FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ

Ellen Hazelkorn | Stéphane Berthet | Crina Damsa
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Abstract

Title

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Authors

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FINEEC Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision

The University of Graz passed the audit on 25 August 2021.

The FINEEC Quality Label is valid until 25 August 2028.

The audit team's evaluation of evaluation areas I-III

I: HEI creates competence: *good*

II: HEI promotes impact and renewal: *good*

III: HEI enhances quality and well-being: *good*

HEI as a learning organisation – evaluation area chosen by the University of Graz

IV: Equal opportunities and diversity

Theme and partner for benchlearning

Theme: Multi-perspective exchange and further development in teaching, research and administration with the University of Leipzig. Strengthening Graz as a leading academic location for international researchers and students – case example: Welcome Center.

Partner: University of Leipzig

Key strengths and recommendations identified by the audit team

Strengths

- The University of Graz is an important strategic actor in its region (Styria) making an important contribution to social, cultural and economic life.
- The university has a strong mission statement, "We work for tomorrow", to increase emphasis on issues for society: climate change, societal health and sustainability.
- The university has a comprehensive and well organised quality system with functioning quality management tools.
- The university has a structured and systematic procedure, clearly defined processes and useful supporting documentation for curriculum development.
- The university is working in an ambitious and structured way to increase gender equality among its staff, with a mix of measures to address the issue.

Recommendations

- A greater emphasis should be placed on ensuring institutional coherence and connectivity between university high-level objectives and individual faculties and academic/researchers' actions.
- The university should foster a shared and widespread understanding of notions central to education, such as student-centred learning and continuous education. This could be promoted by creating arenas for sharing and actively exchanging teaching practices and addressing collectively challenges of teaching and curriculum implementation.
- There is a need to strengthen and embed a common understanding of societal engagement and its relevance across both teaching and research, and in everything that the university does, in order to overcome inconsistences that currently exist.
- The quality system needs to be more widely disseminated and better known so that every entity and individual takes ownership of it. This could be done by giving visibility to concrete examples of the usefulness of the quality system and the continuous improvement of quality tools and processes involving staff at all levels.
- Efforts should be made at the university to define what is meant by diversity, identify target groups for diversity work and structure it. The definition of diversity should be expanded to include aspects that may affect transition to higher education.

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Premise and implementation of the audit

1

1.1 Purpose of the audit

The University of Graz commissioned the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) to conduct an audit of the university. Quality audits of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) are guided by enhancement-led principles. The goal of enhancement-led evaluation is to involve the staff, students and stakeholders of a higher education institution (HEI) in recognising strengths, good practices and enhancement areas in the HEI's activities. The aim is also to support the HEI in achieving its own objectives, thus creating a premise for the continuous development of the HEI.

FINEEC's 2018–2024 audit framework assesses the functionality and effectiveness of the quality systems of HEIs. The focus of the audit is on the procedures used by the HEI to maintain and enhance the quality of its activities.

The purpose of the FINEEC audit framework 2018–2024 is

- to evaluate whether the quality work in the HEI meets the European quality assurance standards,
- to assess whether the quality system produces relevant information for the implementation of the strategy and the continuous development of the HEI's activities, and whether it results in effective enhancement activities,
- to encourage internationalisation, experimenting and a creative atmosphere at HEIs.

The principles of the audit framework are described in the FINEEC audit manual[1].

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1   FINEEC (2019). Audit manual for higher education institutions 2019-2024. Finnish Education Evaluation Centre. Publications: 21. Available at https://karvi.fi/en/publication/korkeakoulujen-auditointikasikirja-2019-2024-2

1.2 Evaluation areas and criteria

The FINEEC audit framework includes four evaluation areas.

I HEI creates competence

- The planning of education
- The implementation of education
- The evaluation and enhancement of education

II HEI promotes impact and renewal

- Managing societal engagement and impact
- Research, development and innovation activities and artistic activities with impact
- Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

III HEI enhances quality and well-being

- Using the quality system in strategic management
- Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff
- Functionality and development of the quality system

IV HEI as a learning organisation – An evaluation area selected by the HEI

- Equal opportunities and diversity (University of Graz)

Evaluation areas I–III are each assessed as one entity using the scale *excellent, good, insufficient*.

The level *excellent* means that the HEI shows evidence of long-term and effective enhancement work. The HEI's enhancement activities also create substantial added value for the HEI, stakeholders, or both. The HEI presents compelling examples of successful enhancement activities.

The level *good* for evaluation areas I–III is described in Appendix 1.

The level *insufficient* means that the HEI shows an absence of or major shortcomings in systematic, functioning, and participatory procedures in the evaluation area (I–III). There is no clear evidence of the impact of quality management in the enhancement of activities.

In order for the HEI to pass the audit, evaluation areas I–III should reach at least the level *good*.

1.3 Implementation of the audit

The audit was carried out by an international audit team. The members of the audit team were:

- Professor **Ellen Hazelkorn** Professor Emeritus, Technological University Dublin, Ireland, and Joint Managing Partner, BH Associates education consultants (chair)
- Vice-rector **Stéphane Berthet**, the University of Geneva
- Associate Professor **Crina Damşa**, the University of Oslo
- Research Associate and Doctoral Candidate **Vitus Püttmann**, Leibniz University Hannover
- Project Manager/Analyst **Aleksandra Sjöstrand**, the Swedish Council for Higher Education.

Counsellor of Evaluation **Mirella Nordblad**, FINEEC, acted as project manager of the audit. The audit was based on the material submitted by the University of Graz, including a self-assessment report and additional material requested by the audit team, and the audit team's online visit to the institution 18–20 May 2021. The audit team had also access to essential electronic materials and systems. The main stages and timetable of the audit were:

Agreement signed	26 November 2019
Appointment of the audit team	18 March 2020
Submission of the self-assessment report and benchlearning report	21 August 2020
Information and discussion event at the HEI	6 October 2020
Audit visit (online)	18–20 May 2021
Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision on the result	25 August 2021
Publication of the report	25 August 2021
Concluding seminar	October 2021

Benchlearning is used as a method in the FINEEC audit. The University of Graz conducted its benchlearning activity with the University of Leipzig. The theme of the benchlearning activity was: Multi-perspective exchange and further development in teaching, research and administration with the University of Leipzig. Strengthening Graz as a leading academic location for international researchers and students – case example: Welcome Center.

Organisation and strategy of the University of Graz

2

2.1 Organisation and key strategic areas

The University of Graz, located in the Styrian capital Graz, is a multidisciplinary university founded in 1585. The University of Graz is Austria's second oldest university and one of the largest in the country. The university has 31,000 students and 4,300 staff members. The university offers 37 bachelor's programmes, 70 master's programmes, 12 doctoral programmes and 2 diploma programmes (Wibi 2020). Continuing education programmes and courses are offered by the university-owned UNI for LIFE and Center for Continuing Education.

The University of Graz is a public university and a legal person under public law. The university comprises seven organisational units, including six faculties and an administration and services department. In addition, the university has 76 institutes, 25 faculty-level and 16 university-level centres. The rectorate, the university council and the senate are the governing bodies of the university. The organisation is presented in Figure 1.
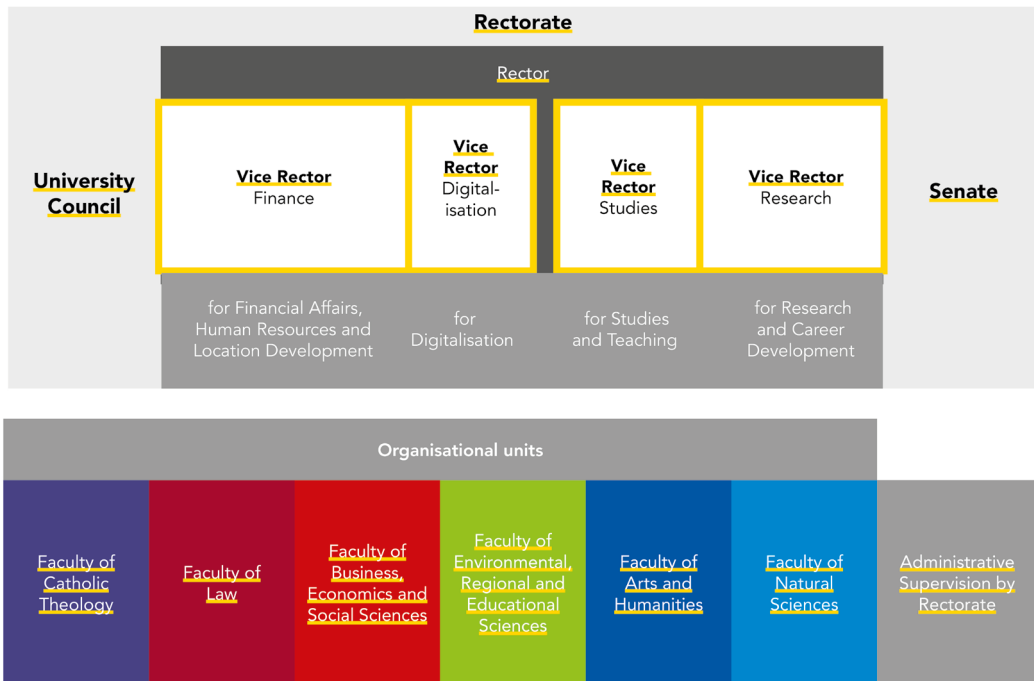
FIGURE 1 The organisation chart of the University of Graz

The University of Graz's slogan is "We work for tomorrow" and its development plan emphasises three impact dimensions: 1. Research and the promotion of young researchers, 2. Degree programmes and continuing education and 3. Societal engagement. The three impact dimensions were the same in the development plan of 2019–2024 but were further specified and updated in the new development plan 2022–2027 published in autumn 2021.
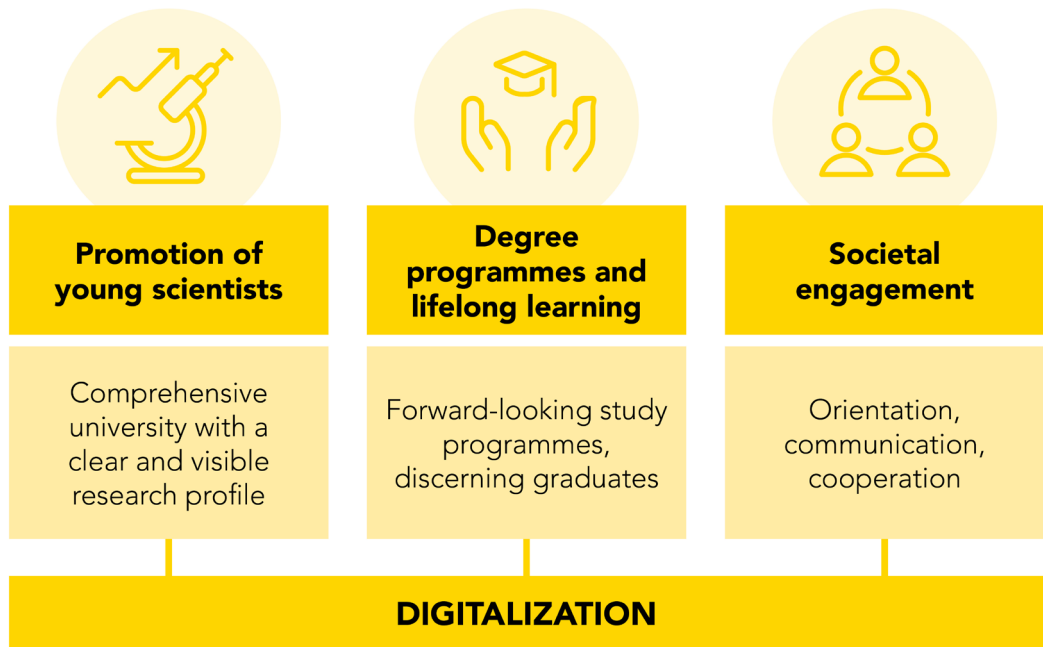
FIGURE 2 The three impact dimensions of the University of Graz Development Plan 2022–2027

The University of Graz has five Fields of Excellence in research:

- BioHealth (life sciences, chemistry)
- Climate Change Graz (climatology, earth sciences, economics, social sciences, biology, philosophy)
- Complexity of Life in Basic Research and Innovation (COLIBRI) (bio- and behavioural sciences,
- economics, mathematics, systems sciences)
- Smart Regulation (social and economic sciences, law, psychology, political science)
- Dimensions of Europeanization (history and linguistics, social sciences, law, political science)

The Fields of Excellence are complemented with research networks, which are active areas focused on socially relevant and future-oriented issues. The networks are The Human Factor in Digital Transformation, Brain and Behaviour, Heterogeneity and Cohesion, and Environment and Global Change.

2.2 Quality management system

As described by the university[2], quality management at the University of Graz is intended to ensure that resources, structures, processes and results are regularly reflected on and systematically developed with regard to their quality. The aims of the system are:

1. to establish a university-wide quality culture,
2. to implement the university strategy,
3. to make goals, procedures, processes and data more transparent,
4. to involve employees more in quality development,
5. to anchor quality development in all areas of the university,
6. to use quality instruments appropriately and optimise the existing instruments.

The quality management system is integrated in the strategic management of the university and follows a continuous quality cycle as described in Figure 3.
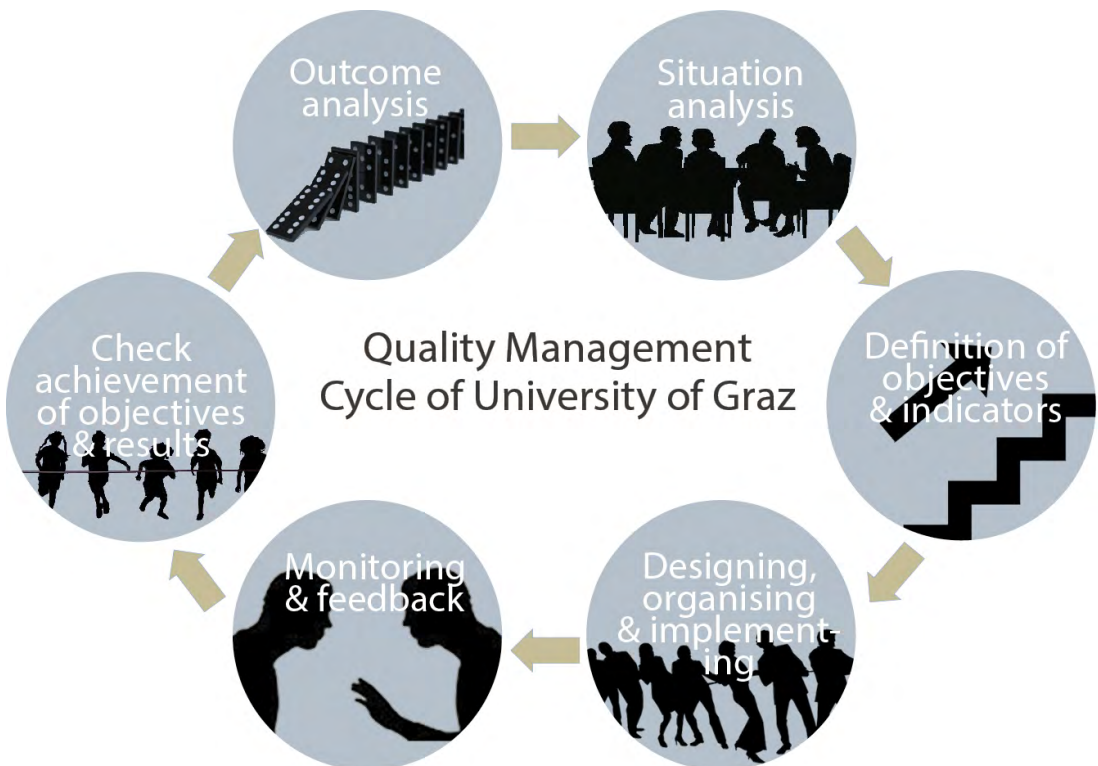
FIGURE 3 The quality management cycle of the University of Graz

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2   Konzept zum Qualitätsmanagement-System der Universität Graz / Quality management at the University of Graz -document

The key elements of the system are:

- Continuous strategic planning processes with monitoring of operations and feedback
- A reporting system that provides key data from the core areas and the cross-sectional areas
- Periodic and occasional evaluations of all fields of activities
- Strategic human resource development
- Annual appraisal interviews for academic and general staff
- Tracking initiatives on students and graduates
- Benchmarking initiatives

The quality management system is closely linked with the strategic management as described in Figure 4.
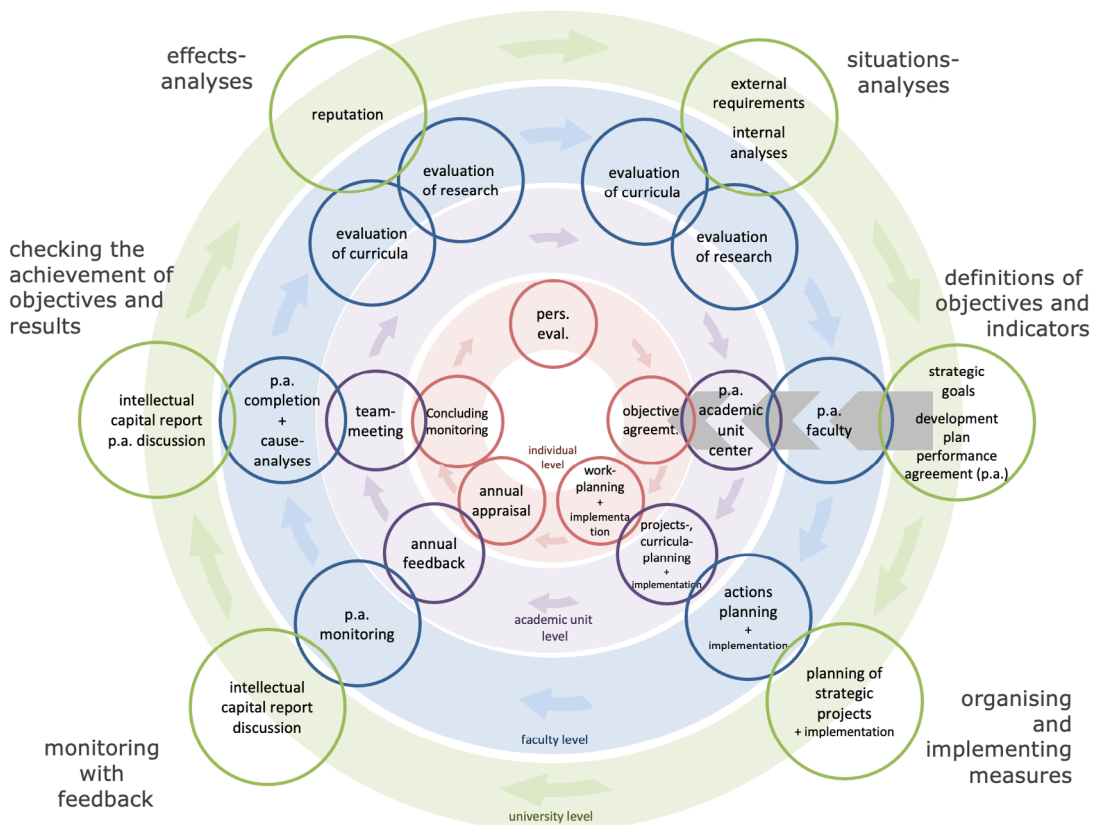
FIGURE 4 Linkage between the quality management cycle and strategic management

Evaluation area I: The University of Graz creates competence

3

Summary of the evaluation area I:
The University of Graz creates competence

Evaluation area I assesses the procedures which support student-centred, working-life oriented planning, implementation and enhancement of education, which is based on research or artistic activities.

Evaluation area I as a whole is at the level *good*.

The main strengths and recommendations identified by the audit team

Strengths

- The University of Graz has a structured and systematic procedure, clearly defined processes and useful supporting documentation for curriculum development.
- There is a clear institutional effort towards implementing digital transformation and towards implementing pedagogically sound approaches to teaching.
- The university has well-functioning procedures to assess the quality of education, including comprehensive data collection, renewed instruments for data collection and data analysis.

Recommendations

- The university should foster a shared and widespread understanding of notions central to education, such as student-centred learning and continuous education. This could be promoted by creating arenas for sharing and actively exchanging teaching practices and collectively addressing challenges of teaching and curriculum implementation.

- The university should develop a more systematic approach to curriculum review and evaluation, which should be conducted regularly, rely to a greater extent on quality assessment data and facilitate a more streamlined involvement of external stakeholders.
- In the area of doctoral education, the type of guidance, training and financial opportunities provided through the Doctoral Academy should be extended to all doctoral candidates.

3.1 The planning of education

A well-developed curriculum development process ensures the systematic planning of education across the university

Curriculum development and approval takes place through a thorough process, which provides a well-developed and established basis for the planning of education at the university. The involvement of a wide range of actors in the process allows for a broad representation of perspectives and interests. This includes students, who can influence curricula via their involvement in the curriculum committees, their representation in the senate and at the faculty level, and via the student union. In principle, the process foresees the involvement of external stakeholders as well. The structure of the process and the definition of the rights and responsibilities of those involved creates clarity and transparency. Several units of the university support the process and the curriculum committees by, amongst others, providing information generated by the quality management processes and advice on didactical matters. The support provided includes a handbook for the development of curricula, which covers legal, procedural and pedagogical matters comprehensively.

The curriculum development process ensures the conformity of degree programmes to relevant competence modules and a systematic measurement of workload. The national law in Austria prescribes that degree programmes have to conform to the National Framework for Qualifications and links the levels of the framework to other competence modules. This requirement is taken up during the curriculum development process via the curriculum development handbook. The handbook also provides guidance on the principles of ECTS for measuring student workload. Based on the audit visit, it nevertheless seems that there is a certain mismatch between ECTS allocated and the actual workload in some cases and that not all students are well informed about the workload of their studies and its measurement. This could be remedied by regular investigations of the workload calculations – as they have been conducted by the university before – and more communication on this matter.

A link between the programmes and university strategy is ensured in the planning process

The educational provision is connected to the university's strategy in several ways, although, the impact differs among programmes. Objectives defined in the institutional strategy find their way into programmes via the involvement of the rectorate and the senate into the curriculum development process. The process also explicitly foresees that the link between programmes and the institutional strategy is considered. This is complemented by initiatives targeting educational provision as a whole. One of these initiatives comprises efforts to ensure the acquisition of a broader range of competences by students, which is also one of the focal areas of the performance agreement between the university and the ministry. The impact of the institutional strategy is clearly visible in a number of cases. One example are the programmes related to the Fields of Excellence, which address overarching societal challenges and implement new course formats to strengthen research-based teaching and learning and the acquisition of generic competences. In other cases, however, the link is weaker. Initiation and success depend on the willingness of those involved in the programme development process to take up new impulses, which could be promoted by additional efforts from the side of the university management.

The labour market relevance of the educational provision can be further strengthened

The ways and extent to which programmes take the perspective of external stakeholders into account and are geared towards relevance for working life differ. All curricula have to define a competence profile that students are envisaged to acquire. These profiles are supposed to take into account the requirements of the labour market based on sources such as institutional data on the labour market success of graduates and exchanges with potential employers. Employers, as well as other external stakeholders, can furthermore receive a draft of curricula for providing feedback. Informal exchanges between university members and employers in the private and the public sector can add to these links. Based on the audit visit, it seems that not all of these possibilities are necessarily used, however. Reinforcing the involvement of external stakeholders and their expertise in the planning of education – and, ultimately, the labour market relevance of programmes – constitutes an area where improvements can be realised, as recognised by the university itself in the self-assessment report.

The connection of research to teaching and learning is ensured by the university's staff composition and the design of courses. Most of the staff members involved in teaching at the university are directly involved in research as well. The flexibility with which individual courses can be implemented enables teachers to adapt their courses to the current state of the art of research in the field. Especially at the master's degree level, a direct link between research and teaching is supported by specific course formats, such as courses including data analysis by students or laboratory work.

A student-centred and learning outcome-oriented approach to teaching and learning is at least foreseen during the curriculum development process. The curriculum development handbook covers this approach, addressing both procedural and pedagogical aspects. This includes the

alignment of teaching methods, assessment methods and learning environments with learning outcomes. However, the actual uptake of this approach varies and should be promoted more thoroughly (for details see Section 3.2).

The educational provision of the university does cover well the different needs for continuous learning. Those in the area of continuing professional development are covered by UNI for LIFE; those of a broader range of learners, including those who do not meet the formal university entrance requirements, by the Center for Continuing Education. Both units collect feedback from learners and use it to adapt the offers.

Internationalisation at home and mobility windows are integrated in the curricula

Internationalisation is embedded well in the university's strategy and considered during the design of programmes. On the strategic level, the university covers internationalisation in its mission statement, identified it as one of the strategic priorities in the area of teaching and learning, and devised a separate strategy on the topic. The strategic importance accorded to internationalisation is visible in the form of, amongst others, the development of and importance accorded to joint programmes, trans-national networking activities such as the ARQUS Alliance, and efforts to foster teaching in the English language. With regard to degree programmes, internationalisation, including internationalisation "at home", is one of the issues to be considered during the curriculum design process. This is supported by specific guidelines on the internationalisation of curricula. As a result, each programme has to include recommendations for studying abroad and to build mobility windows into the curriculum. International cooperation is furthermore used to enhance educational provision at the university beyond matters of internationalisation. One example for this is the ARQUS Alliance, where the university engages in joint learning experiences with other universities from several European countries. Another noteworthy example is the establishment of the Uni Graz Welcome Center as a service platform for foreign students, staff members and visitors. This initiative has also been the focus of the university's benchlearning exercise in cooperation with the University of Leipzig, Germany.

3.2 The implementation of education

Clear and transparent structures should be developed
for the recognition of prior learning

With regard to student selection and management of study progress, the University of Graz has established an orderly system of procedures and documents in place, and clearly assigned responsibilities within this system. While there is open access to universities in Austria, wherein selection processes in a narrow sense do not exist for all programmes, the system for the recognition of prior learning, on the other hand, is rather underdeveloped in terms of formal structures and procedures, and, based on the audit interviews, not sufficiently transparent. While acknowledging the value of this system, the audit interviews indicate a rather bureaucratic procedure, where the

phases and the timespan of the process are not always clear to applicants, and involving at times analogue documentation. There is a clear degree of transparency and streamlining needed in the process, in order to make the criteria and procedures more clear and accessible to applicants/students.

More coherent and concerted efforts are needed to generate renewal of both curricula and teaching

Institutional goals and strategy indicate a clear focus on increasing the quality of education, addressed through pedagogically grounded teaching and learning approaches, the collection of course evaluation and feedback data, and through the development of teaching competence of faculty. Variation in teaching approaches, efforts to enable interactive ways of working, alignment between elements of the course design (i.e., learning outcomes, teaching methods, learning activities and forms of assessment) were reported in the audit by both teaching staff and students. A broad range of competences, such as transversal competences in interdisciplinary modules in master's degree programmes are considered important for the achievement of learning outcomes and students' formation as professionals and citizens. An example are collaborative programmes between the university and the technical university, which offer opportunities for students to attend programmes and courses cross-institutionally. While the assessment forms may be aligned pedagogically with other curriculum elements, the audit interviews indicate insufficient transparency in the assessment process and grading. More clarity about how selected assessment forms contribute to identify students' knowledge and competence development is required.

Student-centred learning has been identified as an area of importance for the university. As discussed in relation to the planning of education, student-centred learning is foreseen in the curriculum development phase, yet the extent to which it is actually implemented appears not very coherent. The audit interviews indicate varying awareness and understanding of this approach. Whereas some indeed consider it a holistic concept, others have a rather narrow understanding, for instance, seeing it as a design feature of individual courses. The self-assessment report has identified a series of projects and initiatives intended to create environments for students to engage and be active in their learning processes (as per the university's development plan and strategic objectives). Examples are instruments for collecting student feedback, internship formats (e.g., the Pedagogical-Practical Studies in teacher education), collaboration among programmes and service-learning, research training and scientific writing. While these have the potential to contribute to students participating in a variety of activities, they appear to be rather irregular and not indicative of an institution-wide and shared understanding of what student-centred learning entails, and how these can be shaped and facilitated. Another area of strategic importance identified is service-learning, where the university, students and community are involved in generative and mutually relevant efforts (see Chapter 4 for further elaboration).

The audit team commends the university for its organisation of distance learning and facilitation of learning through adapted teaching and digitalisation of teaching and learning activities, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Centre for Digital Teaching and Learning, established in 2008, helped prepare the university for the sudden impact of the pandemic on all its activities. It was able to introduce new practices across the delivery of services and into its teaching and

learning. The digital transformation agenda is vital to all aspects of the university and these achievements will provide important lessons for how the university moves forward. Based on the audit there appeared to be stark differences between teachers, ranging from mere standard lecture format to highly interactive and engaging learning situations. Adaptive forms of teaching and learning, especially in the online mode, were rarely mentioned. Also providing feedback on learning, based on formative and summative assessment, and the way this feedback is provided appears to be at the discretion of the individual teachers, with some going to a great extent and others not engaging such aspects. While various teaching approaches are needed depending on the discipline, envisioned learning outcomes or student backgrounds, such differences indicate a privatisation of the teaching act to the extent that it can generate unequal opportunities for students.

The development of teaching competence is indicated as an enhancement area by the university. This is recognised in structures for compulsory pedagogical training for newly employed faculty, provided through, for example, the UNISTART-Wiss programme, and by the Competence Center of University Teaching, Centre for Digital Teaching and Learning (CDTL) and UniIT. The development of didactical competences by other staff members is optional and depends on the preferences of individuals, and seems to be valued in the consideration of teaching skills in terms of appointment procedures and target agreements. Placing greater emphasis on didactical competences as part of the continuing professional development of all staff members could therefore enhance the overall quality of education at the university. In addition, the development of digital competence more evenly among staff and the use of digitally enhanced teaching, in a form that leads to digital transformation and not mere digitalisation of infrastructures and activities, are issues that require further attention.

With regard to approaches intended to generate renewal of both curriculum and teaching, the audit team recommends a more concerted and coherent approach. The university could start with raising awareness and operationalise such notions at the institutional level, in collaboration with the pedagogical experts and continuing with developing and implementing curricula that hold the principles of Scholarship of teaching and learning ISoTL[3] at the core. Students and stakeholders of relevance should also be involved in such processes, especially in the case of the service-learning oriented curriculum development and implementation. A strategic agenda regarding the development and enhancement of collective approaches to teaching and digital transformation has been identified by both self-assessment report and interviews with the university leadership. To match these ambitions, there is a need for creating a collective teaching culture and arenas for sharing and actively exchanging good practices of teaching, but especially for enticing collaborations among teachers, pedagogical innovation and digital transformation that reach their end-beneficiaries, the students.

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3   Felten, Peter (2013). Teaching and Learning Inquiry: The ISSOTL Journal. 1 (1): 121–125.:10.20343/teachlearninqu.1.1.121.

Students' integration to working life is supported by innovative course formats and extracurricular activities

The connection to working life is represented through elective courses and course formats implemented in various projects and initiatives, wherefore these possibilities for competence development are not necessarily an integral, obligatory element of study programmes. Practice firms, internship placements, Moot Courts and Law Clinics are examples. All bachelor's, master's and diploma students have the opportunity to include practical training in their studies as elective studies if practical training is not included as a compulsory element in their curricula. Practice professorships are an arrangement used to support and encourage the involvement of practitioners, as another way of linking education to the world of work. The career support services provide an offer related to the labour market entrance, but the audit interviews indicate that this may not sufficiently account for the changes of the labour market and their communication and that interaction with beneficiaries requires a more proactive approach. In this area, the audit team recommends the university to consider a more clear framing of how these activities and components are linked to learning outcomes, knowledge and competences to be acquired by the students, and how these are relevant for working life. The audit team also recommends clearer communication internally, and a more proactive and engaging approach involving the beneficiaries.

The Doctoral Academy is a commendable initiative that should be extended to all doctoral students

The Doctoral Academy Graz is an umbrella organisation for doctoral education, gathering around 180 students. The Academy provides good research training opportunities, employment conditions and international orientation, enhanced by external funding. This is a commendable initiative, which has the potential to further enhance doctoral education. However, this includes only a small number of doctoral researchers. There are services provided to all doctoral students by the DocService, which appear to be sufficient, but clearly different in terms of quality and variety from those offered to the Doctoral Academy members. The audit team recommends that the university extends the training offer and infrastructure to all doctoral students in order to increase the quality of education and create equal opportunities.

Various services, initiatives and projects directed to support student study path

Attempts to ensure flexible study paths for students with different needs, at various stages in life and career, the efficient progress and completion of studies as well as the well-being and equality of students are made through various initiatives and projects. Good practices such as the Welcome Week and the Student Service Center structures have been identified by the audit team, which physically bundle several services offered to students. However, the former is organised by student representatives, without support from the university. The audit interviews indicate that not all strategies and intended services are perceived as supporting flexibility and being equally efficient. While the university has good offers related to the continuous education programmes, the limited offer on elective courses that would provide alternatives to the mainstream study paths is pointed

out by different data. The curricula, programme structures and support services are well organised, but seem only partly calibrated to provide adaptive support for students threatened by dropout, study delays and socio-emotional difficulties, especially during the pandemic year. Tailored structures and support for first-time and female students in STEM disciplines have been identified but fall short on the aforementioned categories. A more active use of data collected on study progress to assess the actual needs for support of students' learning needs is recommended. This would generate better (curricular) alternatives and support structures, provide better communication about these services, and increase their visibility and accessibility.

3.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

The course feedback system has been systematically improved

The university collects data on and feedback from students systematically via various channels. The data collected and analysed as part of the quality system of the university cover, amongst others, demographic characteristics of the student body, the study progress of students and the employment status and conditions of graduates. As also envisaged by the university, complementing these mostly quantitative data with more qualitative information would allow for covering a broader range of issues such as the societal relevance of programmes and the social engagement activities of students.

Students can have their voices heard directly via their representation in governing bodies at several levels of the institution, the representatives of the student union and informal exchanges with representatives of the university. The rectorate also interacts directly with student representatives on a regular basis, and collects targeted feedback, for example, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. As regards degree programmes and courses, the perspective of students is considered via course evaluations and their involvement in the curriculum development process.

A particularly noteworthy development is the current revision of the instruments for collecting student feedback on courses, which constitutes a major improvement regarding the evaluation and enhancement of the educational provision of the university. The evaluation tools currently in use will soon be replaced by a revised, more flexible survey accompanied by a range of additional tools supporting teaching staff in gathering insights into students' experiences. The quality of the new instruments owes much to the process of their development, which involved representatives of the institutional management, teaching staff members, students, and members of the service units in a participatory manner. As a result, the instruments developed are adapted to different needs within the institution and provide teachers with a choice of instruments suitable for their specific purpose.

Whereas the feedback collection processes are well established and used, scope for improvement remains regarding the ways in which the feedback received is handled. Generally, the feedback provided by students is taken up to improve educational provision and the processes surrounding it. Especially when it comes to individual courses, however, the dependence of the uptake on

individual teachers does lead to a lack of response in some cases. The university's educational provision could therefore be improved by ascertaining that there is an actual follow-up on the feedback provided in all cases. Also in those cases where feedback has been taken up, it could be communicated better which changes have been made as a result. Enhancing students' competences as feedback givers – which has been identified as an area of enhancement by the university itself in the self-assessment report – would add to the establishment of a broader feedback culture within the university. As it was reported to the audit team that feedback to teachers is not in all cases anonymous, ensuring this would be another important improvement going forward.

A regular review and evaluation of curricula would enhance the educational provision

A more wide-ranging possibility for enhancing the quality of educational provision consists of a systematic use of the information and data available for the revision of curricula. At the moment, revisions of programmes and their curricula take place upon request only (with the exception of special cases such as joint programmes). With a view to ensuring the relevance of programmes, also vis-à-vis the competence needs of students, these revisions should be conducted on a regular basis. The broad range of information and data available to the institution provides a solid basis for this. In the case of some of the continuing education offers, such regular feedback loops do indeed exist already.

Efforts have been made to improve student support services

Complementing current efforts, a more holistic and institutionally embedded approach to quality enhancement would benefit the provision of student support services as well. As shown by, for instance, the bundling of support services in the Student Service Center, there are already sizeable efforts to improve the provision of support services to students. All of the units involved also engage in their own evaluation activities of their services and are in regular (informal) contact with each other. With the exception of recently introduced target agreements between the rectorate and service units, those quality enhancement activities are, however, somewhat detached from the overarching efforts of the university. The audit team recommends that the student support services are better integrated in the university's quality system. Support services, as other areas (see also section 5.3), would also benefit from further strengthening a quality culture in which quality management forms a part of staff's everyday activities.

Evaluation area II: The University of Graz promotes impact and renewal

4

Summary of the evaluation area II:
The University of Graz promotes impact and renewal

Evaluation area II assesses the procedures used to manage and improve societal engagement, strengthen the impact of the HEI's research, development and innovation as well as artistic activities, and support an innovative organisational culture.

Evaluation area II as a whole is at the level *good*.

The main strengths and recommendations identified by the audit team

Strengths

- The University of Graz has a strong mission statement "We work for tomorrow" to increase emphasis on issues for society: climate change, societal health, sustainability.
- Societal impact forms part of the university performance agreement with the ministry, and faculty agreements with the rectorate.
- The university is committed to strengthening its research to ensure that it makes an impact on society by deepening cooperation locally and regionally.

Recommendations

- There is a need to strengthen and embed a common understanding of societal engagement and its relevance across both teaching and research, and in everything that the university does, in order to overcome the inconsistences that currently exist.

- The university should develop a societal engagement roadmap and implementation plan with timelines and clear responsibilities to ensure that the strategic objectives can be successfully achieved. Alongside this, there should be a process for monitoring and assessing progress, using its quality system.
- Collaboration with external stakeholders should be more firmly embedded in a structured and holistic way so that it becomes intrinsic to the university way of operating.

4.1 Managing societal engagement and impact

Societal engagement and impact are highlighted in the strategy

The University of Graz is to be commended for identifying societal impact and renewal as a key priority and differentiator for the university. The university's mission statement, "we work for tomorrow", signifies its high-level objective to embed societal engagement and impact across everything that it does, to foster consciousness about societal engagement and impact amongst its students, and to address global challenges impacting and affecting society. Membership of the Arqus European University Alliance will play a transformational role across the university, supporting new initiatives in teaching and learning, research, student and academic life, professional services, etc. The 7th faculty Centre for Society, Science and Communications is one such example, and is tasked with playing a significant role promoting open science and rethinking the research reward and assessment system. Its attachment to the rectorate is especially significant, sending out a powerful message to internal and external stakeholders of strategic intent.

The University of Graz Development Plan 2022–2027 defines societal engagement and impact as "placing a focus on issues of justice and democratisation and facilitating participatory, transdisciplinary dialogues and research that helps turn those affected into participants." Fields of Excellence were established in 2019 to encourage staff and students to work on socially relevant topics such as climate change, societal health, and sustainability. This is indicated also by reference to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with particular attention to SDG 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 16 as mentioned also in the Development Plan.

The university aims to strengthen knowledge transfer by expanding public awareness, communicating the results of its research and stimulating dialogue with the public. It does this by hosting public events and public lectures which are also broadcast and streamed, and posting blogs. It promotes greater cooperation with society and business through different flagship initiatives, such as the Center for Knowledge and Innovation Transfer (ZWI), the Pre-Seed Academy, Centre for Continuing Education and TIMEGATE (Transfer Initiative for Management and Entrepreneurship Basics, Awareness, Training and Employability). Collaboration with Graz University of Technology, involving the development of joint education and research programmes, is another praiseworthy development. The University Museum is an important cultural player reaching beyond the

university community to the wider public. There are also good practice examples of internships and service learning in the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences, Faculty of Law and Faculty of Environmental, Regional and Educational Sciences.

The university shows evidence of wanting to build upon its impressive range of initiatives. The challenge is to embed these examples as a core and distinguishing principle of the university. While the mission statement is important, there are varying understandings and interpretations of key concepts making holistic implementation a challenge. A key objective for success should be ensuring a broader, deeper and more common understanding across the entire university. This includes ensuring that the commitment to societal engagement and impact does not only apply to research but is intrinsic to teaching and learning, curriculum design, delivery and assessment, student learning and high impact learning pedagogies, etc.

A more systematic approach to implementation and follow-up is needed

"Societal impact" is a component of the performance agreement between the University of Graz and the Ministry of Education, Science and Research indicating that it is a high priority within the country. Reciprocally, it is also mentioned in the performance agreements between individual faculties and the rectorate. The agreements set out a range of objectives including societal commitment. However, there is no consistent understanding or approach, strategic plan or ways to measure achievement.

There is an underlying assumption, expressed by many during the audit visit, that societal engagement and impact was intrinsic to particular research fields such as climate change or doing excellent research rather than being an important objective for the university and society. Others expressed the view that engagement with the local community was a natural part of curriculum development or their own work, e.g., influencing policy or legal judgements or advising refugees. These differences were most evident between academic and professional disciplines, respectively. This suggests an uneven understanding of what societal impact and engagement means, why it is relevant for all disciplines and scientific inquiry, and how it can be monitored and assessed.

At the same time, societal engagement and impact is perceived primarily as the university promoting what it does in a uni-directional fashion, via lectures and other public communications activities. For example, the university aims to strengthen its societal impact by pointing out what it does and emphasising the impact of its findings. Instead, the university should develop a more comprehensive understanding of societal engagement and impact that promotes a pro-active two-way, mutually beneficial process of on-going dialogue.

Similarly, there is a tendency to point to the outputs of the university's considerable research activity on societal problems as evidence of undertaking research on societal change and trends. This work is certainly very important, but on its own it does not constitute having an institutional approach to societal engagement and impact. Furthermore, it is not evident that the outcomes of this research are used to inform the university's own strategic decisions.

As such, while societal engagement and impact are seen as an important institutional objective, there is insufficient follow-through across the university. Definitions, interpretation, and commitment vary, and there is an absence of clearly defined goals and identified pathways to reach those goals. The university acknowledges some of its areas for improvement including the need to further strengthen its engagement with external stakeholders in a more structured way. However, there is still an over-emphasis on research rather than seeing the importance of embedding engagement in everything that the university does. Setting out appropriate procedures to support societal engagement with a workplan, as discussed below, would be an important start.

4.2 Research, development and innovation activities and artistic activities with impact

Research as the driver of the university's societal impact

Research, development and innovation (RDI) is seen as being the primary vehicle through which the university makes an impact on knowledge and on society. In particular, the university identified Fields of Excellence as places where societally relevant topics of concern to the future are being addressed. The objective is that research should provide "information that enables members of society and politicians to make better decisions".[4]

There are examples of good initiatives happening across the university. Particular attention is drawn to the work of the 7th Faculty, the Center for Continuing Education, the RCE Graz-Styria Centre for Sustainable Social Transformation, and the Center of Entrepreneurship and Applied Business Studies. New initiatives through the Arqus European University Alliance will make an important contribution in the future, and lead to potentially transformative initiatives. HEInnovate, a self-assessment tool developed conjointly by the EU and OECD, is used to assess innovation potential. The university has an Open Access Policy including concrete measures, and there is support available for open science by researchers provided by the research support services and the library. As the other universities in Austria, the University of Graz is a member of the Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity (ÖAWI) which investigates allegations of scientific misbehaviour in Austria. The university has the appropriate bodies, procedures and support in place for good scientific practice.

While research was seen by many as automatically having societal impact, societal engagement and impact tends to be focused primarily on research outputs. The importance for research practice is less fully understood. Emphasis is placed on traditional indicators of excellence (e.g., publications, grants won, income earned) whereas engagement in projects or working with NGOs or teaching are not rewarded. In the future the intention is to focus on knowledge transfer and spinoff entrepreneurial activities, but this approach will not provide a sufficiently comprehensive approach. The university might consider adopting the principles of responsible research and innovation (RRI). This would help broaden the concept of societal engagement

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4   Natural Science Performance Agreement, 2019–2021

and impact to include the co-production of knowledge. This embraces the idea that "end users" should be embedded from the earliest stage in the research project rather than viewing them as either human subjects or an audience for the results.

In this regard, the establishment of the Doctoral Academy is, as mentioned above in Section 3.2, a welcome development. It is important to ensure consistency in training and the understanding of the key principles of good research practice, e.g., research integrity, open science, societal engagement and impact, citizen involvement in science, and valuing societal impact and benefit. These ideas were not strongly in evidence during the audit visit across all disciplines. Because not all doctoral students are involved in the Doctoral Academy, special attention should be given to ensuring systematic understanding and processes around responsible research practices across the university.

In recent years, there has been a dynamic debate across Europe, and elsewhere, about developing new ways to assess research quality and academic careers which takes account of open science, engagement with society, responsible metrics (combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies), and diversity. Many people acknowledged discussions around societal engagement and impact was at an early stage in the university. As the university develops its societal engagement policies, it is urged to incorporate discussion of these ideas.

4.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

The organisational culture is supportive of innovative and new thinking

The university supports a wide range of different and interesting initiatives which have the potential to be transformational. It supports partnerships, collaboration, and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. There is an open and engaging discussion culture within the university and the university encourages dynamic responses and initiatives from all its staff and students. This is the type of university and organisational culture associated with being a learning organisation, which is supportive of innovative and new thinking.

Partnership and collaboration is strongly promoted with the business and civic society communities as illustrated by the various joint events, entrepreneurship and internship opportunities, partnership with Graz University of Technology, involvement in the teacher training network in south eastern Austria, and membership in the Arqus European University initiative. The university also has wide-ranging collaboration with its five international strategic partner universities (Leipzig University, University of Ljubljana, Montclair State University, Nanjing University and University of Waterloo). The alumni network has existed since 2005 and involves a wider range of activities and continual exchanges. These collaborations at both the local, national and international level highlight the university's critical involvement and willingness to mutual share knowledge. The university also clearly seeks partnerships and collaborations that enhance its activities. Agreements and strategic partnerships are evaluated regularly, as indicated by the university. However, further work is required, as recognised by the university, to involve external stakeholders, e.g., alumni, employers, and society, to act as members of an advisory board.

Benchlearning supported the enhancement of the Welcome Center

The university conducted the audit's benchlearning activity with one of its long-term strategic partners, the University of Leipzig. The benchlearning activity focused on the Welcome Center which formed one case example of a wider collaboration between the universities on research, teaching and administration. The University of Graz strives for stronger internationalisation of its campus. A part of this goal is to make the university more attractive among international university members, visiting researchers and students. Developing the Welcome Center as a focal service point for this target group is one of the measures taken, and the benchlearning activity was well targeted to support this work. Based on the university's benchlearning report, the activity was based on mutual learning and exchange, and good examples and concrete improvement measures were identified in both universities.

Institution-wide approaches are needed to embed the university's ambitions

The university's mission statement to "work for tomorrow" shows strong commitment from the leadership of the university but that commitment needs to be strengthened across the university. The high level of autonomy afforded to faculties and individual units is creating inconsistencies in the understanding, commitment, and practices with respect to societal engagement and impact. There is an over-reliance on passive communication by way of emails and similar messaging rather than active engagement with the university community in this strategic conversation. Professional services must be equally integral to this process. The university would benefit from an institution-wide approach to embed its ambition in everything that it does. This includes highlighting its relevance for education as well as for research practice and the quality management of research.

Accordingly, the university is urged to develop a societal engagement and impact framework which embeds mutual engagement with society in teaching and research alongside fostering scientific confidence, knowledge and understanding in society, and being more responsive to society. This should include policies and processes to recognise and value a wider understanding of excellence, which includes civic engagement. Intrinsic to this, the university should draw more strongly upon its civic and regional partnerships to help inform a longer-term perspective for its strategic decision making. The strategic objectives are good, but a roadmap and clearer implementation plan, with measurable targets, and mechanisms to monitor and assess progress, is vital.

The University of Graz has a long and important history. Stemming from its foundation in 1585, the university has played a formidable role in the social, cultural, economic and political history of Styria. In the future, how the university engages with its wider community, internal as well as external stakeholders, will increasingly be a defining indicator of quality.

Evaluation area III: The University of Graz enhances quality and well-being

5

Summary of the evaluation area III:
The University of Graz enhances quality and well-being

Evaluation area III assesses the functioning and development of the quality system and how the system is used in strategic management. The procedures used to support the competence development and well-being of the staff are also assessed.

Evaluation area III as a whole is at the level *good*.

The main strengths and recommendations identified by the audit team

Strengths

- The University of Graz has a comprehensive and well organised quality system with functioning quality management tools.
- The dashboard of indicators gives the necessary information and a good overview of the needs of the university. Regular meetings between the rectorate, deans and the head of the quality management department ensure that the data is followed up and discussed.
- There are good procedures to welcome new academic and administrative staff, and to offer them support and training in their career development.

Recommendations

- The quality system needs to be more widely disseminated and better known so that every entity and individual takes ownership of it. This could be done by giving visibility to concrete examples of the usefulness of the quality system and the continuous improvement of quality tools and processes involving staff at all levels.

- As young staff/professors seem to be more supportive of the quality management procedures, it could be useful in the promotion of the quality system to take advantage of their experience and use them as promoters of the system.
- The university is encouraged to use "responsible metrics" for research evaluation.

5.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

The university's quality system is strongly linked with strategic management

To sustainably fulfil its tasks in an increasingly complex environment and to achieve its objectives agreed upon in the various performance agreements and in its development plan, the University of Graz has strong assets at its disposal: the quality of its staff, its organisation and its quality system.

The Konzept zum Qualitätsmanagement-System der Universität Graz[5] -document available on the university's website describes the concept of the quality system, including the principles, objectives and responsibilities of the quality system. The document is somewhat outdated, but the university's quality policy described in the document still forms a common basis for the quality work. Although the core aspects of the system may not change that frequently, the audit team advises the university to regularly review and update the key document describing its system. It could be useful for the university to further specify the responsibilities of quality management especially in terms of education, research and societal engagement. The document, including the illustration of the system, could also more strongly underline that quality and quality management are the responsibilities of every staff member.

The quality system covers all the institution's activities and meets legal, societal and performance expectations. The system aims to implement the university's strategy and to make the objectives, procedures and data produced relating to research, teaching, internationalisation, resources, diversity, and gender equality more transparent. Further aims of the system are to increase the involvement of staff in quality development and thus establish a quality culture within the institution. The key elements of the quality system and its connection with strategic management, as described in quality system concept document and self-assessment report, are illustrated in Figures 3 and 4 (see Chapter 2).

There is a close link between the university's quality system and its strategy. The system is directly linked to the various performance agreements – Ministry – University, Rectorate – Faculties, Faculties – Academic Units, and staff evaluation – and to the university's development plan. The implementation of the university's strategy is based on a quality system that affects teaching, research, and administrative support at different levels of the institution. Since the last audit, the quality system of the University of Graz has been further developed so that the quality data collected can be better integrated into the strategic discussions of the university (teaching, research

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5   Konzept zum Qualitätsmanagement-System der Universität Graz available at https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/Lqm/ Dokumente/Qualitaesmanagement1.pdf

development, strengthening of the fields of excellence) and thus offer relevant decision support for management at different levels, in terms of resource allocation, development of the various entities, and staff.

Based on the self-assessment and interviews, the university's strategy and development plans are developed through a participative process involving representative bodies such as the senate and the faculty committee as well as staff. Typically, in the context of monitoring performance agreements between the rectorate and faculties, discussions are held in working groups, bringing together faculty and student representatives. Strategic objectives are also conveyed in staff appraisals and for newly appointed professors in their personal agreements. At regular events such as Unitalk or the quarterly publication Uni.news print, the rectorate provides information on the strategic objectives and important developments of the institution. All these elements allow all staff to appreciate the connection between their own work and the university's objectives, although based on the university's own assessment its strategy could be even more effectively communicated in the university community.

Quality management is well built into the university's governance structures

An important point is that the quality system is supported by the rector, who assumes responsibility for it in terms of objectives, resource allocation, implementation and development of the system. The quality system is therefore placed at the highest level of the institution and gives an important institutional dimension to the quality policy. In addition, there are two operational structures that play an essential role in the quality system. The Department for Performance and Quality Management (LQM) develops and runs the quality system and provides all the relevant data for the system. The Department of Academic Service (LSS) develops the tools for quality management in teaching and study assessment.

All actors in university governance are directly or indirectly involved in the university's quality system which contributes to the establishment of a quality culture within the institution: The university council via the development plan and the performance agreement with the ministry, with the rector and the rectorate; the senate via the rules of evaluation, the rules of appointment procedures, and development planning; deans via the implementation of performance agreements with the rectorate and their activity in leading academic units and individuals; study deans via quality control of courses and examinations in each study area; and institute directors via strategic direction of the institute, evaluation of staff, implementation of institute performance agreements, and research evaluations. The administrative units are responsible for quality management in their area of competence under the supervision of the rectorate. Finally, students who are the main actors in the field of teaching evaluations, have representatives in the senate and in each faculty council. The university also has a quality management board which advises the university management on quality assurance. The entire quality system is driven by the Department for Performance and Quality Management which produces data for particular dashboards at different levels (institution, faculty, institute, etc.).

Data is systematically followed up and used in the management of the university

To ensure the follow-up of the feedback from the quality system, regular meetings are held between the rectorate, the deans, and the Department for Performance and Quality Management (LQM). The data related to the different indicators presented in the dashboards are then discussed to make decisions on the development of the university, a faculty, or an academic unit. The LQM is an important strategic planning structure that provides a good overview of the university at different levels in research, teaching and management. The monitoring of performance agreements, the dashboards produced, the regular meetings between the rectorate and the deans make it possible to identify the university's needs, particularly in terms of academic and administrative staff (planning of departures, replacement or not of a given position in the same field or transfer elsewhere). Curriculum and research evaluations also make it possible to identify needs and improve certain situations that have been identified, such as encourage more applications to the ERC programme, to increase applications for external funding, more publications in peer review journals, etc.

Risk management complements the quality system

The audit team commends the university for complementing its quality system with a risk management approach. This risk management concerns all parts of the university, administration and finance, students, professors, etc. The most intensive work has been done on financial risk management, which is a real risk for an autonomous university. As noted in audit interviews, the University of Graz was in the leading position with several universities in Austria to install a risk management council, with a working group and an external consultant. The risks are assessed by an external consultant together with the university and then discussed with the rectorate to define measures to take to improve the situation.

5.2 Supporting the competence development and well-being of staff

The university has good procedures in place to support new staff

The university's quality system, including follow-up of performance agreements, the development plan, teaching and research evaluations, and the annual performance reviews of staff members, allow the identification of staff members' needs in terms of competences to be developed or further training to be taken. In addition, the university has various services available to staff to assist them in the university's mission and strategic goals, which also helps to provide staff with competence development in different domains. For newcomers – young researchers, administrative staff and senior managers -there is the compulsory UNISTART training programme customised for these three target groups. The UNISTART-Wiss programme is specifically targeted at young scientists. With the Department of Academic Services and its Teaching Development Team and with Competence Center of University Teaching, teachers have access to training courses that enable them, if necessary, to strengthen their didactic and methodological skills and improve the quality of their teaching. All teachers can also benefit from the Competence Centre for

University Teaching for individual support and advice on how to develop their course and better meet students' expectations. The human resources department also organises an internal training programme for all employees every year.

Based on the audit interviews, young researchers are well supported at the university, with services like DocService, Doctoral Academy Graz, support of postdocs, the Center for Empirical Research, Competence Centre for Higher Education Teaching, Center for Digital Teaching and Learning, and gender- and diversity-oriented training. In addition to these services, faculties have set up a personal advisory board which deals with the promotion of young scientists and staff development measures. This board meets regularly with young researchers and follows the development of these young researchers to see for example if "more senior" colleagues can help them in their career development. The Dean of Study can even intervene to reduce the teaching load of a young researcher so that he or she can complete a publication, for example.

Systematic procedures are in place to support well-being, equality and non-discrimination of staff

Based on the audit material and interviews, the university has transparent and documented procedures in place for staff recruitment in which different aspects in the process are regulated in detail. The process is cooperative involving several actors within the university and the by law compulsory Working Group for Equal Opportunities has to be involved in the process.

The university conducts regular surveys on job satisfaction and psychosocial stress in the workplace and a range of specialist advice and services are offered. The annual performance review, which addresses issues of personal development and goals, is also an opportunity to discuss the quality of working conditions and how to improve them (working time arrangements, sport, work-life balance). The university offers various services to support its staff in their well-being (stress, conflict, discrimination, unikid, unicare, dual career, Welcome Center, etc.). Among these measures, there are also procedures and activities which are dedicated to diversity and equity. Programmes and workshops have been set up where professors, staff and students meet and discuss topics related to diversity and inclusion and how to prevent prejudice. There are also seminars on awareness raising and inclusive teaching methods and an anti-bias campaign, which aims to raise awareness of certain issues at the university and to use gender inclusive language. For example, equality, diversity and gender issues are a standard component of all training programmes that new staff members are required to attend as part of the UNISTART programme (see also discussion in Section 6.1).

The university has good structures for ensuring equal opportunities for men and women – Information and support materials need to be further embedded in the organisation

The University of Graz has three bodies to improve equal opportunities for women and men: the Working Group for Equal Opportunities (AGKL see below), the Coordination Centre for Gender Studies and Equal Opportunities, and the Special Representative of the Rectorate for Gender and

Diversity. These three bodies report directly to the rector. The first women's advancement plan at the University of Graz was adopted by the senate in 2001 followed by plans for the advancement of women throughout the university. An equality plan was adopted at the university in 2017 but there still is a separate plan for the advancement of women[6]. The above-mentioned Working Group for Equal Opportunities (AKGL) deals with issues of equal treatment, protection against discrimination, promotion of women, and harassment or mobbing related to discrimination. The working group is composed of academic and administrative staff as well as students. The bureau of this working group has produced detailed both printed and online support materials on these issues. However, based on the audit interviews this information appears not to be widely known within the institution. Therefore, further measures are needed to build awareness of these issues and the support material available for staff and students (see also Section 6.1).

The audit team considers that the University of Graz has put in place targeted and appropriate structures and procedures to support the competence development of its employees beyond their field of expertise and their well-being, equality and non-discrimination.

5.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

The university's quality system supports the improvement of education, research and societal engagement

The quality system of the University of Graz covers its core duties of education, research and societal engagement. The university's activities are developed in a systematic way according to the quality management cycle. It goes from the definition of objectives, through the implementation of an action plan and the monitoring of these actions to achieve the objectives. Results are identified and analysed and finally processes are improved. This cycle takes place at all levels of the institution. However, as discussed and recommended by the audit team in Section 3.3, the support services could be better integrated in the university's continuous cycle of quality improvement.

The quality system of the university is serving its purpose in terms of supporting the strategic management of the university and making processes and procedures and the use of data transparent. Various tools, such as dashboards, teaching and research evaluation processes, individual evaluations, regular discussions between the rectorate, deans and Department for Performance and Quality Management, make it possible to monitor the achievement of fixed objectives and to take appropriate decisions to correct the situation if necessary. Various measures and services are implemented for planning, analysis and improving activities. There was evidence of the system's functionality and impact on the enhancement of education, research and societal engagement. Nonetheless, as was discussed in Chapter 4, the functionality and the impact of the quality system could be improved especially in terms of societal engagement and impact.

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6   https://akgl.uni-graz.at/de/neuigkeiten/detail/article/now-available-in-english

The university is encouraged to use responsible metrics in research evaluation

The contributions of research are many and varied. It is therefore important that the evaluation instruments consider the disciplinary specificity of each field. Sometimes a more qualitative than quantitative approach is required depending on the ecosystem being evaluated. Scientific production in physics or German literature, for example, is not evaluated in the same way. Research evaluation performance indicators that quantify certain aspects of research to establish comparisons lead to a certain standardisation that does not allow for all the specificities of the different fields of research to be considered (law versus physics, for example). The concern is that this approach may bias the analysis and not fully reflect the quality of research in the areas under review. In addition to the comparison of the institution or a research group, these indicators are also used, for example, for the recruitment of researchers, which may raise a certain "danger" of standardisation, since not all research fields can be evaluated in the same way. For research assessment, it is worth mentioning the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA, 2012, https://sfdora. org) and the Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics (2015, http://www.leidenmanifesto.org) which discuss alternatives to research assessment methods which rely on bibliometric indicators (journal impact factor, h-index). These two documents on the responsible use of scientometric indicators, particularly in terms of evaluation, could be considered by the university. This would also align better with the university's societal impact agenda, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Stronger ownership of the quality system should be built at grassroot level

The quality culture at the University of Graz is participatory and open. Management, staff, students and stakeholders are involved in quality assurance and quality development through different processes, procedures, forums and organisational bodies. The university has various tools for the dissemination of the results of quality procedures, the exchange of good quality practices, and awareness of the quality system. These include the participatory structures involving the whole university community, statistical information and databases, dashboards for the rectorate and dean's office, teaching and research evaluations, structures dedicated to specific themes such as diversity and equality, as well as different events, awards and publications. These are all structures where exchanges take place with all the representatives of the university community and allow for the exchange of good practices particularly in terms of quality. They also illustrate the intrinsic quality of the individuals who make up the university. These structures and opportunities for exchanges also make it possible to highlight the value of the university's overall quality system.

While the university's quality system is well built to ensure the success of the university in its missions, the quality culture still needs to be developed within the university. In the academic structures, the system is sometimes perceived as an administrative burden, but not as a tool for continuous improvement. Based on the audit visit, there seems to be somewhat stronger support for quality management among younger academic staff. As is often the case, the quality system has two faces. As discussed during the audit visit, on the one hand, the system is considered a useful tool for the development of the unit and on the other hand a bureaucratic tool heavy in data collection. This depends on the way the units use the system, hence the importance of how the system is communicated and the continuous analysis of its usefulness for the improvement

of activities and for avoiding too heavy a burden on the users. Based on the audit interviews, the challenge for the Department for Performance and Quality Management is to be able to satisfy all the faculties that have different expectations and ways of working. For example, at the beginning of the research evaluation, the staff was critical and found the system cumbersome, but at the end of the process the feedback was mostly positive. The fact that the quality system is seen to be useful in terms of its contribution to the development of the unit and its activities, for example, changes the perception of the system. Hence the importance of sharing these good experiences to promote the system.

When procedures and tools of quality are well established, they must continuously evolve to improve, be easy to use, not be considered as an administrative burden and be adapted to the different specificities and expectations of faculties. It is through this dissemination of information and good practice, through highlighting examples of the usefulness of the quality system and through continuous improvement of quality tools and processes in a participatory way that a quality culture is created and developed within the institution. This provides the University of Graz with the tools to continuously monitor and regularly evaluate its activities to ensure that they are achieving their objectives and meeting the needs of society.

The quality system should support research and teaching, but it should not constrain research or teaching. It is important to demonstrate that the quality system is a tool for continuous improvement at the service of everyone and not to be considered as a bureaucratic and administrative burden. In this context, the way in which the promotion and communication of the quality system is carried out is very important, as is the quality of the feedback to the wider academic community.

The quality system itself must be part of a continuous process of improvement based on the contribution of the entire university community. Although the university has provided evidence of systematic improvement on quality tools and processes, the core elements of the quality system seem to be unchanged since the last audit in 2012–2013[7]. Therefore, in order to take the quality system to the next level and to achieve the aims set for the system in relation to achieving a university-wide quality culture and to involve staff more in quality development, further steps are needed. The quality policy needs to be more widely disseminated and better known and the grassroot level quality culture be strengthened so that every entity and individual takes ownership of it. The university has recognised in its self-assessment that staff could be more involved in quality development and also students further engaged.

This is a process that takes time, but the University of Graz has all the assets in hand. The university has an open and engaging culture and a mature quality system with a lot of good and systematic procedures and activities.

7   Haakstad, J., Frederiks, M., Keränen, H., Lanarès, J., Levä, K., Prisacariu, A. & Hiltunen, K. (2013). Audit of the University of Graz. Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council. Publications 6. Available at https://karvi.fi/en/publication/audit-university-graz-2013–2

Evaluation area IV: The University of Graz as a learning organisation

6

Summary of the evaluation area IV: Equal opportunities and diversity

Evaluation area IV assesses an area selected by the HEI where it wishes to receive feedback for the enhancement of its activities.

The main strengths and recommendations identified by the audit team

Strengths

- The university is working in an ambitious and structured way to increase gender equality among its staff, with a mix of measures to address the issue.
- The work to achieve the gender equality goals is based on the principle of gender mainstreaming, which provides the opportunity to integrate gender equality work into regular activities.
- Equal opportunities and diversity are the direct responsibility of the rector, which creates the conditions for building sustainable structures to work with these issues.

Recommendations

- Efforts should be made at the university to define what is meant by diversity, identify target groups for diversity work and structure it. The definition of diversity should be expanded to include aspects that may affect transition to higher education.
- The university should develop knowledge about its students and doctoral students and create a diversity strategy based on that information. The diversity strategy should include an implementation plan.
- The university should work to embed equal opportunities and diversity throughout the organisation.

6.1 Equal opportunities and diversity

The University of Graz chose equal opportunities and diversity as an evaluation area of the audit. As mentioned by the university in its self-assessment, the topic has been a component of the university's profile for the past two decades. The university especially wanted feedback and advice on how to bridge the gap between developing concepts, designing guidelines and analysing data and implementing real change.

In the Performance agreement 2019–2021 (Leistungsvereinbarung) between the University of Graz and the Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the university commits to a number of activities aimed at increasing diversity and creating equal opportunities, including activities to attract new target groups of students, pedagogical development of teachers to make them more familiar with how to deal with aspects of heterogeneity in teaching, preventing dropouts of students etc. In the recently approved Development Plan 2022–2027, the university, as part of its social commitment commits to stronger promotion of diversity and equal opportunities by minimising prejudice and disadvantages, protecting people against discrimination and supporting groups not experiencing equal opportunities.

The activities mentioned in the performance agreement and development plan, both those already implemented at and those planned by the university, together create the conditions for a structured and successful effort to increase student diversity. Increasing diversity and creating equal opportunities requires a broad and strategic approach consisting of several interrelated components, such as activities targeting prospective students to broaden recruitment, retention activities targeting admitted students and also activities aimed at facilitating students' transition to the labour market.

The university should formulate a clear target for diversity

As studies show that there are a range of factors that can influence transition to higher education – such as social background, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion or place of residence – and that these different factors interact with each other, knowledge about which groups are under-represented within the university as a whole and also at the programme level is therefore an important prerequisite for successful diversity work.

In order to gain this knowledge, quantitative data about students' backgrounds in different aspects should be collected. To bring about real change, quantitative data should be a starting point for in-depth qualitative analysis to understand why certain groups are missing at the university. Qualitative analyses can refer to different groups – current students, prospective students and postgraduates and of course staff as well. Based on the audit interviews, the possibilities for collecting quantitative data on aspects relevant from a diversity perspective, such as social or ethnic background, are limited by Austrian law.

In terms of ethnic background, the university has data on students and staff from abroad but there are no data on Austrian persons with a foreign background. It also became clear in the interviews that the university perceives broader recruitment based on ethnic background, both in terms of students and staff, as an increased share of people from other countries, not people with a foreign background residing in Austria. Consequently, there is a lack of measures specifically targeted at this group. In the past, however, the university had activities specifically aimed at refugees, a particularly vulnerable group among people with a foreign background, but these activities have more or less already ceased.

With regard to social background, the university may request aggregated social background data about students from the government, which collects this data on a regular basis. The university also has data regarding geographic origin, prior school education and first-generation students. Thus, although there are no satisfactory data on social background among students, the university can get some indication of this aspect from these available figures.

There are also data available on age and gender and, to some extent, on students with disabilities. The data on the number of students with disabilities is based on those who contact the university's support services.

Altogether, the audit team considers that the university has several key data on students' backgrounds that could be a good starting point for diversity work. However, there is a lack of common understanding at the university about what is meant by diversity and which are the target groups for diversity work and for widening participation. Consequently, there is no strategy or plan of action at the university to work on these issues in a systematic and structured way. Nor have measurable targets been developed to be followed up for diversity and widening participation, apart from those relating to the gender balance of staff.

The concept of diversity should be broadened to include more aspects than gender

According to the university's mission statement, gender, social background, age, disability, ethnicity, nationality, religion, language, sexual orientation, worldview and caring responsibilities are important dimensions of diversity. However, based on the self-assessment and the interviews, the concept of diversity at the university appears to have an emphasis on gender equality among the staff. Here it is important to point out that the Austrian Universities Act contains several provisions on gender equality that apply to all state universities, i.e. also the University of Graz. According to the law, gender equality should be a guiding principle and a task for universities. In addition, performance agreements between universities and the Ministry of Education, Science and Research must include efforts to increase the number of women in senior positions and to provide targeted support to female junior academics. Each university must establish a plan for the advancement of women and set up structures to coordinate activities for gender equality, the advancement of women and gender research.

Consequently, there are several measures at the university aimed at creating better conditions for women's career development and achieving gender equality goals, such as increasing the proportion of female professors. The university has set targets, a certain number of women for professorships and doctorates. There is therefore close cooperation between the Recruitment Department and the Coordination Centre in each process and some positions are reserved for women, funded from the central budget.

In the discussions with university staff during the audit, diversity was often considered from the viewpoint of gender equality of staff. The audit team considers that the concept of diversity should be broadened within the university and to be inclusive of other aspects than gender.

Ambitious gender equality work is carried out among the staff – gender equality work among students and work against sexual harassment should be developed

The audit team perceives that there was a consensus among the interviewees that gender equality is an important issue within the university, at least as far as staff are concerned. There is a general perception that the university is working successfully to increase the proportion of women in senior academic positions, although there is an awareness that the proportion of women in such positions is still unsatisfactory. University initiatives to facilitate study and academic careers for people with families, such as childcare services or providing advice on work-life balance, are welcomed as an important part of gender equality work.

To sum up, the audit team finds that gender equality is an important aspect of the university's diversity work, but that gender equality work is mainly limited to staff. Despite the university's awareness of the gender imbalance among students – more women than men at the bachelor's level (more than 60 percent), the decrease in the number of female students at the master's and doctoral level, over-representation of women in different programmes, etc. – there do not seem to be any gender equality measures targeted at students and potential students. However, according to the interviews, some attempts are being made to encourage women to apply for science studies by creating special programmes. On the other hand, there are no measures to increase the proportion of men in the female-dominated programmes. In this context, it should be noted that the issue of gender diversity and gender-inclusive language has also been integrated into the standard course evaluation form.

The strength of the university's gender equality work is that it is based on the strategy of gender mainstreaming, as this means that the gender equality perspective should be integrated into all areas of activity and in all stages of decision-making, planning and implementation of activities.

At the same time, the audit team finds that the issue of sexual harassment does not seem to have been discussed to any great extent in the organisation. For example, the information available on the university's website about sexual harassment does not seem to be widely known. There was also uncertainty among interviewees about the availability of workshops or courses on the subject. At the same time, there seems to be an interest in learning more about the subject.

The audit team considers that it is difficult to be certain that the problem of sexual harassment does not exist at the university, as international studies show that harassment based on gender is the most common form of exposure within academia. According to the research, the academic structure and culture, which is characterised by, among other things, a clear status hierarchy, different power and dependency relations and an imbalance between formal and informal power, creates the conditions for sexual harassment to occur. Gender mainstreaming includes addressing the academic culture and structure, which means that gender mainstreaming efforts can thus have positive side-effects in terms of preventing sexual harassment. It is therefore important that the work against sexual harassment is not seen as a separate subject, but that it is linked to the work on gender mainstreaming.

The university should pay more attention to the pre-admission and the admission process to achieve greater diversity

On the issue of broader recruitment in terms of aspects that may affect transition to higher education, it was pointed out in the interviews that the Austrian system of open access to most of the higher education programmes makes efforts to increase the number of people from different backgrounds to some extent redundant. The student body automatically becomes heterogeneous, with, for example, older and working students, it was pointed out.

The audit team shares the university's view that the design of the admissions regulations can play an important role in broader recruitment to higher education and that open access can contribute to that. However, in the context of this topic, the audit team has made the following four reflections.

Firstly, the audit team would like to stress the importance of early action to promote broader recruitment, including cooperation with individual schools, different types of activities targeted at school pupils, homework help, "open days" at the university, etc., to influence attitudes to higher education among children with disadvantaged backgrounds. Raising awareness of higher education among groups with traditionally low transition to higher education is a first step in the work on broader recruitment. The admission process itself is a later component of this work. The interviews showed that in some faculties there are occasional activities targeting schools, such as student ambassadors visiting schools and giving one-off lessons, or staff at the university encouraging secondary school teachers to raise awareness of higher education among pupils. However, these activities do not seem to be systematic or a part of a common well-thought-out strategy. Neither the self-assessment material nor the interviews revealed that activities are carried out targeting groups other than schoolchildren, such as refugees, immigrants, people with disabilities, national minorities, the unemployed, etc., with the aim of promoting the recruitment of these groups and thus increasing diversity at the university.

Secondly, open access applies to those who fulfil the entry requirements. At the same time, the university does not have a formalised process for systematically recognising prior learning, which would allow potential students who do not have the necessary qualifications for admission to higher education to enter any programme at the university, and not just the specific programmes as it is at present. The work of developing recognising prior learning could thus contribute to broader recruitment at the university as a whole, not least of refugees.

Thirdly, open access does not apply to programmes that are usually considered as high status programmes, such as law, psychology and economics etc. Access to these programmes is limited and a selection process is applied. Although a selection procedure should not be used to give preference to applicants from certain backgrounds, it should be monitored with a view to broader recruitment, to see whether it contributes to a more heterogeneous student body or whether it may exclude certain groups. At the same time, it is positive that the selection process is based on well-defined criteria, as transparency and clarity in the process itself helps to promote a broader recruitment.

Fourthly, it is important to point out here that open access may mean that the selection process that would take place upon admission to the university will take place later, during the programme itself. Broader recruitment alone is not enough; the university must help the admitted students to complete their studies. To do this, it must work in combination with measures for welcoming, introducing and supporting students. This work is strongly linked to pedagogical development, measures regarding participation and inclusion, and work against discrimination. For example, prospective students may be discouraged from applying to the university if it is not perceived as a place for everyone.

There is a need to further raise awareness of diversity

According to the self-assessment and the interviews, the university is working to raise awareness of diversity issues, including encouraging staff, and even students to undergo equality training. The general trainee programmes for new staff in all groups include at least half a day of mandatory training on topics such as anti-bias awareness, gender-sensitive teaching methods/didactics, stereotype management and awareness of privilege to help staff identify discriminatory practices and to intervene when incidents occur.

The audit team considers it positive that this type of training is offered. However, it is questionable whether a single training session is sufficient to provide staff with a solid basis for working on the issues. It is also worth asking why the mandatory training only applies to new staff. At the same time, it is positive that the university has complementary activities to increase staff diversity competence, such as information and workshops on inclusive teaching in heterogeneous groups or tools provided by the anti-bias circle to help avoid discrimination.

The university should focus on providing clearer information about available support measures

In terms of specific support measures aimed at preventing drop-out among admitted students, a number of activities were highlighted in the interviews, including the Welcome Day or, in some programmes, the Welcome Days for new students, peer mentors responsible for reaching out to students whose parents did not attend university to provide them with support, a pilot tutoring programme for first and second semester students to help them better integrate into their study area, or various support services with student service desks co-located in one place.

The university's Writing Centre (*Schreibzentrum*) provides support in academic writing, writing strategies and working techniques. However, students, at least those interviewed, do not seem to be aware that such support is available at the university. This seems to be a common problem across the university, whereby students (or staff) are not fully aware of the services and supports available. Creating one entry point or portal for all support measures and trying to direct students and staff to it could be a way to reduce the information gap that apparently exists and to establish a structure for support efforts.

There also seems to be no procedures to identify students who need support at an early stage. Although it was mentioned that monitoring of study progress takes place, it is unclear how structured it is and how the results are used to support students. For students with disabilities, there are various support measures, such as the possibility to make adapted tests, receive adapted lecture materials or financial support measures, such as no or reduced fees. On the other hand, there seem to be shortcomings in the adaptation of the physical environment to meet the needs of people with disabilities, such as wheelchair users, e.g. an adequate number of lifts. The issue of mental health and the need for easier access to psychological help or the possibility of discussion groups for students with psychologists was also raised in the interviews. Though, this could be a challenge that is especially linked to the current situation with the pandemic.

The university's work to help students with the transition to the labour market is generally good

Supporting students to facilitate their transition to the labour market is generally of great importance. It is even more important for under-represented groups, as they often do not have the same network of contacts as more traditional students. There are several support activities at the university to make it easier for students to enter the labour market, such as career guidance or information via e-mail on job vacancies in different companies. Practical training is part of the studies, which is depending on the programme either optional or compulsory. The university also monitors students' transition to the labour market. Overall, the impression of the audit team is that the university is working in an ambitious way to facilitate students' transition to the labour market. However, students expressed a desire for the university to do more, for example to carry out different types of projects with employers or to prepare students for the uncertainties of working life. It was also pointed out that information about vacancies via e-mail may be enough for active people but not for others.

In conclusion, the audit team considers that the university is working well to achieve greater gender equality among its staff. The work is based on the principle of gender mainstreaming, which creates the conditions for integrating the work into the organisation and for building sustainable structures for working on the issue. Structures for gender equality work are also in place. The University of Graz is clearly committed and has the ambition to increase diversity and equal opportunities among students and that work has begun. However, the university needs to take further steps to structure its diversity work, and some essential elements are still missing to create the conditions for successful work. The audit team hopes that its comments will be useful for the further development of the university's diversity work.

Appendix 1
FINEEC evaluation criteria for the level good

FINEEC evaluation criteria for the level good
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1 HEI creates competence

> ### Evaluation area I
>
> assesses the procedures which support student-centred, working-life oriented planning, implementation and enhancement of education, which is based on research or artistic activities.

1.1 The planning of education

The degree programmes and other provision are planned with clearly defined learning outcomes. The planning process ensures that the educational provision is in line with the HEI's strategy and relevant for working life. Aspects concerning internationalisation and continuous learning needs are ensured in the planning process. In terms of degrees, it is ensured that they correspond with the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules. The education is planned so that the teaching methods, assessment of learning, and learning environments support the achievement of the learning outcomes. Students and external stakeholders participate in the planning of education in a purposeful manner.

Research, development, innovation and artistic activities are integrated in the education in a way that links research-based information to the education in a relevant way.

The students' workload is defined according to the principles of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). The HEI has systematic procedures for approving the plans for degree programmes or other study entities.

1.2 The implementation of education

The HEI applies the provisions and regulations concerning student admission, the recognition of prior learning, progress of studies and completion of degrees consistently and transparently.

The education is implemented in a manner that supports target-oriented learning and the active role of students in their own learning process. Students receive feedback on their learning which helps them achieve the learning outcomes. The procedures connected with the implementation of education support the efficient progress and completion of studies as well as the integration of students with professional life.

The well-being and equality of students are promoted throughout the student's study path. The HEI provides adequate resources, counselling and other services to support the progress of studies and learning.

1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

The HEI systematically collects and uses feedback data on the needs of students, the implementation of the education and the progress of studies in order to enhance the education. Feedback-on-feedback, i.e., information on changes introduced based on student feedback is provided to students in an appropriate manner.

The HEI monitors and evaluates the degree programmes and other provision to ensure that they are up to date with regard to the latest research findings as well as the changing needs of the society and working life. Opportunities for continuous learning are ensured in the educational provision. In the degree programmes and other provision, how well the intended learning outcomes are achieved is analysed.

Feedback and evaluation data is used systematically in the enhancement of education. The needs of staff and students are considered in the development of support services.

Examples of successful enhancement activities

The HEI is able to present examples of successful enhancement activities.

2 HEI promotes impact and renewal

Evaluation area II

assesses the procedures used to manage and improve societal engagement, strengthen the impact of the HEI's research, development and innovation as well as artistic activities, and support an innovative organisational culture.

2.1 Managing societal engagement and impact

The HEI enhances its societal engagement and impact, and this is also supported by its management system. The HEI has defined goals for its societal engagement and ways in which it attempts to reach those goals.

Information produced by the HEI's analysis of its operational environment is used to set the direction for its activities. Appropriate procedures help to ensure that societal engagement supports the implementation of the HEI's overall strategy.

2.2 Research, development and innovation activities as well as artistic activities with impact

The HEI's research, development and innovation activities as well as artistic activities contribute to reforming society. Targets have been set for the impact of the HEI's research, development, innovation and artistic activities. The HEI collects relevant information regarding the societal impact of research, development, innovation and artistic activities, and the information is used in the enhancement of these activities.

The HEI has systematic procedures for ensuring the responsible conduct of research. The HEI enhances open science.

2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

The organisational culture of the HEI encourages experimental activities with partners and strengthens the conditions for a creative atmosphere. The HEI seeks opportunities to engage with stakeholders in activities which enable renewal and enhancement. The HEI has functioning procedures that support the use of the competences possessed by its staff and students.

The HEI has target-oriented cooperation with its alumni and it utilises the alumni in enhancement activities. Collaboration with both national and international networks supports the enhancement of the HEI's activities. The HEI has well-functioning procedures for managing and updating its stakeholder relations and collaboration networks.

Examples of successful enhancement activities

The HEI is able to present examples of successful enhancement activities.

3 HEI enhances quality and well-being

Evaluation area III

assesses the functioning and development of the quality system and how the system is used in strategic management. The procedures used to support the competence development and well-being of the staff are also assessed.

3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

The principles, objectives and responsibilities of the quality system constitute the HEI's quality policy, which is public. The quality policy forms a common basis for the quality work.

The information generated by the quality system is used in the management of the HEI. The system supports the profile of the HEI, the achievement of its objectives related to the core duties and the implementation of its strategy.

The HEI ensures that the staff recognise the connection between their own work and the goals of the HEI.

3.2 Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff

The HEI has functioning procedures to identify development needs concerning staff competence and to support the development of staff competence.

The HEI has transparent procedures for staff recruitment.

The HEI has systematic procedures to support the well-being, equality and non-discrimination of staff.

3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

The HEI has a functioning quality system which covers its core duties. The quality system helps the HEI to recognise development needs and to enhance its activities in a goal-oriented manner. There is evidence of the functionality and impact of the quality system on the enhancement of the core duties. The system is developed in a systematic manner.

The quality culture of the HEI is participatory and open. Staff, students and external stakeholders participate in the enhancement of the HEI's activities in a purposeful manner.

Examples of successful enhancement activities

The HEI is able to present examples of successful enhancement activities.

4 HEI as a learning organisation

Evaluation area IV

assesses an area selected by the HEI where it wishes to receive feedback for the enhancement of its activities.

4.1 An evaluation area selected by the HEI

The HEI selects an area which is central to its profile or strategy on which it would like to receive external feedback for enhancement of the selected area. The assessed area may relate to any of the HEI's core duties. The focus and central aims of the assessment should be specified as part of the agreement negotiations between the HEI and FINEEC.

No grading based on the assessment scale is given for the evaluation area selected by the HEI and it will not be considered when deciding whether the HEI will pass the audit.

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) conducted a quality audit of the University of Graz 2020–2021. This report presents the audit process and the results of the audit.

The purpose of the FINEEC audit is to evaluate whether the quality work in the HEI meets the European quality assurance standards, to assess whether the quality system produces relevant information for the implementation of the strategy and the continuous development of the HEI's activities, and whether it results in effective enhancement activities. The FINEEC audit also aim to encourage internationalisation, experimenting and a creative atmosphere at HEIs.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent agency responsible for the evaluation of education. It operates as a separate unit within the Finnish National Agency for Education. It implements system and thematic evaluations, learning outcome evaluations and field-specific evaluations. Moreover, FINEEC supports providers of education and training and higher education institutions in matters related to evaluation and quality assurance, as well as advances the evaluation of education.