high-quality study* and the *Board for quality improvement* by evaluating the quality of teachers and the teaching process via student questionnaires (on annual basis).
The *Board for quality improvement* organizes, coordinates and implements procedures for evaluating and developing internal mechanisms to ensure and improve quality at the university (SED, p.21).
The university started also documenting and monitoring all the processes and also evaluating and verifying all the documents and records according to the requirements of ISO 9001 with the aim to licence its laboratories which are really well equipped.
As stated before (ref. Standard 2) the feeling of the audit panel is that working with three Q-units is too complex for a small scale university. The division of responsibilities and authority of each of the three Q-units and the degree of integration is still unclear for the audit panel.

Students, staff and employers are represented in the various boards and committees – Expert Council, Q-units - where quality matters are discussed. According to the SED a few graduated students started the process of registering an Alumni Association, which seeks to develop cooperation between the graduated students, the university and the companies/organisations in which the alumni are employed. The panel's meetings with representatives of these boards and committees and the scrutiny of documents revealed that these bodies are systematically consulted also on quality matters

The dean has a very outspoken and leading position and is the driving force behind quality issues although these issues are not always resulting in proper- formalised - improvement measures.
As stated before a charismatic leader can have a catalyst function but at the same time the broader commitment of all stakeholders based on a shared quality vision is needed.

Given the small scale of the university with only three bachelor's programmes, management at institutional and at programme level substantially coincide. Consequently the decision-making structure is developing relatively uncomplicated with short lines of communication and mainly informal contacts. A good functioning quality system, however, also requires a formally organised structure especially needed after the pioneer's phase. This is certainly true for a system wanting to cater in due time for more programmes and more complicated decision-making processes.

Information on quality assurance is not yet readably available to all stakeholders. Their participation in the quality system would benefit from the availability of all necessary information on the university's website. A complete set of documents (preferably also in English) regarding the quality system and its various (sub)committees can be made easily accessible by launching a special webpage on quality assurance. Publishing new survey results, recent improvements measures, current quality issues, and minutes of the latest meetings of (sub)committees is essential for maximum involvement and transparency.
The university already publishes on the web a set of data containing information such as achievements of students, new degree programs, qualitative and quantitative indicators of the institution. Also the establishment of a system for informing employees about all activities related to quality assurance has started.

Assessment Standard 5: Organisation and decision-making structure – partially satisfactory
In general, organisational structures facilitate the implementation of a basic quality system but not all arrangements are equally effective. Issues include the existence of three quality units, the management style/ culture, and the actual involvement of all stakeholders. Also the university should find a more balanced approach to formal and informal lines of communication on quality.

The university is innovative in realising an organisational structure supportive for realising additional income.

The university is advised to invest in the further development and implementation of the quality system. This can also be helpful for the university in making good use of the results of the NVAO project.

General conclusion
From its vision regarding the quality of the education it provides, the executive board of the institution has developed quality relevant structures and processes that allow monitoring in a systematic way the quality of the educational programmes offered and contribute to quality enhancement. These quality relevant structures and processes include sufficient guarantees to detect and remedy perceived weaknesses and, finally, to maintain or move towards a robust and transparent system of internal quality assurance.

General conclusion – satisfactory
Assessing the five standards of the NVAO framework, the panel found that three standards are satisfactory and that two standards are partially satisfactory mainly due to the early stage of development. The panel's overall conclusion is satisfactory.
The audit panel is confident that quality of the programmes resulting in an efficient internal quality system has the priority of the management.