

Quality Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education

INSTITUTION-WIDE REVIEW

University of Iceland

April 2015



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PREFACE

This is a report of an institution-wide review undertaken by the Icelandic Quality Board for Higher Education under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The review was carried out by a team of independent senior international higher education experts together with a student representative from the higher education sector in Iceland.

Institution-wide Review is one component of the Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) established by the Icelandic Government in 2011. The main elements of the QEF are:

- Quality Board-led reviews at the institutional level;
- Comprehensive program of subject level reviews led by the higher education institutes themselves;
- Programme of annual meetings between members of the Quality Board and individual institutions to discuss institutional developments in quality assurance and enhancement.
- Series of quality enhancement workshops and conferences to share national and international developments in enhancing the quality of the student experience.

Further information on the QEF is available at the RANNIS web site.¹

Professor Norman Sharp OBE
Chair

Dr Þorsteinn Gunnarsson
Manager

¹ See: http://www.rannis.is/media/gaedarad-haskola/Handbook_complete_1558767620.pdf

1. Introduction: The review in context

1.1. The Review

Institutional Review is one of the main elements of the Quality Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education (QEF) as described in full in the Quality Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education (2011). All seven Higher Education Institutions in Iceland are participating in an Institutional Review between 2012 and 2015. This is the report of the sixth review, that of the University of Iceland.

The review was conducted under the auspices of the Quality Board for Higher Education with support from RANNÍS, in accordance with the procedures described in the 2011 Handbook. The Review Team (the Team) comprised Professor Norman Sharp (chair) and Professor Jean-Marie Hombert (vice-chair) – members of the Quality Board for Higher Education - together with Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (independent expert), Professor Bruce L. Mallory (independent expert), Professor Harald Walderhaug (independent expert) and Snædís Anna Þórhallsdóttir (student representative). Administrative support was provided by Elísabet Andrésdóttir and Dr. Þorsteinn Gunnarsson (RANNÍS) and Dr Frank Quinault (Quality Board).

In preparation for the main visit by the Team, the vice-chair commented on an early draft of the institution's Reflective Analysis (RA), following which further revisions took place. After the receipt of the final version of the RA together with extensive hyperlinks to a wide range of source material and related documentation, the Team chair drafted the visit schedule in consultation with the full Team and, subsequently, the Director of Quality Management at the University of Iceland. The preparation of the University's Reflective Analysis and the arrangements for the visit were overseen and coordinated by the Rector, Dr

Kristín Ingólfssdóttir, the Pro-Rector for Science and Academic Affairs, Jón Atli Benediktsson, and the Director of Quality Management/Director of the Office of the Rector, Magnús Diðrik Baldursson.

The review visit took place on January 14-16, 2015 at the main University campus in Reykjavik. Following a series of presentations from the Rector and the Deans of the Schools, the team visited the Faculty of Earth Sciences in the modern Askja Building for an interactive session with the Chairman, three PhD students and a post-doctoral researcher. Following these extremely interesting and valuable sessions, the Team met with some 170 staff and students of the University in 21 meetings. In addition, the Team was available during two publicised time slots for any students or members of staff who wished to meet privately with it. One student took advantage of this opportunity.

The Quality Board is very grateful to the University of Iceland for its meticulous preparations in advance of the visit and for its excellent cooperation in organising the proceedings during the visit, and also to RANNÍS for its efficient administration of the review.

1.2. The University of Iceland

The University of Iceland (the University) was founded on 17 June 1911, formed through the merger of the Theological Seminary, the School of Medicine, and the School of Law, together with the creation of a Faculty of Philosophy. Since its establishment, the University has developed a comprehensive programme of degrees, both undergraduate and postgraduate, across most subject areas. In 2008, the University merged with the Iceland University of Education, thus extending its provision in teacher training and continuing professional development for teachers. The University is accredited for PhD provision in all its fields of study. Throughout most of the 20th century, the University was the only university in Iceland and its current student count of around 14,000 makes it by far the largest and most comprehensive higher education institution in the country, enrolling some two-thirds of the total student population of Iceland.

The Rector of the University is appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture following an election within the University community. At the time of the review, the Rector was within a few months of stepping down following the completion of two full periods in office. The Rector is supported in the senior management of the University by the Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs and the Director of Finance and Operations.

Since 2008, the University has been structured into five schools headed by deans: the School of Education; the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences; the School of Health Sciences; the School of Humanities; and, the School of Social Sciences. Each school is further subdivided into faculties (a total of 25 over the five schools) and research institutes. The school deans are appointed by the Rector for a period of five years and they in turn appoint faculty heads for a two year period in accordance with nominations from faculty meetings.

Because of its size, age and history, the breadth and depth of its curriculum offerings and its research profile, the University plays a vital national role in the country. The Rector of the University is the Chair of the Icelandic Rectors' Conference, which illustrates the important role of the University within the Icelandic higher education system. The University operates and collaborates widely with other research bodies in the country such as its seven regional research centres located round Iceland, the National University Hospital of Iceland, the National Museum of Iceland, the Icelandic Heart Association, Matis and deCODE genetics. The University also plays important roles, both formal and informal, in the development and execution of national education policy through, for example, its initiatives to widen and deepen access to university level education by all parts of the Icelandic community – a particularly important role following the economic and employment downturn in 2008. The University also played a leading role in the recent important initiative to enhance cooperation between all the public higher education institutions in Iceland, the national Network of Public Universities.

In addition to its national role, the University's mission emphasises the importance of its role on the international stage. The University is actively involved in the Bologna process and the Rector is a member of the Board of the European University Association (EUA). Several joint programmes at the postgraduate level are conducted in partnership with other international universities, and the Team was also aware of significant international partnerships in research. At the time of the visit, approximately 1,200 international students were studying at the University. While the University language policy indicates that, in general, undergraduate courses will be taught in Icelandic, in 2014-15, some 18% (377) of undergraduate courses are being taught in English. Also in line with the University language policy, full programmes in English are mainly available at postgraduate level. The University participates in the EUA Council on Doctoral Education, the Council of Graduate Schools in the US and the OECD Higher Education Programme (IMHE). At the time of the review visit, the University had recently appointed a senior Director of the University International Office who is playing an important role in the current review of the overall international strategy of the University.

An increasing emphasis is placed on the role of research in the University, which has declared its intention of becoming an international standard research university. In 2011, it was ranked for the first time among the world's 300 best universities in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, a position it has subsequently maintained. The University's Reflective Analysis (RA) quotes the NordForsk review of research in the Nordic countries², indicating that the University of Iceland is responsible for 82% of all scientific articles that are published with affiliations to Icelandic universities.

² Comparing research at Nordic universities using bibliometric indicators, second report covering the years 2000-2012, Nordforsk

In common with the other public higher education institutions, the University of Iceland operates under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (MESC), and is subject to the same laws and regulations that apply to all Icelandic public institutions. However, the RA indicates that the University enjoys full autonomy in its activities and has self-determination in internal affairs. All seven HEIs in Iceland are covered by the 2006 legislation which established a system of subject field accreditation, whereby accreditation of individual subjects was required in order that an institution may offer programmes in that subject area. The accreditation exercises were carried out on behalf of MESC by teams of foreign experts. The University of Iceland was successful in all accreditations and, uniquely in Iceland, was given authority to offer PhD programmes in all subject areas. The University operates within the terms of contracts agreed with MESC. The contract current at the time of the review visit covered the period 2011-2016 and was based in turn on the University of Iceland Policy 2011-2016.

1.3. Funding

The resource environment of the University

Public funding comes to the University through MESC, based, in part, on the number of students (full-time equivalents) registered on programmes in the various price bands agreed with MESC. In addition, an allowance is provided for research and other projects agreed with MESC. From non-governmental sources the University receives funding through national and international competitive research contracts, student registrations and from the University of Iceland Lottery, the latter being dedicated to University buildings and maintenance. The proportion of non-government income (including student registrations and lottery funding) in 2013 was 36%. From the beginning of the economic crisis of 2008 until 2013, overall funding has decreased by some 10%. The crisis of 2008 added significantly to the level of unemployment in Iceland, and the University, notwithstanding its declining unit of resource, responded positively to societal needs for increased training and retraining opportunities. These factors combined to produce an overall decline in funding per student (FTE) between

2001 and 2013 of some 23.4%. The relative funding position of Icelandic higher education institutions generally, compared to both OECD and Nordic averages, has therefore deteriorated even further than was already apparent in 2008. The RA indicates, for example, that the total expenditure per FTE in Iceland over the period 2008-2012 was 30% lower than the OECD average, and 50% lower than the average for other Nordic countries. One of the major impacts of this situation is the extremely high ratio of students to academic staff which the RA quotes as being 21:1 in 2013. The financial position also impacts significantly on a number of other aspects of University operations, including: the proportion of teaching carried out by part-time sessional teachers (currently 30% of all teaching); the number and range of electives able to be offered; the size of tutorial groups; the increased pressure on administrative staff; and the increasingly obsolete equipment still in use for some undergraduate teaching.

It is, however, important to highlight three important contextual factors in relation to funding. Firstly, the RA indicates that, with the exception of a small deficit in 2013, the University has continued to achieve at least a balanced budget. This is an outcome which the Team viewed as a significant achievement.

Secondly, the Government has recognised the relative underfunding of universities, and in 2007 a new five-year contract was signed between MESC and the University for both teaching and research. This was based both on the University Policy 2006-2011, and the proposals of the Ministerially chaired, Icelandic Science and Technology Policy Council. The University viewed this contract as a major turning point in financial support, providing a realistic financial basis for the realisation of its strategic plans. Unfortunately, the crisis of 2008 prevented the fulfilment of this contract. However, in celebration of the centenary of the University in 2011, the Icelandic Government and the *Althingi* Parliament established the University of Iceland Centennial Fund to support, in particular, research and innovation at the University. The target is for the fund to grow to the extent that by 2016 funding per student at the University will reach the OECD average, and, by 2020 will reach the average of the Nordic countries. Already, the University has been able to make use of the Fund to make strategic

new appointments drawn from international pools in support of the University's ambitions.

Thirdly, notwithstanding the very challenging financial circumstances confronting both the country and the University since 2008, the Team encountered at the University a highly committed, dedicated, and, indeed, enthusiastic leadership and wider community of staff and students throughout the review process.

1.4. University staff

In 2013 the total academic staff complement was 709 which included 265 full professors, 157 associate and 152 assistant professors, and 89 adjuncts. In 2013, by a small margin, the majority of assistant professors were female, as were 43% of associate professors and 28% of full professors. Given the drop in permanent recruitment, especially since 2008, the average age of staff has been increasing and in 2013 was around 54 years. The proportion of staff holding PhDs has been increasing, and in 2013 was around 80%. The proportion of international academic staff has been growing over the 21st century, reaching 15% in 2011. The current trend in applications for posts from around the world was reported in the RA to be increasing significantly. In the context of internationalisation of staff it is important to note also that a significant proportion of Icelandic staff studied, and, in many cases, worked internationally prior to taking an appointment at the University of Iceland.

Research-related staff are also increasingly important to the University in line with the growing emphasis on research. In this context the University has increased the target numbers of post-doctoral researchers it wishes to appoint. This category of staff has grown in number from 54 in 2010 to 67 in 2012.

However, there has been little change in the number of administrative staff at the University. The numbers of administrative and support staff have been virtually constant since 2008 numbering 424 in 2013 – one less than in 2010.

One of the impacts of the crisis and lack of growth in permanent staff has been the growth in the use of sessional teachers, to the extent that sessional teachers (including PhD students) in 2013 accounted for around one third of all teaching at the University. The Team was aware of the range of categories of sessional staff including, for example, medical and medical-related staff, sessional staff from business, and postgraduate students/post-doc researchers. While there are many positive advantages to be gained from the employment of such sessional staff, they also bring challenges relating, for example, to coherence of the student experience, to academic standards, and to the teacher induction, training and evaluation.

1.5. Students

Students who graduate successfully from upper secondary school in Iceland are entitled to enter any of the public higher education institutions, including UI. The Team was informed that experience in a number of schools and faculties in the University had raised a number of problems arising from this open entry entitlement and some faculties had consequently introduced tests of preparedness for entry to their undergraduate programmes (e.g. law and economics). For many years *numerus clausus* has been in place in medicine, dentistry, nursing and physiotherapy with competitive examinations. The implications of this mixed approach to entry are discussed later in this report.

Since 2009, the total number of students has remained more or less constant at around 14,000. This number grew steadily from just under 8,000 students at the start of the 21st Century to around 10,000 in 2007. Notwithstanding significant cuts in funding, the University responded very positively to societal needs and demands from the government following the economic collapse in 2008, and student numbers increased further by some 40% between 2008 and 2010 and have subsequently remained around the 2010 level. The significant increase in student numbers in 2008 was also contributed to by the merging of the Iceland University of Education with the University of Iceland in July 2008. The School of

Social Sciences is the largest in terms of student numbers with some 33% of the student population, with the remaining students spread approximately evenly between the other schools.

In 2013, some 67% of students were studying at the undergraduate level, 30% at the Masters level, and around 3% at the PhD level. Growth in graduate studies is an explicit strategic objective of the University, as witnessed for example by the recent creation of the University Graduate School and the growth in Masters enrolments of some 18% between 2009 and 2013, and of PhD registrations in the same period of some 30%.

At the time of the visit, females constituted some 66% of the total student population, although the balance is reversed in the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences with some 60% of students being male. In the School of Education some 82% of the students are female. The overall proportion of males (34%) is somewhat less than the proportion of males graduating from upper secondary school (40%). The gender imbalance is not unique to the University of Iceland, but is pervasive throughout the sector in Iceland. While the University is not complacent regarding this matter, and attempts to address it in part through an exciting range of initiatives such as the University for Children, the Science Factory and the University Train, it views the gender issue as a wider problem in Icelandic society in which the University has a part to play but does not have sole or prime responsibility.

The age profile of undergraduates at UI is higher than OECD averages. This is due, at least in part, to the higher graduation age in Icelandic upper secondary school which is some 2-4 years beyond most OECD countries. This was a matter of active consideration by the Government at the time of the review. A reduction in the school-graduating age would have a significant impact on the University. In 2013, 56% of undergraduate students were under 24, and 21% between 24-29. In 2013, 64% of Masters students were over 30. A significant factor in the relatively high age of Masters students is the increased demand for up-skilling and re-training following the 2008 crisis. In relation to graduation, the largest

group of students graduating fall into the 30-39 age category. The University has an expressed intention to reduce the age of graduation, i.e. the duration of study programmes. The Team noted in this context that the University does not currently recognise part-time students as a distinct category, on which comment is made later in this report.

In 2013 approximately 8% of the students were international. The biggest proportion of these students was from Germany with the US the next most common and growing in significance. In addition, the University participates in a number of exchange programmes such as Erasmus+ and Nordplus. In 2013, the University exported 267 students through such arrangements and imported 467. The University has declared its intention to move towards achieving a closer balance in these flows. The University operates a student mentoring scheme for incoming international students to help them adjust to, and benefit fully from, life in Iceland within and outwith the University.

In relation to programmes followed by students, the traditional pattern is for undergraduate students to register at the University to study a particular discipline within a specific school. However, the most recent University Policy places an increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary studies. Enrolments in interdisciplinary studies have increased by 98% between 2009 and 2013. This trend raises important questions for the management of courses which increasingly may cross faculty or even school boundaries. In general, the University is encouraging increased interdisciplinary collaboration, including collaboration within student projects. Recent examples of interdisciplinarity were given to the Team in Public Health, Environment and Natural Resources, Speech Pathology and Innovation and Business Development.

There is a very active Student Council and students are well represented throughout the academic and managerial committee structure of the University. Both the University and the Student Council are conscious of the importance of providing training and support for students to contribute effectively and confidently within the committee structure. The Student Council at UI has also

been influential in the creation of a national federation of students which had recently emerged in Iceland at the time of the review.

1.6. Key committee and managerial structures

The University Council (UC) is the senior decision-making authority of the University. The University notes in its Reflective Analysis, 'that the Rector and the UC are the highest authorities at UI and are ultimately responsible for the quality of operations.' The constitution of the UC is laid down in law as comprising, the Rector (President of the UC), three representatives of the academic community, two representatives of the students, two representatives appointed by MESC, and three members appointed by the UC itself. All members (excluding the Rector) are appointed for two years. The UC's responsibilities include: strategic planning; oversight of the delivery of strategic plans; resource allocation; supervision of all financial arrangements and cooperative agreements; and, regulations for the University, its individual schools and affiliated institutions. Within this general framework the effective delivery of teaching and research of required quality and standards is the responsibility of individual schools.

To take forward its business, the UC has a variety of advisory sub-committees, including: the Quality Committee (with advisory responsibilities for developing, maintaining and operating the quality system and related matters); the Academic Affairs Committee (with advisory responsibilities for promoting the development and quality of teaching), the Science Committee (with advisory responsibilities for promoting research and innovation in UI and allocating project grants and doctoral grants from the UI Research Fund) and the Equal Rights Committee. The work of the Academic Affairs Committee (and the related Division of Academic Affairs) and Science Committee is discussed in subsequent chapters of this report. In addition to its standing committees, the UC has more recently established a Quality Review Committee, charged with managing the review processes associated with the QEF at both subject and institutional level, from preparations, through execution to conclusions and follow up. There is an

overlap of membership between this committee and the other UC committees outlined above.

In addition to this University-wide committee structure, there is the University Forum, a consultative forum for the UI community as a whole. The Rector, deans and heads of faculties are *ex officio* members and the Forum also includes wide representation from teaching staff, researchers, members of institutes, the Union of University Teachers, university administrative staff, and all members of the UC who are not otherwise in membership (in a non-voting capacity). The Rector chairs the Forum which meets at least once each semester. The Forum was described to the Team as a very valuable deliberative gathering representing potentially a large cross-section of the university community. Most recently, the Forum had met to discuss a draft of the Reflective Analysis. This attracted participation from over 100 colleagues and provided a valuable and productive context for discussion and further development of the final version of the RA – and indeed also of some of the key issues facing the University. This open involvement in discussing the RA in such an inclusive context, following what was already a widely shared process for building the draft RA was, in the view of the Team, both very valuable and commendable.

The day-to-day operation of the quality management system is overseen by the Pro-Rector for Science and Academic Affairs together with the Director of Quality Management. To a significant extent the Pro-Rector has fulfilled this role by chairing the UC Quality Committee, the Quality Review Committee, and being the Head of the Graduate School. In executive terms, an important role in managing and enhancing quality and standards is played by the Office of the Rector which has overall responsibility for the quality framework in the University. The Managing Director of the Rector's Office is also the Director of Quality Management.

School and faculty responsibilities for managing quality

Within the above University-wide framework for the management of quality and standards, the RA emphasises that science and academic affairs are the core responsibility of the individual schools. The schools are viewed as the key structural units within which teaching, research, administration and support services for the University are conducted and quality assurance is supervised. The individual school deans, school boards and academic affairs committees have designated responsibilities for the quality of teaching, research and service delivery within each school. In addition, each school has a consultative school assembly which also has a voice in the management of quality. Within each school there are faculties, each with a faculty head. The faculty heads, faculty meetings and study committees of faculties also have important quality management responsibilities, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and assessment on individual courses, curriculum design and updating and revision of individual programmes. Sitting alongside the schools, the new University Graduate School has responsibility for quality and standards in graduate education. The execution of the roles and responsibilities of these various constituencies is discussed in subsequent chapters of this report.

1.7. Response to previous reviews

Learning from previous external reviews

The RA identifies a plethora of reviews undertaken in the University over the past decade or so by a variety of bodies for a variety of purposes. Excluding the current review and the Institution-led Subject Reviews associated with the introduction of the QEF, there are some 29 fairly major reviews identified in the RA. These have been a mixture of MESC reviews to meet requirements of legislation, accreditation reviews, National Audit Office reviews, comparative reviews of subject areas across different universities within Iceland, and reviews associated with international accreditation. Managing this complexity of reviews and, importantly, learning from them, is very demanding. Notwithstanding the increasing resource pressure under which UI was operating throughout the

period, the Team was aware that significant learning points had been gleaned from these reviews and taken forward constructively. For example, the various reviews in the Law Faculty over the period stimulated action in relation to the design and subsequent implementation of revised admissions practices. The self-imposed institution-wide review commissioned from the European University Association, along with two other external institutional reviews which took place in 2004-2005, led to the production of an extensive action plan which became embedded in the subsequent University Policy. The University has noted the outstanding matter of fully following through the outcomes of the recent follow-up review of the impact of the merger with the University of Education.

The Implementation of Subject-level Reviews

Elsewhere in this report, we comment in detail on the significant impacts of the Subject-level Reviews undertaken by the University since 2011 as part of the QEF. When completed in 2014-2015, this will amount to a total of 27 reviews covering all the faculties of the University and two interdisciplinary programmes. At the time of the Review visit, 19 of these reviews had been completed with the remaining eight on track to be complete by summer 2015. The evidence available to the Team, both from reading the complete set of finished reports and from the sample of seven subject reviews explicitly included in the Review visit, indicated that these reviews had been extremely well organised, involved significant external and student input, and, although lacking consistency of impact, had produced examples of excellent action plans that were being taken forward. It appeared to the Team that, amongst other factors, the creation of the Quality Review Committee was an important development in supporting increasing consistency in process and action including enhancement lessons being taken forward both locally and, as appropriate, across the University.

It is important also to mention in this context the Centre for Teaching and Learning, operated within the Division of Academic Affairs, which was also clearly providing much valuable and valued support in preparing for reviews,

undertaking the reviews and taking forward the learning points from the review outcomes. This small unit appeared to the Team to be having a very large impact.

1.8. The Reflective Analysis

Staff and student ownership of the Reflective Analysis

The Rector stated in her introduction to the Reflective Analysis (RA) that the production of the RA: “has indeed been a positive experience for the University of Iceland. It has given the institution a valuable opportunity to gather evidence of its past performance and brought together the community within the institution – staff and students – in reflection on where we stand and in what direction we want to move.” All aspects of the Rector’s statement were borne out in the evidence of the review visit. All staff and students whom the team met (some 170 individuals) were not only familiar with the RA itself, but felt ownership of it, and had been given many opportunities to contribute to it, both in terms of their ‘local’ issues and to the document overall and the direction of travel (past and future) that it represented. The Team was interested to learn of the meeting of the University Forum that contributed to the drafting of the RA referred to above, which appeared to typify the depth and breadth of involvement of the University community in the process of building the RA.

The Chair of the Student Council, in his introduction to the RA, stated that: “students had direct involvement, on every level, in the work on both the institution-led reviews at the subject level as well as the institution wide reflective analysis. This is of great importance since the student perspective is essential for a clear and honest picture of the University’s advantages and disadvantages. The Reflective Analysis puts forth quantifiable measures and a further commitment by the University to improve teaching and learning”. The full and meaningful involvement of students in these processes was borne out by the many students met by the Team during the review visit.

The Reflective Analysis as a source of evidence

The RA itself was a comprehensive document of just short of 100 pages, giving extensive sources of evidence and reference to a wide range of source material. Direct links to the further evidence and source material were built in to the electronic version of the RA. In addition, the Team was given access to the University intranet, Ugla, which also contained useful source material. All this material was well structured, timeously produced and shared in a very open and free manner. The Team was struck by the extensive collection of statistical and other forms of evidence which the University is now being able to amass. Throughout the RA references are made to points for further action which the University has noted for itself – described as a list of measures. These ‘measures’ helpfully indicate a valuable link between the RA and the process of compiling the next strategic plan on which the University is about to embark. The Team was aware that there are many action points – some 75 in total. It would be helpful for the University to now give these measures further consideration, decide on relative priorities and timescales, and allocate responsibilities for action.

In general, the Team found the RA to be an excellent open, evidence-based and self-critical document that drew on past history to analyse the present in order to begin to construct the future.

1.9. Summary evaluation

The evaluation in this introductory section is inevitably both limited in scope and, to some considerable extent, draws on analysis that follows in subsequent chapters. However, it is important at this early stage to provide some introductory general views formed by the Team on the overall characteristics of the University and its structures outlined in this chapter.

The Reflective Analysis

Undoubtedly, the Reflective Analysis, which is at the heart of this process, is an excellent document. The comprehensive involvement of the university community, including students, in the preparation of the RA is commendable, as is the extensive use of evidence and clear references to source material. The positive but self-critical analysis in general stood up well to scrutiny. The Team derived confidence that the RA did indeed reflect a University that understood itself - strengths and weaknesses - and was serious about taking action to further enhance the student experience and secure the standards of their awards. All involved in the production of the RA are to be congratulated. The University is commended for the Reflective Analysis and its comprehensive collection and systematic presentation of evidence, together with the engagement of the entire university community in its production, thereby generating a valuable tool for strategic planning. The utility of the RA in strategic planning would be further enhanced through the creation of an action plan based on the 75 Measures in the Reflective Analysis and linking them to performance indicators in the University Policy.

Ugla

Throughout the review process frequent reference was made to the value of Ugla as a key information resource widely used throughout the University by staff and students. The views expressed to us reflected our own impression that Ugla was indeed a very useful and extensive source of information for students and staff. The University is commended for the comprehensive and easily accessible information available to students and staff through the Ugla system.

Visit engagement

It is important also to note the quality of the discussions the Team were able to benefit from during the review visit. In addition to the RA being appropriately self-critical, all staff and students were very open in expressing their analyses of the past together with the threats and opportunities being faced in the future. The University community is to be commended for the willingness of such a

large number of staff and students to engage with the Team in open and frank discussions.

Leading, managing and operating in a time of resource constraints

The RA and other documents illustrated cogently the impact of the economic crisis of 2008 on the already rather strained finances of the University. It is clear that this has added very significantly to teaching loads, individual administrative burdens and general pressures on all staff at the University, academic, support and administrative. Notwithstanding these very real and tangible pressures, the Team encountered an institution, from Rector and senior management through all staff, full of commitment and indeed enthusiasm for sustaining, and indeed stretching, its vision. The University is to be commended for the resilient responses of the academic community to the economic crises in Iceland. Having made this very important point, it is equally important to highlight the perception of the Team that recent years have indeed been a struggle. Not only has momentum been maintained, but in key areas such as research, even more has been achieved. The Team's perception is that there are clear signs that the limits of stretch might be quite close. References were frequently made during discussions of the importance of the proximity of the light at the end of the tunnel. It is hoped that the important funding initiatives associated with the Centennial Fund bear early fruit.

Student engagement

It is very clear that students are well represented in the academic and managerial committees of the University, and that their inputs are actively sought and valued. This is a significant achievement, the implications of which will be discussed in a future chapter. However, at this stage it is important to indicate that the University is to be commended for the high level of student engagement in governance and all relevant committees, which is supported effectively by the Student Council.

Institution-wide management of quality and standards

The main committee structure relating to quality management and enhancement is clearly laid out in the RA, through faculties, schools and university-wide levels. While this will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapters, it appeared to the team that the operational responsibilities relating to managing quality and standards at school and faculty levels were, in general, clearly understood and executed.

At the University-wide level, the Team was aware of the fact that the UC membership it met had only been appointed some four months prior to the Review visit, and, in that time, had only held three meetings which, of necessity, had focussed on policy and resources. Inevitably this meant that the UC members whom the Team met had not had the opportunity to develop a full appreciation of matters related to quality management. The Team was informed that the focus of future meetings would certainly include UC's responsibilities for oversight of quality assurance and enhancement. The Team would wish to stress the importance of this direction of travel to enable the UC, in steady state, to exercise effectively its key responsibilities in this important area. In passing, the Team also noted the difficulties in this context created by the legally mandated two-year period of appointment of UC members.

As will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent chapter, the Team further concluded that the inter-relationships between the senior committees of the UC, and between themselves and the UC, were also at times not entirely clear. It appeared to the Team that this lack of understanding of roles and inter-relationships was not unique to the Team. It would therefore be helpful for the University to consider, with regard to the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards, how it might clarify and better communicate the roles of the University Council and its sub-committees, together with their inter-relationships.

The national role

At the beginning of this chapter reference was made to the national role which falls to the University of Iceland, a role which the University willingly stands ready to fulfil. It was clear that, notwithstanding internal financial pressures, the University is committed to playing its full part in the country, witnessed for example by its very significant increase in student numbers following the economic crises and its fulfilment of a vital national role in key research areas. The University is commended for the seriousness with which the University plays its role in serving national needs in Iceland.

2. Safeguarding Standards

2.1. Institutional approach to the management of standards

While the Rector and the UC hold ultimate responsibility for quality and standards at the University of Iceland, the Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs currently chairs the UC Quality Committee and, therefore, carries much of the delegated responsibility in this area. The Quality Committee, together with the Board of the Graduate School and the UI Quality Review Committee, are the main structures with institutional oversight of quality and standards. The Director of Quality Management has day-to-day responsibility for the University's quality management system under the authority of the Rector. The Director of Quality Management also holds the post of Director of the Rector's Office and, in addition, is secretary to the UC and the University Forum. While this gives him a splendid overview of the University's activities, it does impose a heavy workload and responsibility on just one person.

School deans carry the responsibility for the quality of operations within their schools and work with faculty heads and directors of institutes, who are answerable to them for the quality of the academic work of the faculties and institutes. Each member of staff is then responsible for the quality and standard of their own work. The role of the governance structures of the University is viewed as being to ensure that staff and students receive the necessary information and support for the effective exercise of their responsibilities. Faculties and schools at the University of Iceland, therefore, have substantial autonomy and, within these units, academic staff are largely responsible for the quality of their teaching. In practice, this means that academic standards of the courses and programmes rely heavily on the staff that deliver them, with few routine or systematic safeguards.

By providing oversight of postgraduate provision at an institutional level, the Team believes the Graduate School will make a major contribution to academic

standards by ensuring consistency across the schools and faculties of the University. It is clear that this was one of the key objectives behind the establishment of the Graduate School, and the Team formed the view that the University would benefit from a comparable level of oversight of the academic standards of its undergraduate provision.

2.2. External reference points and benchmarks

Programmes and courses at the University of Iceland follow the protocols of the Bologna Process. They are aligned with the Icelandic National Qualification Framework for Higher Education (NQFHE). The NQFHE defines three categories of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competences) and demonstrates how they develop across the five levels of higher education (diploma, bachelor's degree, qualification at Masters level, Masters degree and doctoral degree). The revised framework for learning outcomes was introduced at the University of Iceland in the 2011-12 academic year.

The number of courses with defined learning outcomes is still increasing, with some 82% of courses listing learning outcomes in the course catalogue in the 2014-15 academic year. Learning outcomes are reviewed annually as part of the process of reviewing and refreshing the course catalogue. It was clear to the Team that some parts of the University were using them as a tool for enhancing teaching, for example in annual course evaluations, and the University had expressed its intention to coordinate their use for evaluating studies across faculties and schools. The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) runs seminars and workshops on how to formulate learning outcomes and how to use them in teaching and assessment. Further guidance on learning outcomes is also provided available on the CTL website.

ECTS

Teaching and learning at the University of Iceland is aligned with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The course catalogue includes information about the credit weighting of each course. Guidance on the

allocation of ECTS credits is provided for staff and students on the University website. While the information intended for students gives a brief overview of the credit system, the detailed guidance for staff makes it clear that ECTS credits should reflect the work that an average student needs to put in to grasp the knowledge, skills and competences required to obtain the minimum passing grade in any unit of teaching. On this basis, 60 ECTS credits represent full-time study for one academic year, and each credit equates to between 25 and 30 hours of work.

However, students reported to the review panel that the allocation of ECTS credits was not consistent across courses and had been known to change from year to year on an apparently *ad hoc* basis. Inconsistency in the allocation of ECTS credits was also reported in one of the subject-level review reports. The University is aware of this issue and has stated its intention to harmonise the number of credits and students' workloads in individual courses.

Benchmark statements

In relation to comparisons with international standards, the Team found very little evidence of institutional use of benchmark statements, such as those produced by the Quality Assurance Agency in the UK, or the Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. In the School of Health Sciences, students on the medical programme sit an American Board examination, thereby providing benchmarking information about the content and assessed standard of the UI medical curriculum.

Postgraduate study

The potential contribution of the Graduate School as a mechanism for leveling and securing standards of graduate education across the University has already been noted. Its ability to fulfil this potential is increased given its membership of the American Council of Graduate Schools, and the access to external reference points that membership brings.

2.3. Design, approval, monitoring and review of programmes

The procedures for preparation and approval of new programmes at the University of Iceland are described in the document, “Rules of procedure on the preparation and organisation of new programmes”. The programmes offered by each faculty at any given time are determined, depending on the faculty, either by the faculty forum, faculty council, department or board of study.

Proposals for new programmes are prepared by faculties, and submitted for approval to the governing board of the relevant school for consideration. If approved at school level, the proposal goes on for consideration by the University Council. However, in the case of proposals for new Masters or doctoral programmes, the governing board of a school must first seek the approval of the Graduate School.

Proposals for new programmes must include information about the level of study, the number of credits, the study requirements and learning outcomes. External reference points include the NQFHE levels and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, as described above. Where appropriate, the requirements of any professional regulatory body are considered. In some cases, information about comparable programmes offered by foreign universities is also requested. There does not seem to be any requirement for input into the programme approval process by any external members.

Individual approved courses are reviewed after 4 years, and may be discontinued, temporarily or permanently, for a variety of reasons, including financial considerations, staff availability or student demand.

At the end of each course, students are requested to complete a course evaluation survey. This survey, first introduced in 1989, consists of six sections covering: teaching and management of the learning experience; clarity of course objectives and expectations; level of workload and academic challenge; contribution to student understanding of the area; and, the extent and

effectiveness of the students own preparations to allow them to benefit from the course. In addition to the end of course evaluations, the University piloted mid-semester course evaluations in the autumn of 2013 which continued into 2014. This on-line survey presents students with two open-ended questions that ask for comment on what has been successful and what could be improved. Students are also asked to rate each course on a numerical scale. These surveys are overseen by the Academic Affairs Committee and the Division of Academic Affairs.

According to the University Rules, Computer Services are responsible for processing the survey results in order to give the relevant teaching staff a clear indication of their performance compared to other teaching staff in same unit. Teaching staff, school teaching committees and their chairs, faculty heads, managing directors and school deans are responsible for following up the results of the course evaluations. The CTL is able to provide help with interpretation of the results and in developing appropriate responses.

However, student participation in the survey is patchy, with some schools reporting only 50% engagement. The Team observed no evidence of a systematic approach to analysis of and responding to the data. According to the *Rules of Procedure*, the data should be made available, in anonymised form, on Ugla and faculties or departments required to meet with student representatives at least once per semester, in order to consider the data. Despite this, it seemed that student representatives did not always have access to course evaluation results even though this is a stated requirement.

The Team learned that the University is in the process of establishing course evaluations at the graduate levels.

Following the introduction of the QEF, periodic review of courses and programmes at the University occurs through the Subject-level Reviews (SLR). The protocol for these reviews includes requirements for input from staff, students and external experts. Notwithstanding the universal inclusion of

external experts, the reports appeared to include few explicit references to external benchmarks. Through the Quality Review Committee, the University has set out consistent procedures for undertaking the self-review stages and also for securing active follow-up activities. However, staff met by the Team expressed widely divergent views on the effectiveness of the procedures for follow-up; some schools had clear action plans with allocated responsibility for follow-up while others did not seem to have any defined process for addressing issues raised by the review and, indeed, were unclear where the responsibility for this lay.

2.4. Admissions criteria

As outlined in the previous chapter, in keeping with national policy, there is open admission to the majority of programmes at UI. Entrance to the University only requires an Icelandic matriculation examination or an equivalent qualification from a foreign school. However, this policy is not without its problems, including high dropout rates. The University has stated its intention to evaluate the UI admission requirements rules with regard to set admission guidelines.

While discussions continue with the Ministry, UI has introduced entrance examinations in a number of popular programmes, including economics and law. The introduction of selective entrance has reduced the dropout rate in these areas. There is no University policy on the age profile of the student population.

Some of the more technical subjects have reported varying levels of preparedness for entry to university study among its entrants, depending in part upon which school they attended. In mathematics, some of the basic skills are lacking in students who come from some schools. In response to high dropout rates, the School of Engineering offers compensatory classes, but these are not supported by additional government funding.

2.5. Assessment policies and regulations

The document “Rules of Procedure on good working practice in teaching and examination at the University of Iceland” provides guidance and University policy on examinations and other forms of assessment.

Setting and marking assessments is generally the responsibility of the teaching staff that deliver a course. There is no uniform approach to setting or agreeing examination papers or other assessment tasks, though staff reported informal mechanisms whereby new or junior staff often seek the advice of more experienced colleagues.

Seminars and workshops on different types of assessment run by the CTL have covered topics such as designing examination papers and writing examination questions with regard to learning outcomes. While these workshops and seminars will help to promote a more uniform approach to assessment, the University will continue to find it difficult to assure itself of level standards across the institution as long as assessments remain exclusively the responsibility of individuals.

The grading system used at UI is described in outline in documents aimed at potential or current students and on the website. More information is available in the Course Catalogue and detailed guidance for staff may also be found in the Rules of Procedure on good working practice in teaching and examination at the University of Iceland. However, staff were not sure whether students were aware that information on the grading system was available on the website, and the Team was told that not all parts of the University use the grading scheme.

Staff met by the review panel were of the view that the grade given to a piece of work varied according to the staff member, and that potential idiosyncrasies were difficult to control in the absence of a formal mechanism for oversight of the marking process. However, the Team learned that the CTL was attempting to

bring about increased standardisation of approach to assessment with close reference to the learning outcomes.

Although double marking occurs on an *ad hoc* basis at UI, there appeared to be no formal policy on this practice. The Team heard that junior staff sometimes requested the advice or support of a more experienced colleague, and that in relation to some larger classes there were group marking sessions.

External examiners are used by the University for the examination of theses and dissertations, oral examinations and competitive examinations. Competitive examinations are defined as those where the number of students who will be entitled to continue their studies has been determined in advance by the UC, for example in medicine, nursing and law. Apart from this, individual teaching staff are responsible for marking written and practical assessments, unless the faculty determines otherwise.

External examiners may also be called when a student appeals a failed assessment. Students have the right to receive an explanation of the evaluation of their written examination papers, if requested, within 15 days of grades being published. The assessment grade may then be reconsidered. However, the option of seeking an external opinion on the grade is only possible when an assessment has been marked as a fail. Students met by the Team were clear about the right to appeal and where to seek advice about process.

The Team was informed that there was an ongoing discussion about restructuring the bachelors-level thesis. At the time of the review, the thesis project was a significant component of the curriculum and was completed by every student. While recognising the value to the student, some schools were questioning the extensive demands on staff time created by the thesis.

2.6. Staff induction, appraisal and development

The quality of teaching staff, their support and continuing development have clear implications for the student experience. These aspects also play an important role in the establishment and maintenance of standards, particularly in a university such as UI where responsibility for academic standards is largely delegated to individual staff members.

The Division of Human Resources arranges 3-hour meetings with new staff, two to four times a year. The induction meetings are the responsibility of the Head of the Division of Human Resources, who oversees a programme that includes a visit to the Rector's Office, a brief history of the University, an orientation session and a session on various technical issues. This is supplemented by induction programmes run by the schools for their new staff.

The Division of Human Resources, in close cooperation with the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the schools, at the time of the review had recently introduced a mentoring programme for new teachers. Participation in the programme is optional, but to date the Team was informed that the uptake had been 100 per cent.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning offers a wide range of courses for new staff, or those wishing to develop their teaching skills. Attendance at these courses is not obligatory. The CTL also runs a 30-ECTS Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Teaching Studies for Higher Education. Completion of the Diploma (or an equivalent course) is obligatory for those appointed to permanent teaching positions at the University. For existing staff, completion of the course is not mandatory, though staff are offered central support, in the form of a grant covering registration fees and a 40 hours reduction in teaching duties upon completion.

Staff training in the supervision of doctoral students to date has largely been the responsibility of faculties. Some parts of the University provide training and support for their supervisors. For example, the Schools of Education and Social

Sciences were quoted to the Team as providing significant supervisor support as well as encouraging cooperation between the departments. The Team was also informed that supervisor training courses were run in the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering. Staff members are normally required to have prior experience of serving on a doctoral committee before becoming a supervisor themselves, but, at the time of the review, this was not a formal requirement. Graduate students told the Team that some of their supervisors had very limited supervisory experience and were having to learn by trial and error.

The University recognises the need for a more systematic approach to supervisor training and, at the time of the review, the CTL was actively discussing this issue with the Head of the Graduate School to determine how best to take this forward, and whether the training should be provided centrally or through the individual schools.

Teaching portfolios were introduced in 2009, to enable staff to present all relevant information about their teaching in one place, and to encourage staff to reflect on their teaching activities and experience. However, it was clear to the Team that use of these portfolios was patchy across the institution. This is recognised by the University and, at the time of the review, there were proposals for a review of the current and potential use of the portfolio, including more explicit use in processes for academic promotion.

Although appraisal interviews every two years are obligatory for all academic staff, in practice they are conducted less frequently in some schools. The University hopes that the appointment of human resources managers in the schools will make it easier to monitor these interviews and more consistently follow up actions arising from them.

There are well-developed incentives in place to promote and reward scholarly activity by academic staff. These include a performance-based research points system, sabbaticals, and annual staff awards for outstanding professional achievement. However, with the exception of the award for teaching, these are

all focussed on research performance, with little emphasis on teaching quality. The Team was pleased to hear that the University is working to create comparable incentives for teaching activity.

As indicated in the previous chapter, the University relies heavily on sessional staff for the delivery of its teaching programmes. There were over 2,500 sessional teachers employed by the University in 2013, and the School of Health Sciences has over three times the number of sessional staff as full-time employees. This reliance on sessional teachers has been particularly the case since the 2008 economic crisis with decreased funding, increased student numbers and an increased institutional emphasis on research.

The term “sessional staff” however, covers a wide range of teachers, with a correspondingly wide range of experience. Some may better be described as teaching assistants, being undergraduate or graduate students who provide a few hours assistance with assignments or marking, while others hold established positions in industry or the professions and are, therefore, able to use their practical experience to enrich their teaching and the learning experience of students.

While sessional staff have access to the same training opportunities as full-time staff, the Team learned that uptake of these opportunities was low. Across the institution, support for sessional staff is patchy and frequently insufficient. Students reported a variety of learning experiences from sessional staff, ranging from excellent to staff who appeared to have little interest in their teaching. They also reported variation in marking standards between sessional and full-time staff. Full-time staff met by the Team expressed concern about the potential impact on teaching quality of the large proportion of sessional staff, especially when the latter were young and inexperienced.

2.7. Summary evaluation of security of standards

The Review Team set out to determine how the University of Iceland assures itself that the awards made in its name are at an appropriate standard. There are two aspects to this, firstly how does the University achieve internal consistency and, secondly how does it determine the alignment of its awards with nationally and internationally recognised standards?

In keeping with other Icelandic institutions, the University relies heavily upon individuals for setting and maintaining standards, and makes little use of external reference points. The Team recommends that the University should strengthen its approach, at the institutional level, to managing standards and enhancing quality.

For financial reasons the use of external examiners has been very limited and there is no systematic use of external benchmarks. However, for a University with such extensive international connectivity, this relative lack of external reference points for the establishment and maintenance of academic standards is an issue. The Team therefore recommends that the University should seek to increase the use of externality in its processes for securing standards and managing quality. It is the Team's view that the University is currently presented with a unique opportunity to learn from its comparator institutions in other parts of the world and take a leading role for the higher education sector of Iceland in the introduction of internationally-recognised systems of external benchmarking in the area of academic standards.

The University has clearly benefitted from the introduction of learning outcomes and is encouraged to press ahead with its programme of introducing them for all courses.

Approval processes for new programmes and courses are clear and unambiguous. The procedures appear to be sound, but safeguarding of standards would be strengthened with input from external subject-experts and by

reference to any appropriate published subject benchmark statements. Practice for monitoring and review of programmes and courses displays considerable variation across the University and would be improved by being more uniform and systematic. The University is therefore asked to consider further systematising its processes for the approval, monitoring and evaluation of courses and programmes.

The University recognises the need for a reconsideration of the national policy on admissions, to balance breadth of participation with selectivity. There must also be options for those who do not meet selective hurdles. The abilities of students admitted to programmes will have a bearing on the standards maintained. In the meantime, the introduction of entrance examinations in some areas has significantly reduced dropout rates, but has also adversely effected funding, since this is tied to student numbers. The Team recommends the University to consider the implications of the mixed use of open enrolment and entrance tests across the university.

The University of Iceland only uses external examiners for competitive examinations and theses. This is in keeping with higher education practice in much of the world. However, the Team would encourage the University to consider opportunities for double marking of some assessments to ensure an absence of idiosyncratic approaches to setting standards.

The University offers, mostly through the Centre for Teaching and Learning, a wide range of courses for staff development. These courses are available to all staff, though uptake of the opportunities presented tends to be low among the sessional staff, of whom there is a large number. While the extensive use of sessional teachers may be necessary, it also poses a risk to the security of standards. The University is recommended to systematise effective training and support for its sessional staff and to monitor their contribution to teaching and assessment.

3. The student learning experience

3.1. Overview

This section provides an analysis of the student experience through the different phases of university life, from enrolment to final graduation. In this context it is important to recognize that the University of Iceland (UI) caters for different categories of students, and their experience is in many ways influenced by the category to which they belong.

An obvious challenge for UI compared to other Nordic universities is the high student/staff ratios and low expenditure per student; as indicated above, a situation which was aggravated by the economic downturn in 2008. Additional strains are imposed by the balance between UI's national responsibility to maintain a broad curriculum as Iceland's dominant institution of higher education, and the ambition to be a research university of high international standing. Faced by these challenges the university seems to have responded remarkably well, and has raised its research profile without adversely affecting the overall high level of satisfaction displayed by most students. However, some areas of concern to the Review Team remain, and will be addressed in the analysis below.

In an international context, the student population at UI (and indeed in Iceland as a whole) is slightly unusual on several counts. As outlined in the previous chapters, there is a large gender imbalance, with an overall majority of students female, but varying over individual schools from 40% in Natural Sciences and Engineering to around 80% in Health Sciences and Education. Also as highlighted earlier, the age of the student population on entry is also higher than European or Nordic norms, and some students also take a long time to complete their degree.

The Icelandic system features an open enrolment policy which leads to some very large classes at the undergraduate level, particularly in first year, and this magnifies the already high student to staff ratios. On the other hand, the commitment at UI to take a national responsibility in offering study programmes across the widest possible range of subjects leads to limited choice of specialized courses for many Masters students.

In response to high student numbers and allegedly insufficient previous knowledge from upper secondary school, some study programmes have now introduced entrance exams to limit enrolment. The effect of this mixed intake policy on factors such as dropout rates and skewing enrolment between different subjects and programmes remains to be explored in full.

3.2. Student recruitment and induction

Although not solely limited to its own recruitment, the University deserves commendation for its many outreach activities directed towards children and the Icelandic society as a whole. Prime examples are the University Train, Science Factory and University for Children, which in addition to taking societal responsibility no doubt contribute to raising UI's profile within Iceland as a whole, and contribute positively to recruitment in the long term. The annual University Day is also an important mechanism for presenting the opportunities within UI to prospective students and their families. For more direct recruitment the university website is by far the most important mechanism, with 95% of prospective students acquiring information on the individual study programmes from that source. The University has a special induction programme for new students at the beginning of each academic year, introducing them to practical, academic and social aspects of university life as well as offering new students various counselling services. In general, the students appeared to the Team to be largely satisfied both with the information available when choosing field and place of study, and how they were welcomed as new students on campus at UI.

3.3. The student voice

The primary central entity advocating the rights of students at UI is the Student Council (SC). Each school has five elected members on the SC, except the School of Social Sciences which elects seven members due to its large size. The Student Council therefore has a total elected membership of 27. A new governance structure was adopted in 2013, and there appeared to the Team to be a general consensus that the structure worked well, with a good spread of student representation between individual departments and faculties. In general, the students met by the Team were satisfied with their representation, both in governance and in relevant committees at all levels of the university structure. On the other hand, some students whom the Team met commented that, although the student voice was heard in the governance structure, this was not always synonymous with having real power to influence decisions – “we are heard, but not listened to” was a comment made to the Team on more than one occasion.

This viewpoint from students was, however, raised more consistently in relation to student feedback on courses through the formal course evaluations. Getting feedback and/or seeing resulting action on the basis of student evaluations of individual courses and programmes was a matter of concern raised by student representatives at UI. However, UI is by no means alone in receiving these comments. The challenge in this context appeared to the Team to be twofold. Firstly, it is important to have a good structure for handling the student feedback at the departmental/faculty level, and ensuring appropriate follow up where action is required. Secondly, and perhaps equally important, communicating to the students how their feedback has been handled, since in many cases students were unsure whether their feedback had been heeded and had any influence on future course planning and delivery. The students commented to the Team that they were perfectly willing to accept that a course could not always be changed in accordance with their suggestions if given a valid explanation. However, they sought transparency on how feedback is handled. In this regard, the Team formed the view that there was a good deal of variation across different

departments/faculties, but consistently the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering was upheld as a beacon of good practice, for having both formal mechanisms for handling and discussing student feedback at the faculty level, and good follow through of issues raised concerning individual courses and students. The Team commends the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering in this regard.

The student representatives had some critical comments on how the actual surveys were conducted. One example raised was that standardized electronic feedback forms forced the students to evaluate all teachers on a given course before the form could be submitted, even though students had sometimes not been exposed to all of the teachers on a course prior to the submission deadline. The Team was informed that this led to arbitrary views being offered which reduced the value of the response. This was also offered to the Team as a contributing factor to low student response rates and scepticism concerning the evaluation process as a whole.

Student representatives also highlighted that most course evaluation to date had taken place close to completion of the course. This reduced student motivation to actively participate in the process, since any changes made on the basis of their feedback would not be directly beneficial to themselves. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the recent piloting of simplified mid-semester evaluations was seen as a very positive development, and, as previously indicated, the Team would encourage UI to further explore and advance the more comprehensive use of these mid-term evaluations.

The UI has regulations in place for the handling of student complaints. These state that students who believe their rights have been infringed in any way, may direct a written claim to the head of faculty. The head of faculty is then required to respond with a formal reply within two months, following which the students have further possibilities for appeal should they not accept this outcome. In general, the Team observed that the number of such complaints is low, and most issues seemed to be resolved informally. Students were well aware of, and

satisfied with, the system in place, and the Team was informed that the decision of the faculty head was almost always accepted. The main concern raised by students to the Team in this context was that, for some of the issues raised, a response time of two months was too long, and more effort could be made to respond more speedily.

3.4. Student support services

Important student support services include the Ugla IT system, the Student Counselling and Career Centre (SCCC) and the National and University Library. In addition to these centrally managed entities, staff at individual schools and faculties offer both formal and informal counselling and service on a large variety of issues.

In general, students express a high degree of satisfaction with the Ugla IT system, and it is praised for its comprehensive nature, easily accessible information and good integration between different parts of the system. Although Ugla is not intended as a learning support system, it also offers good integration with more specialized external systems such as Moodle. Ugla as a tool therefore deserves commendation. There were however some critical comments as to how well this tool is used by staff. Of special concern to students met by the Team is that the information available on individual courses and programmes is not always updated when changes occur, and that not all staff are equally ready to use this excellent tool in their teaching. As a general rule, undergraduate students expressed a desire for staff to make more use of both Ugla and Moodle. Some concerns were also raised as to the quality of the Wi-Fi connection in parts of the campus.

The central counselling service (SCCC) received praise from the student representatives met by the Team. The staff of the SCCC are to be commended both for the advice they give and the wide range of services and courses they offer. In particular, the service they provide to new students at the start of their studies appeared to the Team to be instrumental in ensuring that students did

not lose more time than necessary if they thought they were in the wrong programme. This also contributes significantly to reducing student dropout. As students progress in their studies, they tend to turn more to their individual schools and faculties for more subject-specific advice. In this context the SCCC and the individual departments share responsibility for making transitions between different study programmes as smooth as possible for students who think they need a change of direction.

Although the SCCC received very positive reviews for their services from those who had used them, knowledge of their function and the range of services on offer was not comprehensive among the students met by the Team. The SCCC are aware of this problem, and discussed with the Team steps they have taken to enhance their visibility in the student community.

In general, both undergraduate and Masters students seem satisfied with the service provided by the university library, and the resources available for their specific fields of study. PhD students on the other hand seemed somewhat less satisfied with the breadth of access to relevant online journals and databases. This is addressed elsewhere in the report.

3.5. The student learning context

It was clear to the Team that the UI faces special challenges in its endeavour to introduce new teaching and evaluation practices, provide individual feedback to students, and create a modern infrastructure with up to date facilities and equipment. These challenges arise in particular through the economic troubles of the past few years and the consequential high student to staff ratios. In the face of these problems the Team formed the view that, notwithstanding the obvious impact of these severe resource constraints, the University had responded remarkably well. Teaching and evaluation methods, however, at the introductory level in particular, appeared to be generally conservative, relying on traditional lectures in large classes with little opportunity for individual feedback. The undergraduate students indicated to the Team that they would welcome more

diversity in teaching methods, and more use of the opportunities provided by electronic aids such as Uglu and Moodle. Perhaps this is a situation which is difficult to address until opportunities arise for refreshing the staff team and for extending staff development opportunities. On a similar note, while the Team was pleased to learn of ongoing building developments on the campus, they were also made aware of the increasing urgency for investment in new equipment and modern IT infrastructure.

However, as stressed in the preceding sections, in the quest to enhance teaching quality and spread knowledge of good teaching practice at UI, a special commendation must go to the work of the Centre for Teaching and Learning. The services the Centre provides for academic staff, as well as their specialist advisory role to schools and faculties on more specific teaching related issues, were universally praised to the Team and were clearly viewed as an invaluable asset by academic staff.

3.6. Use of sessional teachers

The previous chapter referred to the extensive and varied use of sessional staff in teaching. Numerically, sessional teachers far outnumber permanent academic staff at UI, and thus are a very important group for the total learning experience of students. The composition of sessional staff is highly diversified, ranging from undergraduate teaching assistants to hospital surgeons.

It is clear that the sessional teachers as a whole provide the university with an invaluable service, often for meagre economic gains, which allows the UI to maintain a breadth of subjects and societal and professional contacts it could not have achieved through the full-time academic staff alone. However, managing such a diverse group and integrating their individual contributions into the curriculum as a whole also poses many challenges. An issue raised by students to the Team was the extent to which the sessional staff were fully aware of the planning and structure of the course and or curriculum as a whole. Examples were quoted to the Team of cases where courses were given by several sessional

teachers who appeared to share little internal communication, resulting in the students receiving a selection of individually interesting mini-courses, but lacking any sense of overall purpose or planning. Related concerns were raised concerning the total workload and inconsistent grading of courses given by several teachers who may be both ambitious and innovative, but perhaps not sufficiently aware of the total load imposed on the students.

These comments are not intended to devalue the invaluable contribution and often excellent teaching provided by some sessional staff, but rather to underscore the need for UI to take responsibility for supporting the sessional teachers, coordinating the courses in which they take part, and ensuring coherent practice.

3.7. The language experience

As outlined previously in this report, UI's stated ambition to evolve towards a high-ranking international research institution has led to an increased international presence among both academic staff and students, together with pressures to publish in high-ranking journals published in English. At the same time, the University is very aware of its national role in preserving Icelandic language and culture, and there is an undisputed need to be able to communicate professionally in Icelandic within professions such as, for example, nursing and school teaching. This inevitably leads to some competing pressures and difficult decisions concerning language of instruction at the different levels of study. Such issues are not unique to the UI, and indeed the balance between preserving national language and participating in an increasingly international research world where English is the dominant language is of serious concern to all universities in the Nordic countries. Such issues are not easily resolved, and the Team was conscious that the University was well aware of these tensions. The Team would encourage the University to address these matters at an institutional level, and work towards implementing a coherent language policy as outlined in the 'Measure' highlighted in the RA.

3.8. Internationalisation

Chapter 1 of this report outlined the growth of international students at UI, who, in 2013 comprised 8.4% of the student population. At the undergraduate level 18% of individual courses are offered in English, while full programmes in English are only available at the postgraduate level. A little fewer than 500 incoming undergraduate students take advantage of programmes such as Erasmus+, Nordplus and other bilateral agreements, but fewer than 300 UI students take advantage of the same programmes to study abroad. The reason for this imbalance does not seem entirely clear, since many attractive exchange opportunities are in place for the Icelandic students to study abroad. The Team was aware that the recently appointed Director of the International Office is contributing to the development of a new international policy which will seek to stimulate wider uptake of opportunities for study abroad. The report has already highlighted the importance of the re-invigorated mentoring programme for overseas students which the International Office manages in conjunction with the Student Council. This is a commendable scheme which the Team viewed as enriching the cultural and educational experience of both overseas and domestic students. What students learn from this experience is recognised in the Diploma Supplements of the participating domestic students.

3.9. Masters programmes

The PhD programmes and the new Graduate School will not be discussed here, as this is explicitly addressed in the following chapter on the Case Study. Additional overlapping issues between Masters and PhD programmes are also discussed in that chapter. However, in the context of this chapter, it is important to highlight an apparent lack of clarity between the Masters and the Bachelors levels of studies. Furthermore, the standing of the Masters programme as a separate entity seemed to the Team to vary somewhat both between and within schools. The limited breadth and scope of courses directed specifically at the Masters level was expressed to the Team as a fairly widespread matter of concern. In the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering the Masters

programme was seen as an independent professional degree of high standing with a good range of courses for the differing specialities. However, in much of the rest of the Natural Sciences and Humanities, the Masters programmes appeared to struggle to find a clear independent identity, and appeared to be uncomfortably squeezed between the demands of Bachelor and PhD studies. In Social Sciences, in professional Masters programmes such as in Nursing and Education appeared to have more identity and structure than the academic Masters degrees. The Team was aware that this matter is again not unique to UI, and also that, subject to regulations and conditions, undergraduate courses can meaningfully contribute to Masters programmes, and vice-versa. However, such conditions and regulations need to be carefully thought through and clearly enunciated. Related to this matter, the Team was aware of concerns being raised regarding the range of courses available to Masters students to support appropriate breadth and depth of experience for the students. The Team was conscious that the University is aware of these problems in relation to Masters level study and recommends that, as a matter of some urgency, the University takes steps to clarify the nature, roles and functions of Masters programmes both within and across faculties and schools, and their relationship to undergraduate courses.

3.10. Resources and effect of economic downturn on teaching

In general, it was clear to the Team that there was a common view among both staff and students that UI had coped well with very challenging economic circumstances. The very difficult situation had clearly been well managed by skilful leadership. The university staff had been under a lot of pressure since the economic downturn in 2008, with UI taking a national responsibility for providing more students with opportunities in the face of dwindling resources. The Team was conscious that the students were well aware and, indeed, appreciative of the efforts that had been made and continue to be made. There appeared to the Team to be a sense of a common commitment between staff and students to pull through difficult times together. However, several interviewees

expressed the opinion that the increased pressure over the past few years was taking its toll, and that the present situation could not continue indefinitely.

The University is justifiably proud of having improved its international research ranking despite these difficult economic circumstances over the past few years, and the RA provides some detail on how this has been achieved through increased focus on high-end research and the PhD programmes. This increased emphasis on research is illustrated by the fact that the main increase in staff numbers over the past five years has come in the category “researchers without teaching duties”(mostly post-docs). The Team also heard from staff that there was a perceived imbalance between the many incentives in place to support research performance of staff and only much more limited rewards in relation to achieving excellence in teaching. While it is recognised that this is always a difficult balance to maintain, the Team agreed with the commentary in the RA, that the importance of excellence in supporting learning should also be emphasized. The Team noted with interest, for example, that a more systematic and active use of teaching portfolios was being considered as one possible important way forward in addressing this imbalance.

The Team was also very aware that increased overall pressure to perform better in research in the face of high student numbers also leaves less time and energy for innovation and renewal in teaching. Although the UI community as a whole seemed to the Team to have responded remarkably well to this challenge, the Team was made aware of some instances where teachers conveyed their unhappiness with their large teaching obligations to students. Although frustration in the face of high workloads may be understandable, it would be very unfortunate if an attitude that teaching was an unwelcome chore were to be conveyed to students. It should however be noted that the Team perceived this attitude to be the exception rather than the rule. Nonetheless, it is a matter that the University would wish to monitor carefully.

Heavy teaching loads and high student to staff ratios were also seen as being inhibitory in terms of developing teaching practice, since introducing new

methods was seen as requiring extra effort and time, at least in the initiation phase. The Team viewed these pressures as tending to keep teaching practices more conservative. It was observed, however, that some staff, often but not uniquely newer members of staff, were enthusiastic about introducing more use of different approaches to managing student learning.

On a similar note, large classes and time constraints were seen as posing a challenge to providing students with individual feedback on their work. However the Team's discussions with student representatives showed that the students themselves were well aware of the constraints under which staff operated, and they therefore to a large extent had accepted the impact this has on teaching and feedback practices as inevitable. The Team acknowledges that the University is aware of the risk of such complacency and would encourage the University in continuing to monitor the situation carefully and continue to provide support and encouragement for the wider dissemination of good practice that exists in the University.

The Team learned that cuts in funding have also had an impact on UI's ability to maintain and replace equipment to support undergraduate teaching, and the need to replace obsolete or worn equipment is growing in urgency. Increased success in obtaining research funding from the EU and other external sources means that often high-end apparatus used by researchers and PhD students can be replaced, while core funding for routine apparatus used by undergraduates is harder to come by.

In summary, the Team is very aware of the challenges faced by staff and students in the difficult economic environment. While there is always a need to guard against complacency, the Team wishes to commend the resilience and professionalism of all concerned to sustain the quality of the student experience in the face of difficult external circumstances.

3.11. Consistency in grading and estimating workload

Several of the students interviewed by the Team raised the issue that there did not always seem to be consistency between the number of ECTS credits awarded for a given course and the workload involved. The Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering addressed the same issue in their subject-level review report, and provided an analysis to show that the perceived workload varied considerably between different courses which were nominally the same size. Students also voiced concerns that significant amounts of material could both be added to or removed from a given course without changing the number of ECTS credits awarded, creating the impression that the assignment of ECTS was in some instances a little arbitrary. The University is therefore encouraged to promote guidelines which ensure that the workload assigned to a course of a given ECTS size is consistent both within and between the different schools.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, external examiners are predominately used for evaluating final theses, a practice not uncommon in Europe and elsewhere. The Team also noted that grading of courses was most commonly the sole responsibility of the teacher giving the course. Although there were isolated examples of *ad hoc* double marking arrangements, there appeared to be no formal system for double marking. While the Team was aware of the resource constraints, the absence of such arrangements places undue responsibility on individual teachers to ensure consistency in grading and maintenance of standards, especially when sessional staff who are not immersed in the university culture are involved. In general, the students appeared to the Team to be very accepting of the grades they received, and formal complaints seemed rare. However, as indicated in the previous chapter, the Team formed the view that standards could be more firmly assured if there were more systematic arrangements in place to encourage more standardised grading practice across the University. While this is primarily a matter of securing standards, as discussed previously, it also affects the student experience in a more general sense due to its potential impact on students' abilities to identify and strive to achieve consistent expectations of standards within and across courses.

3.12. Learning outcomes

The use of learning outcomes to increase awareness of course goals and enhance teaching and assessment practices is still relatively new to the University. At present learning outcomes are defined for 82% of the total courses, ranging between 60% and 100% in individual faculties. The students and staff met by the Team were clearly well aware of their existence, and, in general, were enthusiastic about their value and continued development. The Centre for Teaching and Learning provides seminars and instructions on how best to write and use learning outcomes. Although constructing good learning outcomes and relating them to approaches to teaching, learning and assessment is still a work in progress, the University is commended for its continuing commitment to their development and application.

3.13. Different categories of students and analytical needs

One difficulty encountered when trying to analyse factors reflecting the student experience such as retention rates, time to graduation and overall student satisfaction, is that the numbers presented are very much an aggregation of experiences from different categories of students. In practice, the student experience varies with context, and distance learners, for example, are likely to have a different perspective than campus-based students. Analyses of time spent on an individual's study programme or age of graduation do not take into account the proportion of students who cannot, or do not wish to, study full time. For example, the Team was informed that not all students entering the University plan to take a complete degree. In this context, 'non-completion' becomes a less meaningful concept. Furthermore, dropout from the University altogether is obviously different from dropout from one programme in order to enter another programme at UI, and so on.

On the surface, student dropout rates appeared to the Team to be fairly high, and the time spent by students on individual programmes too long, but not knowing the above factors in detail it was not clear to the Team whether or not this was a

real problem. By the same token the overall satisfaction surveys of students with respect to different aspects of their studies (presented in section 4.3 of the Reflective Analysis) are useful in a general sense, but would not adequately expose specific problems which may be associated with certain subgroups of students. This makes it more difficult for the University and for the Team to identify the need for action to alleviate specific problems affecting particular categories of students. The University is therefore encouraged to distinguish more clearly between different student categories, (including full- and part-time, graduating and non-graduating, and campus based and distance learning) to analyse the experience and needs of each group.

3.14. Management of information

The University acknowledges that its capacity for collecting and analysing statistical data for use as management information could be improved. The RA identified a need for better definition and support, both centrally and at school level, for the processing of statistical data, and for communicating this information to staff and students. This view was supported by some of the staff members met by the Team. While noting the intention of the University to address this matter, the Team would encourage it to establish a systemic mechanism for handling such management information and using it to enhance the ability of the main committees to exercise effectively their management functions and hence support the learning experience of its students.

The University's Ugla IT system is both an institutional intranet and a collection of information systems and resources for staff and students. These systems and resources include the student register and academic records, the application systems, the course catalogue, and an examination schedules component. Ugla is not principally intended to function as a virtual learning environment, though it does include course homepages that often link to other systems. Ugla was generally praised by staff and students alike and the Team would commend Ugla for the way in which it provides ready access to a comprehensive range of information.

The accuracy and completeness of information published on the University website is the responsibility of a number of different units. The pages of statistical information are controlled by the Division of Science and Innovation. The President of the University Council (the Rector) and the secretary of the UC control the web publication of the Council minutes; and, the course catalogue is overseen by an editor within the Division of Academic Affairs who liaises with school and faculty staff for the annual update of the information it contains.

Students informed the review panel that they regularly used the website and, while it was sometimes difficult to find all the information, the website was generally accurate. However, the RA noted that course changes were not always communicated effectively to students. Support staff reported to the Team that they received emails from students complaining that the course catalogue was not up to date. Sometimes courses described as being available were not actually running in a particular academic session. In the 2013-2014 course catalogue this amounted to a total of 388 courses not taught. Support staff informed the Team that Ugla presented all courses related to a particular line of study, even if some of the courses were not taught every session. Unless students checked with the relevant faculty, they would not discover this until they attempted to register.

3.15. Summary evaluation of the student experience

Against the background of the resource constraints faced by UI over the past several years, the University leadership and individual teachers have, in the view of the Team, handled the added strains imposed on them remarkably well, with a consistently high level of professionalism and a determination to push forward. As has been consistently pointed out throughout this report, the University continues to make great strides in the collection of data in order to understand the nature of the experience of students at UI. This is evidenced, for example, by: the systematic student course evaluations; the piloting of mid-semester evaluations; the introduction of comprehensive student experience surveys at two key points in the undergraduate student journey; the commitment to adapt

the student experience survey for postgraduate students; and, the range of registration and progression statistics. The University is aware that the utility of the end of course student evaluations is somewhat limited, and the Team would encourage the University to spread the good practice evident, for example, in the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering. Conversely, the Team was aware of clear evidence of the perceived value to students of the mid-course student evaluations. In general, these issues do not come as news to the University, and many related matters are addressed in the 'measures' identified in the Reflective Analysis. The University is encouraged to actively pursue these measures through an action plan, and, on a more general note, to continue to find ways to show that it values excellence and innovation in teaching as highly as it values excellence in research.

In many significant areas, the Team formed the view that the University was on the cusp of further enhancements to its evidence-base on the student experience. The ambitious and comprehensive student experience survey is excellent, and is now providing the University, schools and faculties with a wealth of detailed information which will be of enormous benefit in the future management of the quality of the student experience. Similarly, the University has instituted a rigorous, comprehensive process of periodic subject-level reviews. In these, and other related areas, the Team would support the hope expressed to it on many occasions during the visit, that this rich mine of data is fully shared and utilized at all levels in the University. It will provide central Committees with an excellent x-ray vision of the student experience and help to identify pockets of particularly good practice worthy of dissemination, as well as areas where change may be required. Further, at local department, faculty and school levels this provides detailed information to teaching staff on the experience of their students and the effectiveness of their practice. The Team supports the view of the University that it will be important to ensure that, at all levels, this comprehensive evidence is shared, analysed, acted upon and effectively used in monitoring.

The University is aware of the importance of moving to the consideration of the experience of particular groups of students. It is clear that there is a significant

presence of part-time students at UI although such a category does not formally exist. The Team would encourage the University to move forward with its consideration of this classification. Similarly, the experience and needs of students learning at a distance require particular consideration. The University is well aware of the importance of re-visiting the philosophy underlying its provision of Masters programmes and analysing the particular experience of Masters students. In general, the Team would support the University in taking a more granular approach to considering the experience of its students.

The Team was impressed by the services provided by the student support services, and the one-stop shop entry arrangements. The University is aware of the need to look at the on-line library arrangements for graduate students which the Team agreed appeared to be less than satisfactory.

The University is in the early stages of revising its international strategy and there were plans afoot to develop further the international dimensions to the student experience. The early initiative to enhance the mentoring scheme for international students was already paying dividends, and the Team viewed this initiative as a commendable way in which to enhance the experience of both international and domestic students.

The use of learning outcomes had clearly been widely applied and there were plans afoot, at least within the CTL, to exploit their value more fully in relation to approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. The Team would support this further development.

The University acknowledges the requirement for further work to strengthen its ability to collect and use management information; the Team would encourage further development in this area. The Uglu IT system is commended for the way it provides ready access to a comprehensive range of information. The University meets sector expectations for the accuracy and completeness of the information it publishes on its website.

The Team observed two areas where a potential lack of consistency could adversely impact on the quality of the student learning experience. The high proportion of sessional teachers employed leads, on occasion, to students being exposed to a large number of different sessional teachers within a single course. Where such staff are not effectively briefed and supported, students can easily experience a rather random collection of individual small units lacking coherence in objectives, outcomes and standards. Several students reported such experiences to the Team. This, however, is not to undervalue the added richness that well-managed contributions from sessional staff can bring to the student experience, which again was reported by students.

The second area where the Team thought further consistency would be beneficial to the student experience was in assessment strategies and outcomes. As discussed above, in many cases assessment appeared to be left almost entirely to single individual members of staff. This applied to both the design of assessment and the definition of the required standards to be achieved. While the previous chapter raised the implications of this for the security of standards, it also has significant implications for the student learning experience. Clarity, consistency and dissemination of required standards support the students in fully appreciating the expectations of the outcomes to be achieved, and the assessment tasks themselves have a significant impact on the adoption of appropriate learning styles. The Team therefore recommends that it would be helpful to consider more systematic arrangements for sharing approaches to assessment and grading practices.

4. Graduate School Case Study and Research

4.1. Background to the establishment of the Graduate School

The University of Iceland, pursuant to the goals established in the University Policy for 2011-2016, has embarked on a significant effort to expand its graduate programs and enrolments, especially at the PhD level, and to advance its research profile. These are two complementary and interdependent goals. Between 2009 and 2014, Masters programme enrolments have increased by 18 percent and PhD programme enrolments by 31 percent. These increases have been both responsive (for the former, in response to the economic conditions following the financial crisis of 2008, and for the latter, in response to an articulated desire to enhance research activity and in turn the competitive position of the University *vis-à-vis* European and global rankings) and proactive, as a means to enhance overall quality, attract students and faculty, and compete for domestic and international research funding.

For these reasons, it is appropriate that the University chose to focus on the establishment of the Graduate School in 2009 as the case study included in the Reflective Analysis. It was explained to the Team that the University considered this to be a particularly good case study since it illustrated an example of significant change closely linked to the University Policy, it demonstrated the University's focus on enhancement, and also demonstrated the commitment to build across the university on good practice. Within the case study, the primary emphasis was on PhD education. The Review Team was informed that Masters programmes would be the focus of a subsequent analysis by the University. Although PhD degrees had been awarded by the University since 1919, the first formal programmes were organised in 1990, and the first degrees resulting from those programmes were awarded in 1997. The University Policy sets a goal of 60-70 PhD completions each year. In 2013, 52 were awarded, based on a total doctoral enrolment of 515. Half of the PhD degrees awarded on that occasion

were to women. The most rapid growth in PhD enrolments since 2009 has been in the School of Education and the School of Humanities.

The Graduate School is housed within the Office of the Rector and is led by the Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs supported by the Managing Director of the Graduate School. A Board of Directors for the School was created in 2013 chaired by the Pro-Rector. The Team was informed that there was some scepticism, even resistance, on the part of some faculty regarding the inception of the Graduate School. The tension between centrally administered graduate education and the traditional model of diffuse organisation of graduate programs was negotiated over time. At the time of the review, there remained some lack of understanding of the role and structure of the School on the part of some faculty as well as PhD students themselves. This appeared to the Team however to be in the process of being resolved as the Graduate School continued to demonstrate its added value with respect to: establishing uniform standards and practices; quality assurance processes; resource allocation for student support; and, the enhancement of the visibility of graduate education within the University community. The Team observed that the 2004 “Standards and Requirements for the Quality of Doctoral Programmes at the University of Iceland” (revised 2012) was an important effort to articulate common standards. Over time, assuring that all faculty are acting in accordance with these standards will be a valuable role for the Graduate School.

All faculties at the University were accredited by the Ministry to develop and award PhD degrees, and the University has proceeded to offer PhD programmes across all areas. This inclusive approach reflects a decision by the central administration not to choose areas of focus. The Team was informed that this would have run counter to the culture of the University. In addition, it was believed that Iceland as a nation requires advanced academic and technical specialisation across all fields to support its continued economic and cultural aspirations. The primary factor determining growth of programmes is the availability of funding for students, which has consequences for those fields where extramural or industry funding is more or less available. While the Team

appreciated the rationale behind this inclusive approach to the provision of PhD programmes, it was also aware of significant potential dangers created, for example, by the absence of breadth of capacity in some specialisms. This could leave students vulnerable to lack of critical mass for support or problems due to staff absence or sabbatical arrangements.

The Graduate School is still early in its organisational and programmatic development. For this reason, the case study presented in the Reflective Analysis was more descriptive than analytic. Systematic processes for evaluation of the effectiveness of the School in fulfilling its mission, as well as regular data collection and analysis regarding doctoral education, are in the early stages of development. The issues discussed below illustrate this early development and no doubt will be addressed by the University as the School matures.

4.2. Graduate Programme Curricula

There are no specified course requirements for doctoral programmes as a whole. While this in itself may not present a problem, given the individualized nature of PhD study and the prior qualifications of matriculants, the absence of prescribed courses in research methods, including quantitative and qualitative analysis, may affect the quality of students' educational experience and their ability to conduct independent research upon graduation. In addition, student advising may be variable given the lack of curricular structure, which may in turn affect the timely completion of degrees (see below). There has been discussion of creating School-wide or University-wide doctoral seminars focused on research methods, but no concrete plans were in place at the time of the review. Coursework that takes into account ethical issues in research had just begun to be put in place at the time of the review, initially in the School of Social Sciences (in addition to that already established in the School of Health Studies). In the view of the Team, it will be important to design both methods and ethics content as doctoral curricula develop further.

At the Masters degree level, there is evidence that there is insufficient breadth of coursework and limited availability of courses in some programmes. Only 39 percent of all graduate students believed that the variety and number of courses available is satisfactory. This is an area where, in the view of the Team, the Graduate School can play a helpful role in establishing more uniform expectations and standards. Masters programmes are discussed further below.

4.3. Language policy

The existing policy on the use of Icelandic as the official language of instruction and academic writing presents some significant challenges that will need to be resolved with respect especially to graduate education and research. As the University aspires to attract more international students and faculty, and contribute to the international scholarly literature, there will be continuing, even increased, tensions between the prescribed use of Icelandic and the tendency to use English as the most accessible language for multicultural communication. For example, 54 percent of the graduate students in the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences are international, but there is no organized support for their language needs. There was evidence that the language policy is not adhered to consistently, apparently out of necessity. Almost one-fifth of undergraduate courses are taught in English. In Nursing, for example, many of the core texts are in English, which, students highlighted to the Team, created problems in supporting their needs in communicating with Icelandic patients. There seemed to the Team to be considerable uncertainty in the University regarding these language issues, as reflected in contradictory statements found on the website and in programme materials. However, the Team was pleased to learn that there was a study underway on the matter at the time of the Review. It is clearly important that an early resolution of these matters is found.

4.4. Supervision of students writing theses and serving as research assistants

Increased use of research assistants to support the enhanced research mission of the University as well as the increasing number of doctoral students writing theses are creating the need for systematic and high quality supervisory practices. Graduate students generally were satisfied with the quality of supervision they received, although there appeared to be variability in the competence and availability of supervisors across the individual schools. One programme reported a ratio of two suitable faculty for 28 students at the thesis stage; this appeared to be an extreme situation, but, nonetheless, warrants attention. It was reported to the Team that some faculty were unaware of policies regarding supervision of PhD studies. This led to situations where, if a supervisor became unavailable due to leave or other circumstance, there was sometimes no provision for back-up support for the student.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning has initiated workshops on supervision for faculty working with graduate students, an important step forward. In addition, the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences has taken the lead in developing good supervisory practices. In the view of the Team, its efforts can serve as a model for other Schools in the future. A new special committee that oversees the quality of PhD student supervision has been created within the Graduate School, which should help to address this challenge in the coming years.

In general, the Team formed the view that it will be important for the Graduate School to follow through with its work on ensuring a carefully monitored and consistently high quality of supervisory experience of all PhD students. Further, it will also be important to develop an appropriate framework of support for doctoral students, through short courses or otherwise, in general areas such as research methodologies and research ethics.

4.5. Funding

The funding of PhD education is a critical aspect of achieving competitive status, especially with respect to attracting non-Icelandic students. The increased number of PhD students conducting research has been one factor in the significant increase in ISI ratings for the University, so the financial support for students is critical not only for the students' own success, but also for the fulfilment of University goals. The availability of funding varies considerably across schools, with the highest numbers of students on full support in the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences and the School of Health Studies. Overall, about half of all doctoral students receive full funding to carry out their studies and serve as research assistants. PhD students who serve as teaching assistants or lecturers also receive compensation, but in some cases students continue to work outside of the University in order to support themselves and their families. The lack of full funding has a direct effect on time to degree (see below). In general, the shortage of funding has a clear impact on the ability of PhD students to focus on their main line of research and the general quality of their experience as graduate students.

Current policy requires that funding for students be in place at the point of admission, regardless of source. Formally, the faculties are required by the central administration to operate according to this policy when students are admitted. However, it appeared to the Team that the policy seemed to be operating more as an aspiration than a matter of regular practice. A recent doubling of research funds, primarily from external sources, has helped to fulfil the goal of funding for all students. RANNIS funding is also expected to double over the next few years, which might also result in more funding for students.

4.6. Time to graduation

Time to degree completion is an important marker of quality and efficiency in graduate education, especially at the PhD level. It was reported that 55 percent of all PhD students who entered UI in 2004 completed their studies in six years.

The shortest times for completion were found in the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences and the School of Health Sciences, due primarily to the availability of full funding for those students, reducing their need to earn supplemental income during their time of enrolment. Systematic collection of data on time to degree and attrition is beginning to occur. Annual progress reports are expected for all PhD students, as prescribed in Annex 4 of the 2012 Standards for Doctoral Programmes referenced above. This policy is in the process of being fully implemented. In addition, the Graduate School is conducting targeted interviews with students who are taking longer than average to complete, to determine the reasons and offer appropriate support.

4.7. Student experience and resources

Graduate students depend on a range of resources and services in order to be assured of a positive educational experience and successful completion of degree requirements. Although some of the PhD students reported satisfaction with library holdings, including on-line journals and data bases, others expressed to the Team considerable dissatisfaction with the access available to on-line journals. The Team was given examples where meaningful access could only be gained through either an overseas university or the use of supervisor's access. The Graduate School is currently working with the University Library both to assure access to needed resources and to inform students of resources that are already in place, of which they may not be aware.

When the Graduate School was established in 2009 the plans to appoint a Director to take developments forward had to be put on hold due to the severe budget cuts following the 2008 crisis. The first Director and permanent Board were only appointed in 2013 and it is therefore only recently that full developments have been getting underway. The Team was aware that PhD students whom they met were not yet fully aware of the role of the Graduate School and the resources it provided to support their studies. Now that the School had its Director and Board in place, it was taking steps to address this, including adding students to governance committees, hosting an opening

reception for all new PhD students, and publishing a graduate student handbook in addition to having a student representative as a full member of the Board. These actions are likely to create a greater sense of community among the graduate students, a goal that is shared by faculty and students. A doctoral student organisation, recently formed at the time of the review, will also help to bring graduate students together across the University.

4.8. Masters degree programmes

As noted earlier, the University planned to review the place and quality of Masters degrees in UI following the review. Partially due to restricted funding following the crisis of 2008-09, there was an increased demand for Masters level programmes associated with the desire to support the labour force in upskilling and changing direction. At the same time funds for expansion were limited. This resulted in a rapid growth of Masters level provision but across a narrower range of areas and options than would have been considered ideal. This was an issue raised by Masters students at the time of the review. The rapid growth of Masters provision in a short time also detracted from the possibility of full consideration of the role of Masters level programmes across the University within the UI portfolio of awards. It is therefore not surprising that a theme that emerged in the Team's discussions with both faculty and students was the need to create a clear distinction and defined relationship between Masters and undergraduate studies, and Masters and PhD studies. The strong emphasis on PhD studies and the need to commit high levels of teaching resources for undergraduate students appeared to the Team to have squeezed out full consideration of the nature, role and place of Masters degrees. There is considerable variety across programmes. In some cases, particularly in professional areas, the Masters degree is a respected and well-resourced endeavour (e.g., Engineering, Psychology, Education, and Nursing). In other fields, the Masters degree seems to be a step-child, not as well developed as either the undergraduate or doctoral programmes (e.g., Natural Sciences, Humanities, and some Social Sciences).

4.9. Research at the University

It has been frequently stressed throughout this report that the University of Iceland places an increasing emphasis on research intensity across all schools, and indeed the preceding section on growth of PhD provision is particularly interlinked with its success as a research-intensive institution. The Team was pleased to note the success of the University in sustaining its position in the top 300 universities in the world in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. In general, this review, and the QEF of which it is one component, in this first cycle is focused on the management of the quality of the student learning experience and the security of the standards of their awards. This report is not therefore able to present an evaluation of the research performance of the University *per se*. However, research activity is such an important and integral aspect of the University of Iceland, and therefore an important element in the environment in which students are learning, that it is appropriate to include a brief commentary on some of the salient features of the management of research and its quality.

Research Institutes

In general, all academic staff at UI are expected to be research-active, with the expected proportion of research effort varying between different types of post. Research is organized within faculties and research institutes. There are many different forms of institute across the University. The Team was informed that in the School of Education the structure of research institutes has been designed to preserve the strong link between research and teaching. The largest research institute is the Science Research Institute. The Team was informed that there were over 130 research institutes in total with varying structures and styles of operation. It was a matter of decision for individual staff in which institute to locate their research. The Team was informed that, at the time of this review, the University was about to undertake a review of the functioning and structure of the research units.

Research policy and management

Although the University places great emphasis on the ability of staff to select their own areas of research as a fundamental aspect of academic freedom, research is carried out within a general policy framework defined by the University Council Science Committee and supported through the Division of Science and Innovation. The latter oversees and supports competitive funding bids and distributes internal funding from the University Research Fund. It also evaluates research projects, provides input into the Evaluation system of public universities and contributes to the hiring and promotion processes in relation to research performance.

Research resources

An important source of funding for research has been the establishment of the Centennial Fund described above in chapter 1. To the extent objectives are achieved, this would raise the level of funding at UI to the Nordic average by 2020, and liberate a significant proportion of funds to support research. However, already, the Team was informed, the fund has supported the appointment of 15 new post-doctoral researchers and 8 Assistant Professors, all appointed through international competition with an emphasis on seeking international research excellence. In general, much research funding has to be obtained externally both within Iceland, through European and Nordic sources, and more widely internationally.

The quality of research activity is monitored largely through the submission of an annual research report which all staff are required to submit. This report also includes information on teaching and other duties. The University has developed a points-based system designed to reflect the quality of research outputs of individual staff. This system has been adopted by all the public higher education institutions in Iceland. The Team was pleased to see a framework for the assessment of research in place. Such scales are notoriously difficult to construct in a manner that is considered fair to all disciplines and all kinds of research output, and the Team was aware of the views of some staff that the scales adopted unfairly worked against some forms of research output. The Team was

aware, and pleased to note, that this is a matter of which the University is conscious and is keeping under review.

Research/teaching balance

The distribution of internal research funds to schools and faculties is based largely on the research points earned in total by the staff of each faculty and school. It is important to note in the context of this report that staff who earn above a certain number of research points will earn remission in teaching. At the other end, staff who earn below a certain number of research points will be allocated additional teaching. Thus research active staff are given reduced teaching loads, potentially removing the most current and scholarly faculty from classrooms occupied by undergraduate and Masters students. This may work against the University's goals to increase undergraduate research awareness and thus maintain a high quality of higher education teaching. Further, it could send a signal to faculty that teaching is a duty to be avoided if one is to be judged well. Striking the right strategic and operational balance between teaching and research will be increasingly important to the University as it continues along the path defined by international rankings. The Team is conscious that the University is well aware of these potential dangers and is seeking to ensure the effective operation of appropriate balancing mechanisms. The Team would encourage continuing vigilance in this regard. Similar commentary applies to the criteria applied to considering staff for promotion to senior levels within the University.

Sustaining the international environment in research

Finally in this section, a point linking research back to the growth of PhD provision in UI. The Team noted one of the core strengths of the University to be the great diversity of academic backgrounds represented by faculty who have been trained at a wide variety of institutions in other countries. This clearly contributes to the depth and breadth of research now taking place. As the University expands its PhD programmes and increases the number of graduates, there may be some danger of "inbreeding" if the University in the future hires its own graduates, not an unlikely scenario given the challenges of recruiting

international faculty to Iceland (and related to the discussion earlier of the language policy). Again, in discussion it was clear to the Team that the University was well aware of this potential issue and that the University would seek to ensure that there was not undue reliance in the future on 'growing their own staff'.

4.10. Summary evaluation of the case study and research

The Case Study

The creation of the Graduate School in 2009 and subsequent development of policies and practices in relation to PhD studies has catalysed new resources for student support and is leading to more uniform, higher standards of PhD education. The rapid growth of Masters and PhD programmes since then has created both opportunities and stresses. There are multiple signs of growing pains, as central administration, schools, and departments address increased enrolments, funding challenges, and the need for various forms of support for students. Essentially, the necessary regulations and frameworks appear to the Team to be now in place.

Further work on creating a sense of shared identity among graduate students, finding opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, and articulating common interests of faculty and students is needed and is now finding a focus of attention in the Graduate School.

More strategic approaches to the admissions process for doctoral students, systematic collection and analysis of data related to retention and time to degree, and enhanced support for, and monitoring of, student supervision are all targets of the Graduate School and need to be achieved.

In the view of the Team, a promising start has been made by the well-led Graduate School.

Research

Although the present exercise does not include a review of research, the general research environment established at the University of Iceland undoubtedly contributes positively to the quality of both the undergraduate and postgraduate learning experience. The University has been very successful in establishing its position in international world rankings for which it must be commended. UI is also aware of the importance of maintaining an appropriate balance in incentivising research and teaching. The Team was pleased to learn of the impending review of the Research Institutes which should result in a more coherent structure across the University within which research may flourish.

While it is natural in this context to have a prime focus on the links between research and postgraduate teaching, the links with undergraduate teaching are also extremely important. At the undergraduate level, the provision of research methods courses, the exposure of students to staff and other current research activities and outcomes, and the opportunities to engage directly in research activities themselves, are all viewed by the Team to be of utmost importance. The Team was aware of some areas where resource pressures were beginning to influence these fundamentally important aspects of the undergraduate learning experience.

5. Managing Enhancement

5.1. The general enhancement context

Throughout its interactions with the University, the Team was presented with an institution which was going to significant lengths to understand itself. The RA itself represents an extensive collection and collation of statistical and other data. The recent development and implementation of a comprehensive student experience survey and the extensive information provided through the subject-level cycle of reviews are excellent examples of the institution building up a bank of information on which to base and monitor its strategy for enhancing the quality of the student experience. While this process is undoubtedly allowing some strengths to be recognised and celebrated, this emerging picture is allowing the University also to identify and prioritise areas for enhancement, which the Team recognised was increasingly occurring. In general, the Team formed the view that the University was indeed a self-critical and forward facing community, a perspective exemplified by the Rector, Rectorate, and Deans. This growing culture of evidence collection linked to an underlying enhancement perspective provides confidence in the future direction of the quality of the learning experience of the students at the University of Iceland.

Many examples of the self-reflective and critical culture were in evidence throughout this review, including: the decision to undertake a review of the merger of the University of Education with UI and a commitment to following through the outcomes of that review; in general, the self-critical nature of the subject-level reviews and the follow-up actions (e.g. in Political Science and Psychology); and, the commitment to undertake a review of the operation of the research institutes. Other areas where the University has reflected on areas for enhancement are included in the extensive list of action points highlighted in the 'Measures' in the RA. In all this, the University is not complacent regarding the challenges it faces in taking forward its ambitious agendas. A number of these challenges were highlighted to the team, including: the need for early resolution

to underfunding; the need to ensure effective communication both within the University and between the University and external stakeholders; and, the need to ensure effective, highly qualified leadership at all levels and to guard against complacency and resistance to change.

In all, the Team concluded that the University embodied a very positive environment for enhancement based on its increasing appetite for the building of evidence, its self-critical approach to managing its affairs, and its realism in relation to the challenges involved. One of these challenges, discussed further below, will be to ensure that appropriate diagnosis and action follows from the building of the x-ray pictures that the University is building of itself. An example of this is the further action that is required to turn the identified 'Measures' of the RA into a plan of action with identified responsibilities and monitoring arrangements.

5.2. Managing enhancement – the committee structure

The cornerstone of strategic and operational planning in UI is the series of University Policies which contain targets and timescales. The Rector's Office (including the regular meetings with the Deans), the Division of Academic Affairs, the Division of Science and Innovation (in relation to research), the UC Quality Committee, the UC Quality Reviews Committee, and the UC Academic Affairs Committee, all have roles in ensuring that targeted enhancements are being monitored and supported as appropriate. A key role in all of this is played by the Director of Quality Management. In its meetings with these various individuals and groups, together with the RA and associated evidence, the Team was able to confirm that these individuals and committees do indeed currently execute their roles effectively. However, at the most senior level, the Team was uncertain of the evidence on which the University Council itself drew to assure itself that appropriate enhancements were systematically and effectively being identified, prioritised and addressed.

In relation to the Academic Affairs Committee and the Quality Committee of the UC, the Team was conscious of their important roles in managing enhancement, particularly the Academic Affairs Committee and the Head of Division of Academic Affairs. However, the Team was also aware of the very real possibility of confusion arising over the responsibilities of these two committees for identifying the need for action and subsequently monitoring its impact. While this issue, of potential overlap and falling down the cracks, is by no means a problem unique to UI, the Team was conscious not only of its own confusion, but also that of staff and students met during the review. The picture is made more complex with the introduction of the Quality Reviews Committee. Again, the Team was very aware of the important role of this Committee, and indeed was able to witness its effectiveness in relation to its coordination of the Subject-level Reviews. However, in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, shared understandings and clarity of communication, the Team formed the view that it would be useful to re-visit the operation and inter-relationships of these three key committees in order to support their continued effectiveness in managing enhancement.

The Team was impressed by the commitment and effectiveness of key individuals in the management of quality enhancement, in particular the Pro-Rector for Science and Academic Affairs and the Director of Quality Management (who is also Director of the Rector's Office). The team was also aware of the breadth of their responsibilities and the considerable advantages gained by having these individuals heavily involved in the range of committees discussed above. However, for the Team this did also raise the question of capacity, potential over-stretch, and risk in these absolutely key areas. It is important to state unequivocally that the Team found absolutely no evidence of lack of energy and enthusiasm for identifying and addressing challenges. Indeed, the very reverse. The Team was consistently impressed by the appetite, energy and effectiveness of those involved. However, the concern does remain, that the leadership responsibilities in this key area fall on a few shoulders, and there are significant risks if this situation continues given the University's important enhancement agenda. This is perhaps a good example of the pressing need,

referred to above, to see the light at the end of the tunnel of scarce resources with increasing, indeed urgent, clarity.

5.3. Managing enhancement – the University evidence base

As indicated above, it is clear that the University is on the threshold of developing a comprehensive evidence base covering at least the majority of dimensions of the student experience. For some time, the Academic Affairs Committee, supported by the Division of Academic Affairs, has conducted a range of surveys used to support enhancement of practice. An interesting example is the survey of admission and induction processes for new students across the University. More recently, the introduction of the comprehensive student experience survey is a commendable and extensive survey of student opinions at two important stages in their learning journeys (the mid-point and point of graduation). The office of the Rector, the Division of Academic Affairs and the Social Sciences Research Institute are to be congratulated for their work in creating, administering and analysing the outcomes from this survey. It is particularly helpful for benchmarking purposes that the survey design has built in comparability with the equivalent national survey in the UK. The Team was pleased to note the early use of results in this context, and indeed the outputs from this survey permeating the evidence base of the RA.

At course level, information on the student experience is collected through course evaluation surveys which students complete routinely at the end of each course. The results of these surveys have restricted circulation, and therefore limited exposure to discussion. This is discussed further below. More recently, additional mid-semester course evaluations have been introduced. In addition, the University gathers much information on the quality of teaching and learning support through the Subject-level Reviews. The Subject-level Reviews, when completed in summer 2015, will have produced 27 reports. At the time of the review visit, 19 of these subject reviews had already been completed. These review reports provide a rich compilation of statistical and non-statistical material which help faculties, schools and the University to map out the reality of the 'local' experience of students. In addition to this work at the subject-level, at

an institutional level, the RA itself has produced and drawn together an extensive data set on the experience of students across the institution.

Putting all this together, at both subject and institutional levels, demonstrates that the University now has in place systemic structures that will provide regular, up to date information on the experience of students and the impact (or otherwise) of policy designed to improve that experience. The challenge facing the University, of which it is well aware, is to ensure that the information continues to be 'clean', is widely available, is channelled to targeted areas for interpretation and action, and used throughout the University to further develop and monitor the impact of enhancement strategies. Data in itself does not provide enhancement, but is a first essential step. Course evaluations that remain buried do not enhance student learning. However, open sharing of the outcomes (as in the excellent examples the Team were repeatedly given from the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering), makes a substantial difference. Course evaluation exercises that are not followed up (or where follow-up is not communicated) will wither on the vine. Course evaluations where clear action follows will have a clear impact on enhancement, as evidenced by the general success of the mid-session course evaluations. In summary, the Team agrees with the University, that the systematic collection of information that is now in place in UI will have a very important role in the continuing development and monitoring of its management of enhancement. In practice, the impact will, of course, be determined by the effective communication of that data and its application to the development and monitoring of enhancement strategies and policies throughout the committees, schools and faculties.

5.4. Managing enhancement – sharing internal practice and experience

There is clear evidence of a wide range of fora within the University where staff and students from across the schools, faculties and other units meet regularly. These include the UC Quality Committee, Academic Affairs Committee, Quality Reviews Committee and Science Committee. From its discussions, the Team

formed the view that these committees have very busy agendas, and that, in practice there was a tendency for the responsibilities, in particular of the QC and AAC for quality management, to overlap. In addition, it was not clear which committee, if any, was responsible for identifying and initiating the sharing of good practice. The University Quality Reviews Committee to date did appear to the Team to have been very successful in sharing good practice across the University in relation to subject review methodology. However, its active role in sharing outcomes from the reviews worthy of dissemination across the institution was only beginning to emerge. At Masters level, it appeared that the discussion of enhancement, and indeed the very meaning of a Masters degree itself, was a matter left largely to individual schools and faculties. At PhD level, the practice of enhancement (for example of supervision) was passing largely from individual schools to the Graduate School with one of the founding principles of the School being to share good practice across the University. As discussed elsewhere in this report, this is a commendable example of sharing practice across the institution. The university is aware of the desirability of revisiting the responsibilities of the various central committees for sharing good practice, and the Team would support this further consideration.

The Team also noted the sharing of practice between central administration and school administration through Consultative Groups which met regularly to discuss a range of matters including academic affairs, research matters, human resources, management, marketing, and public relations.

Aside from the operation of individual committees, the Team noted some excellent examples of opportunities for the sharing of good practice that had been created across the institution. The Annual University Conference of Teaching and Learning for example provides important and valued opportunities once a year to share new and interesting practice in approaches to teaching and learning. The awards for outstanding professional achievement in teaching, research and in support services, conferred annually, provide a further opportunity for university-wide sharing and celebration of good practice.

5.5. Managing enhancement – the Centre for Teaching and Learning

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) plays a pivotal role in the University's approach to managing enhancement. It has a central role in the committee structure of the university in sharing and drawing on practice across the faculties and schools. In addition, the CTL provides a range of customised services to faculties on course and teaching evaluations, student focus groups and other devices for identifying and remedying perceived weaknesses and for identifying, celebrating and sharing strengths. The CTL also largely manages the regular course evaluation surveys and stands ready to offer advice on areas for enhancement. In addition, the CTL is heavily involved in offering advice to faculties on taking forward the outcomes from subject-level reviews in order to further enhance practice. The CTL is also involved in organising a wide range of courses and seminars for staff including induction programmes for new staff and the more substantive Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching Studies for Higher Education. The Team was also informed of a proposal which emerged in discussion between the CTL and faculty heads to learn from a Finnish approach involving external experts in various areas of pedagogical practice working with faculties for a brief period. Although the RA indicates that this particular initiative was unlikely to bear fruit, it is nonetheless a good example of the close working between the CTL and the faculties.

From discussion with a wide range of staff, it was very clear to the Team that the offerings of the CTL were widely appreciated for their impact on enhancing practice, as was the personal approach of the Director of the CTL on an individual, quasi consultative basis. The Team was aware that such centres are not universally so successful in achieving such positive reputations and outcomes, and the University is to be commended for the role of the CTL in enhancing practice in teaching and learning. As in other areas, the Team was conscious of concerns regarding the capacity of the CTL to continue offering this important enhancement function to the same extent within its increasingly stretched resources.

5.6. Managing enhancement – learning from Subject-level Reviews

As indicated above, at the time of the Review the University was nearing completion of 27 Subject-level Reviews covering all faculties and programmes of the University. The Team received copies of all completed reports along with the RA, and these review reports provided an important part of the evidence base for the review. In addition, the Team met with a sample of staff and students associated with five of these reviews, one from each school. The Team formed the view that these reviews were carried out in a robust manner and did not stop short of both identifying weaknesses and in recording strengths. In all cases, external experts of high international standing were being involved productively within the review process, for advice and, in some cases, also for benchmarking purposes. In addition, although not yet consistent, there was clear evidence that the reviews were directly leading to specific recommendations for the enhancement of practice which was being acted on. The University is to be commended for its comprehensive implementation and management of this robust, productive and enhancing approach to Subject-level Review. The Team appreciated that this was no mean achievement given the scale of operation involved.

The Team's analysis of these subject-level reviews together with its wider discussions and analysis of evidence heightened its awareness of the very important role played by the faculty heads in managing and enhancing the quality of the student experience and in securing the standards of their awards. The Team would strongly agree with the comment in the RA that consideration should be given to the adequacy of current arrangements for preparation and on-going support provided for faculty heads, especially given their current short term of office.

5.7. Managing enhancement – drawing on international experience

The previous section highlighted the valuable contribution to enhancement made by the external experts who were involved in all Subject-level Reviews at UI. Of the 18 completed review reports available at the time of the review, the international experts were drawn from 17 comparable institutions overseas, five from Denmark, five from USA, two each from UK, Sweden and Norway, and one each from France and Finland. It is very clear, both from the review reports and from the sample discussed with the faculties at the visit, that some of the international experts not only contributed very productively in terms of benchmarking UI provision with international practice, but also played a very active role in contributing to faculty discussion of areas and priorities for enhancement and policy for moving forward. As this report has stated repeatedly, the University is to be commended for rapidly establishing a rigorous and enhancement-focussed approach to Subject-level Reviews and the opportunities they present for learning from international experience. In the future, it will be important to ensure that learning points are consistently identified and shared across the institution, and also that the action plans derived from the reviews are systematically and consistently followed through. As commented above, the Centre for Teaching and Learning has already made a very good start in this area.

The proportion of international academic staff employed by the University since 2010 has not been less than 10%. In addition, in the vast majority of cases, the Icelandic academic staff have studied abroad (at postgraduate and/or undergraduate levels) and have significant international University teaching and research experience. Furthermore, all PhD students are required to spend time overseas. In total there have been around 1,000 international students (approximately 8% of the student population) at UI since 2010, mostly from northern Europe, but also increasingly from the USA and Canada. The University also has around 450 students on exchange taking part of their programme at UI. The RA records that the University has over 500 agreements with international

universities, and staff/student exchange schemes with some 36 of the top 100 Universities from the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. In addition, at the time of the review 30 students in science and engineering were given places at the University of California, Santa Barbara without fees. The Team was informed that similar arrangements were also in place with a number of other institutions including Columbia University and institutions in Japan and China. The RA indicates that this scheme will be expanded to include students from social sciences and humanities. The Team also noted that the University is in membership of a wide range of significant international associations.

Undoubtedly, this rich pattern of international activity and experience enhances provision within UI and, potentially, could make a significant contribution to international benchmarking. However, the Team formed the view that much of the benefit of these strands of internationalisation remained largely local and relatively unsystematised. As a consequence, it was possible that the University as a whole was therefore not fully capitalising on the richness of its international spheres of operation for enhancing its own provision. The University is aware of these issues, and the Team was pleased to learn that a new Head of the International Office was appointed in 2013 and a decision taken in 2014 to develop an overarching University international strategy. The Team was informed that part of this new strategy will be to focus on a smaller number of international partnerships with targeted institutions and to manage them in a more coherent and proactive manner. A good early example of the impact of careful management of international relationships was the mentoring scheme for international students introduced in 2013-14 and further refined more recently. Through this scheme (run by the Student Council and the International Office), international students are offered a volunteer peer mentor, who has both an academic and cultural mentoring role. The domestic student is required to file a report on completion of the mentoring arrangement and, if approved, this activity is then recorded on the Diploma Supplement on the student's graduation. Through the nurturing of the scheme by the International Office and the Student Council, increased participation has been recorded, and the Team was informed that virtually all international students now request a mentor and

that there is no shortage of volunteers from the domestic students to participate. The Team was informed that there is now discussion on developing the scheme for use by exchange staff, and indeed that this had already been introduced in the School of Education. The team viewed the mentoring scheme as commendable in itself, but also viewed it as an interesting example of the benefit to be gained through the further development and systematic application of university-wide policy and practice both to enhance its international activities themselves, but also to use them to enhance the experience of the whole university community.

5.8. Managing enhancement – contributing to, and drawing on domestic cooperation

As described earlier in this report, the University of Iceland is the largest, most comprehensive and longest established of the higher education institutions in the country and, as also discussed previously, UI takes seriously its role in contributing to Icelandic society outwith its own campus boundaries. One dimension of this commitment is the very full part played by the University in two important enhancement focussed initiatives in Icelandic higher education. The cooperative Network of Public Universities in Iceland was established in August 2010 by the Ministry for Education, Science and Culture. The objectives of the Network are to strengthen and promote the higher education system in Iceland, to achieve more efficient use of resources in university operations and to foster strong and varied higher education provision throughout the country. Parties to the network are: the University of Iceland, the University of Akureyri, the Agricultural University of Iceland and Hólar University College. The Network is managed by a Board which includes the four Rectors. The Network has undertaken significant enhancement projects including: the development of common information systems (building significantly on the UI Ugly framework described earlier in this report); enhanced student registration systems; and module sharing initiatives to broaden student choice. The University of Iceland has played a full role in the Network both making a significant contribution to the enhancement of provision in the public universities in Iceland and also drawing benefit from the Network to enhance provision for UI students.

Unfortunately, prior to the conclusion of the review, the Team was informed that funding for the Network had ceased.

A second, and continuing national enhancement role played by UI is its role in relation to the national Quality Council. The Quality Council is one of the pillars of the Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework. It includes in membership representatives of students together with the senior member of staff responsible for managing quality in each of the seven Icelandic higher education institutions. The Director of Quality Management at UI is the elected founding chair of the Council in its revised format. In the RA, the University indicated that the Quality Council is an important enhancement forum for Icelandic HEIs. According to the RA, within the Council a cooperative environment has already been established for mutual communication of information on good practice related to subject-level reviews and institutional reviews, including strategies for follow-up. The leading and very active role played by UI on the Quality Council illustrates the contribution of UI to the general enhancement of provision in Iceland, and also the potential benefit to the enhancement of UI students' experience through the active involvement of UI on the Council. The very active role of UI on the Quality Council is, in the view of the Team, another important demonstration of the key national role played by UI and also of the University's external role providing further stimulus to the enhancement of provision for UI students.

5.9. Managing enhancement – evaluation

The University of Iceland has a clear focus on understanding and seeking to improve the learning experience of its students. Throughout the review, the Team was impressed by the initiatives of the University to underpin its enhancement strategies by systematically gathering and analysing evidence on students' experience, most notably in the commendable comprehensive student experience survey. The extensive programme of Subject-level Reviews was also increasingly providing more granular information on the quality of the student experience. The RA within the review process itself had also clearly provided a valuable opportunity for bringing together in a coherent manner a significant

body of information, qualitative as well as quantitative, on the student experience. Through its extensive international linkages, the University is, potentially, in a good position to benchmark all of this data against international experience and performance.

This drive towards ensuring a sound evidence base on which to build further enhancements is, in the view of the Team, very effectively driven and guided from within the Rector's Office. The schools and faculties have also demonstrated, in general, an appetite for driving improvements within and following Subject-level Reviews. The Centre for Teaching and Learning also provides a commendable and widely recognized role in supporting enhancement across the University in a wide variety of ways. It is, however, clear that the resource base for managing enhancement is increasingly stretched and must be approaching the territory of creating an unacceptably high level of risk.

The committee structure includes all the necessary elements to support effective enhancement of the student experience. However, it would be helpful to look again at the responsibilities of the main committees involved to ensure clarity of responsibility for all aspects of the management and oversight of enhancement. It would also be helpful to ensure that the senior committees are receiving appropriate evidence to provide them with confidence that they are exercising effectively their responsibilities. It is also important that the whole University community is very clear about the responsibilities of each of the key committees.

Finally, as the University moves forward with its strategy for enhancement, it will be important to ensure that the rich body of evidence on the student experience which is now being collected systematically is used to good effect. As the University has recognized in its list of 'Measures', this evidence base should increasingly support the work of individuals and committees in the identification of priorities for enhancement, the monitoring of progress, and, importantly, the sharing of good practice. The more focused approach to international relations will assist in taking all this forward in a global context.

6. Conclusion

The Review Team is very grateful to the Rector, staff and students of the University of Iceland for the very warm welcome extended to the Team and for the positive and highly professional engagement of all concerned with the review process. In all aspects of the review, the Team has been impressed by the openness of all concerned in sharing their critical reflections on the past performance and future progress of the University. The evidence available to the Team reflected the increasing efforts by the University to develop systematic and comprehensive data sets on which to base policy and practice in enhancing the student experience and securing the standards of their awards.

Throughout the Review, the Team encountered an institution, from Rector and senior management through all staff and students, fully committed to sustaining, and indeed stretching, its vision. The University is indeed to be commended for the resilient responses of the academic community to the economic crisis in Iceland. As we highlighted in the body of the Report, it is equally important, however, to emphasize the perception of the Team that recent years have indeed been a struggle. Although momentum has been maintained, and in key areas such as research even more has been achieved, it appeared to the Team that the limits of stretch of human and physical resources might be quite close.

The Team hopes that the Review has made a positive contribution to the University's processes of critical reflection on its practices to continually enhance the student learning experience and secure the standards of their awards. In concluding the Review, the Team would stress that:

- Confidence can be placed in the soundness of the University of Iceland's present and likely future arrangements to secure the academic standards of its awards;
- Confidence can be placed in the soundness of the University of Iceland's present and likely future arrangements to secure the quality of the student learning experience.

In particular, the Team wishes to commend the following strengths and elements of good practice:

- The Reflective Analysis for its comprehensive collection and systematic presentation of evidence, together with the engagement of the entire university community in its production, thereby generating a valuable tool for strategic planning.
- The decision to create a Graduate School to support the University's mission to enhance research and expand doctoral education, as demonstrated by the Case Study.
- The Centre for Teaching and Learning for its contribution to the enhancement of teaching and the dissemination of good practice, a contribution which is highly regarded by academic staff.
- The Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Teaching Studies for Higher Education and its versatile use both within and outwith the University.
- The high level of student engagement in governance and all relevant committees, which is supported effectively by the Student Council.
- The innovative and resilient responses of the academic community to the economic crisis in Iceland.
- The extent to which the University's research output has been raised, in accordance with the University Policy.
- The comprehensive and successful implementation of the programme for Subject-level Reviews and their potential for enhancement.
- The student satisfaction surveys, including the use of international comparisons, and the introduction of mid-semester course evaluations.
- The continuing development and application of learning outcomes.
- The comprehensive and easily accessible information available to students and staff through the Ugla system.
- The mentoring programme for international students.
- The generic advice and support provided for students, both individually and through workshops, by the Student Counselling and Career Centre.
- The University's innovative outreach programmes, as exemplified by the University for Children, the University Train and the Science Factory.
- The willingness of such a large number of staff and students to engage with the review panel in open and frank discussions.
- The seriousness with which the University plays its role in serving national needs in Iceland.

As the University continues to refine its practice in the management of quality and standards, the Team would ask the University to consider:

- Strengthening the University's approach, at the institutional level, to managing standards and enhancing quality.
- Clarifying the roles and functions of Masters degrees.
- Considering the implications of the mixed use of open enrolment and entrance tests across the university.
- Considering the value of distinguishing between the following categories of students: full- and part-time; graduating and non-graduating; and campus-based and distance learning.
- Creating an action plan based on the 75 Measures in the Reflective Analysis and linking them to performance indicators in the University Policy.
- With regard to the maintenance of quality and standards, clarifying and communicating the roles of the University Council and its sub-committees, together with their inter-relationships.
- Continuing the University's review of the structure and management of its Research Institutes.
- Developing a strategic policy for using IT-based teaching in the University together with implications for staff development and investment in infrastructure.
- Further developing the University's policy in support of increasing internationalisation, including such matters as the language of instruction, the management of joint programmes, and opportunities for study abroad.
- Addressing the perceived imbalance between incentives for teaching and for research.
- Increasing the utility of course evaluations through effective follow-up and feedback to students.
- Further systematising the University's processes for the approval, monitoring and evaluation of courses and programmes.
- Increasing the use of externality in the University's processes for securing standards and managing quality.
- Monitoring and supporting the contribution made by sessional teachers.
- Considering the possible merit of a more focussed approach to the provision of doctoral education.
- Determining how best to provide guidance, and monitor assessment, when students take courses across disciplinary boundaries

Appendix I: Schedule of site visit of the Review Team to University of Iceland

Wednesday 14 January	University of Iceland		
Time & place	Meeting	Examples of topics to be covered	Participants from UI
09.00 - 12.00 UI Main Building (UC meeting room); Askja	University programme. Rector, Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs, Director of Finance and Operations, deans of schools	09.00 - 09.30: The University of Iceland. Kristín Ingólfssdóttir, Rector 09.30 - 09.40: Discussion 09.40 - 10.30: The UI Schools. Short introductions from deans of schools 10.45 - 11.50: Visit to Faculty of Earth Sciences in the Askja building. Programme: 10.45: Arrival at the Askja building 10.50: Professor Freysteinn Sigmundsson , introduction and role of UI in natural hazard monitoring PhD and post doc project talks: 11.00: Hannah Iona Reynolds , PhD student 11.10: Stephanie Dumont , post doc 11.20: Sæmundur Ari Halldórsson , post doc 11.30: Discussion and walk through the facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kristín Ingólfssdóttir, Rector 2. Jón Atli Benediktsson, Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs 3. Ástráður Eysteinnsson, Dean of SOH 4. Daði Már Kristófersson, Dean of SOSS 5. Guðmundur R. Jónsson, Director of Finance and Operations 6. Hilmar Bragi Janusson, Dean of SENS 7. Inga Þórsdóttir, Dean of SOHS 8. Jóhanna Einarsdóttir, Dean of SOE 9. Magnús Diðrik Baldursson, Director of Quality Management and Managing Director of the Rector's Office
12.00 - 13.00 Nordic House	Lunch		

13.00 - 14.00 University Centre, HT-300	Rector, Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs and Director of Finance and Operations	Overall governance and strategic management; national role of the University; working with other HEIs internationally and in Iceland; impact of downturn on research; funding issues and student numbers; vertical and horizontal communication (e.g. with deans); various balances e.g. local/national/ international; teaching/research; open entry/ standards and progression implications of uncertainties and stability of the sector.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kristín Ingólfssdóttir, Rector 2. Jón Atli Benediktsson, Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs 3. Guðmundur R. Jónsson, Director of Finance and Operations
14.00 - 14.15	Private discussion		
14.15 - 15.15 University Centre, HT-300	Self-Review Team appointed by the University Council to oversee the Reflective Analysis (to include the Head of Division of Academic Affairs)	Process of compiling the Reflective Analysis & involvement of students and academic community; evidence base; issues to emerge (cf. the list of measures in the annex of the Reflective Analysis); usefulness of process; link with subject-level reviews, etc.; links to strategic planning; mechanisms for follow-through; overall role of Head of Division of Academic Affairs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jón Atli Benediktsson, Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs, Chair of UC Quality Committee, UI Quality Review Committee and UI Self-Review Team 2. Guðrún Geirsdóttir, Associate Professor at SOE and Director of UI Centre for Teaching and Learning, member of UI Self-Review Team and UI Quality Review Team 3. Haldór Jónsson, Head of Division of Science and Innovation, member of UI Self-Review Team and UI Quality Review Team 4. Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, Professor at SOE, member of UI Self-Review Team 5. Helga Ögmundsdóttir, Professor at SOHS and member of UC Quality Committee, UI Self-Review Team and UI Quality Review Team 6. Ísak Einar Rúnarsson, Chair of Student Council, member of UI Self-Review Team and UI Quality Review Team 7. Magnús Diðrik Baldursson, Director of Quality Management and Managing Director of the Rector's Office, member of UI Self-Review Team and UI Quality Review Team 8. Magnús Lyngdal Magnússon, Managing Director of UI Graduate School, member of UI Self-Review Team and UI Quality Review Team 9. Þórður Kristinsson, Head of Division of Academic Affairs, member of UI Self-Review Team and UI Quality Review Team
15.15 - 15.30	Private discussion		

<p>15.30 - 16.30 University Centre, HT-300</p>	<p>University Council (including the Chair of the UC Academic Affairs Committee)</p>	<p>Overall role; links with managerial structures; evidential base available to University Council – oversight of security of standards of awards and quality; issues of overall student progression; planning strategy; perceived SWOTs; delegation of authority; effectiveness of student involvement; future of distance learning; strategy on IT-based learning; development of international strategy; follow-up on issues from meeting 1; how will review of organisational structure be carried out? Working with other HEIs in Iceland and internationally.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kristín Ingólfssdóttir, Rector and President of UC 2. Börkur Hansen, Professor at SOE, Chair of UC Academic Affairs Committee, former Vice-President of UC 3. Davíð Þorláksson, Attorney at Law, UC representative appointed by Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 4. Ebba Þóra Hvannberg, Professor at SENS, UC representative of the academic community, Vice-President of UC 5. Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson, Professor at SOH, UC representative of the academic community 6. Jakob Ó. Sigurðsson, chemist and MBA, President of Promens, UC representative appointed by the UC 7. Margrét Hallgrímsdóttir, archaeologist, Director of the National Museum of Iceland, UC representative appointed by the UC 8. Nanna Elísa Snædal Jakobsdóttir, law student at SOSS, UC student representative 9. Orri Hauksson, President of Síminn, UC representative appointed by Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 10. Stefán Hrafn Jónsson, Associate Professor at SOSS, UC representative of the academic community 11. Tómas Þorvaldsson, specialist in intellectual property rights, owner and lawyer at VÍK Law Firm, UC representative appointed by the UC
<p>16.30 - 16.45</p>	<p>Private discussion</p>		
<p>16.45 - 17.45 University Centre, HT-300</p>	<p>Deans of schools plus 1 head of faculty* from each school</p>	<p>Role and responsibilities of deans; links with faculty heads; links with University Council and its committees; links with institutes; involvement in subject reviews; responsibilities regarding student and staff management; roles in strategic planning; responsibilities for quality management – validation, monitoring and review; managing in an era of declining resources; research and teaching and learning policy; staff support; responsibilities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ástráður Eysteinnsson, Dean of SOH 2. Daði Már Kristófersson, Dean of SOSS 3. Hilmar Bragi Janusson, Dean of SENS 4. Inga Þórsdóttir, Dean of SOHS 5. Jóhanna Einarsdóttir, Dean of SOE 6. Áslaug Geirsdóttir, Deputy Head of Faculty of Earth Sciences at SENS 7. Gunnhildur Óskarsdóttir, Head of Faculty of Teacher Education at SOE

		for effective student support services; management of part-time staff; responsibilities for oversight of analysis and action on student survey; oversight of accuracy of public information.	<p>8. Hólmfríður Garðarsdóttir, Head of Faculty of Foreign Languages, Literature and Linguistics at SOH</p> <p>9. Magnús Karl Magnússon, Head of Faculty of Medicine at SOHS</p>
17.45 - 18.00	Private discussion		
18.00 - 18.15	Feedback and clarifications		

* Heads of faculty appearances should be distributed to maximise the number of different faculty heads meeting the team.

Thursday 15 January	University of Iceland		
Time	Meeting	Examples of topics to be covered	Participants from UI
09.00 - 10.00 University Centre, HT-300	Representatives of the UC Academic Affairs Committee (2-3); the Head of the Division of Science and Innovation and 2-3 other representatives; and 1 representative from each school with a senior responsibility for research strategy and operation total max. 10)	Research policy; management of research strategy and operations; impact of economic downturn on research; implication and challenges of aim of being a research-led university; research incentives; balance of research and teaching; research-teaching linkages; external links and pressures; research evaluation.	<p>1. Árni Kristjánsson, Professor, representative from SOHS with senior responsibility for research strategy and operation</p> <p>2. Eiríkur Smári Sigurðarsson, Research Manager of SOH</p> <p>3. Gréta Björk Kristjánsdóttir, Research Manager of SENS</p> <p>4. Halldór Jónsson, Head of the Division of Science and Innovation, member of the UI Self-Review Team and the UI Quality Review Team</p> <p>5. Hjálmtýr Hafsteinsson, Associate Professor, Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of SENS and representative at the UC Academic Affairs Committee</p> <p>6. Hulda Þórisdóttir, Assistant Professor and member of the Science Committee of SOSS</p> <p>7. Kristín Erla Harðardóttir, Research Manager and Director of the Educational Research Institute at SOE</p> <p>8. Oddur Ingólfsson, Professor at the Faculty of Physical Sciences at</p>

			<p>SENS and member of the UC Science Committee</p> <p>9. Jón Torfi Jónasson, Professor at SOE, former Head of SOE, Chair of the Science Ethics Committee</p> <p>10. Róbert H. Haraldsson, Professor at SOH, former Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee, member of the UI Self-Review Team and the UI Quality Review Team</p>
10.00 - 10.15	Private discussion		
10.15 - 11.15 University Centre, HT-300	<p>Representatives of the University Council Quality Committee including the Chair and the Director of Quality Management and also including representatives of the Quality Review Committee (total max. 5); a representative of each school with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement; Head of the Centre for Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>Strategic and operational responsibilities for management of quality and standards; validation, monitoring and review of responsibilities and processes; managing the impact of increased emphasis on research on teaching; impact of rising staff-student ratio; role of University Council Quality Committee and Academic Affairs Committees of Schools and Study Committees of Faculties; effectiveness of the student voice (esp. at school level); management of enhancement; benchmarking; responsibility for the Quality Manual; Quality Assurance arrangements for joint programmes; role of the Centre for Teaching and Learning including sharing good practice; follow-through on subject-level review recommendations; sharing good practice; responsibility for responding to student feedback; University policy on learning and teaching and assessment (learning outcomes, etc.); impact of age and gender profile on learning policy and environment; role of external examiners; mentoring of incoming international students; role of PG Dip in Teaching Studies for HE; projects supported by Teaching Development Fund; oversight of complaints and appeals.</p>	<p>1. Jón Atli Benediktsson, Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs, Chair of the UC Quality Committee</p> <p>2. Björn Guðbjörnsson, Professor, Chair of the Teaching Committee of SOHS and member of the UC Academic Affairs Committee.</p> <p>3. Guðrún Geirsdóttir, Associate Professor at SOE, Director of the UI Centre for Teaching and Learning, member of UI Self-Review Team and UI Quality Review Team</p> <p>4. Hjálmtýr Hafsteinsson, Associate Professor, Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of SENS and representative at the UC Academic Affairs Committee</p> <p>5. Ingvar Sigurgeirsson, professor, Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of SOE and representative at the UC Academic Affairs Committee</p> <p>6. Jakob Guðmundur Rúnarsson, doctoral student, student representative of SOH at UC Quality Committee</p> <p>7. Magnús Diðrik Baldursson, Director of Quality Management and Managing Director of the Rector's Office, member of UI Quality Review Committee and UI Self-Review Team</p> <p>8. Róbert H. Haraldsson, Professor at SOH, former Chair of UC Academic Affairs Committee, member of UI Self-Review Team and UI Quality Review Team</p> <p>9. Sigurður Magnús Garðarsson, Professor at SENS, former Head of</p>

			<p>Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering, prospective Chair of UC Quality Committee</p> <p>10. Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson, Professor at the Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies</p> <p>11. Þórður Kristinsson, Head of Division of Academic Affairs, member of UI Self-Review Team and UI Quality Review Team</p>
11.15 - 11.30	Private discussion		
11.30 - 12.30 University Centre, HT-300	Chair of Student Council and one other elected representative; student representatives from each school board and one student representative of a faculty meeting drawn from each school (maximum total 12)	How is student voice articulated; effectiveness of student voice at each level; student involvement in the Reflective Analysis; student involvement in curriculum planning; student involvement in monitoring and review; effectiveness of response to student feedback; effectiveness of processes for student complaints and appeals; effectiveness of student computing and other services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ísak Einar Rúnarsson, Chair of the Student Council, member of the UI Self-Review Team and the UI Quality Review Team 2. Atli Páll Helgason, student representative on the Board of SENS 3. Egill Þór Jónsson, student representative on the Board of SOSS 4. Fríða Brá Pálsdóttir, student representative on the Board of SOHS 5. Guðbjörg Þórisdóttir, student representative on the Board of SOH 6. Helgi Reyrr Guðmundsson, student representative on the Board of SOE 7. Hildur Helga Sigurðardóttir, student representative of the Faculty Meeting of the Faculty of Foreign Language, Literature and Linguistics at SOH 8. Kristbjörg Anna Þórarinsdóttir, student representative of the Faculty Meeting of the Faculty of Physical Sciences at SENS 9. Kristín Rannveig Jónsdóttir, Vice-Chair of the Student Council 10. Lára Hrönn Hlynsdóttir, student representative of the Faculty Meeting of the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at SOSS 11. Sólveig Sigurðardóttir, student representative of the Faculty Meeting of the Faculty of Education Studies at SOE 12. Sæmundur Rögnvaldsson, student representative of the Faculty Meeting of the Faculty of Medicine at SOHS
12.30 - 12.45	Private discussion		
12.45 - 13.45	Lunch		

<p>13.45 - 14.45 University Centre, HT-300</p>	<p>Senior staff with responsibility for Library, Ugla IT system, University computer services; HR, Student Counselling and Career Centre, the International Office; Student Service Desk, Student Registry</p>	<p>Evaluation of student services; involvement of services in course monitoring and evaluation and subject-level reviews; resource pressures and associated SWOTs; implications of Network of Public Universities; mentoring scheme for international students; responsibilities for international partnerships – approval, monitoring etc; supporting and recognising UI students studying abroad; training for staff in the use of Ugla as a learning resource.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anna Birna Halldórsdóttir, Director of the Student Service Desk within the Division of Academic Affairs 2. Friðrika Harðardóttir, Director of the UI International Office 3. Hildur Halldórsdóttir, Project Manager at the Division of Human Resources 4. Hreinn Pálsson, Director of the Examination Office within the Division of Academic Affairs and head of the Ugla IT System development team 5. Ingebjörg Steinunn Sverrisdóttir, National Librarian, the National and University Library 6. Kristín Jónasdóttir, Director of the Student Registry within the Division of Academic Affairs 7. María Dóra Björnsdóttir, Director of the Student Counselling and Career Service within the Division of Academic Affairs
<p>14.45 - 15.00</p>	<p>Private discussion</p>		
<p>15.00 - 16.00 (meeting divided into 2) University Centre, HT-300 & HT-303</p>	<p>Undergraduate students from across the faculties to include at least two students studying at a distance. Total no more than 24</p>	<p>Effectiveness of student voice at various levels; experience of teaching and learning and providing feedback; experience of learning outcomes; experience of distance learning/web-based learning; implications of dl students for campus-based students; perceptions of non-completions; experience of student support services; mentoring of international students.</p>	<p>Meeting 1 - University Centre, HT-300</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ágústa Dúa Oddsdóttir, undergraduate student at Faculty of Education Studies at SOE 2. Birta Sigmundsdóttir, undergraduate student at Faculty of Political Science at SOSS 3. Bryngeir Valdimarsson, undergraduate student at Faculty of Teacher Education at SOE 4. Brynjar Örn Svavarsson, undergraduate student at Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at SOSS 5. Jóhanna Hlín Auðunsdóttir, undergraduate student at Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering at SENS 6. Kolbrún Edda Haraldsdóttir, undergraduate student at Faculty of Odontology at SOHS 7. Lára Hólm Heimisdóttir, undergraduate student at Faculty of

			<p>Odontology at SOHS</p> <p>8. Margrét Unnarsdóttir, undergraduate student at Faculty of Psychology at SOHS</p> <p>9. Mirko Garofalo, undergraduate student at Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies at SOH</p> <p>10. Pétur Húni Björnsson, distance learning undergraduate student at Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at SOSS</p> <p>11. Snæfríður Pétursdóttir, undergraduate student at Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences at SENS</p> <p>Meeting 2 - University Centre, HT-303</p> <p>1. Áslaug Björk Ingólfssdóttir, undergraduate student at the Faculty of Law at SOSS</p> <p>2. Guðmundur Alfreðsson, undergraduate student at the Faculty of History and Philosophy at SOH</p> <p>3. Inga Sæbjörg Magnúsdóttir, undergraduate student at the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science at SOHS</p> <p>4. Margrét Guðrún Gunnarsdóttir, undergraduate student at the Faculty of Medicine at SOHS</p> <p>5. María Bjarnadóttir, undergraduate student at the Faculty of Social Work at SOSS</p> <p>6. Óli Freyr Axelsson, undergraduate student at the Faculty of Sport, Leisure and Social Education at SOH</p> <p>7. Ragna Sverrisdóttir, distance learning undergraduate student at the Faculty of Teacher Education at SOE</p> <p>8. Sigurgeir Ólafsson, undergraduate student at Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences at SENS</p> <p>9. Una Emelía Árnadóttir, undergraduate student at the Faculty of</p>
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			Foreign Languages, Literature and Linguistics at SOH
	Private discussion		
16.15 - 17.15 (meeting divided into 2) University Centre, HT-300 & HT-303	Master's students (no more than 10) and doctoral students (no more than 10) from across the faculties to include a broadly representative sample of international students.	Experience of library services; experience of technical services necessary to underpin research/advanced study; encouragement of networking; external links and inputs; curriculum choices for Master's students; funding and support of PhD students; issues in progression of PhD students; quality of academic support available; effectiveness of the student voice; involvement in, and preparation for, teaching; support for international experience.	<p>Meeting 1 - University Centre, HT-300</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anna Guðrún Edvardsdóttir, doctoral student at SOE 2. Bæring Jón B. Guðmundsson, Master's Student at the Faculty of Teacher Education at SOE 3. Eva Rut Gunnlaugsdóttir, Master's student at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at SOSS 4. Gregg Thomas Batson, Master's student at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Literature and Linguistics at SOH 5. Guðbjört Guðjónsdóttir, Doctoral Student at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at SOSS 6. Hildur Sveinsdóttir, Masters's student at the Faculty of Nursing at SOHS 7. Harald Josef Schaller, doctoral student at SENS 8. Kristinn Guðjónsson, Master's student at the Faculty of Industrial Eng., Mechanical Eng. and Computer Science at SENS 9. María Ágústsdóttir, doctoral student at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at SOH 10. Natalia Pich, doctoral student at the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science at SOHS <p>Meeting 2 - University Centre, HT-303</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Birna Þórisdóttir, Doctoral Student at the Faculty of Food Science and Nutrition at SOHS 2. Joe Walser, doctoral student at the Faculty of History and Philosophy

			<p>at SOH</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Lísa Anne Libungan, Doctoral student at SENS 4. Johanna Ann-Louise C. Laeerae, doctoral student at SOE 5. Michael MacPherson, Master's student at the Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies at SOH 6. Tómas Kristjánsson, Master's student at the Faculty of Psychology at SOHS 7. Sigrún Tómasdóttir, Master's student at the Faculty of Education Studies at SOE 8. Skúli Örn Sigurðsson, Master's student at the Faculty of Business Administration at SOSS 9. Þórhildur Ólafsdóttir, Doctoral Student at the Faculty of Economics at SOSS
17.15 - 17.30	Private discussion		
17.30 - 17.45	Feedback and clarifications		

Friday 16 January	University of Iceland		
Time	Meeting	Examples of topics to be covered	Participants from UI
09.00 - 10.00 University Centre, HT-300	Managing Director and key staff responsible for the UI Graduate School	Role of the UI Graduate School and strategic and operational targets; effect of economic downturn on research and postgraduate students; resources in general; facilities to support doctoral level education; library and related provision; policy on managing, monitoring and evaluating quality and standards; discussion of measures (p. 90 in the UI Reflective Analysis).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jón Atli Benediktsson, Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs, Chair of Board of UI GS 2. Ása Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir, Director of Research at SOHS and member of UI GS's Consultative Goup. 3. Magnús Lyngdal Magnússon, Managing Director of UI Graduate School

			<p>4. Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, Professor and representative of SOE on the board of UI GS</p> <p>5. Pétur Ástvaldsson, Project Manager at UI GS</p> <p>6. Sigríður Sif Magnúsdóttir, Project Manager for Postgraduate Studies at SENS and member of UI GS's Consultative Group.</p>
10.00 - 10.15	Private discussion		
10.15 - 11.15 (Meeting divided into 2) University Centre, HT-300 & HT-303	<p>Meeting of professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and sessional staff</p> <p>(approximately 5 from each grade spread evenly as far as possible across schools. Maximum total 20)</p>	<p>General involvement of the academic community in the strategic and operational management of the University; impact of rising student numbers; student drop-out issues; support from Centre for Teaching and Learning and for teaching staff development opportunities; role of PG Dip. in Teaching Studies for HE; use of learning outcomes; annual review and follow-up; support for sessional staff; effectiveness of University IT systems for staff; effectiveness of library provision for staff; balancing research and teaching; the role and value of the teaching portfolio; projects supported by the Teaching Development Fund; responding to student feedback.</p>	<p>Meeting 1 - University Centre, HT-300</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allyson Macdonald, Professor at Faculty of Teacher Education at SOE 2. Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir, Professor at Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at SOH 3. Ásdís Helgadóttir, Assistant Professor at Faculty of Industrial Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Computer Science at SENS 4. Benedikt Ómarsson, sessional teacher at SENS 5. Björn Þorsteinsson, Assistant Professor at Faculty of History and Philosophy at SOH 6. Bryndís Eva Birgisdóttir, Associate Professor at Faculty of Food Science and Nutrition at SOHS 7. Ragnar Karlsson, sessional teacher at SOSS 8. Snorri Þorgeir Ingvarsson, Professor at Faculty of Physical Sciences at SENS 9. Steinunn Hrafnisdóttir, Associate Professor at Faculty of Social Work at SOSS 10. Svanborg R. Jónsdóttir, Assistant Professor at Faculty of Teacher Education at SOE <p>Meeting 2 - University Centre, HT-303</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anna Kristín Sigurðardóttir, Associate Professor at Faculty of

			<p>Teacher Education at SOE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Benedikt Hjartarson, Associate Professor at Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies at SOH 3. Björn Viðar Arnbjörnsson, sessional teacher at Faculty of Food Science and Nutrition at SOHS 4. Guðfinna Th. Aðalgeirsdóttir, Associate Professor at Faculty of Earth Sciences at SENS 5. Kári Kristinsson, Assistant Professor at Faculty of Business Administration at SOSS 6. Magnea J. Matthíasdóttir, sessional teacher at Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies at SOH 7. Sesselja S. Ómarsdóttir, Professor at Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences at SOHS 8. Terry Gunnell, Professor at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at SOSS 9. Þórdís Katrín Þorsteinsdóttir, Assistant Professor at Faculty of Nursing at SOHS
11.15 - 11.30	Private discussion		

<p>11.30 - 12.15 (Meeting divided into 2) University Center, HT-300 & HT-303</p>	<p>1. Discussion of the subject-level review: of the Faculty of Political Science at SOSS (June 2014) 2. Discussion of the subject-level review of the interdisciplinary postgraduate programme of Public Health Sciences at SOHS (October 2012), and Faculty of Psychology (April 2013) In each case those representing the subject reviews should include the *Head of Faculty and the student representatives involved. A maximum of 10 should be included in each meeting.</p>	<p>Effectiveness of guidelines on subject-level reviews; use of evidence; role of staff, students and externals; robustness of process; extent of follow up undertaken or planned; responsibility for follow-up; sharing of good practice; value of process to staff, students and University; effectiveness of links to University Council; role in faculty/school/University strategic planning; examples of new/diverse teaching methods and student reactions; highs and lows in the student survey – implications and follow-up. Also an opportunity to follow up general staff issues referred to above.</p>	<p>Meeting 1 – University Centre, HT-303: Discussion of the SLR of the Faculty of Political Science at SOSS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baldur Þórhallsson, Professor, current Head of Faculty of Political Science at SOSS 2. Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson, Professor and representative of tenured lecturers in the self-review team of the Faculty of Political Science at SOSS 3. Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir, Adjunct Professor and representative of tenured lecturers in the self-review team of the Faculty of Political Science at SOSS 4. Svavar Halldórsson, journalist, representative of the alumni in the self-review team of the Faculty of Political Science at SOSS 5. Þorgerður Einarsdóttir, Professor, former Head of Faculty, chair of the self-review team of the Faculty of Political Science at SOSS <p>Meeting 2 - University Centre, HT-300: Discussion of the SLR of the Public Health Sciences interdisciplinary postgraduate programme at SOHS and of the SLR of the Faculty of Psychology at SOHS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arna Hauksdóttir, Associate Professor, representative of tenured lecturers in the self-review team of the Public Health Sciences interdisciplinary postgraduate programme at SOHS 2. Héðinn Svarfdal Björnsson, project manager at the Medical Directorate of Health, external representative of industry in the self-review team of the Public Health Sciences interdisciplinary postgraduate programme at SOHS
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12.15 - 12.30	Private discussion		
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch		
13.30 - 14.15 (Meeting divided into 2) University Centre, HT-300 & HT-303	<p>1. Discussion of the subject-level review of the Faculty of History and Philosophy at SOH (June 2014)</p> <p>2. Discussion of the</p>	As above	<p>Meeting 1 – University Centre, HT-300: Discussion of the SLR of the Faculty of History and Philosophy at SOH</p> <p>1. Gavin Lucas, Professor, Head of Department of Archaeology, representative of tenured lecturers in self-review team of the Faculty of History and Philosophy at SOH</p>

	<p>subject-level review of the Faculty of Education Studies at SOE (January 2013)</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Guðmundur Hálfðánarson, Professor, current Head of the Faculty 3. Guðmundur Jónsson, Professor, Head of Department of History, representative of tenured lecturers in self-review team of the Faculty of History and Philosophy at SOH 4. Guðrún Hólmgeirsdóttir, MA in Philosophy, Secondary School teacher in philosophy, representative of alumni in the self-review team of the Faculty of History and Philosophy at SOH 5. Kristín Svava Tómasdóttir, representative of Master's students in self-review team of the Faculty of History and Philosophy at SOH 6. Svavar Hrafn Svavarsson, Professor, former Head of Faculty, chair of self-review team of the Faculty of History and Philosophy at SOH <p>Meeting 2 – University Centre, HT-303: Discussion of the SLR of the Faculty of Education Studies at SOE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ármann Halldórsson, representative of Master's students in self-review team of the Faculty of Education Studies at SOE 2. Börkur Hansen, Professor, representative of tenured lecturers in self-review team of the Faculty of Education Studies at SOE 3. Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, Professor, former Head of Faculty, chair of self-review team of the Faculty of Education Studies at SOE 4. Ólafur Páll Jónsson, Professor, current Head of Faculty and representative of tenured lecturers in self-review team of the Faculty of Education Studies at SOE 5. Sigurlína Davíðsdóttir, Professor Emeritus, representative of tenured lecturers in self-review team of the Faculty of Education Studies at SOE
14.15 - 14.30	Private discussion		

14.30 - 15.15 (Meeting divided into 2) University Centre, HT-300 & HT-303	1. Discussion of the subject-level review of the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering at SENS (September 2013) 2. Open meeting: students**	As above	Meeting 1 – University Centre, HT-300: Discussion of the SLR of the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering at SENS 1. Bjarni Bessason , Professor, representative of tenured lecturers in self-review team of the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering at SENS 2. Sigurbjörn Bárðarson , representative of postgraduate students in self-review team of the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering at SENS 3. Sigurður Magnús Garðarsson , Professor, former Head of Faculty, chair of self-review team of the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering at SENS Meeting 2 – Univ. Centre, HT-303: Open Meeting Students
15.15 - 15.30	Private discussion		
16.15 - 17.00	Open meeting: staff**		
17.00 - 17.30	Private discussion		
17.30 - 18.00	Final meeting: Rector, Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs, Director of Finance and Operations, Head of Division of Academic Affairs, and Director of Quality Management	Final loose ends and general impressions. General conclusions will follow in the 'Headline Letter' within two weeks.	1. Kristín Ingólfssdóttir , Rector 2. Jón Atli Benediktsson , Pro-Rector of Science and Academic affairs 3. Guðmundur R. Jónsson , director of Finance and Operations 4. Magnús Diðrik Baldursson , Director of Quality Management and Managing Director of the Rector's Office 5. Þórður Kristinsson , Head of Division of Academic Affairs

* Heads of faculty appearances should be distributed to maximise the number of different faculty heads meeting the team.

** These open meetings simply indicate the availability of the team to meet with any staff or students who wish to raise particular matters with them.

External Review Team

1. Professor Norman Sharp, former director of QAA Scotland and Chair of the Quality Board, Chair of the Review-Team.
2. Professor Jean-Marie Hombert, Director of Research, Institute of Human Sciences, University of Lyon and member of the Quality Board, Vice-Chair of the Self-Review Team.
3. Jeremy Bradshaw, Professor of Molecular Biophysics and Assistant Principal at the University of Edinburgh.
4. Bruce L. Mallory, Professor of Education and former Provost, University of New Hampshire.
5. Harald Walderhaug, Professor of Geophysics and Director of Teaching, University of Bergen
6. Snædís Anna Þórhallsdóttir, postgraduate student in Agricultural Sciences, Agricultural University of Iceland.

Secretaries:

7. Frank Quinault, former Director for Teaching and Learning, University of St. Andrews, Scotland and member of the Quality Board.
8. Elísabet Andrésdóttir, Head of International Division at the Icelandic Centre for Research.