

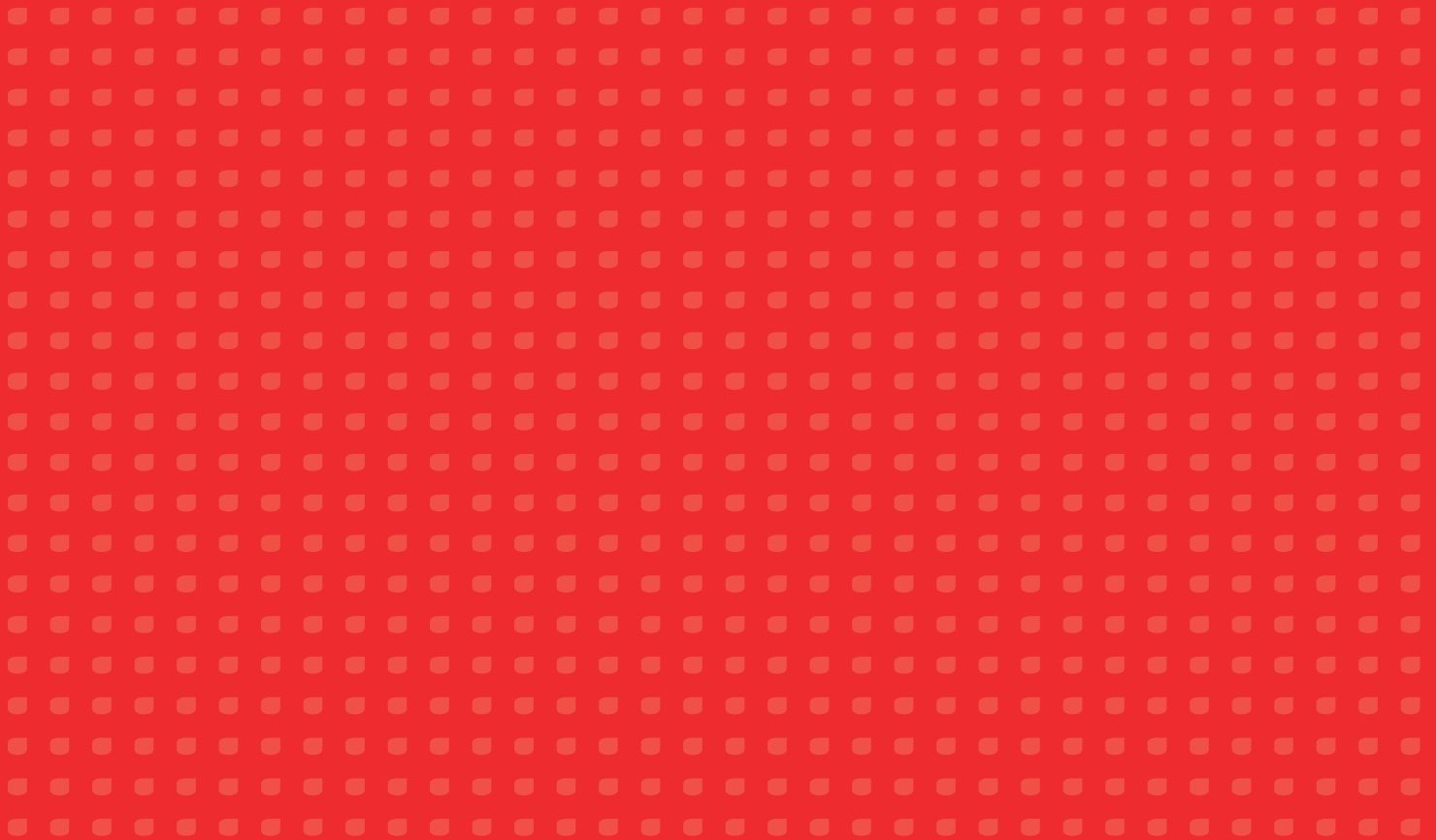


schweizerische agentur
für akkreditierung
und qualitätssicherung

agence suisse
d'accréditation et
d'assurance qualité

agenzia svizzera di
accreditamento e
garanzia della qualità

swiss agency of
accreditation and
quality assurance



Institutional Accreditation University of St. Gallen

External assessment report | 24 January 2022



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Section A

Decision by the Swiss Accreditation Council

25 March 2022



Akkreditierungsentscheid
des Schweizerischen Akkreditierungsrats

**Institutionelle Akkreditierung der
Universität St. Gallen**

I. Rechtliches

Bundesgesetz vom 30. September 2011 über die Förderung der Hochschulen und die Koordination im schweizerischen Hochschulbereich (Hochschulförderungs- und -koordinationsgesetz, HFKG, SR 414.20).

Verordnung des Hochschulrates vom 28. Mai 2015 (Stand 1. Januar 2018) über die Akkreditierung im Hochschulbereich (Akkreditierungsverordnung HFKG, SR 414.205.3).

Reglement vom 12. März 2015 über die Organisation des Schweizerischen Akkreditierungsrats (OReg-SAR).

II. Sachverhalt

Die Universität St. Gallen stellte mit Datum vom 19. Februar 2019 Antrag auf institutionelle Akkreditierung als Universität gemäss Artikel 8 Absatz 1 Akkreditierungsverordnung.

Die Universität St. Gallen wählte die Schweizerische Agentur für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung AAQ als Akkreditierungsagentur.

Die Universität St. Gallen wählte Deutsch als Sprache des Verfahrens gemäss Artikel 9 Absatz 7 Akkreditierungsverordnung. Die Universität St. Gallen machte von der Möglichkeit Gebrauch, den Selbstbeurteilungsbericht in englischer Sprache zu verfassen und den Bericht der Gutachtergruppe in englischer Sprache zu erhalten.

Der Akkreditierungsrat entschied am 22. März 2019 gestützt auf Artikel 4 Absatz 2 der Akkreditierungsverordnung Eintreten auf das Gesuch der Universität St. Gallen und leitete die Unterlagen an die AAQ weiter.

Die AAQ eröffnete das Verfahren am 17. September 2020.

Die von der AAQ eingesetzte Gutachtergruppe prüfte auf der Grundlage des Selbstbeurteilungsberichts vom 5. Juli 2021 und der Vor-Ort-Visite per Zoom vom 5. bis 7. Oktober 2021, ob die Akkreditierungsvoraussetzungen nach Artikel 30 HFKG erfüllt sind, und hielt die Schlussfolgerungen in einem Bericht fest.

Die AAQ formulierte gestützt auf die verfahrensrelevanten Unterlagen, insbesondere den Selbstbeurteilungsbericht und den vorläufigen Bericht der Gutachtergruppe, den Entwurf des Akkreditierungsantrags und legte den Bericht der Gutachtergruppe sowie den Antrag der Agentur der Universität St. Gallen am 7. Dezember 2021 zur Stellungnahme vor.

Die Universität St. Gallen nahm am 21. Dezember 2021 zum vorläufigen Bericht der Gutachtergruppe und zum Entwurf des Akkreditierungsantrags der AAQ Stellung.

Gestützt auf die Stellungnahme der Universität änderte die Gutachtergruppe die Bewertung von Standard 4.3 und die AAQ passte ihren Akkreditierungsantrag an.

Mit Datum vom 24. Januar 2022 beantragte die AAQ dem Akkreditierungsrat die Akkreditierung der Universität St. Gallen als Universität.

III. Erwägungen

1. Bewertung und Akkreditierungsvorschlag der Gutachtergruppe

1.1 Vorläufige Beurteilung und vorläufiger Akkreditierungsvorschlag

In ihrer gesamthaften Beurteilung stellt die Gutachtergruppe der Universität ein positives Zeugnis aus: Sie ist der Ansicht, dass eine der grossen Stärken der Universität darin bestehe, dass die Angehörigen der obersten Führungsebene einen starken Teamgeist und gute Verbindungen zur nächsten Leitungsebene etabliert haben. Das Engagement für die Universität sei in allen Bereichen gross; die Umsetzung des Qualitätssicherungssystems verkörpere diesen Geist, wobei alle Beteiligten, einschliesslich der Dozentinnen und Dozenten sowie Alumni und Alumnae, das Recht haben, sich an der Entwicklung und Umsetzung der Leitlinien zu beteiligen. Auch mit der kantonalen Regierung bestehe ein konstruktives und kooperatives Verhältnis. Die Beziehungen zwischen der Alumni-Organisation, der HSG Stiftung und der Universität seien ebenfalls von einer beispielhaften Zusammenarbeit geprägt. Die Studierenden haben das Gefühl, dass sie gehört werden und dass sie durch das gut funktionierende Vertretungssystem Einfluss auf die Universität nehmen können.

Die Gutachtergruppe sieht in ihrer Gesamtbeurteilung auch Raum für Weiterentwicklung: Die Umsetzung des erst kürzlich überarbeiteten Qualitätssicherungssystems stecke noch in den Kinderschuhen; es lasse sich nur schwer feststellen, ob die Ziele und Messgrössen die Ergebnisse unterstützten oder nicht. Die Gutachtergruppe ist der Ansicht, dass das System derzeit eher die Strategie und Entwicklung überwache als steuere. Die Gutachtergruppe betont neben der anstehenden Evaluation des Qualitätssicherungssystems

den Bedarf für eine stärkere Abstimmung zwischen der zentralen Strategie und dem Qualitätssicherungssystem einerseits und deren Umsetzung auf den dezentralen Ebenen andererseits. Schliesslich sieht die Gutachtergruppe noch Diskussionsbedarf innerhalb der Universität St. Gallen, um zu klären, was es bedeute, eine integrative Business School zu werden.

Insgesamt kommt die Gutachtergruppe mit ihren Analysen und Bewertungen zum Schluss, dass die Universität St. Gallen über ein Qualitätssicherungssystem verfüge, das alle Bereiche und Prozesse der Hochschule erfasst. Die Gutachtergruppe hält folglich die zentrale Voraussetzung für die institutionelle Akkreditierung nach Artikel 30 HFKG für gegeben.

Die Gutachtergruppe sieht indes Bedarf für Korrekturen bezogen auf zwei Anforderungen:

- Nachhaltigkeit (Art. 30 Abs. 1 Bst. a Ziff. 6 HFKG; Standard 2.4)
- Personalentwicklung (Art. 30 Abs. 1 Bst. a Ziff. 1 HFKG; Standard 4.3)

In ihrer Bewertung von Standard 2.4 im vorläufigen Bericht stellte die Gutachtergruppe fest, dass die Universität St. Gallen im Hinblick auf die Nachhaltigkeit viele Massnahmen eingeleitet habe. Es fehle jedoch die systematische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Thema Nachhaltigkeit und was es bedeute, eine integrative Wirtschaftshochschule zu sein. Die Gutachtergruppe kam zum Schluss, dass in diesem Bereich mehr Reflexion, mehr strategische Planung und nachvollziehbarere Umsetzung erforderlich sind. Die Gutachtergruppe schlägt eine Auflage vor:

Auflage 1 zu Standard 2.4:

Die Universität St. Gallen muss eine umfassende Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie entwickeln, welche Forschung, Lehre, Management und Dienstleistungen umfasst. Dabei muss die Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie die Empfehlungen in den Standards 2.5 und 4.1 mitberücksichtigen.

In ihrer Bewertung von Standard 4.3 kam die Gutachtergruppe im vorläufigen Bericht zum Schluss, dass die Laufbahn- und Personalentwicklungsprozesse für den akademischen Lehrkörper angemessen sind. Die Verfahren für das Verwaltungs- und Hilfspersonal sind jedoch weder so umfassend noch so weit entwickelt. Mit dieser Feststellung nimmt die Gutachtergruppe Aspekte der Analyse von Standard 4.2 wieder auf. In diesem Zusammenhang ist die Gutachtergruppe der Ansicht, dass das Qualitätssicherungssystem auch für das Verwaltungspersonal im Hinblick auf dessen Karriere- und Entwicklungsbedürfnisse funktionieren muss. Die Gutachtergruppe schlägt eine Auflage vor:

Auflage 2 zu Standard 4.3:

Die Universität St. Gallen muss sicherstellen, dass dem Personal in den Fachdiensten und der Verwaltung systematisch Laufbahn- und Entwicklungsberatung zur Verfügung stehen.

1.2 Stellungnahme der Universität St. Gallen

Die Universität St. Gallen argumentiert in ihrer Stellungnahme, dass aus den vorgenommenen Analysen und Feststellungen im Bericht der Gutachtergruppe keine gravierenden Mängel hergeleitet werden können. Die Universität St. Gallen hält die von der Gutachtergruppe vorgeschlagenen und von der AAQ übernommenen Auflagen für unbegründet und bittet um eine erneute Abwägung der getroffenen Feststellungen und um die Aufhebung der Auflagen oder allenfalls die Umformulierung zu Empfehlungen.

Die Universität St. Gallen begründet ihre Position wie folgt:

- Standard 2.4

Die Universität St. Gallen weist in ihrer Stellungnahme auf die anerkennende Würdigung der Tiefe und traditionellen Verankerung der Strukturen und Prozesse in Bezug auf Sustainability an der Universität durch die Gutachtergruppe hin. Die Universität St. Gallen betont weiter die Bedeutung der SGDs für die Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie vom April 2021 und erinnert daran, dass im PRME Report bereits 2018 Aktivitäten zu sieben und 2020 zu neun SDGs dokumentiert sind. Die Universität St. Gallen anerkennt in ihrer Stellungnahme den von der Gutachtergruppe aufgezeigten Entwicklungsbedarf. Die Universität St. Gallen bestreitet jedoch, dass in der Analyse der Gutachtergruppe ein Bedarf für eine strukturelle Veränderung, wie es im Falle eines erheblichen Mangels oder einer beachtlichen Schwäche erforderlich wäre, erkennbar sei.

Die Universität St. Gallen unterstreicht weiter, dass die von der Universität gewährte akademische Freiheit, Schwerpunkte autonom zu setzen, auch bei den internationalen Rankings in Bezug auf Nachhaltigkeit explizit gefordert werden. Der Standard 2.4 verweise «auf die erforderliche Gesamtprüfung der Zielsetzungen und die Prüfung von Prozessen und Strukturen in Bezug auf die Umsetzung der Aufgaben im Einklang mit den verschiedenen Dimensionen der Nachhaltigkeit, nicht auf deren konkrete inhaltliche Schwerpunktsetzung auf einzelnen Dimensionen oder den expliziten Ausweis einzelner SDGs.»

Schliesslich hält die Universität St. Gallen die Verknüpfung von Auflagen mit Empfehlungen zu anderen Standards für problematisch, da so Standards, die als vollständig oder grösstenteils erfüllt bewertet sind, in den Kontext von erheblichen Mängeln gestellt werden. Mit Verweis auf den Leitfaden der AAQ hält die Universität St. Gallen dieses Vorgehen für formal unzulässig.

– Standard 4.3

Die Universität St. Gallen hält in ihrer Stellungnahme fest, dass «alle Mitarbeitenden, das technische und administrative Personal eingeschlossen, eine systematische Karriere- und Entwicklungsberatung sowie ein breites Angebot an interner und externer Weiterbildung erhalten. Eine Schwerpunktsetzung hinsichtlich spezifischer Verfahren, Prozesse und Instrumente für die Karriere- und Laufbahnentwicklung für das akademische Personal wird an der Universität umgesetzt – wie dies im Standard 4.3 gefordert und überprüft wurde.»

Weiter erinnert die Universität St. Gallen an die HR-Strategie vom März 2021 («zweimal jährlich standardisierte und dokumentierte Mitarbeitendengespräche mit Standortbestimmung, Kompetenzen-Evaluation, Zielsetzung und Weiterentwicklung, dazu internes Schulungs- und Entwicklungsprogramm «HSGacademy», finanzielle und zeitliche Unterstützung von Weiterbildungen, Coaching und Beratung, Leadership Development, Compliance Training, Kadertage, Onboarding, Offboarding»).

Schliesslich verweist die Universität St. Gallen auf die getätigten Investitionen (u. a. HSGacademy, HRsuite, Weiterbildungsverträge) und durchgeführten Schulungen. Die Universität St. Gallen sei 2021 im Ranking der Handelszeitung in der Kategorie der besten Arbeitgeber auf Rang 6 votiert worden.

1.3 Würdigung der Stellungnahme durch die Gutachtergruppe

Die Gutachtergruppe stellt fest, dass die Universität St. Gallen in ihrer Stellungnahme nicht auf sachliche Fehler hinweist, sondern Argumente anführt, wie die vorliegenden Evidenzen anders interpretiert werden könnten.

Das Gutachtergruppe hält an ihrer Bewertung von Standard 2.4 fest, da die Universität St. Gallen nicht nachweisen konnte, wie sie Bereiche in Bezug auf Nachhaltigkeit als relevant identifiziert und welche Ziele sie sich setzt. Allerdings hat die Gutachtergruppe ihre Formulierung der Schlussfolgerung und der Auflage präzisiert. Insbesondere hat die Gutachtergruppe die Verweise auf andere Standards gestrichen:

Auflage 1 (zu Standard 2.4)

Die Universität St. Gallen muss eine übergreifende Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie entwickeln, die aufzeigt, wie die Universität für sie relevante SDGs identifiziert und welche Ziele sie sich für die ökologische, soziale und ökonomische Nachhaltigkeit setzt.

Die Gutachtergruppe hält an ihrer Analyse von Standard 4.3 fest, beschloss jedoch, ihren Ermessensspielraum zugunsten der Universität St. Gallen zu nutzen, da die von der Universität eingerichteten Prozesse der aktuellen Personalpolitik entsprechen, wenngleich empirische Evidenz für die Wirksamkeit der Instrumente fehlen.

Die im vorläufigen Bericht vorgeschlagene Auflage entfällt damit.

2. Würdigung der Beurteilung und des Akkreditierungsvorschlags der Gutachtergruppe sowie der Stellungnahme der Universität St. Gallen durch die AAQ

Die AAQ stellt fest, dass die Gutachtergruppe alle Standards geprüft hat. Die Bewertungen der Gutachtergruppe und die daraus gezogenen Schlussfolgerungen sind schlüssig und kohärent aus den Standards hergeleitet. Die AAQ stellt weiter fest, dass die vorgeschlagenen Auflagen geeignet sind, den festgestellten Bedarf an Weiterentwicklung des Qualitätssicherungssystems sicherzustellen.

Die AAQ beurteilt die Würdigung der Stellungnahme der Universität St. Gallen durch die Gutachtergruppe ebenfalls als schlüssig und nachvollziehbar.

Die AAQ stellt fest, dass die Universität St. Gallen die Voraussetzungen gemäss Artikel 30 HFKG für die institutionelle Akkreditierung erfüllt:

- Artikel 30 Absatz 1 Buchstabe a und c

Die Analyse der Standards gemäss Akkreditierungsverordnung durch die Gutachtergruppe zeigt, dass die Universität St. Gallen die Voraussetzungen nach Buchstabe a sowie Buchstabe c erfüllt bzw. nach Erfüllung der Auflage erfüllen wird.

- Artikel 30 Absatz 1 Buchstabe b

Als Universität mit sechs «Schools» – School of Management (SoM), School of Finance (SoF), School of Economics and Political Science (SEPS), Law School (LS), School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS) und School of Computer Science (SCS) – erfüllt die Universität St. Gallen die Anforderungen nach Artikel 30 Absatz 1 Buchstabe b für eine Universität.

3. Beurteilung des Schweizerischen Akkreditierungsrats

Der Bericht der Gutachtergruppe und der Akkreditierungsantrag der AAQ sind vollständig und stichhaltig begründet. Sie ermöglichen es dem Akkreditierungsrat, einen Entscheid zu fällen.

Aus dem Akkreditierungsantrag der AAQ geht angemessen hervor, dass die Universität St. Gallen die Voraussetzungen für die institutionelle Akkreditierung gemäss Artikel 30 HFKG, die durch die Qualitätsstandards (Art. 22 und Anhang 1 der Akkreditierungsverordnung) konkretisiert werden, erfüllt. Namentlich verfügt die Universität St. Gallen über ein Qualitätssicherungssystem, welches alle Bereiche der Hochschule erfasst und erlaubt, die Ziele der Universität St. Gallen als Universität zu erreichen.

Die Auflage, die die Gutachtergruppe beantragt und die von der Agentur übernommen wurde, erachtet der Akkreditierungsrat als schlüssig. Er übernimmt diese Auflage gemäss dem Akkreditierungsantrag, da sie eine klare Grundlage für Massnahmen der Universität St. Gallen zur Behebung der festgestellten Mängel formuliert.

Der Schweizerische Akkreditierungsrat erachtet die von der AAQ vorgeschlagene Frist von 24 Monaten sowie die Modalitäten zur Überprüfung der Auflagen als angemessen.

IV. Entscheid

Gestützt auf die Rechtsgrundlage, den Sachverhalt und die Erwägungen entscheidet der Akkreditierungsrat:

1. Die Universität St. Gallen ist akkreditiert als Universität unter nachstehender Auflage:
 - 1.1 Die Universität St. Gallen muss eine übergreifende Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie entwickeln, die aufzeigt, wie die Universität für sie relevante SDGs identifiziert und welche Ziele sie sich für die ökologische, soziale und ökonomische Nachhaltigkeit setzt.
2. Die Universität St. Gallen muss dem Akkreditierungsrat innerhalb von 24 Monaten ab Entscheid des Akkreditierungsrats, d.h. bis zum 24. März 2024, Bericht über die Erfüllung der Auflagen erstatten.
3. Die Überprüfung der Auflagenerfüllung erfolgt im Rahmen einer «Sur-Dossier»-Prüfung durch zwei Gutachtende.
4. Der Schweizerische Akkreditierungsrat erteilt die Akkreditierung für eine Dauer von sieben Jahren ab dem Datum des Entscheids, d. h. bis zum 24. März 2029.
5. Der Schweizerische Akkreditierungsrat veröffentlicht die Akkreditierung in elektronischer Form auf www.akkreditierungsrat.ch.
6. Der Schweizerische Akkreditierungsrat stellt der Universität St. Gallen eine Urkunde aus.
7. Die Universität St. Gallen erhält das Recht, das Siegel «Institutionell akkreditiert gemäss HFKG 2022-2029» zu verwenden.

Bern, 25. März 2022

Präsident des Schweizerischen
Akkreditierungsrats



Prof. Dr. Jean-Marc Rapp

Rechtsmittelbelehrung

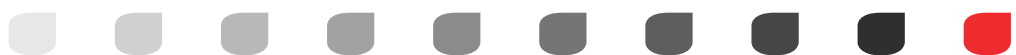
Gegen diese Verfügung kann innert 30 Tagen nach der Eröffnung beim Bundesverwaltungsgericht, Postfach, 9023 St. Gallen Beschwerde geführt werden.



Section B

Accreditation proposal

24 January 2022



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Preliminary remarks

Purpose and object of institutional accreditation

With institutional accreditation according to the HEdA, Switzerland has an instrument with which to control access to its higher education landscape. Institutional accreditation assesses the quality assurance systems of higher education institutions, through which they guarantee the quality of their teaching, research and services.

The quality assurance system is evaluated by external experts. They review the concepts and mechanisms of quality assurance and quality development against quality standards. They assess whether the various elements form a fully consistent and coherent whole that enables the higher education institution to ensure the quality and continuous improvement of its activities according to its type and specific characteristics. The relationship between the resources used and the results achieved is also taken into account. A review of the whole system every seven years allows the higher education institution (HEI) to regularly assess the state of development and the coherence of the different elements.

Proposal by the agency

The institutional accreditation procedure is designed as a “peer review” process. Each report by a group of experts therefore represents a snapshot of a specific higher education institution. Accordingly, the reports by the groups of experts are not suitable for drawing comparisons between higher education institutions. The accreditation decisions, on the other hand, must be consistent: the same findings must lead to the same decisions.

In its proposal, the agency verifies whether the argumentation of the group of experts is coherent, i.e. related to the standard and evidence-based, and ensures consistency with previous applications.

1 The University of St. Gallen

The University of St. Gallen was founded in 1898 by the Canton of St. Gallen as the Academy for Commerce, Transport and Administration. In 1938 it was transformed from a foundation under private law into an institution under public law and was granted the right to award doctorates. With the 1987 Higher Education Act of the Canton of St. Gallen, the university was renamed the Hochschule St. Gallen für Wirtschafts-, Rechts- und Sozialwissenschaften (HSG). With the revision of the Higher Education Act of 1993, the university was renamed the University of St. Gallen, but retained the abbreviation HSG.

In 2021, 9,047 students were taught by more than 220 professors and lecturers in over 30 different disciplines.

The HSG consists of six schools: the School of Management (SoM), the School of Finance (SoF), the School of Economics and Political Science (SEPS), the Law School (LS), the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS) and, as of 1 August 2020, the School of Computer Science (SCS).

2 Legal

- *Federal Act of 30 September 2011 on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (Higher Education Act, HEdA), SR 414.20.*

According to the Higher Education Act (HEdA) of 30 September 2011, institutional accreditation is a prerequisite for all higher education institutions – as well as all other institutions in the higher education sector, both public and private – using one of the following designations: “university”, “university of applied sciences” or “university of teacher education” (Art. 29 HEdA), and for applying for federal funding (Art. 45 HEdA).

- *Ordinance of the Higher Education Council of 28 May 2015 on Accreditation in Higher Education (Accreditation Ordinance HEdA), SR 414.205.3.*

The Accreditation Ordinance (HEdA) of 28 May 2015 specifies the requirements for accreditation pursuant to Article 30 HEdA; it specifies the procedural rules and the quality standards.

3 Facts

The University of St. Gallen submitted an application for institutional accreditation as a university pursuant to Article 8 Paragraph 1 of the Accreditation Ordinance on 19 February 2019.

The University of St. Gallen has chosen the Swiss Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ) as its accreditation agency.

The University of St. Gallen chose German as the language of the procedure in accordance with Article 9 Paragraph 7 of the Accreditation Ordinance. The self-evaluation report and the report by the group of experts were written in English.

On 22 March 2019, the Accreditation Council decided to accept the application by the University of St. Gallen on the basis of Article 4 Paragraph 2 of the Accreditation Ordinance and forwarded the documents to the AAQ.

The AAQ opened the proceedings on 17 September 2020.

The AAQ informed the University of St. Gallen on 3 March 2021 of the composition of the group of experts, which comprised the following:

- Kajsa Anna-Karin Fung, MLaw, University of Gothenburg, Head of External Relations, School of Business and Law
- Prof. Lino Guzzella, ETH Zurich, Department of Mechanical and Process Engineering
- Prof. Edeltraud Hanappi-Egger, Rector, WU Vienna, Chair
- Elischa Link, Bachelor’s in Political Science and Law, University of Basel, semester abroad at Tsinghua University School of Law, Beijing
- Prof. Eric Waarts, Dean of Education, Rotterdam School of Management

On the basis of the self-evaluation report of 5 July 2021 and the on-site visit via Zoom of 5–7 October 2021, the group of experts examined whether the accreditation requirements pursuant to Article 30 HEdA were fulfilled and recorded the conclusions in a report.

Based on the documents relevant to the procedure, in particular the self-evaluation report and the preliminary report by the group of experts, the AAQ formulated the draft of the accreditation application and submitted the report by the group of experts and the application by the agency to the University of St. Gallen for comment on 7 December 2021.

The University of St. Gallen commented on the report by the group of experts and on the AAQ’s application for accreditation on 21 December 2021.

On 24 January 2022, the AAQ proposed to the Accreditation Council that the University of St. Gallen be accredited as a “university”.

4 Considerations

4.1 Assessment and accreditation recommendation by the group of experts

Preliminary assessment and accreditation recommendation

The review panel’s overall assessment of the university is positive: it considers that one of the great strengths of the university is that members of the top management show a strong team spirit and good relations with the next level of management. Commitment to the university is strong in all areas, and the implementation of the quality assurance system embodies this spirit, with all stakeholders, including lecturers and alumni, having the right to participate in the development and implementation of the guidelines. There is also a constructive and cooperative relationship with the cantonal government. Relations between the alumni organisation, the HSG Foundation and the university are also characterised by exemplary cooperation. Students feel that they are heard and that they can influence the university through a functional representation system.

In its overall assessment, the group of experts also sees room for further development: the implementation of the recently transformed quality assurance system is still in its infancy, and it is difficult to determine whether the objectives and metrics support the results or not. The group of experts believes that the system currently monitors rather than guides strategy and development. In addition to the upcoming evaluation of the quality assurance system, the group of experts emphasises the need for greater coordination between the central strategy and the quality assurance system on the one hand, and their implementation on a decentralised level on the other. Finally, the group of experts sees a need for discussion within the HSG to clarify what it means to become an integrative business school.

Overall, the group of experts concludes with its analyses and evaluations that the University of St. Gallen has a quality assurance system that covers all areas and processes of the university. Consequently, the group of experts considers the central requirement for institutional accreditation according to Article 30 HEdA to be met.

However, the group of experts sees a need for corrections with regard to two requirements:

- Sustainability (Art. 30 Para. 1(a) no. 6 HEdA; Standard 2.4)
- Human resources development (Art. 30 Para. 1(a) no. 1 HEdA; Standard 4.3)

In its evaluation of Standard 2.4, the group of experts came to the conclusion that the HSG had introduced many measures with regard to sustainability. However, there was a lack of systematic reflection on the topic of sustainability and what it means to be an integrative business school. The group of experts came to the conclusion that more reflection, more strategic planning and more comprehensible implementation are needed in this area. The group of experts proposes a condition:

Condition 1 to Standard 2.4:

The HSG must develop an overall sustainability strategy covering research, teaching, management and community service, as well as taking into account the recommendations in Standards 2.5 and 4.1.

In its evaluation of Standard 4.3, the review panel concluded that the career and staff development processes for academic teaching staff are adequate. However, the procedures for administrative and support staff are neither as comprehensive nor as well developed (the review panel, in making this observation, is echoing aspects of the analysis of Standard 4.2). In this

context, the group of experts considers that the quality assurance system must also work for administrative staff in terms of their career and development needs. The group of experts proposes a condition:

Condition 2 to Standard 4.3:

The HSG must ensure that career and developmental advice and opportunities are systematically available to staff in professional services and administration.

Position statement by the University of St. Gallen

In its statement, the University of St. Gallen argues that no “serious deficiencies” can be derived from the analyses carried out and conclusions drawn in the report by the group of experts. The university considers the conditions proposed by the group of experts and adopted by the AAQ to be unfounded and asks for the conclusions to be reconsidered and for the conditions to be lifted or, if necessary, reformulated into recommendations.

The University of St. Gallen justifies its position as follows:

– *Standard 2.4 (Sustainability)*

Standard 2.4: “The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall give consideration to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in the completion of its tasks. The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.”

Condition 1: “The HSG must develop an overall sustainability strategy covering research, teaching, management and community service, as well as taking into account the recommendations set out in Standards 2.5 and 4.1.”

In its statement, the University of St. Gallen points out that the expert group has acknowledged the depth and traditional anchoring of the structures and processes relating to sustainability at the university. The university further emphasises the importance of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for its sustainability strategy and recalls that the PRME Report documented activities on seven SDGs in 2018 and nine SDGs in 2020. In its statement, the university acknowledges the need for development as identified by the expert group. However, the University of St. Gallen disputes that the analysis by the group of experts identifies a need for structural change, as would be required in the case of a significant deficiency or weakness.

The University of St. Gallen further emphasises that the academic freedom granted by the university to set priorities autonomously is also explicitly demanded in the international rankings regarding sustainability. As the university underlines, “Standard 2.4 refers to the required overall examination of objectives and to the examination of processes and structures in relation to task implementation rather than to their concrete substantive focus on individual dimensions or to the explicit identification of individual SDGs.”

Finally, the University of St. Gallen considers the linking of requirements with recommendations regarding other standards to be problematic, as standards that are assessed as fully or largely fulfilled are thus placed in the context of significant deficiencies. With reference to the AAQ guidelines, the university considers this procedure to be formally inadmissible.

– *Standard 4.3 (Career development)*

Standard 4.3: “The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector supports the career development of its entire staff, particularly the new generation of scientists.” (AAQ Guide, p. 43)

Condition 2: “The HSG must ensure that career and developmental advice and opportunities are systematically available to staff in professional services and administration.”

The University of St. Gallen responds in its position statement that it “ensures that all staff, including its administrative and technical staff, receive systematic career and development guidance and a wide range of internal and external training. The University has also implemented specific procedures, processes and instruments to ensure the career development of its academic staff – as required by and reviewed in Standard 4.3.”

Furthermore, the university recalls the HR strategy of March 2021 “e.g. twice-yearly standardised and documented staff appraisals including a status review; competency evaluation; goal setting and further development; participation in the ‘HSGacademy’, the University’s internal training and development programme; support for further training (financial and time-wise), coaching & consultancy, leadership development, compliance training, management days, onboarding, offboarding” and the training courses held. In 2021, the HSG was ranked sixth in the category of best employers by the *Handelszeitung*.

Appraisal of the statement by the expert group

The expert group notes that the university does not point out factual errors in its statement, but rather provides arguments why the available evidence could be interpreted differently.

The expert group maintains its assessment of Standard 2.4, as the university has not been able to demonstrate how it is identifying relevant areas of sustainability and which targets it sets for itself. However, the review panel has clarified its wording of the conclusion and the requirement. In particular, the panel has deleted the reference to other standards:

Condition 1 to Standard 2.4:

The HSG must develop an overall sustainability strategy that shows how the University identifies relevant SDGs and which objectives for ecological, social and economical sustainability it sets for itself.

The review panel maintains its analysis of Standard 4.3, but decided to use its discretion in favour of the university, as the processes put in place by the university are in line with current HR policy, although there is no empirical evidence of the effectiveness of these instruments.

The condition proposed in the preliminary report is no longer applicable.

4.2 Appraisal of the assessment and accreditation proposal by the group of experts

The AAQ states that the group of experts has reviewed all standards. The evaluations by the group of experts and the conclusions drawn from them are conclusive and coherently derived from the standards. The AAQ further states that the proposed requirements are suitable to ensure the identified need for development of the quality assurance system.

The AAQ notes that the assessment of the University of St. Gallen’s statement by the expert group is conclusive and comprehensible.

The AAQ states that the University of St. Gallen fulfils the requirements for institutional accreditation in accordance with Article 30 HEdA:

- Article 30 1(a) and (c)

The analysis of the standards according to the Accreditation Ordinance by the group of experts shows that the University of St. Gallen fulfils the requirements according to lit. (a) as well as lit. (c), or will fulfil them after fulfilling the condition.

- Article 30 1(b)

As a university with six schools – the School of Management (SoM), the School of Finance (SoF), the School of Economics and Political Science (SEPS), the Law School (LS), the School

of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS) and the School of Computer Science (SCS) – the University of St. Gallen meets the requirements of Article 30 Paragraph 1(b) for a university.

5 Accreditation proposal

Based on the self-evaluation report by the University of St. Gallen, the analysis and the accreditation recommendation presented in the report by the group of experts and the statement by the University of St. Gallen, the AAQ proposes the accreditation of the University of St. Gallen as a “university” according to Article 29 HEdA with one condition:

Condition 1 to Standard 2.4:

The HSG must develop an overall sustainability strategy that shows how the University identifies relevant SDGs and which objectives for ecological, social and economical sustainability it sets for itself.

The AAQ considers a period of two years for the fulfilment of the condition to be reasonable.

The AAQ proposes that the review of conditions be carried out as part of a “sur dossier” review with two reviewers.



Section C

Expert report

24 January 2022





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1 University of St. Gallen: brief description

The University of St. Gallen is the canton of St. Gallen's public university. It specialises in the areas of management, finance, economics, law and international affairs, and has recently added computer science to its academic portfolio. Founded in 1898 as an academy to train young people in trades, it received all university rights in the 1930s. Today, there are 9,047 students studying on bachelor's, master's and PhD programmes covering nearly 30 different study areas. More than 220 professors and senior lecturers and over 3,000 academic and administrative employees (approximately 1,150 FTEs) teach, conduct research, deliver services to society and provide administrative support.

The university comprises six schools: the School of Management (SoM), the School of Finance (SoF), the School of Economics and Political Science (SEPS), the Law School (LS), the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS) and, as of 1 August 2020, the School of Computer Science (SCS). There are also more than 40 institutes, research units and centres. The Executive School of Management, Technology and Law (ES-HSG) and the School of Medicine (MED-HSG) are institutes with special mandates. Executive education has a longstanding tradition at the university and is offered by the Executive School and the other institutes.

With its origins as a specialised university co-founded by industry, the University of St. Gallen emphasises interdisciplinary research that has societal impact.

2 Analysis of follow-up on the results of previous procedures

In 2014, the University of St. Gallen successfully passed its third quality audit of public universities in Switzerland. The group of experts at that time made four recommendations which the university has used to further develop its quality assurance processes and instruments as follows:

Structures of Quality Assurance

Recommendation: "The University should carefully consider the long-term implications of internationalisation regarding both the student body and the faculty. With an increasing portion of University members not speaking or reading German, the still strong emphasis on informal structures of quality assurance may turn out to be inappropriate (Quality Assurance Strategy; Standard 1.3)."

University action taken includes:

- Revision of the University's Quality Development Guidelines (2020/21)
- Professionalisation of structures and procedures for programme development
- Revision of all doctoral degree regulations (2016) by the University Senate

Relevance of gender and diversity issues

Recommendation: "The University could emphasize the relevance of gender and diversity issues stronger in their everyday work. In a situation in which the performance in equal opportunity matters gives room for improvement, a stronger engagement of the University's management would have an important symbolic value."

University action taken includes:

- Engagement of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee in the process of revising the University of St. Gallen Act; inclusion of a paragraph regarding diversity is suggested
- Inclusion of an explicit reference to equality and diversity in the Vision 2025 and General Principles
- Explicit gender target by 2025
- New regulations and processes for faculty recruitment and appointment processes
- Action plan under the federal P-7 programme for equal opportunities and university development
- Updated strategy for diversity and inclusion 2021–2025
- Creation of a new position: the President’s Delegate for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Scope of programme evaluations

Recommendation: “The University could make more use of the existing (and well-documented) knowledge in programme evaluation. The current informal exchange of ideas and experiences on structural problems of the programmes (and the programme portfolio) could eventually be substituted by regular full-scope programme evaluations. In this manner, it is possible to implement more of the knowledge and ideas formulated in the existing manual on programme evaluations. This would have a positive effect on the quality of the programmes and could also show incentives to adopt the programme portfolio.”

University actions and major developments include:

- Intensification of the Assurance of Learning approach
- Creation of the new position of General Programme Manager (GPM)
- Peer reviews of study programmes (e.g. master’s degree programmes in law, the Master’s in International Affairs (MIA), Assessment Year)
- Additional quality reports provided on strengths and challenges based on accumulated evaluations
- Efforts made to connect the many initiatives on the programme at school and university level
- Introduction of a new Programme Management Cockpit (PMC)

Faculty promotion schemes

Recommendation: “Although it is not easy to develop broad and transparent schemes for faculty promotion when the number of available tenured positions is strictly limited, the University may still try to increase transparency in this important field. Such a step would not only improve equal opportunities for all young faculty members; it may also broaden the University’s resource basis for their research ambitions.”

University actions include:

- Revision of the tenure track career model
- Major initiative to develop new career pathways and increase the number of lecturers on a fixed-term contract, assistant professors and associate professor positions

This report provides further detail on each of these actions under the relevant standard. The accreditation panel, in general, was surprised by how late some of the actions in response to

the 2014 audit were begun and/or completed, for example the revision of the Quality Assurance Guidelines. The new, revised document was not published until March 2021.

3 Quality assurance system of the University of St. Gallen

The university's quality assurance system is a comprehensive one that is implemented not only in the areas of academic provision and research but also in strategic areas such as sustainability and internationalisation.

The Quality Development Strategy is based on three general assumptions:

1. Quality is largely based on faculty and staff members; therefore, quality development is aimed at fostering and supporting this aspiration in the university's core areas, i.e. teaching, research, services, executive education, management and administration.
2. Universities are professional expert communities, with a high degree of autonomy given to the faculty. Given their autonomy and the culture of academia, peer feedback and recognition within a research community or school are often more effective than material incentives or organisational rules.
3. Consequently, the intrinsic motivation of individuals and an informal organisation of networks are important, with quality development relying more on initiatives than instructions.

The university strongly believes that quality development will ultimately result in significant changes if it is aligned with professional standards and perceived and implemented as an integral part of the functions and responsibilities of faculty and staff, with a need to harmonise centrally initiated development initiatives and decentralised reflection and action. Empowerment, dialogue and feedback based on solid data and transparency are central components of the university's quality development strategy.

Quality development goals and responsibilities

In brief, the university's goals for quality development, in line with its Vision 2025 and General Principles, are to:

- strengthen and further develop the quality of the university's core areas (teaching, research, services to society) according to national and international standards;
- support the individual actors in their decision-making and actions (especially lecturers, students, researchers and staff);
- concretise the quality targets and areas of action in the core areas. These specific targets and areas of action can be interlinked through their common orientation towards the fundamental principles.

The Quality Guidelines.

The university's Quality Guidelines describe quality and quality development as following a holistic approach that is enabled by the interconnectedness of the various actors and their perspectives at different levels of the university, both in terms of joint and shared responsibility and in terms of four key principles: strategy orientation, core process orientation, evidence-based development and continuous improvement.

The quality strategy focuses on six core processes:

- Teaching I: bachelor's, master's and PhD programmes
- Teaching II: post-experience degree programmes

- Research I: knowledge production and dissemination
- Research II: faculty and early-stage researchers
- Service to society (services) I: science to practice transfer
- Service to society (services) II: professional development/executive education (e.g. non-degree programmes such as certificate and diploma programmes, open and custom programmes)

The diagram below sets out the relationship between the university's strategy, quality development goals and key principles:

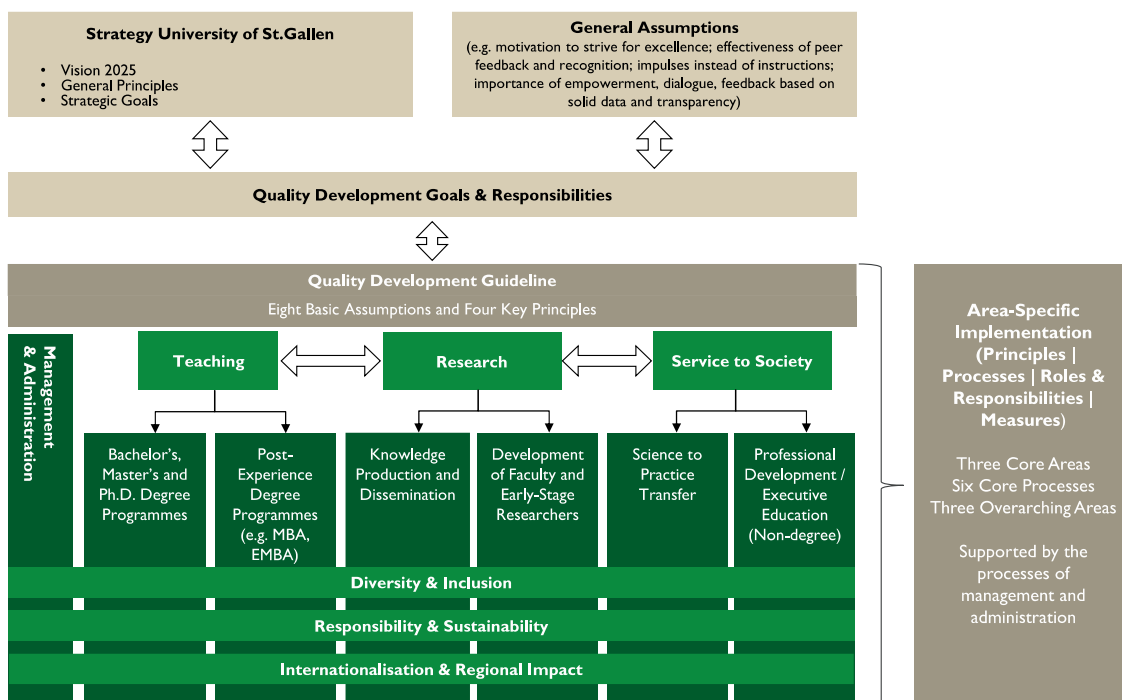


Figure 4-1: Overview Major Components of the Quality Development Strategy

For each of the core process areas, the university sets out the instruments, measures and responsibilities in relation to quality assurance. An example in core areas I and II (teaching) is provided below. Similar tables are provided for the other core areas:

Teaching			
QA Area (Level)	Instrument	Measure	Responsibility
Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular course evaluations Student feedback groups TAP (Teaching Analysis Poll; midterm review) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived quality according to a set of criteria Reflected quality Qualitative feedback from students regarding learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty members (individual improvement) Programme Directors (assignment in course) Dean (assignment in programme) Vice-President Studies and Academic Affairs / Delegate QD (overall assessment of faculty teaching performance; recommendation for specific coaching; decision on re-election)
Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular graduate surveys Student feedback groups Qualitative evaluation of selected programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived quality according to a set of criteria Reflected quality Programme coherence Assurance of Learning Placement success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Directors (improvement cycles) Delegate QD (triggering substantial innovations) Vice-President Studies and Academic Affairs / President (change responsibilities in programme)
Programme Portfolio	Monitoring quantitative and qualitative development of programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student numbers Reflected quality (e.g. USP; contribution to Vision & strategy; link to relevant recruiting markets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vice-President Studies and Academic Affairs; Delegate QD President's Board/Senate (creation of new programmes, termination of existing programmes)

Such information and guidelines are also provided in relation to the implementation of strategic areas such as sustainability and internationalisation, thus ensuring a comprehensive oversight of all of the university's activities.

The accreditation panel read the documentation, including the Quality Guidelines, with interest. In particular, it sought to understand during the site visit how the system worked "on the ground".

4 Analysis of compliance with the quality standards

Area 1: Quality assurance strategy

Standard 1.1: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall define its quality assurance strategy. This strategy shall contain the essential elements of an internal quality assurance system aimed at ensuring the quality of the activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and their long-term quality development as well as promoting the development of a quality culture.

Description

The self-evaluation report (SER) states that overall quality and quality development are defined directly in the strategy of the University of St. Gallen. Within the strategy, the quality understanding is framed in the General Principles for the areas of teaching, research and services to society. The main points of reference for quality development are highlighted in the strategy.

The SER explains that the university's Roadmap 2025 specifies the overall quality assurance framework and defines the leading principles, core activities and services. Specific strategies and/or guiding principles are then developed within this framework by the four Vice-Presidents. In parallel, the basic values are defined in the university's Code of Conduct (the present version of which was approved in 2019 by the Senate and the Board of Governors). The strategy is reviewed every five to seven years or adapted with small changes when the President's Board changes.

The university's Vision clearly defines the ambition to be a leading business university. Consequently, international accreditation, ranking and benchmarking are ongoing exercises and

well-established practices, and the university believes that quality and quality development are embedded in its DNA. An understanding of quality development and assurance have been developed through different iterations of internal and external quality audits, accreditations, peer reviews and internal analyses.

The SER states that the quality assurance processes are well implemented and integrated into the overall organisation with a balance of top-down and bottom-up processes covering centralised and decentralised activities. The university recognises that its growing size, the increasing diversification of its programmes and disciplines and the stronger alignment of executive education as a core area of the university will lead to challenges with regard to scaling up, the effectiveness of instruments and processes and the need for a new calibration of top-down and bottom-up processes.

The university's Quality Development Guidelines were updated and re-defined in 2020/2021, and the SER states that this has reinforced the commitment to a shared and joint quality approach that covers all three core areas and the university's activities. The guidelines specify four main QA principles:

- Orientation towards the university's strategy
- Orientation towards core processes
- Evidence orientation
- Orientation towards continuous development

The university believes that the Quality Development Guidelines provide a common understanding of quality assurance and highlight the importance not only of consensus and a common understanding, but also of defining principles that inform all the developments within the core processes, the governance and how these are supported.

The SER explains that all of the main guiding documents for the further development of the university's quality (notably the university's strategy, Quality Development Guidelines, Code of Conduct, Guidelines on the Evaluation of Teaching and regulations) are discussed within the Senate, which fosters a highly participatory approach amongst all the stakeholder groups. If such documents are approved by the Senate, then the Board of Governors must also take them into consideration. This approach embeds quality assurance in core processes, together with a participatory governance structure that ensures the integration of all levels, groups and stakeholders into the further development of quality at every level.

The SER states that the university strives to strike a balance between a more market-driven quality development approach (with great importance placed on external quality labels), an internal, structural quality development approach (with great importance placed on common understanding), the further development of quality as a cultural aspect and the further development of internal procedures. It therefore makes use of a multi-perspective analysis for quality and quality development through national and international external accreditation procedures, audits and peer reviews and internal quality-enhancing processes such as centralised course evaluations. Many development activities (e.g. study programme reforms) incorporate both perspectives.

The university perceives its key strengths in this area to lie in its collegial culture of open and trustful interaction, respect and appreciation at all levels, together with a strongly embedded QA framework. The close alignment of the quality management approach with the university's strategy and the integral position of quality management within the strategy lead to a multi-level approach of common and shared quality responsibility, and a high participation in the design of the overall quality management approach. This is operationalised through a well-developed suite of robust top-down and bottom-up processes.

The university notes that its challenges lie in managing quality assurance in a period of growth, with fewer resources and an increasingly competitive environment. It is also aware that the expansion of its programme portfolio (especially the Joint Medical Master (JMM-HSG/UZH) and

the Master's in Computer Science) creates some new tensions in challenging the basic assumptions of the university.

Analysis

The accreditation panel was able to speak to various groups of staff and stakeholder representatives and also to view relevant documentation such as the Quality Development Guidelines (2021), the Roadmap 2025 and the President's Board's strategic projects. It was clear to the panel that a comprehensive quality assurance strategy and framework was in place, and this was confirmed by discussions with, for example, members of the Board of Governors (BoG) who described how they could see and feel how the university fits together with an integrated approach to quality assurance (QA) that starts at the top and cascades downwards. The BoG has seen this approach and the focus on the quality of an integrated QA system develop. They informed the panel that the reporting from the system provides oversight across the university into which the BoG feeds its views.

New professors that spoke to the accreditation panel also attested to the culture of the university and were aware of this culture before they began their employment.

Although it was confirmed to the accreditation panel that there were few, if any, tensions between the university and the political context within which it sits, the panel was nonetheless interested to explore the current challenges that the university has identified in relation to its goals and how these might impact on the development of QA policies and guidelines.

Senior management confirmed that the growth of the institution is something that will need to be managed, not only strategically but also operationally. For example, the Senate encompasses all staff and also has student representatives. This has the potential to become a very large body, but the accreditation panel was told that informal contact is cultivated and cannot be underestimated since the university seeks to avoid thinking in silos. An awareness of the impact of growth and growing diversity on overall commitment has led to a focus on clarifying responsibilities while emphasising that this responsibility is shared. The development of the Code of Conduct through a Senate commission has had a cultural impact and the Code continues to be embedded across the institution through various mechanisms. The accreditation panel was able to view the principles set out in the Code of Conduct and to affirm the impact that such actions should have on the culture of the university.

A significant challenge also lies in the integration of the School of Computer Science and the Medical School (managed by an institute within the School of Management). These represent real change for the university, and efforts to ensure integration into the institutional culture include: a year of orientation in which students must participate; the integration of other disciplines within the courses, particularly in computer science; and ensuring that faculty within the school are integrated well into the work of the university through onboarding sessions at the start of the year for new professors and guidelines for staff. This challenge is exacerbated in the case of medical students by the fact that they are not often on campus.

Members of senior staff explained that these challenges are new. For example, there are no results from the new programmes yet, but the university is aware that the processes for course evaluation for technical programmes will require a change in some of the indicators in the central course questionnaire. Steps have already been taken to develop this change further in relation to the core questionnaire for the whole university and to offer it in a more modular way. The accreditation panel was told that the aim is not simply to add more instruments and measures but to use change as an impulse to develop core instruments further.

The accreditation panel was interested in how the theory of the QA system was translated into evidence that it is working on the ground, especially since it appeared that, according to the date of the Quality Development Guidelines (2021), the system is relatively new.

Members of the institution's senior management explained that, for the university, the system is not new – rather, work has been undertaken to make processes more transparent and to improve communication. The aim in revising the Guidelines has been to raise awareness of

quality standards in each of the four pillars of activity and to introduce standards specifically for intersecting areas. For example, the incremental development of study programmes necessitated a more explicit structure for study reform processes, so a handbook was developed for this process and programme managers were trained to operationalise it. This has led to an increased awareness of QA within the study programmes. The revisions have thus not introduced anything new but have restructured existing initiatives and processes.

The accreditation panel was informed that, in fact, the QA system and standards were working so well that it was possible to apply them beyond the academic area. They have now been applied to the legal office, and there is a transitional/step-by-step development underway aimed at embedding these processes. The university is aware of the need to enable faculty and staff to understand the requirements of the QA system so that they are able to apply it in their daily work.

In conclusion, the accreditation panel can confirm that the university has a QA strategy, guidelines and key principles and that some targets/goals for the system have been defined. However, despite what the university claims, implementation of the new system is fledgling, and it is difficult to pinpoint yet whether or not goals and metrics support outcomes. The panel was of the view that, at the moment, the system monitors rather than steers strategy and development. The panel believes that it would have been helpful for the university to begin to work with the outcomes of its last accreditation report sooner so that some empirical evidence could have been available to the panel.

Conclusion

The accreditation panel commends the university for embedding a QA culture and system that supported the changes that were required due to COVID. It encourages learning from this in the future.

The expert group assesses Standard 1.1 as largely fulfilled.

Recommendation

That the University develops targets and incentives for the implementation of the QA strategy.

Standard 1.2: The quality assurance system shall be incorporated into the strategy of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and efficiently support its development. It includes processes verifying whether the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector fulfils its mandate while taking account of its type and specific characteristics.

Description

The SER states that the university's basic quality approach is anchored in the founding regulations: the University Act, the University Statutes, the university strategy and the Quality Development Guidelines. The main tasks are defined in the University Act as teaching and research in management, economics, law, social sciences and affiliated disciplines. Executive education at the University of St Gallen is defined as an additional mandate and, as of 2019, medicine is now also included in the performance mandate. The main mandate is defined as "Fostering the responsibility of all the university's members towards humanity and the ecosystem," as well as preparing students to act based on academic methods and insights and ethical values in economic systems, society, academia and research.

The university believes that quality management and quality development serve as a support function for all actors within the core processes, and the quality approach is oriented towards their specific needs. This is intended to enable informed decisions based on evidence and relevant information. An alignment of data collection, instruments and processes used, analysis and reports, and the governing decisions of the responsible position are important.

The intersection between the university's autonomy and the monitoring of its performance mandate with the canton of St. Gallen is defined by the Board of Governors. A performance mandate is decided for a duration of four years and specifies strategic projects, the programme portfolio, a maximum for student numbers and public resources in a global budget.

The SER explains that the planning process starts with the overall strategy and the Roadmap for strategic projects, with measures specified during a strategic planning process. The President's Board reports to the Board of Governors in an annual report on the different performance areas, a financial report (for the overall university) and an internal risk analysis report. Since 2016, the university's management system has been audited regularly as part of the budget autonomy granted by the canton of St. Gallen.

The SER states that the university aims at early recognition of opportunities and threats, their correct assessment and at taking appropriate action to prevent personal injury and property damage through its risk analysis and risk management. To this end, and in line with the statutory requirements as defined in the Act of the University of St. Gallen, the President's Board reports annually to the Board of Governors on the university's strategic risk analysis and risk management.

At school level, each school is subject to annual target agreements between it and the University President. These target agreements define the schools' key activities, planning and resources. If study programmes undergo any changes to their basic structure, then the Board of Governors is informed and will approve or otherwise based on the Senate's proposal.

The institutes, as independent organisational units within the university, also report to the Board of Governors, providing financial and annual reports on their performance in teaching, research and executive education. The financial reports undergo internal revision and fiscal cantonal revision before being sent to the Board of Governors.

The university believes that its key strengths in this area lie in a well-implemented strategy and strategic process which are supported by a robust and comprehensive planning process. It believes that these in turn are bolstered by an integrated approach to quality management and development that is embedded in the strategy and guidelines. The system for adjusting the university strategy and, subsequently, the Quality Development Guidelines works on a defined cycle, and a mentor system ensures close links between the institutes and the Board of Governors. The President's Board and the Board of Governors make use of institutionalised planning processes to ensure appropriate monitoring of cantonal mandates.

Nonetheless, the university recognises that the dynamics of the university's changing legal basis will impact its governance structure. The university is the focus of political cantonal discussions, especially in the context of selected strategic projects (e.g. the IT education campaign (ITBO), the medicine initiative and campus enlargement) and a few issues of individual misconduct. These, in addition to the fact that the new disciplines of computer science and medicine will stretch the core identity and common understanding of the university, present the university with a level of challenge.

Analysis

The accreditation panel discussed the development of the university's strategy and the role of the QA framework in supporting this strategy with senior members of staff from the institution. It was also able to read documents such as the Roadmap 2025 and the Strategic Project Portfolio, which provided it with insight into the institution's vision and strategic goals as well as the composition of the various boards, etc.

Discussions with senior staff confirmed the university's recognition that, as it grows, it must ensure that it maintains a strong vision of the goals it is striving to reach and to ensure that there are mechanisms that provide oversight of its success in reaching those goals. Strong efforts are made to ensure that work is not carried out in silos: a combination of informal contact through different structures and meetings coupled with the fact that the Senate encompasses all staff and also has student representatives ensures the widest possible consideration of strategic

goals. All professors are also invited to attend an annual retreat to consider strategic issues, and meetings between senior management and the Deans are held fortnightly. Nonetheless, there was recognition that a significant amount of internal communication is needed in order to manage and maintain strategic direction.

Senior management exemplified the problem by talking about the challenge of integrating a new technical faculty (computer science). An example of how QA mechanisms helped to manage this transition is given in 1.1. above. The accreditation panel was also provided with further information about mechanisms for the integration of computer science, such as a reconsideration of the year of orientation which students have to take part in and which includes Contextual Studies. The need for computer science students to start their technical studies was becoming pressing, and this issue was resolved by integrating other disciplines into the courses on computer science. There are also onboarding sessions at the start of the year for new professors and guidelines for staff.

The accreditation panel was interested in how the university sought to ensure consistency in terms of research, and in how strategy supported a balance between the practical and the academic. It was told that this balance between practice and research has traditionally been a strength and that the research strategy defines aims for impact-oriented, cutting-edge research, as the university wants to focus on socially relevant research and to use the most effective and modern methods. Nonetheless, senior staff recognised that there is a danger that the university could place too much emphasis on research, and that it must guarantee relevance and its academic focus as well. It has started to place more importance on education but admitted that it does not yet have a full answer to this question.

When asked how data collection and monitoring supports the QA framework, senior staff informed the accreditation panel that its aim was not to add to the burden of collecting data but to use what is already collected and use it well. Data architecture using business intelligence software has been used to create a dashboard, the Programme Management Cockpit, where programme managers can compare their programmes with others, which has created a real cultural shift – previously, programme managers only had access to their own data. Overall management information is also presented via a dynamic dashboard to ensure that the management board has the data it needs.

In relation to the plan-do-check-act cycle (PDCA), the accreditation panel was informed that such a process was in place across the QA and strategic planning cycles. The university does not view the process as a technical, mechanical cycle but tries to embed the process and follow the principles in the quality cycle. For example, the sustainability strategy was drafted and circulated widely before being sent to the President's Board; it was then adjusted before being returned to the President's Board for finalisation and approval. Such checks and balances are in place to ensure that decentralisation does not impact on the breadth of consultation and involvement in strategic planning.

The accreditation panel also discussed the implementation of the QA framework and the strategic planning cycle with academic staff and was informed that, from their perspective, more formality in the system would be helpful. For example, processes that are voluntary should be mandatory and there should be more structured circulation of reports and outcomes.

The accreditation panel appreciated the open discussions that it had with the university around its strategy and future direction. From the perspective of the panel, the institution appears currently to be operating within its "comfort zone", as evidenced by, for example, lost ground in the FT rankings. The panel acknowledged the new challenges as raised by the university and is of the view that more proactivity is needed to face these challenges in terms of ensuring a more global perspective (the university is influenced by the canton, many administrative staff members studied at the university, and so on). The need to attract ERC grants and the need for stronger alignment between the centralised strategy, the QA system and implementation at a decentralised level was also recognised. As the university grows, it will need to rely more on formal structures than in the past.

Conclusion

The accreditation panel could see that QA and strategic planning cycles were in place, with selected KPIs and feedback loops in some areas. It is of the view that the university should work to ensure that these frameworks are further developed to provide systematic and strong steering as well as monitoring, and to enable the institution to maintain a competitive edge both nationally and internationally.

The expert group assesses Standard 1.2 as largely fulfilled.

Recommendation

That the University should work to ensure that its QA and strategic planning frameworks are further developed to provide systematic strong steering as well as monitoring and enable the institution to maintain a competitive edge both nationally and internationally.

Standard 1.3: At all levels, all representative groups of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall be involved in developing the quality assurance system and in its implementation, in particular students, mid-level faculty staff, professors and administrative and technical staff. Quality assurance responsibilities must be transparently and clearly assigned.

Description

As already explained, the university states that its quality assurance system works on a balanced structure of bottom-up and top-down mechanisms. A common understanding and a shared vision among all internal and external stakeholders is crucial and, consequently, participation is key.

– Participation of internal groups

The SER explains that, within the overall governance of the university, participation and representation of the different groups is organised in different bodies. In the Senate, all full professors are members, and non-tenured faculty and students also have representatives in the Senate. Non-tenured faculty and the Student Union are also represented in the Senate Committee, which is a preparatory committee that also functions as a kind of extended university management board.

Currently, the composition of the Senate is being reconsidered due to the revision of the University Act. In future, full and associate professors will form one group and should have a weight of 60%. Non-tenured faculty (assistant professors, lecturers and postdocs) will form a second group of stakeholders, students a third group, and the administrative and technical staff will form a new fourth group. The same quotas are being proposed for the School Assemblies and other academic bodies (e.g. Appointment Committees) and university working groups (e.g. taskforce). Since all the fundamental decisions about quality and quality development must be discussed in the Senate, the university is satisfied that the participation of the different stakeholder groups in the overall quality process is ensured.

Different committees have been set up to work on the central processes and documents in a participatory manner. The Mandate Committee discusses and decides upon the revision and further development of the Quality Development Guidelines. It is made up of the different stakeholder groups of professors, non-tenured faculty and students. The Mandate Committee is also responsible for the overall preparation of the institutional accreditation process and contributed to the development of the self-assessment report.

A Senate commission was established to further develop the regulatory basis of evaluation in teaching. This commission brought together discussions and the consensus of the different internal groups and then proposed the Guidelines on the Evaluation of Teaching to the Senate.

The development of processes and instruments regarding quality in teaching, research and executive education are subject to the deliberations of various working groups and bodies.

The SER states that, in the area of teaching, there is a strong link between the Student Union and the Vice-President of Studies and Academic Affairs. The Vice-President of the Student Union is explicitly responsible for academic affairs and has regular meetings with the Vice-President of Studies and Academic Affairs and with the Dean of Studies and Academic Affairs. The university believes that such meetings serve to focus the students' interests and initiatives regarding quality development in teaching.

The university believes that such participatory approaches are important, not only in the development of the different processes and instruments but also in their implementation. There are established, regular interactions between the different stakeholder groups. For example, the programme management of each study programme meets the student body responsible for the programme at least once a semester. The Quality Development service team ensures that the different groups have access to the relevant information (depending on the characteristics of the different positions). This team also keeps the different groups (e.g. students, instructors, programme directors) up to date on changes to key processes.

– Participation of external stakeholders

The SER explains that the involvement of relevant external stakeholders is largely based on the governance and regulatory approval provisions (acknowledgement, approval) set out by the bodies in which the stakeholders are represented. These take the form of advisory boards and councils. The university has an Advisory Board in which different perspectives are used to challenge and support strategic projects and initiatives. Furthermore, all institutes have external stakeholders as representatives of their Management Board. Revisions to study programmes include external expertise, for example in the form of external peer reviews, information from alumni, from experts from the labour market and from future employers.

The university states that it relies on strong formal and informal alumni support. HSG Alumni is among the oldest and largest alumni organisations of all Swiss universities and is in regular contact with many different areas of the university. HSG Alumni also provides financial support, serves on committees and teaches on the university's programmes.

Overall, the university believes that its strengths lie in its overall approach to quality responsibilities, which are multi-layered and broadly distributed, with such an approach leading to broad consensus on the overall quality guidelines through discussions with all representatives of the university. The President's Delegate for Quality Development provides a link between the academic and administrative perspectives, and students and faculty form part of all the working groups within the quality management processes. The Programme Management Cockpit now provides improved support in terms of relevant data and information management, and external input is institutionalised through advisory boards and the alumni association.

Despite the above strengths, the complexity of the overall centralised and decentralised quality management system and the interconnection of the different responsibilities for quality management and development are becoming more challenging as the institution grows in size and scope, leading to the need for further work on the campus management information system and quality processes that are at the intersection of different levels.

Analysis

The accreditation panel heard strong confirmation from the various groups of internal and external stakeholders that it spoke to that they were involved at different levels of development and implementation of the quality assurance framework.

Students in particular feel that their voice is heard and they are frequently asked about quality matters and asked to consider these matters when representing student interests. The example of the impact of COVID on the whole of campus life was one area in which the students felt that

they had been particularly involved. Student representatives from the EMBA programme, for example, told the accreditation panel that the university had been very responsive on an ongoing basis to their suggestions for altering the delivery of various aspects of the programme during the pandemic. Students informed the accreditation panel that they had noticed more formal processes in the new system, with QA matters being taken seriously and even raised in lectures. In particular, students said that student evaluations felt more systematic and there were more open questions. They had more time to reflect on the evaluation and to complete it, and the results have now been published. This has changed the perception of the student evaluations.

From the Student Union side, students organise the Student Parliament, which involves an annual student self-evaluation in relation to achievements in the area of QA and those goals that were not achieved. This report is made publicly available each year.

Staff, including administrative staff, at various levels of the institution also felt that they could always contribute to the further development of the university as there is an open culture of comment, feedback and direct interaction. Staff pointed to the example of the Ethics Code, which is now very visible, with posters on campus and posts on social media to publicise the Code of Conduct. Staff believe this is related to the quality development of the university.

The accreditation panel spoke to the Head of the Alumni Organisation (AO), who said that it was involved in many university projects. For example, it is invited to offer feedback on the strategic plan. The AO feels that it is appropriately involved in relevant projects, with a mix of formal and informal input.

The accreditation panel also heard of improvements since the appointment of the new Board of Directors from the group of staff who make up the “Mittelbau” (non-professorial teaching staff). These staff members feel that they are listened to much more than previously. They said that there are still tensions around representation with a need to find more ways for them to participate in boards, the Senate and school meetings, but that things have improved.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 1.3 as entirely fulfilled.

Standard 1.4: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall periodically analyse the relevance of its quality assurance system and make the necessary adjustments.

Description

The SER states that the quality assurance system is regularly reviewed, updated and improved to meet the needs of the university. Most of the reviews are internally driven, but recommendations from external accreditations and reviews are also important.

– Internal quality development

The SER explains that the university has experience of a broad spectrum of different measures for quality assurance and development in the areas of teaching, research and services. These processes are informed and led by different representatives within the university (from the different stakeholder groups, from the service team for quality development, from the perspective of the President’s Delegate, etc.). The cyclical revision of the university’s strategy also provides a defined cycle for re-aligning quality development measures. For example, the introduction of new programmes in computer science requires adaptations to the course evaluation instruments.

– Accreditations and rankings

The SER states that the university also takes account of the outcomes of and feedback from external rankings and accreditation processes to ensure the continuous development of its quality assurance system and instruments (including databases). Moreover, the university utilises and benefits from informal, external peer review processes (e.g. for study programmes), for example those that are being used in the current review of the Assessment Year.

In addition to accreditations, selected rankings are very relevant for the university, as they relate to individual programmes, disciplines, programme types or even the university as a whole, and can impact on all areas of university activity.

The university views the alignment of the cyclical revision of the university's strategy and of the Quality Development Guidelines as a strength, along with the embedded culture of using external quality assurance to assist with the continuous improvement of the institution. However, it recognises the potential burden this places on the different stakeholders involved. It also recognises the need for further work on the interlinking of data collection for quality measurements within the core processes and the need to implement stronger feedback loops and impact measurement systems.

Analysis

The accreditation panel was aware of the recent process undertaken by the university to revise the Quality Assurance Guidelines, and it was informed by various groups of internal stakeholders that the system was flexible enough to be adjusted and revised when necessary. As stated in 1.3 above, the panel was provided with examples of improvements to the system since its last iteration and was in no doubt that the intentions of the university to ensure that the QA system remains appropriate were well embedded and understood across the institution.

However, from its reading of the description of the system in the SER, the accreditation panel had formed the impression of a rather complicated and theoretical system. While this impression was not borne out in practice, nonetheless the panel was of the view that the system is very specifically developed, with many instruments in place, and is primarily used for information gathering and monitoring.

Conclusion

The accreditation panel, in line with its views on the rest of the standards in Area 1: Quality assurance strategy, encourages the university to ensure that, in any future revision and embedding of the QA system, appropriate measures are put in place to ensure that the system has a role in steering and guiding the institution as well as monitoring its various activities.

The expert group assesses Standard 1.4 as largely fulfilled.

Recommendation

That the University take into consideration comments and recommendations under standards 1.1 and 1.2 when reviewing its quality assurance system, particularly with regard to developing targets and incentives for the implementation of the QA strategy and relevant KPIs for monitoring and steering purposes.

Area 2: Governance

Standard 2.1: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the organisational structure and decision-making processes enable the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector to fulfil its mission and to achieve its strategic objectives.

Description

The SER explains that, at the institutional level, the President and the President's Board are responsible for ensuring the fulfilment of the university's overall mandate. Strategic decisions concerning the mandate and the fulfilment of the mandate are governed in close communication with the Board of Governors and the Senate.

The four Vice-Presidents' Boards and the work by specific committees are responsible for the strategic guidelines and the fundamental mandates for specific core processes in the areas of teaching, research and services. The University President installs delegates (academic faculty) for consultation and to foster different strategic dimensions. Currently, delegates are in charge of the fields of public programmes, quality development, university development and executive education, responsibility and sustainability. A delegate responsible for equality, diversity and inclusion will be put in place in the near future. The delegates work closely with different committees and with the university's management and administration to foster the strategic goals and supporting measures.

The Senate Committee is of key importance in the governance of the institution. Its members are from the President's Board, the Deans of the schools and representatives of non-tenured faculty and students, and it is responsible for preparing all the Senate's decisions. The Senate discusses and approves all decisions regarding core processes with a strategic and fundamental relevance. The Senate Committee and the Senate link the work of the President, the President's Board and the Vice-Presidents' Board with the work at school and institute level.

The SER states that the six disciplinary schools and the two institutes with specific mandates (the Executive School and the School of Medicine) form the primary organisational structure of the institution. Although they enjoy autonomy in academic matters, such as faculty appointments and academic programmes, they do not operate in silos and their administration is coordinated centrally.

The university believes that the institutes support and strengthen the institution's overall objectives, provide the entire university with a high level of agility and are an integral part of its development concept. More than 50% of full professors are engaged at institutes. However, the university is aware that the institutes can contribute to potential friction, for example:

- Institutes are stakeholders in new professorial appointments and faculty recruitment.
- Institutes can consume the energy and resources of individual professors, thereby reducing their availability for university-wide projects.
- Institutes can actively compete against each other, although this is also considered a driver for better quality.

The Board of Governors and the President's Board are aware of these challenges and mitigate the risks by taking measures such as the monitoring system and convening Appointment Committees, by strengthening the university-wide regulation of the institutes (for financial and organisational aspects), by implementing a Vice-President's Board for Institutes and Executive Education, and by a new role for the Executive Education Committee. Strict monitoring has resulted in the closure of two institutes since 2013, for example.

The university is of the view that its organisational and governance structure balances five conflict areas:

1. The close interaction between the *Senate*, the *President's Board* and the *Board of Governors* balances out the *top-down approach* of an efficient public organisation

management and the *bottom-up approach* of the university as an expert organisation. It recognises the need for centralised responsibility and accountability. At the same time, there is a necessity for well-rooted commitment and intrinsic motivation on the part of all the university's members.

2. Given (1) and the largely autonomous role of the institutes, the university balances compliance and autonomy in all its activities. The *right of autonomy* is especially noticeable in the activities of the core processes. The *requirement for compliance* is especially visible in the way activities are executed.
3. In this regard, the university's governance shows the *balance* between a *public university* and a *privately funded business school*.
4. The university balances the development between further *diversity in the disciplines* within the university (e.g. computer science and medicine) and *integration as a university* which is *specialised* in business, economics, law, social sciences and humanities. While the canton of St. Gallen has provided the impetus for growth, the university still takes opportunities to define its profile in a modern, complex environment. Stronger diversity enables and supports the business, economics, law, social sciences and humanities perspective, especially with regard to digitalisation. The traditional disciplines enable and support the computer science and medicine disciplines with fundamentals in business, economics, law, social sciences and humanities.
5. Another potential trade-off lies between the *professionalisation* of the university's governance and management and the *self-governance of the university's members*. The organisational structure shows that in the last decade, the support structure within the self-governance committees and bodies has been enhanced by increasing the support positions under the four Vice-Presidents (each Vice-President's Board has a Dean/Director and staff members).

The SER also states that the Executive School and the institutes have adopted a specific quality management system. Within the new approved strategy for executive education, the quality management approach is strengthened and will be more applicable across the university.

In sum, it is still the conviction of all the university's members that the self-governance approach (through the Senate) should be sustained, because of its fitness for purpose for the university's core processes. The university is clear that the balanced – and further balancing of – top-down and bottom-up approaches enable highly innovative and responsible actions at a centralised and decentralised level, and provide support in all the core activities. It is also aware that the new legal basis for the university and the proposal by the canton within the University Act for a more transparent and multilevel governance structure will help increase the efficacy and efficiency of the university's governance structure in the future.

However, the university is also aware of the instability caused by the ongoing political process in the revision of the University Act and that the increase in complexity due to the growth in size and diversity in programmes, disciplines and schools will need further elaboration and configuration to develop an appropriate governance model.

Analysis

The accreditation panel discussed this issue, in particular with the university's senior staff. It agreed that there were indeed tensions to be faced in relation to decentralisation and the balance between top-down and bottom-up processes and decision-making, as well as the balance between the right of autonomy and the need for compliance. The panel is of the view that, as the university points out regularly in its SER, growth and diversification call for a more formal approach to processes and systems than might previously have been the case. From the panel's perspective, decentralisation currently allows space for flexibility in the application of the

QA system, but the QA system does not overtly impact the organisational structure at the moment. This will become a more crucial issue given the growth strategy of the university.

However, the accreditation panel found the senior management and governance to act as a team, which it strongly supports. Good links exist between the top and middle management and there is a strong team spirit. Commitment to the university across the institution is notable and the implementation of the QA system embodies this spirit. The panel commends this, along with the constructive relationship that the university enjoys with the cantonal government. It encourages the university to maintain this constructive relationship, which works as a partnership.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 2.1 as largely fulfilled.

Recommendation

The university should use its growth strategy as a starting point for reviewing whether or not the current approach to processes and systems is sufficient or if there is a need for a more formal approach to encapsulate growth and increasing diversification.

Standard 2.2: The quality assurance system shall systematically contribute to providing relevant and current quantitative and qualitative information on which the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector relies to make current and strategic decisions.

Description

The SER states that, in recent years, the university has invested in the development of information systems so that the responsible management position at each level is provided with data and information that enable informed, evidence-based governing decisions.

A large amount of systematically collected data is available in relation to the evaluation of teaching and learning. The students, teaching faculty and programme management have access to course evaluation data for their individual courses (students and faculty) or for all mandatory evaluated courses in the programme (programme management). Further data is collected and brought together in the Programme Management Cockpit, and the university also conducts its own HSG Graduate Surveys and takes part in the national survey of higher education graduates by the Federal Statistical Office.

The individual research units (institutes and research centres) develop annual reports including data regarding research output and outcome. The Research Committee annually reports on research proposals, research funding and research activities. The research platform Alexandria is the basic source for publications and projects within the research area where research output is documented.

The university and the institutes also provide annual reports, including information on their impact on society. A regionalisation report (on regional impact) and the Business School Impact System collect comprehensive data and information on the institution's impact in the city, the canton and the region.

The SER explains that the President and the President's Board are provided with different statistics and information from the Management Cockpit. A project was launched this year to expand the data points and improve the useability of the Management Cockpit. Various administrative units have established their own monitoring systems for their tasks and areas of responsibility (e.g. IT, the Real Estate unit, the Library, the Communication unit and the Career Services centre).

The SER states that information for the responsible stakeholders is provided in different forms:

- Direct access to data is restricted to the directly involved management positions (e.g. the programme directors have access to the mandatory evaluation results of the individual faculty in their programme, but the Deans of the schools have access to the aggregated analysis on a programme level).
- The controlling and other administrative service units provide the different actors with relevant statistics (e.g. the Deans of the schools receive statistics on the different activities within the school).
- A main source of information is the annual reports of the institutes, the schools (within the annual target agreement process), the different committees (e.g. the Research Committee, the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Committee) and the different reports in specific areas (e.g. sustainability, regionalisation). These all convey tremendously rich information on the activities within all the core processes and the management of the university.
- Alexandria functions as the *information databank* for the research output (mainly publications and projects).

The university's archive, which is led by a registrar, holds all the relevant legal documents and the annual reports.

Besides the internal quality assurance processes that allow an inside perspective, the university believes that it gains vital insights through external rankings, accreditations and peer reviews. These insights are used to cross-check vision achievement and provide further motivation in taking action in specific areas of the Roadmap. The President's Board is informed about all feedback received from each accreditation and all ranking results. From the information, the university, the schools and the institutes consider what action they will take to improve.

The university is of the view that its strengths in the area of data collection and information lie in its multilevel approach – which collects data and analyses information based on the core processes – and in how it has sought and developed adequate forms of information management which have resulted in accepted forms of data management, e.g. controlling database, availability of the Management Cockpit and the Programme Management Cockpit and standard reports in addition to the cockpits. It also believes that its systematic use of both internal and external measurements and data and the connections that it makes between them strengthens the decision-making processes.

However, the university recognises that a stronger alignment of the executive education within the university's core processes is needed. It is also aware that a supply of decentralised information in some cases provides no "single point of truth", and it is time-consuming to connect the data across different areas.

Analysis

The accreditation panel was able to read many of the reports available, such as the most recent Annual Report and the "Facts and figures" reports from the last two years. It also spoke to various groups of stakeholders about data and information collected and evaluated by the university, in particular senior management, Deans and administrative staff.

The accreditation panel was particularly interested in how the university plans to professionalise its data management to ensure that it is fit for any future governance model. From the panel's perspective, the various data management dashboards and cockpits provide the institution with a stable monitoring system rather than a steering tool. Senior management agreed with this perspective to a point and agreed that it was their aim to have an evidence-based decision-making process. However, it was also aware of the need to develop targets, and this is an ongoing process. From the data, developments emerge and present new opportunities and

risks. Senior managers felt strongly that they used data to challenge themselves and did not avoid difficult discussions or decisions raised by the data.

In relation to the information that the system provides on ranking, the accreditation panel was told that senior management analyses the results of the FT, THE and QS rankings and that these can be analysed in different ways. The primary target of the university in this regard is to continue to be recognised as a Top Ten institution in the FT European Business Schools ranking, and this is what is monitored most closely.

The accreditation panel discussed the example of student course evaluations with the Deans and the kinds of targets that might be set in this area, or more generally. It was informed that the dashboard does provide a very useful monitoring tool but that there are huge debates about what the key indicators for the university are or should be. These discussions are ongoing and targets have not yet been quantitatively implemented. The key aim in relation to student evaluation is to refocus the evaluations and ensure that the students are not over-burdened. At the moment there is evaluation fatigue; the aim is to make evaluation more attractive/manageable but not to set a target of, for example, a 50% completion rate. The main concern that the panel met was a fear of over-regulation and the loss of bottom-up initiatives. There was a strong feeling that not everything needed to be regulated but that, instead, opening up debate around how and how not to respond to an issue was more valuable in the long run, although there was recognition that this requires a lot of discussion and can be time-consuming. However, there was a strong desire to maintain a level of flexibility in relation to data and criteria to allow for agility in a dynamic world.

Administrative staff who spoke to the accreditation panel had a slightly different view of the level of the burden raised by data collection and reporting: they appreciated the need to make things visible and accepted that significant work is necessary to provide all the necessary reports, which are important for gaining an overview and for providing an important mechanism for change. Indeed, the enormous competence of administrative staff in this regard was commented on by academic faculty who spoke to the panel, saying that their work and reports provided academic leaders with guidance and options.

The accreditation panel was informed that the data collected is used in a very concrete way: it is turned into intelligence and highlights issues so that units can work together to provide solutions. Diversity and inclusion were provided as an example, although staff stressed that it is not possible to address every issue at once. In relation to feedback loops, it was clear to the panel that these have not yet been universally implemented.

In the view of the accreditation panel, the QA system does provide qualitative and quantitative data and there is some evidence of the university starting to use the data and to build feedback loops. However, much of the work in this area was begun relatively recently and/or is not yet fully embedded, so it is too soon to determine its impact. But the accreditation panel has no doubts that the university will finish the implementation as planned.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 2.2 as largely fulfilled.

Recommendation

The university should ensure that its feedback loops at all levels are explicit and systematic.

Standard 2.3: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the representative groups of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector have an appropriate participatory right and that basic conditions are in place allowing them to independently operate.

Description

The SER states that the University Act and the University Statutes regulate the participatory rights and independence of the various groups within the university. Revisions to the Act are currently in progress, and the new University Act is on track to be implemented in 2024.

In the current University Act, the composition of the Senate is defined as the group comprising the full professors, the group comprising the non-tenured faculty and the group comprising the students. The participatory rights of the faculty (full professors and non-tenured faculty) and the students are anchored in Art. 33 of the University Statutes. The new University Act will provide for a fourth group of administrative and technical staff who will also have representatives in academic bodies. The quota currently discussed is a 60% to 40% distribution between the full professors and the three other stakeholder groups.

The Senate can set up temporary committees for different topics and issues (e.g. a steering committee for the revision of the University Act, a commission for the Guidelines on the Evaluation of Teaching), and the relevant stakeholder groups send members to these committees. Working groups for different topics can also be implemented on a less formal basis. It is a cultural value of the university that all (internal) stakeholder groups are included in different work streams (e.g. the working group on teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic).

The SER states that, in relation to professors and faculty, participatory rights include membership of the Senate. Professors are also members of their School Assembly. They can use their participatory rights in all decisions regarding personnel, teaching and fundamental regulatory documents, and also in all decisions regarding the strategy of the university and in voting for the Vice-Presidents and the University President. They use their participatory rights in committees (Appointment Committees, the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Committee, the Research Committee, etc.).

Non-tenured faculty have participatory rights in all academic committees and bodies. They elect a president, who is a member of the Senate Committee. The president and seven further members act as delegates in the Senate. Non-tenured faculty members have participatory rights in the School Assembly and in different committees (the Research Committee, the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Committee, etc). The role of non-tenured faculty in the Senate has been discussed and the weight of their representatives has been increased through discussion of the new University Act.

In relation to students, the SER explains that the Student Union (SHSG) is composed of all enrolled undergraduate, graduate and PhD students at the university and is thus the university's official sub-corporation. The Student Union acts autonomously within the given legal university framework. For example, the members of the Student Union vote for their representatives in the different committees and in the Senate. The associated activities of the students are based entirely on student engagement, whereby this is divided into two paths: representation of interests and services for students. In this sense, the SHSG proactively contributes to the ongoing development of the university environment. The SHSG represents the interests of students by actively participating in the university's formal self-governance and serving on academic committees (e.g. the Senate, the Senate Committee, School Assemblies) and all major committees (e.g. Appointment Committees, the Research Committee) belonging to the university. There are usually about 100–200 students involved in the SHSG.

The SHSG Presidency has close links with the President and the Vice-Presidents of the university, and the SHSG Vice-President focuses on the representation of students' interests as their main role. For example, there are routine meetings with the Vice-President of Studies and Academic Affairs to ensure a direct flow of information and interests.

The members of the SHSG Presidency receive a small wage from the SHSG for their positions and a tuition waiver for the period for which they represent the SHSG.

As stated above, administrative and technical staff are proposed as the fourth group represented in the Senate in the future University Act. They will also receive participatory rights for central committees (e.g. the Senate, School Assemblies), but not for the purely academic-oriented committees (e.g. Appointment Committees, the Habilitation Committee).

The university is convinced of its clear participatory structures and representation based not only on a regulatory definition but also on cultural values. It believes that students are strongly represented across the institution and that there is a high level of involvement of non-tenured faculty within the self-governance structure. The university notes that legal representation (e.g. in the form of a personnel commission) is only now being considered and that this has been a point of weakness. It also recognises that it will be difficult for students to manage the workload of active representation as well as for the institution to manage the representation required by a heterogeneous group of non-tenured faculty.

Analysis

The accreditation panel was able to view membership of various committees and working groups and also spoke to a range of stakeholders about their participation in the university's QA system.

In relation to student participation, university staff admitted that there was a significant workload involved in getting students on board, trained, etc., especially since they only have a one-year term. If elected, students are supported and have their expenses covered, conditions are in place to deal with any impact on their study programmes (i.e. they have terms that can be applied in exchange for being an active student representative) and their experience is credit-bearing. The student information system for the student representative body has been clarified and structured and is now more professional in order to support the flow of information for student representatives.

Students that spoke to the accreditation panel corroborated what staff had said about the support available, and all students – including those that were not representatives – said that they felt heard and that they could influence the university. They felt supported when they raised ideas. They felt that the representation system worked well and that students were able to debate matters with the university and have an impact, e.g. in relation to the implementation of the COVID passport. Another example provided was their specific involvement in QA in the context of helping the programme committee to design appropriate QA measures and track their improvement.

They explained that 10 students are elected to the Senate. They actively participate with full voting rights and also send someone to the Senate Committee. The Student Parliament is also a formal part of the university's governance. PhD students are less directly involved but are able to discuss processes at specific levels and to define their own evaluation, which has raised several issues and opened up discussion around improvement. This evaluation did result in change, as well as in a clarification of rights and duties.

Various levels of staff and faculty members are also involved in the university's QA processes at the appropriate level. For example, programme managers are involved in developing KPIs for the masters programmes and monitoring these. They are also involved in the preparation of the Programme Boards, thus ensuring that senior lecturers are involved in QA.

However, the accreditation panel had an in-depth discussion with members of the faculty who belong to the "Mittelbau". These faculty members believed that they were reasonably well involved in the structure (they have to be included in all committees) but that there could be improvement in, for example, how the results of evaluations are shared across the university. As the participation of the Mittelbau in the school meetings is proportional to the size of the schools (between two and five representatives), programme managers are not necessarily present at the meetings.

The accreditation panel was also able to speak to representatives from the Alumni Organisation and the Foundation. It found that these two organisations were able to participate in the QA system in ways that were appropriate to them.

In the view of the panel, there is adequate representation and participation of the different stakeholder groups in the university's QA system, with some areas participating more strongly than others. The panel believes that the relationship with the Alumni Organisation and the Foundation works, that the university shows exemplary cooperation and that the Alumni Organisation's role on day one of Freshers' Week is commendable.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 2.3 as entirely fulfilled.

Standard 2.4: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall give consideration to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in the completion of its tasks. The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.

Description

NB: For the purposes of this report, social sustainability is covered in Standard 2.5 and financial sustainability in Standard 4.1.

The SER states that the university's purpose, as described in the University Act (Art. 2), is to foster the responsibility of all the university members for humanity and the environment. Fostering students to think ethically as supported by academic standards is additionally defined as one of the university's basic tasks. The University Statutes emphasise these goals (Art 7). Within the university's Code of Conduct, responsibility and sustainability (R&S) are highly valued and form part of the defined core values. In addition to the regulatory foundations, the university is guided by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The university's Vision and General Principles highlight the importance of ethical thinking and responsible action as a characteristic for the future leaders the university wants to educate. The strategic position with regard to R&S ensures the importance of understanding this dimension and its impact across all the core areas.

A new strategy and action plan for R&S were developed by the Delegate for Responsibility and Sustainability and approved by the President's Board in 2021. The position of the President's Delegate for R&S has been in place at the university since 2010. The university believes that this demonstrates the importance it attaches to having an academically excellent and senior faculty member in the position of delegate to inform and to develop the actions in this dimension from within academia, thus reinforcing the link between the academic and administrative spheres.

Different working groups and task forces have been established to work on a solution for the climate neutrality of the campus by 2030. Within the working groups, representatives from the academic and administrative spheres work together, and several of the institutes and research centres also work on topics related to R&S. New positions have been created to foster interdisciplinary teaching, research and services in this area, e.g. a new assistant professorship for sustainable accounting.

According to the SER, students and their associations are highly active in the field, which has an impact on the campus and the overall university experience. In 2019, the EConnect platform was created to improve coordination and communication, and to strengthen the link with the university. The HSG Alumni Sustainability Club is also very active in this area, with details of activity easily accessible through a dedicated website.

The SER states that communication and reporting is carried out on a regular basis. This includes the PRME Report (the HSG is a member of the PRME organisation and publishes its PRME SIP report every two years), the CO₂ footprint report (annual, internal), the Regionalisation report on regional impact (annual), the Blue University report on water (annual) and the report concerning cantonal reduction targets for CO₂ (annual). The reports inform internal and external stakeholders about different programmes, initiatives, projects and institutional efforts regarding responsibility and sustainability.

In the core area of teaching, the university believes that it covers the dimensions of R&S in different ways. First-year students follow a course in management covering the topics of ethics, responsibility and sustainability. This course is mandatory for all students. In Contextual Studies, core and elective courses in master's programmes have specific intended learning outcomes regarding responsibility and sustainability, and these courses often use action-oriented learning formats (e.g. simulations or service learning) to enhance the impact on students and to achieve a higher level of student engagement with the topic.

The SER also states that the latest study programme reforms have also placed more importance on the dimensions of R&S. For example, the reformed Master's in General Management will have its own strand of courses focusing on major challenges and solutions. In 2020, a new master's certificate programme in Managing Climate Solutions (MaCS) was launched to address the future need for R&S competences. The certificate programme is open to all master's students at the university, in addition to their core studies.

Within executive education, the university offers programmes with a specific focus on R&S and includes courses in the part-time and full-time MBAs and EMBA's. Specific elements, such as social impact challenges, are implemented to enhance the participants' competence development (cf. SER, Chapter 4.10.3).

R&S are key research topics in a variety of institutes and centres at the university. There are several institutes with this domain as their core mission, and in other university institutes, research projects that intersect with R&S topics are being developed. These research initiatives and projects lead to publications, but also to practical impact.

The university believes that these documented activities and measurements show that the area of R&S is deeply rooted in the university's strategy and has an impact on different levels, with measures in all three core areas: teaching, research and services. The initiatives and measures are based in the academic sphere, but aim for real impact in the practical sphere. The university makes use of the academic research outcome to further develop its own institutional structures and processes. Internal and external monitoring processes (e.g. reports) help drive improvements in the fields of responsibility and sustainability. The university recognises that continuing integration of R&S challenges into all main degree programmes is a key ongoing process, as is making the development of a sustainability and responsibility mindset more explicit and more tangible and broadening everyone's awareness of all sustainability dimensions.

Analysis

The accreditation panel spoke to several groups of stakeholders and was able to confirm the various course curricula that cover R&S.

Staff confirmed their awareness of the development of the sustainability strategy and informed the accreditation panel that the goal of the strategy was to prepare students for a world in which responsibility for sustainability will be heightened. This is reinforced by the teaching goals of embedding sustainability into programmes at all levels and developing new courses with appropriate support for faculty. For example, one of the aims of such courses is to prepare students to be responsible leaders – this is partly addressed in the Contextual Studies course from which students achieve 25% of their points and as part of which they must, for example, critically articulate their own position in relation to sustainability, diversity, etc.

Senior management informed the accreditation panel that such activities and the strategy are relatively new, with learning outcomes currently being embedded into courses. However, the university is not yet at a stage where it can provide an overview of the number of courses that touch on sustainability. On the other hand, it has been noted that there is a growing group of alumni in this area, and the relationship with the Alumni Organisation means that this can be leveraged in practice to provide learning from real-life problems.

It was stressed to the panel that this goal is qualitative, not quantitative – this was a deliberate decision based on decentralisation and the desire to preserve flexibility. It is evaluated through feedback and updates to the President’s Board and the Senate.

In relation to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the accreditation panel was told that the university is not in a position to address all 17 of these at the moment and that it is therefore focusing on the five that make sense for the University of St Gallen. The panel noted, in particular, a lack of attention to poverty.

The accreditation panel was not able to discover the university’s view on a sustainable number of students for the institution, and the university has not yet found the answer to the tension between increasing internationalisation and reducing its carbon footprint. However, there was a strong feeling that the pandemic had changed things in this regard and that some of these changes, such as virtual conferencing, will become embedded in the future, as will initiatives to offer content and discussion internationally in a way that digitally replicates the St. Gallen environment, thus cutting down on the need to travel.

Students and staff informed the accreditation panel of a number of other initiatives such as providing students with a reusable water bottle on their first day at university and raising environmental awareness through the kind of food that is sold on campus. Students informed the panel that the university’s engagement with the sustainability agenda was visible to them.

In relation to social sustainability, university staff that spoke to the accreditation panel believed that the institution needed to improve its approach in this area to make it more normalised, in the same way that its approach to environmental sustainability is normalised. Some pockets of excellence exist but more could be done to communicate them. The panel agreed that objectives have been set in this area, in particular in relation to gender balance, but that these objectives needed more work in order to have an impact (see Standard 2.5 for further details).

In terms of economic sustainability, the accreditation panel was informed that the university currently maintains its reserves at between 5% of one year and 15–20% long-term of its total budget. The institutes also have capital, and there is currently no cap on the reserves they can hold, although this is under discussion at the moment with a view to ensuring investment in teaching and research. However, the panel was not able to ascertain whether there was a clear plan at university or institute level for the use of reserves (see Standard 4.1 for further details).

Overall, the accreditation panel was left with a mixed impression of the efforts being made by the university with regard to sustainability. The panel took note of a variety of initiatives, but there has been no systematic discussion of what it means to become an integrative business school. The University of St. Gallen is a business-focused university with an opportunity to challenge the perception of what this means in a way that might attract a whole new category of students. The panel was of the view that this is an area where there needs to be more thought, strategic planning and decision-making. While there are concrete measures being taken to contribute to the SDGs from the schools and institutes, the panel felt that a top-down process for defining objectives was missing.

The accreditation panel also believes that an overall sustainability strategy with university-wide objectives will allow the university to reconsider its focus on the UN SDGs with regard to whether they have prioritised these appropriately. For example, while the panel is aware that the planning of the Learning Centre must predate the present state of thinking on sustainability at the university, it regrets that the Learning Centre will not exceed the current building code for sustainability.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 2.4 as partially fulfilled.

Condition

The University of St. Gallen must develop an overall sustainability strategy covering research, teaching, management and community service that shows how the university sets top-down objectives for ecological, social and economic sustainability.

Recommendation

The university should reconsider its focus on the UN SDGs to ensure that these have been prioritised appropriately and that sustainability is being considered in its broadest sense.

Standard 2.5: To carry out its tasks, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall promote equal opportunities and actual gender equality for its staff and students. The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.

Description

The SER states that enabling gender equality in teaching, learning and research is set down in the University Statutes. The university's equal opportunity objectives are founded on a statutory basis and are supported by an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee which is made up of members who are professors, non-tenured faculty and students, as well as a Diversity and Inclusion professional services unit. A new position of Delegate for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is being established, who will lead the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

The university also refers explicitly to diversity and inclusion in the Vision 2025, with the aim of promoting diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities. Within the Code of Conduct, the core values promote recognition and humanity, regardless of age, status, sex, origin, orientation and identity or disability. The university believes that it strives to ensure gender equality and a balanced representation of both genders among faculty, students and professional staff. In doing so and based on the former diversity strategy of the President's Board, the university is currently pursuing the specific equality goal of 30% women among assistant, associate and full professors by 2025. This equality goal is supported by various concrete measures (new regulations for the recruitment process, implementation of a training tool to reduce implicit bias within Appointment Committees, etc). Within the recruitment process guidelines, better practices have been developed to attract more female applications for open positions. One example of this is that potential female candidates are contacted personally and invited to apply. Furthermore, female applicants are discussed before male applicants, and this is stipulated in the university's guidelines. Childcare options are provided in-house with funding supplied by the HSG Foundation.

The SER explains that guidelines for the use of inclusive language, guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic and teaching guidelines for digital accessibility provide a perspective for all university members, highlighting sensitivities and demonstrating solutions. The idea of the guidelines is to promote alternative options and not dictate a certain form of behaviour. This follows the basic principles of the Code of Conduct, which starts with self-reflection, seeking alternative options and taking appropriate action.

The SER states that different institutes and research centres work specifically on projects and initiatives around gender equality and other questions of inclusion. The professional staff assign research projects within the university (e.g. a study on the retention of female staff members at the university is currently underway). Furthermore, there have been student-driven initiatives including the first ever Pride Month in 2020. Support for students with disabilities is organised by the Special Needs Service Centre, and the university has installed an ombudsperson and a

whistleblowing system to which all university members can complain if discriminatory behaviour occurs. This external system follows up complaints, and internal investigation processes are taken up under the leadership of the relevant Vice-President.

The SER explains that the university monitors its diversity and inclusion data with results being published biennially. The most recent Gender and Diversity monitoring report in 2020 showed that, although the number of female faculty members was increasing, it still remained relatively low. The administrative team showed the highest number of female employees. Various courses are in place to support female career paths such as Women Back to Business and courses in Women's Leadership. Different measures have been implemented at an institutional level to raise awareness of equality and diversity matters, to guide informed actions and to initiate new measures. Although the university believes that the institutional strategic, conceptual and structural measures are convincing and impactful, connecting the different measures into an interwoven network of activities is still challenging, as is ongoing cultural change.

Analysis

The accreditation panel discussed the university's approach to social sustainability, diversity and inclusion with the senior management, members of the faculty, staff and students. In view of the targets set in this area, the panel was interested to know why the management dashboard gave no indication of the fact that there were no female Vice-Presidents, nor identified this as a potential indicator of improvement. The panel was informed that this topic had been discussed recently by the Advisory Board and this was a question that needed to be addressed at the Rectorate level in relation to developing a plan. It is a monitored indicator but appears in a separate report and not in the management cockpit as the latter is under revision. Senior managers affirmed that there is a commitment to respond to such questions in everyday business. The gender equality strategy includes an indicator of 30% women at all levels, and this is measured in various ways, such as how many women are recruited and how many women leave. However, these indicators do not yet appear in the formal cockpit.

The panel was also able to speak to members of the Equal Opportunities Committee, and asked whether this body has goals and targets that are monitored. It was informed that there is a quota/target to be achieved, at least in relation to female professors (also 30% women in higher management in administration and two female Vice-Presidents by 2025) and that there is also an Office for Diversity and Inclusion that tracks progress. The Marketing Office also works with quality criteria to ensure diverse images of the university in publications.

Generally, the problem is not the recruitment of female faculty but rather their retention. The university is working to understand this situation. The accreditation panel was informed that the existence of certain restrictions, for example set by the canton, make it harder for the university in this regard. However, there was a strong feeling that progress is being made at faculty level with deep and honest debate about the subject. There is now professional support from a central unit with a formalisation of the regulations. The Deans have opened up communication on the topic, which has helped to legitimise the issue. An Equal Salaries study is carried out annually to inform the university of any discrimination issues in that area.

At the university, equality and diversity put an emphasis on social sustainability. The university is trying to resolve some of the problems in this area by using ongoing analysis of the student and staff body to do a gender and diversity report once every two years with the aim of pinpointing the problems and working out a plan of action. The same approach is being taken to diversity where the strategic goals are similar. The problems chiefly lie in the area of gender, and target numbers have been established. However, there is recognition that diversity is broader than gender and language inclusion and that, for example, access to buildings is also important. Diversity targets are monitored biennially.

The accreditation panel also discussed the matter with students and was informed that students are represented on the Equal Opportunities Committee. Student ideas can also be presented to the university, and students feel they receive full support and resources to implement their ideas. They were aware of some problems in this area but believed that there is a great deal of

willingness on the part of the institution to change and become more diverse. For example, students noticed much more openness to students with disabilities, with concrete impact on teaching and learning methods. Students also spoke of extra-curricular activities, with about 100 students belonging to one or more of the sustainability-focused student organisations.

Overall, the university staff that spoke to the accreditation panel believed that the institution needed to improve its approach social sustainability to make it more normalised in the same way that its approach to environmental sustainability is normalised. Some pockets of excellence exist, but more could be done to communicate them. The panel agrees that objectives have been set in this area, in particular in relation to gender balance, but that these objectives need more work in order to have an impact.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 2.5 as largely fulfilled.

Recommendation

The university should increase its efforts to achieve its equality goals, especially with regard to the inclusion of a female member of the senior management team.

Area 3: Teaching, research and services

Standard 3.1: The activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall correspond to its type, specific features and strategic objectives. They shall mainly relate to teaching, research and services and be carried out in accordance with the principle of freedom and independence within the limits of the mandate of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

Description

The SER states that the cantonal University Act defines the university's mandate in teaching, research, executive education and further services to the public. This mandate is specified and elaborated on in the University Statutes, especially the core understanding of fostering students' ability to act based on ethical reasoning, academic methods and insights into future challenges in business, law, economic and political systems and society. The basic Mission is specified within a four-year performance mandate between the university and the canton.

Teaching at bachelor's, master's and PhD level is defined in Art. 16 of the University Statutes, and the disciplines are likewise defined (business and economics, law, social and cultural studies, international affairs, medicine and computer science). In the university's Vision and General Principles, the three mandate areas are dominant and are taken up as the guiding principles for all the university's actions.

Based on the mandate, the university offers 26 – soon to be 28 – different pre-experience (bachelor's and master's) programmes. Its teaching offer meets the mandate of the canton, which has been broadened in recent years with study programmes in medicine and computer science. Furthermore, the university was one of the first Swiss universities to introduce the Bologna structure, starting in 2000.

The portfolio of programmes and their delivery are closely linked to the Vision and Mission of the university, which include:

- The ambition to be a leading business university.
- A portfolio of ranked programmes and internationally oriented programmes taught in English.

- The ambition to deliver an integrated perspective. Programmes comprise core studies and Contextual Studies, which account for 75% and 25% of the students' workload respectively (calculated in term of ECTS credits).
- Links to practice and academia: discipline-oriented bachelor's programmes together with a broad range of academic and professionally oriented master's programmes, with a number of them preparing for additional professional certifications.

The Joint Medical Master (JMM-HSG/UZH) is an exception and follows its own professional standards.

Within the study framework, the key study conditions are predefined (e.g. max. 30 ECTS in each semester, a two-week break from intensive courses in each semester). Since the university has uniform examination regulations, the examination and assessment conditions are regulated in a very coherent way across the different study programmes.

The SER explains that for the development of a new programme (e.g. the new master's and bachelor's programmes in computer science), the process have been in place from inception. The Dean of Studies and Academic Affairs and the service units within the Vice-President's Board for Studies and Academic Affairs work with the responsible faculty members in relation to educational curriculum development, structural curriculum development, student administrative law, etc.

The overall framework specifies the set programme structure. Programme objectives must be defined for each programme in the conception phase. The constructive alignment between the learning goals, the learning design and the assessment methods are also considered. Within the concept of each study programme, the prerequisites and the nature of admission (open or specific programme) is decided. The programme goals follow the logic of the three-cycle higher education framework and its adaption in the national qualification framework.

The concept of a new study programme is discussed in the different schools and must be approved by the Senate, which then proposes the concept and the regulations to the Board of Governors. The university believes that through this highly participatory process, close links between administrative regulations and academic concept development lead to a coherent portfolio of study programmes at the university.

The SER explains that the study programme development process has been professionalised in recent years. The "Successful study programme development" handbook was updated and is now available in English. A manual on the administrative steps of study programme reforms developed by the Vice-President's Board for Studies and Academic Affairs supports those responsible for the programme (e.g. academic and administrative programme directors) in their approach to developing the programme further while remaining aligned with the overall framework.

Study programmes that undergo a reform must develop and present the new concept and study plan to the relevant academic bodies and committees. The study programme reform process includes the participation of students and non-tenured faculty. In that pursuit, the university aims for a very coherent and transparent study programme portfolio for the whole university.

The university believes that when a study programme is reformed, one factor that leads to increased quality is the close interaction between faculty members and administrative staff. Additional administrative staff have been hired in the past few years to cover the quantity and complexity of this process (e.g. the Programme Development and Study Reform unit). In addition, the position of a General Programme Manager at the intersection between academia and administrative staff helps support educational development, especially curriculum development within programmes.

The SER states that each school is responsible for its own study programmes and that they have created support structures to enhance transparency and coherence within their study programme portfolio. For example, within the School of Management, all the academic and

administrative programme directors meet at least once a semester to discuss strategic issues in programme development. In smaller schools, the alignment between the different programmes is discussed and worked on by the academic programme managers directly.

According to the SER, approximately 50% of students undertake an international exchange within the network of partner universities or independently. This is the highest percentage of any Swiss university. The programme structures are defined such that exchange is encouraged and made possible within the study programmes. The Student Mobility Office is also consulted as part of the process of study programme reforms so as not to hinder the excellent exchange opportunities that HSG students have. Exchanges are also facilitated by the university's two international hubs in Singapore and Sao Paulo, managed by respective institutes within the University of St. Gallen, which operate pre-approved and standardised terms of exchange.

In relation to the research mandate, the SER states that the university's Statutes define basic research and applied research as the two pillars of the research area. The Vision and Mission of the university emphasise impact-oriented research excellence, which means combining academic excellence with practical relevance to create impact. The research strategy specifies that vision advancement, research excellence and a focus on impact be emphasised.

The university fosters a broad variety of research methodologies, research methods and research settings. It implements the freedom of research at very different levels (e.g. individual faculty members, the research agendas of institutes and schools). The measurement of research quality and impact does not aim to follow a single-dimensional approach (e.g. number of publications in ranked journals) but a multi-dimensional one which considers the measurement of impact at different levels.

The Vice-President of Research and Faculty, the Dean of Research and Faculty and their teams are responsible for core processes in research services, faculty affairs and doctoral administration.

With regard to the mandate in Services and Post-Experience Degrees, the university seeks to promote lifelong learning in the area of executive education. The SER states that the university has the mandate to offer public events in order to foster the transfer of knowledge from the academic community to the public sphere and to foster lifelong learning for the general public, too.

The university has a very strong and longstanding tradition of offering executive education in the form of post-experience programmes (MBAs, EMBA), certificate and diploma courses (at different levels) and open programmes, as well as customised programmes. A general principle within the strategy of the university is to offer market-oriented programmes in order to provide long-term value for students at all stages of life. A new strategy for executive education was developed last year and is now being implemented with structural changes.

The SER explains that, within the revision of the University Act, executive education will be defined more strongly as the university's third mandate area, and it will become more integrated into the university's central governance structure. A new Vice-President of Institutes and Executive Education has been elected, and the mandate of the Executive School and the Executive Education Committee have been designed with a clearer and more transparent structure. The variety of courses, certificate and diploma programmes and post-experience programmes offered is very wide, but they fundamentally follow the same disciplines as the pre-experience programmes. Since the market orientation leads to higher expectations with regard to impact in teaching, the necessary agility within executive education programmes needs to remain high. In future, executive education needs to take a more structural approach while still allowing entrepreneurial freedom and flexibility. These goals impacted the discussion of the new executive education strategy and the discussion of the new University Act.

The SER states that the university is very active in offering public lectures for children and adults. The President's Delegate for the Public Programme curates the programme, which is published for a broad public audience. Furthermore, all the institutes and research centres engage in knowledge transfer activities between academia and practice through consulting,

seminars, positions in companies, etc. The university believes that it has a certain level of oversight over these activities. For example, secondary employment is subject to approval if it exceeds an amount of one day per week or is of strategic interest and importance (e.g. on the governing board of a company).

According to the SER, freedom of teaching and research is anchored within the Swiss Constitution. The University Act and the University Statutes explain such freedom as a right for internal members, but also as a responsibility for the institution. To ensure not only the quality but also the freedom of teaching and research, the university has implemented various measures to protect this freedom, including the disclosure of potential conflicts of interest, the appointment of an ombudsperson and a whistleblowing process.

The university believes that its guiding principles, a framework of guidelines for fostering diversity and a variety of research methodology and methods alongside strong links between the university and the different fields of practice and the public ensure its academic mandate and ambition to serve the community are fulfilled. A long tradition of research with impact mirroring the schools' tradition of balancing academic and practice-oriented research further embeds this framework.

Nevertheless, the university is aware that the increasing diversity in its disciplines challenges the one-size-fits-all approach of the study programme framework, making it more demanding to maintain an integrative approach. Diversification may also lead to questions about coherence and the institutional profile. In the field of research, there is a need to balance an impactful and integrative research approach within an increasingly competitive and specialised international research environment.

Additionally, the university is aware of the tension in consolidating its quality approach when it comes to ensuring that there is transparency and accountability without hindering the autonomy and freedom of the faculty.

Analysis

The accreditation panel spoke with faculty from across the university, including the institutes and the schools. It also spoke to faculty from the two new disciplinary areas: medicine and computer science. As commented on in other sections of this report, the panel accepted the institution's analysis of the challenge of diversification, institutional coherence and the need to balance centralised and decentralised policies and processes. Nevertheless, it was clear to the panel that the institution's core teaching, research and service activities are appropriate to its status as a university and a business school.

The accreditation panel was interested to learn more about the research aspect of the university's work, in particular how consistency is achieved across the institutes and schools and, at a strategic level, how alignment is achieved with regard to strategic goals relating to the balance between practical and academic research. The panel was informed that the university recognised these challenges and acknowledged them in the context of trying to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between research and teaching, as it is of key importance that the programmes offered demonstrate their relevance. In relation to the balance between practical and academic research, there was a recognition that, as of yet, there is no definitive answer. Currently, more weight has been placed on the educational side, and the balance between practice and research has been a strength. However, the university believes that it could improve both its teaching and its research offer. When pressed, faculty and senior management stated that the research strategy defines aims for impact-oriented, cutting-edge research, as the institution wants to focus on socially relevant research.

In terms of achieving the goals of the research strategy, the university aims to select researchers who can "bridge both worlds" and who can address the impact side of its mission. It was made very clear that research should go "beyond the ivory tower", and that the university evaluates the success of its researchers by applying a broad range of criteria that are intended to evaluate faculty research in terms of its broader outreach and impact. This is reinforced at the

point of recruitment by the emphasis placed on the section of the applicant's résumé that focuses on public impact.

Incentivisation for research is provided through support and through the institute's structure rather than financially. For example, media training is provided for those who publish in German/Swiss newspapers and who appear on CNN.

Having spoken to faculty members, including early career researchers, studied documents such as the research strategy and taken into account the university's recognition of the challenges of diversification and the need to ensure transparency and accountability without hindering the autonomy and freedom of the faculty, the accreditation panel is of the view that more harmonisation within research, particularly in relation to doctoral students, would help to ensure the transparency of outcomes, impact and the achievement of strategic goals. In relation to the latter, the panel believes that these could be clearer and more able to be monitored.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 3.1 as entirely fulfilled.

Recommendation

The university should explore various options for harmonising research activities and providing transparency, including the possibility of creating a doctoral school, and promote more harmonisation in terms of the recruitment of PhD students.

Standard 3.2: The quality assurance system shall provide for a periodic evaluation of teaching and research activities, of services and of results achieved in these areas.

Description

According to the SER, the University Act states that the high quality of teaching, research and services is made possible through the mandate agreement. All areas of action are subject to quality assurance and quality development, and a continuous quality development process is defined.

Within the area of teaching, the faculty have significant responsibility in terms of quality assurance and development. High quality standards are defined in the strategy, the General Principles and within the HSG Quality Development Guidelines, and faculty members must support the periodic university-wide evaluation process. At course level, the SER explains that the university differentiates between centralised course evaluations and decentralised course and programme evaluations. Cyclical mandatory course evaluations occur every other academic year. The programmes can define additional cycles (programme-based mandatory evaluation), and lecturers can voluntarily request centralised course evaluation. The students and the lecturers have access to the results directly after the course evaluation is completed. After every semester, the programme management receives the analysis of their programmes' mandatory evaluation (cyclical and programme-based). Lecturers can also make voluntary use of more qualitative instruments, for example Teaching Analysis Polls (TAPs) to make learning hinderances visible and to develop measurements together with the students.

The SER explains that, to improve the quality of examinations and assessments, different quality standards, manuals and best practice guidelines are provided. For high-volume, centralised exams in the first year, a quality assurance cycle ensures the quality of the examinations, and the academic programme management of the Assessment Year pre-reviews the centralised examinations beforehand. Measures for the quality of examinations within courses is a running project. Surveys are used, questions have been conceptualised and a pilot implementation took place in spring 2021. The goal is to alternate systematically between course evaluations and evaluation of exams.

At programme level, each study programme has a student mentor from the Student Parliament who talks with the programme management at least once a semester, discussing students' concerns and measures for improvement. Programmes that are within the scope of international accreditation undergo an Assurance of Learning (AoL) analysis every three to four years. An increasing number of programmes use the AoL principles on an annual basis. The programmes document the AoL analysis in a programme report, which is incorporated into the self-evaluation report. By analysing the distribution of student performance according to the intended programme goals, occurring deviations provide a focus for the need for further analysis and potential programme development.

According to the SER, the Vice-President's Board for Studies and Academic Affairs monitors different aspects of teaching and learning conditions, such as student admissions, the use of digital infrastructure, graduate surveys and assessments. The information is provided through the Programme Management Cockpit standard reports (e.g. excel tables), or is made available in different reports.

Current developments can raise the need for specific surveys. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, student and lecturer surveys were conducted highlighting their experiences, the perception of emergency remote teaching and any preferences students, lecturers and employees had.

The SER explains that some programmes are subject to closer analysis through international accreditations, using the inside-out analysis perspective in their preparation, combining this with the outside-in perspective from peer reviewers, and using the results as an impetus for further internal development. This allows for an interconnection between internal and external quality assurance.

In the field of research, the SER states that research quality is visible mostly in the single research project results and their impact on different stakeholders. Researchers work according to the standards of integrity in research projects and aim for high quality in their work. This high quality is made visible through proposal acceptance, through publications in leading journals and through high impact in different areas.

Each of the more than 40 institutes and research centres publishes an annual report showing their annual research performance (projects, publications). These qualitative reports are discussed with mentors from the Board of Governors and the members of the institutes' boards. These annual reports are the main cycle for monitoring the university's research performance. The Research Committee issues an analysis each year, showing the proposals (frequency and value) to internal university, national and international funding schemes, and presenting the development of the acceptance ratio and the success quota.

Continuous monitoring is available through the university's own research platform, Alexandria. Faculty members are invited to update their publications, projects and personal profiles annually. This is vital for annual statistics and for the external research rankings in which the university participates. Furthermore, the results of the "Bibliometric research performance analysis for University of St. Gallen 2013–2018" conducted by CWTS are used to identify potential for optimisation and to promote strengths and elaborate profile areas.

The SER explains that a survey was recently conducted to further develop the quality of the PhD programmes and the working/study conditions for doctoral students. The survey highlighted different aspects that needed further consideration, for example the two role models of supervisor and employer for internal PhD students. In 2021, the PhD programme in Management (PMA) received EFMD programme accreditation, which was a useful exercise for evaluating against international standards, engaging to a certain extent in benchmarking, and discussing and supporting programme development.

In the area of Services and Teaching in Post-Experience Degrees, the SER states that, within executive education, the Executive School (ES) and the institutes evaluate teaching quality intensively. Since participant expectations are high, the competition is intense, and a thorough quality evaluation is key to market success. The programmes and the institutes offering the

programmes design their own surveys and measurements of quality assurance and development.

Post-experience programmes are within the scope of the international accreditations EQUIS and AACSB, and selected programmes are eligible for AMBA accreditation. The use of systematic peer feedback combined with systematic internal feedback is important for identifying weak spots and further developing the programmes. All executive education that is offered by the Executive School works with a systematic quality assurance process. Executive education provided by the different institutes is organised on a decentralised basis. An annual report by the Executive School and annual reports for all MBA and EMBA programmes consolidate the relevant information.

The SER states that the quality of different service offers in consulting, academia to practice transfer, open lectures and other knowledge transfer events are also monitored for high quality in a very decentralised manner. Since the individual projects follow very specific quality standards and expectations which cannot be standardised, there is no plan to change this. The responsible faculty member or institute conducts the quality assurance according to the standards applicable for the specific context and project.

The university also undertakes various external accreditation processes such as EQUIS accreditation, with a focus on management. This covers the whole university (e.g. with a focus on internationalisation), while AACSB international accreditation focuses on the School of Management (SoM) and the School of Finance (SoF). AMBA accreditation reviews the MBA and EMBA programmes, while the EFMD programme accreditation was used to review the PhD programme in Management. The university's regional impact strategy and internationalisation aspects are regularly assessed by the EFMD's Business School Impact System (BSIS). These accreditation peer reviews and interim reporting requirements incorporate the university's quality systems related to teaching, research performance and societal impact.

The university believes that such a differentiated system of quality assurance and development instruments and processes is a strength, as are the multi-dimensional approaches taken to measuring research performance. However, it is aware that it needs more strategic alignment of resource allocation with regard to the outcome of processes, and that there is a risk of evaluation fatigue and decreasing response rates. It also believes that it could introduce analysis of the information on a more continuous basis and use more real-time data, and that this would support governance decisions with useful, up-to-date data.

Analysis

The accreditation panel discussed the university's evaluation processes for its teaching, research and services with various groups of staff and faculty members. It also read the key documents in relation to self-evaluations such as the institutional Roadmap 2025 and the Quality Development Guidelines. The outcomes of external accreditations such as EQUIS were also presented to the panel as examples of how external review stimulates improvement and impacts internal quality assurance.

In terms of the evaluation of all three areas, the accreditation panel was aware of the impact of decentralisation: within the area of teaching, responsibility for quality assurance and development lies mainly with faculty; in research, each of the more than 40 institutes and research centres publishes an annual report showing its annual research performance (projects, publications); and in the area of services, monitoring is carried out in a "very decentralised manner". However, in the panel's view, adherence to the overall framework and principles for quality assurance and the provision of overarching qualitative reports in the areas of research and services serve to provide a central focal point for all such evaluation.

These qualitative reports are discussed with mentors from the Board of Governors and the members of the institutes' boards. These annual reports are the main cycle for monitoring the university's research performance.

However, the accreditation panel also discussed the evaluation of faculty and found that, although performance is formally monitored, and there was some evidence of internal peer-to-peer evaluations taking place, such peer-to-peer review activity at programme and school level was sporadic. The panel is of the view that there would be value in the implementation of systematic and structured external peer-to-peer evaluation at unit level with regard to teaching and research.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 3.2 as largely fulfilled.

Recommendation

The school should introduce systematic and structured external peer-to-peer evaluation at unit level with regard to teaching and research.

Standard 3.3: The quality assurance system shall ensure that principles and objectives linked to the European Higher Education Area are taken into consideration.

Description

The SER states that in 2001, St. Gallen was the first Swiss university and among the first universities in Europe to completely restructure its curricula and align them with the two-level Bologna system of bachelor's and master's degrees. The university used the opportunity to not only renew the degree structures but also to update the content and forms of teaching within each programme. According to the SER, the degree outcomes are aligned with the Dublin Descriptors according to the QF-EHEA and nqf.ch-HS definitions. On the structural side, workload distribution, the modularisation of different courses, the ECTS declaration and assessing student performance within courses are all taken into consideration, and the university believes that these efforts ensure alignment with the expectations of the EHEA.

The university respects the cantonal restriction, i.e. that a maximum of 25% of the students at the university can be foreign students. The university remains attractive for European students (mainly from the DACH region) and the specific selection and admissions test for foreign students is very competitive.

The SER explains that fostering student mobility is an important goal of the university's internationalisation strategy. Nearly one in two students spends at least one semester abroad. With a network of more than 200 partner universities, the recognition of grades and diplomas is institutionalised. Moreover, European higher education entrance exams are accepted if they are equivalent to the Swiss "Maturität" (secondary school leaving exam) with regard to subjects, hours and duration.

Within curriculum reforms in study programmes, the university benchmarks itself against European competitors and integrates relevant academic trends and developments. When study programmes undergo a reform, the new programme concept is analysed according to law and compliance with national and European structures is checked.

The SER states that, to meet the EHEA standards in fostering teaching competence, support is provided to faculty members. To teach and assess at the university, lecturers must have at least a postdoc. If teaching at postdoc level, their qualification must be at least one step higher than those they are teaching. Teaching quality is systematically monitored through course evaluations, and the pedagogical competence of the faculty members is subject to assessment.

The university believes that through EQUIS accreditation, the European quality approach in higher education development is alive at the university. However, although there are many research collaborations in the European area, there is very little participation in European

funding schemes. This is due to national restrictions, as Switzerland is not an EU member country.

Analysis

The accreditation panel was able to confirm the university's adherence to principles and objectives linked to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) such as the QF-EHEA and the use of ECTS. The university also makes use of EHEA tools such as the Diploma Supplement and nqf.ch-HS definitions. The panel can also confirm, therefore, that the university fully complies with the relevant legal framework (Verordnung Koordination Lehre, SR 414.205.1), which requires 180 ECTS credits for bachelor's programmes and 90 or 120 ECTS credits for master's programmes.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 3.3 as entirely fulfilled.

Standard 3.4: The quality assurance system shall ensure compliance with the criteria for admission, for the assessment of the student performance and for issuing final diplomas according to the mission of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector. These criteria shall be defined, communicated and applied systematically, transparently and consistently.

Description

The SER explains that in Switzerland, there are very clearly defined, mostly merit-based requirements for allowing students to apply for admission at any public university. At bachelor's level, this is stringently enforced and, in line with Art. 23 HEdA, the university has implemented criteria for admission to the first cycle. At graduate and doctorate level, a number of very specific exceptions are allowed, including a process that needs to be adhered to and requires special approval. The university website (German and English) details the admissions expectations for each programme the university offers. The information is organised separately for Swiss and international students, since international applicants add a different level of complexity, and the university needs to ensure comparable entrance requirements.

The SER states that the minimum prerequisite for admission to the first year of study at the university is a recognised secondary school certificate equivalent to the Swiss "Matura" (secondary school leaving certificate). This may be the highly selective Matura itself, an international baccalaureate with a special combination of subjects and a minimum grade, or an equivalent foreign certificate combined with an admissions test. Due to its high standard, the Matura examination grants direct admission to any Swiss university in any discipline.

The university has developed a specific entrance test in German and English for European students applying for the bachelor's programme to ensure careful selection. Generally, more foreign students apply than can be admitted. The overall drop-out rate at the assessment level is consistently around 30% for Swiss students and somewhat lower for foreign students. However, of those who pass the highly selective Assessment Year, almost all complete their bachelor's studies successfully. Around 60% of all bachelor's graduates start directly with their master's studies at the university. Bachelor's students who change to other institutions to complete a master's degree usually enrol in programmes at leading peer universities, such as the Rotterdam School of Management, ESADE, Bocconi or the London School of Economics.

The SER states that, as of autumn 2020, 3,443 students were enrolled in master's programmes. This represents growth of about 9% from 2018–2020. The current student mix at master's level comprises two-thirds HSG bachelor's graduates and one-third external students who, in addition to the master's-specific requirements, must pass the demanding Integration Week programme.

Since the autumn semester 2016, a multi-dimensional dossier selection process and programme-specific quotas have been used to select foreign applicants for non-specialised master's programmes. Besides ensuring that the admitted students are of a higher quality, this process also results in a somewhat more restrictive admissions practice and, consequently, in a slight reduction in new enrolments in a number of these programmes. Furthermore, the selection criteria for the specialised management and finance master's programmes (SIM and MBF) have been tightened.

At doctoral level, since 2014, new enrolments of doctoral students (excluding exchange students) have stabilised. This is part of a deliberate policy to strengthen the quality of doctoral programmes. The total number of enrolled PhD students has also remained stable at about 620 over the last few years.

The SER states that regulations for admission are made public via the websites. The Admission Committee decides on the general distribution of admissions. The administrative staff for admissions are responsible for the coherent implementation of the rules, and the Department of Studies within the Vice-President's Board for Studies and Academic Affairs is responsible for the operational running of studies (e.g. the Admissions and Crediting Office, the Dean's Advisory Office, Planning & Examinations). The Dean of Studies and Academic Affairs is responsible for the personnel in this area and makes legally effective decisions concerning the administration of studies and examinations.

The SER explains that the university has a general examination regulation, decided and approved by the Senate, the President's Board and the Board of Governors. These examination regulations define all the formal aspects of assessment. The examination regulations are applicable for every study programme at the university at bachelor's, master's and PhD level. For each study programme, the examination formats for the obligatory courses are defined in the study plan. Changes in the study plan are subject to a decision by the Senate. For the individual courses, the specific examination format and regulations, based on the examination regulations, are described in the course fact sheets and communicated to the students before the start of the semester. Students can inform themselves through the course fact sheets before they choose their courses.

Lecturers cannot change the form of the examinations during the semester. The exams are graded based on the assessment requirements set out in the course fact sheets and the examination regulations. The grades are documented in an application called "Faculty marks" and transmitted to the study administration team. The Dean of Studies and Academic Affairs issues the grades and the students are provided with an overview of their study performance in the students' Learning Management System (COMPASS). After the grades are communicated, students have the right to appeal to the Appeal Committee. The Appeal Committee makes its decision following the receipt of statements from both the student and the lecturer.

The SER states that, if students have concerns about any aspect of their studies, including course material, examinations or grading, there are various contacts to whom they can address their concern, e.g. the ombudsperson or the whistleblowing system. Other contacts include university counsellors, career counsellors and representatives of the Student Parliament.

The students can request official transcripts of records. Once a semester, final diplomas and transcripts of records are presented in the central graduation ceremonies for bachelor's and master's degrees.

The university believes that its regulations are clear and well supported by IT applications to enhance the communication and transparency of examinations and grading. However, it understands that further differentiation of its study programmes and disciplines leads to a more heterogeneous need for regulations and that there is a need for coordinated reforms at different levels (e.g. curriculum reforms, administrative reforms, technical reforms) which can be highly demanding.

Analysis

Through its discussions with faculty, students and staff from the relevant professional services departments, the accreditation panel was able to confirm the systematic, transparent and consistent application of criteria for admission, for the assessment of the student performance and for issuing final diplomas.

The panel was interested in discussing the balance of national and international students in light of a comment that was made during the site visit indicating that the university would not grow beyond 9,000 students. The senior management team referred the panel to page 15 of the SER which states that the institution will continue to grow, albeit at a slower rate, and will probably stabilise at between 9,000–10,000 students. However, there is no fixed number of students as the number of appropriately qualified Swiss students cannot be limited. International student numbers could be controlled, but apart from respecting the cantonal restriction, the panel heard no clear intention or strategy for doing so.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 3.4 as entirely fulfilled.

Area 4: Resources

Standard 4.1: With its competent authorities, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall assure that its personnel resources, infrastructure and financial means allow for operating on a going concern basis and for achieving its strategic objectives. The origin and allocation of financial resources and financing conditions shall be transparent.

Description

– Financial resources

The SER states the university's belief that its financial model, comprising approximately 55% public funding and 45% market revenue, is sustainable. However, it notes that the cantonal contribution to the budget has not increased in line with the growth of the university, although the federal government budget has increased slightly. The part of the budget that comes through self-financing has also decreased slightly in the last few years due to growing competitiveness in research and third-party funding.

The university is currently preparing for its next performance mandate with the canton and has made a bid for increased funding to maintain the high standard of its core processes in teaching, research and services. The university's overall financial plan is threefold:

- To argue for an essential increase in the cantonal budget.
- To ensure that all necessary conditions are met to maintain the federal government budget at a constant level per student and to be eligible for the higher level of funding per student for the technical programmes in computer science.
- To intensify activities in relation to third-party funding (especially donations).

In the fiscal year 2020, the university had (in FTE) 94.8 full professors, 69.9 associate professors, assistant professors and senior lecturers, 134.4 visiting professors, lecturers on a fixed-term contract (adjunct faculty) and teaching assistants, 416.3 researchers and assistants and 525.8 technical and administrative staff. This is a 6% increase on the previous fiscal year, and this positive result stems from annual planning to ensure strategic aims are met.

The SER states that the internal control system is fully integrated into the university's risk management and can thus be aligned to achieve strategic, operational, compliance and financial reporting objectives.

Transparent budgeting is achieved through compliance with various internal and external requirements. The annual financial statements of the university and the institutes are inspected by internal auditing, which began in 2021, and are inspected through the cantonal fiscal audit every spring. The Financial Committee and the Board of Governors must approve these audits. The introduction of the multi-year performance mandate and the four-year global budget means that the university has strengthened its internal audit, risk management and compliance regime.

The essential elements of the Compliance Action Plan, which was communicated in March 2019, have already been implemented. They include:

- the introduction of new reporting and expense regulations and the introduction of a knowledge database for expenses;
- the organisation of compulsory online training sessions on topics such as expenses, IT and additional occupations;
- special audits at the institutes, profit centres and further units for 2018 which were conducted from April to October 2019;
- the establishment of an independent office to report violations related to finance;
- the further development of the internal control system (IKS), including the posts of IKS and Risk Officer and Compliance Officer; and
- the adoption of a university-wide Code of Conduct.

The findings gained from the Compliance Action Plan are being taken into consideration in the current revision of the University Act. This government project was launched in 2018 and aims at a comprehensive revision of the legal basis of the university.

– *Personnel resources*

The SER states that employees of the university hold a contract with the university based on the regulations of public organisations in the canton of St. Gallen. Their employment in the public sector is based on cantonal regulations, particularly the state administrative law, the canton of St. Gallen's regulations for the civil service, insurance funds and working hours, and the university's own internal directives and regulations.

Within the four-year performance mandate, the development of personnel planning is agreed upon by the university and the canton. The central university administration budgets for personnel are decided on as part of the annual budgeting process. Personnel planning is a subject of the annual target agreements between the President's Board and the Deans of the schools. The central controlling department monitors the university's personnel resources and issues analyses for the information of the President's Board.

The SER explains that, for administrative staff, a new salary system was introduced in 2019: all administrative positions are categorised into reference classes with a given wage bracket. Through annual performance meetings with their direct supervisor, the performance of every employee is evaluated and proposals for pay rises can be made within a limited range. For academic positions, the canton has issued different academic job categories, depending on the pre-requisite qualification and the amount of experience. The wages for academic staff are not subject to individual wage negotiations. This also applies to professors, who cannot negotiate their income during the appointment process. Directors of institutes can, however, receive a bonus of 25% if the institute has a positive financial performance.

Each organisational unit is responsible for the recruitment process for its administrative staff. Centralised processes for job announcements, application management and document management are provided by the Human Resources unit. This organisational unit is responsible for the selection process, onboarding, ongoing supervision, the annual appraisal, professional development and all necessary direct personnel processes. The central HR team offers support by providing information, guidelines and training, etc.

Assistant professors, associate professors and full professors are recruited via centrally supported Appointment Committees and processes. The processes of the Appointment Committees are standardised, and guidelines and best practices make professionalised recruitment possible. The Appointment Committee decides on a selected candidate. The School Assembly votes for the candidate or can reject the Appointment Committee's decision if two thirds vote against the proposed candidate. The Deans of the schools and the University President negotiate with the selected candidates and the Senate votes according to the recommendation of the Appointment Committee and the School Assembly. The Senate may decide against the recommendation with a qualified majority of votes.

Full professors are re-elected in an eight-year cycle. The professors document their performance in a self-evaluation report in the areas of teaching, research, services and self-governance commitments, and the Delegate for Quality Development issues a report based on the evaluation of course data. The University President compiles the information from the different reports and proposes re-election to the Board of Governors, which must be ratified by the canton of St. Gallen.

– Physical infrastructure – campus development

The SER states that the Real Estate unit has an infrastructure strategy based on the University's Vision and General Principles (2020–2025). Basic regulatory requirements are set out in the statutes of the University Act, in the regulations for the canton of St. Gallen's physical infrastructure and in the canton of St. Gallen's physical infrastructure strategy.

The infrastructure portfolio includes the canton's campus buildings and rented buildings. The canton provides mainly teaching and learning space (55%), and additional space can be rented mainly for research and administration (45%). In addition, the HSG Foundation supports the university with the acquisition, financing and construction of additional buildings, such as the Learning Centre and the Centre for Executive Education. Projected student numbers and the different campus development activities are internally monitored by the Real Estate unit.

The physical infrastructure strategy, which was approved by the President's Board in 2019, sets out eight areas of action, including an innovative learning and teaching environment, an excellent research environment and a sustainable physical infrastructure. Three major campus development projects are ongoing:

- Renovation of the library building
- Construction of the HSG Learning Centre
- Campus Platztor (a new campus for 3,000 students within the city of St. Gallen)

The university believes that the four-year performance mandate with the canton of St. Gallen has strengthened the university's financial autonomy and thus its ability to act coherently in accordance with its strategy. It also believes that its new systems for financial risk management and auditing have increased transparency and accountability, and improved the safeguarding of the mandate-related distribution of resources. It is currently content with the balance in financing of 55% public subsidies and 45% revenue and donations.

However, it recognises that the revision of the University Act will have consequences for future governance processes and for financial and organisational procedures, and that this will require a significant amount of time and effort in an increasingly complex organisation.

Analysis

The accreditation panel discussed the overall budget with senior management and was particularly interested in whether the university was satisfied with the breakdown of funding (public and private) and if it believed that the current financial situation was sustainable. In fact, the university is convinced that the current balance is a strength and offers a chance to broaden its horizons and attract high-quality faculty. However, it does recognise the need to strengthen its success in terms of ERC grants, and there have been recent appointments of faculty

members who are likely to attract this kind of competitive third-party funding. The university hopes to capitalise on bringing together its technical and business links.

In terms of physical resources, the university spoke of two current projects with the canton for shifting its focus from “square metres to high-quality metres”, with a view to considering space and spaces in terms of their function, value and how they can be used, rather than just their size.

In terms of funding sustainability, the accreditation panel was informed that the university currently maintains its reserves at between 5% of one year and 15–20% long-term of its total budget. The institutes also have capital and there is currently no cap on the reserves they can hold, although this is under discussion at the moment with a view to ensuring investment in teaching and research. However, the panel was not able to ascertain whether there was a clear plan at university or institute level for the use of reserves.

The accreditation panel was also able to speak to representatives from the HSG Foundation and the Alumni Organisation (AO) and to discuss their role in contributing financially to the university’s budget. It learned that both entities are organised separately from the university, as this helps with donations which are then tax exempt. The Foundation is exempt from tax and is not consolidated into the university’s budget. The AO is also separate from the university which ensures its independence, its sustainability and its ability to be active on behalf of its members.

The AO and the Foundation work closely together and with the university, and meet every month to discuss funding. The AO puts on about 350 events each year, which is key to bringing people together. It is strategically moving into Lifelong Learning in order to connect with the philosophy of the Learning Centre, which has been financed by the Foundation. AO members pay CHF 100 per year, or purchase a lifetime membership for CHF 2,500.

Both organisations described themselves as a bridge between the university and alumni. Funding tends to be used to focus on projects which aim to deliver excellence in teaching and learning, with a strong desire to see the university’s brand flourish.

Overall, the accreditation panel commends initiatives such as the shift from “square metres to high-quality metres”. It also commends the fruitful relationship between the HSG Foundation, the Alumni Organisation and the university, with its focus on the enhancement of learning and teaching. However, it is of the view that the university urgently needs to work on a plan for the use of its reserves.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 4.1 as entirely fulfilled.

Recommendation

The university should develop a plan for the use of its financial reserves.

Standard 4.2: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the entire staff is qualified according to the type and specific characteristics of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector. To this end, it shall also provide for its periodic assessment.

Description

The SER states that in 2020, the university had more than 500 administrative and over 700 academic positions. The University Act, the University Statutes and the regulatory personnel framework define the basis on which recruitment, termination and ongoing leadership take place. All personnel have the status of an employee of a public organisation in the canton of St. Gallen. Professors have a special status granted by the University Act, which guarantees the long-term perspectives and job security necessary for maintaining academic freedom.

The SER explains that the recruitment of administrative staff begins with an application for the resources to employ an additional person within a unit. In 2020, a new application management tool was introduced to support the whole workflow, from advertising the role to the recruitment decision. Once resources are approved, units can consult a guide on university job advertisement standards, which promotes the consistency of the process. The post is advertised and applicants are selected for interviews.

Successful candidates follow a comprehensive induction process. Part of this is carried out face-to-face, while other important aspects are offered online by the HSGacademy. These cover important regulatory details and also explore several other topics related to the culture of the university, from language to project management. Courses are selected based on the specific role the new employee is taking on. The face-to-face welcome supports new employees in understanding the specifics of their role and introduces them to the key people at the university.

The SER goes on to explain that administrative staff have a mid-term review to discuss their initial phase of working at the university. This meeting and the associated documentation form the beginning of the annual review process. The responsible team leader/supervisor holds an annual performance discussion. Based on that discussion, recommendations for further training and salary increases (within the existing parameters of the reference categories issued by the canton) are defined. This ensures that staff members across all levels of the university have development opportunities where possible, that there is a structured system to support and document development and that this can be initiated either by the employee or by the responsible team leader.

Positions for non-tenured faculty (e.g. PhD students, postdocs and lecturers) are advertised in pre-defined categories and are communicated through the university-wide open positions platform. HR is responsible for ensuring applications are received that support the whole recruitment process. The relevant research unit is responsible for the job profile and for making decisions concerning how well the candidate fits the profile. HR provides support with formal aspects such as the contract, official regulations and work permits for non-Swiss academic staff. The wage categories are pre-defined by the canton according to the academic qualifications required for the position. The academic supervisor is responsible for personnel management and conducts an annual appraisal interview to define development needs. In addition to the offer of courses through the HSGacademy, academic staff can take courses at the GSERM for training in research methodology or courses at the Centre of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (HDZ). The university covers all such training costs. A number of institutes provide further budgets for individual continuing education for their academic staff. PhD students can participate in further training through the Early Career Programme.

The SER explains that the career options for postdocs (assistant professors and tenure track) have been re-positioned through the development of the new career path model. An orientation towards developments in the international academic job market is now more integrated within the career model at the university, which now has two tracks for assistant professors and senior postdocs.

Within the “academic track”, assistant professors are recruited competitively by an Appointment Committee. This process is supported by the Faculty Affairs team within the Vice-President’s Board for Research and Faculty. Assistant professors undergo a mid-term evaluation and are evaluated after at least six years. The tenure evaluation process is initiated if defined criteria are fulfilled. The school’s internal Tenure Committee then evaluates the candidate’s performance, including external reviews from experts in the discipline, and recommends a promotion to the university-wide Tenure and Promotion Committee. This committee decides on all the tenure decisions for the whole university.

Within the “organisational track”, a postdoc candidate can develop an even broader spectrum of competences regarding teaching, research and services. They can take the “habilitation” as their next academic qualification and, at postdoc level, can apply for the posts of senior lecturer, research project leader or team leader within institutes.

Lecturers on a fixed-term contract can be appointed in two ways:

- Via appointment by a school's internal Appointment Committee.
- Via promotion (internal direct appointment) from an internal position.

Lecturers on a fixed-term contract hold an open contract with the university and engage in responsibilities with a higher teaching load, research activities and service activities. With a multiannual, positive record in teaching, services and research, they can be promoted to adjunct professor.

According to the SER, associate and full professors can be appointed in two ways:

- Via competitive appointment (international advertisement, Appointment Committee, etc.).
- Via promotion from associate to full professor or assistant professor to associate professor.

The requirements for promotion from associate professor to full professor are very high. The Tenure and Promotion Committee oversees the evaluation for promotion from associate professor to full professor. The majority of full professor positions are advertised internationally.

In recruiting professors, the Appointment Committee defines the profile of the professorship. International job advertisement and professionalised appointment processes have helped increase the attractiveness of professorships at the university, and there is a special awareness of gender issues. The Senate and the Board of Governors approve the decision of the Appointment Committee and the canton of St. Gallen then elects the professor.

An induction process including compulsory training units in, for example, management of research teams, compliance, etc. is defined in order to introduce the new professor to the university. Further training opportunities relating to institutional responsibilities – for example an introduction into the role as the Dean of a school, leadership competence and project management – are provided through the Faculty Development team within the Vice-President's Board for Research and Faculty. Training in educational development is provided by the Teaching and Learning Centre (HDZ), and training in new technology in teaching is offered by the Teaching Innovation Lab (TIL). Professors can make use of funds for personal development.

Although full professors are appointed for life, they have to undergo an evaluation and renewal of their contract every eight years

The university believes that the regulations and systematic processes for the recruitment, induction, management and development of academic and administrative staff lead to a highly qualified personnel portfolio with a high level of commitment to the university. The processes are well communicated and transparent. The university aims to offer different development dimensions to all its staff through the internal support services. Different appraisal and evaluation procedures are implemented for all staff. The university also believes that there is an appropriate balance between the faculty and lecturers from the practice fields in terms of their number and expertise, and that the new career pathway model leads to more transparent academic career development.

However, the university recognises that it faces challenges in terms of attracting and recruiting high-quality staff and faculty due to its location, and that it has work to do in terms of attracting and, importantly, retaining academic faculty in particular. It is also aware that it needs to increase the diversity of its faculty.

Analysis

The accreditation panel was interested to learn from the senior management team about how the recruitment processes support the university's strategic goals. It was told that this was key for the whole university culture and quality. In the past, there were no associate professors, which meant that the university did not benefit from the recruitment of young faculty who would then develop their skills and collegiality at the institution. Such appointments now mean that

there is real contact with the institution through programme management and research activities. The university is able to identify those faculty whose engagement goes beyond their discipline. These staff members are less likely to leave as they can see more career opportunities than were available in the old position of assistant professor. The aim is to have 40 associate professors but not to increase the number of assistant professors.

There is also now more transparency around the recruitment process (including international recruitment), and monitoring has been built into the recruitment and development of staff and faculty. Senior staff emphasised the fact that the university is not only interested in those faculty who engage solely with their discipline and it can now use the recruitment process to avoid such a culture.

The new processes for career paths have allowed the institutes to build an entrepreneurial approach to their structure. The DNA of the university is a hybrid between the academic and the practical, and the new central processes and guidelines help to ensure this hybrid without loss of autonomy for the researchers and their institutes. The re-appointment of faculty every eight years allows the Dean to have a discussion with under-performing members of staff and to ensure that there is a focus on development needs. All of these measures have strengthened and supported the university's goals.

Senior staff told the accreditation panel that it was as yet too early to assess the impact of the tenure track to date, but that they believe that, given how difficult it is to hire excellent people at the level of full professor, especially women, it should be possible to recruit people earlier in their career. The university is investing in potential and aims to build up the senior track this way. They will monitor the retention of associate professors.

As already mentioned, the accreditation panel was informed that strategic and operational measures have been introduced to recruit more women. A new target of 40% female professors and 30% women at all levels within the institution has been introduced.

In relation to the university's definition of quality in this regard, the accreditation panel was informed that this is based on research excellence, teaching and leadership skills. An excellent appointment will have an impact on all three areas, and on society and students. Senior staff value the feedback from students on the performance of new appointees and suggested that the institution needs "to dare to evaluate the quality of papers that are published".

The accreditation panel asked groups of faculty and staff about the kinds of development opportunities that were available to them and what they thought about the systems in place to assess their performance. Several professors talked about the integration of development and assessment through the process of re-election every eight years involving the self-assessment of research, teaching and impact on the university and outreach. This self-assessment takes account of teaching evaluations by students and also the commitment to study programme reforms. Such self-evaluation was regarded as very important by those who undertook it, especially as it involves an interview with the candidate to define areas for further development.

Other faculty members spoke of faculty development in education: the university provides a certificate course for basic training and also provides additional training for online/hybrid teaching. The programme is voluntary and the university pays the fees.

Faculty were also clear that negative student evaluations would also lead to a discussion between the member of faculty and the programme manager to devise and implement a programme for improvement. One member of faculty felt that it would be helpful to have more peer discussion in safe spaces in order to build trust and to talk about problems with those that could help.

In relation to recruitment for PhD positions, the accreditation panel heard of several different processes. In some cases, there was no formal vacancy but simply an interview based on interests which, after a couple of months, evolved from a PhD into an employment position. However, in schools with more established PhD routes, a more strategic approach is taken which considers the benefits to the school/department. In neither approach were members of faculty able to tell the panel what the criteria were for the extension of a contract.

Overall, the accreditation panel appreciated the strategy of recruiting younger staff and developing them within the institution to mitigate against the difficulty of recruiting excellent established faculty. However, there was a lack of clarity in terms of the criteria for the extension of contracts for young researchers and PhD students which, in the view of the panel, should be rectified.

It also noted strong faculty appreciation of professional services staff, with Deans highlighting their reliance on such staff. In that regard, the panel is of the view that the QA system must work for administrative staff too in terms of dealing with their career and development needs (see also Standard 4.3).

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 4.2 as largely fulfilled.

Recommendation

The university should develop and implement a transparent system and communication strategy for the criteria for the extension of PhD contracts.

Standard 4.3: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector supports the career development of its entire staff, particularly the new generation of scientists.

Description

The SER states that the university fosters different career development paths for its employees through training, counselling and mentoring opportunities and through programmes specific to academic and administrative staff. Specific support is offered for academic career development at different stages. Individual competence training regarding teaching, research, services and leadership is provided. This offers a broad spectrum from methodological training to self-competence, social competence and leadership training.

For the university, fostering careers at different stages of the academic career track is of great importance and is essential for internal career development and the preparation for the external academic labour market. As part of the Vice-President's Board for Research and Faculty, the Faculty Affairs office provides advice and support within the HSG induction programme. It also offers resources, training and workshops, individual support and consulting for HSG academic/research staff at all career levels.

The SER states that PhD students are supported by their supervisors and co-supervisors. The development of a formal PhD agreement in itself helps foster a mutual understanding and clarifies expectations on both sides. This process is supported by a university publication called *The PhD Journey: A shared responsibility*, which helps to embed this mutual understanding. PhD students are trained within the disciplinary field and in the research methodology of the various PhD study programmes, and the GSERM helps support PhD students with a broad spectrum of research methodologies. PhD students can also avail themselves of the Early Career Programme to make use of consulting and further training. Doc.Net (the PhD students' network) also provides workshops and events. A PhD survey conducted in 2019 highlighted some inequality in working and supervisory conditions for PhD students. The Vice-President's Board for Research and Faculty is helping the President's Board to develop new regulations to tackle these inequalities.

The Careers Service supports PhD students who are seeking a professional career after graduation, and they can apply for funding for conferences or re-imburement for expenses.

With regard to assistant professors, postdocs and lecturers on a fixed-term contract, the new career path model makes the different career paths more specific and transparent. It defines the

different evaluation steps and the criteria for evaluation and promotion. The differentiation between the academic and organisational tracks helps clarify the specific profiles and takes into account that academic paths can be diverse and that there is not just one single path for all.

Further internal training is available to academic staff within the training and consultation provision of the Centre of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (HDZ) and the Teaching Innovation Lab (TIL) for technology in teaching. Staff can take part in research training workshops or research methodology courses. The Faculty Development team supports junior researchers in developing interdisciplinary competencies, in finding their way around the academic system and in addressing issues and conflicts that arise during the qualification period and career planning (Early Career Programme).

The SER explains that associate and full professors can also, in the same way, develop their individual competences further with regard to teaching, professorial leadership and research projects (workshops for research funding, research seminars at the schools). For associate professors, the option of internal promotion to full professor is available if certain criteria are fulfilled. For full professors, the re-election process evaluates their performance and career development within the last eight years (see Standard 4.2).

In the case of administrative staff or those in leadership positions, the employee's supervisor is responsible for their career development. Annual performance discussions including target agreements and different personal development measures (consultations, professional development, promotion) are conducted. The HR team supports personnel development within the teams or individually through consultations and workshops. The HSGacademy offers training modules for individual competences and especially for leadership competences. These are free of charge for university employees. For substantial further education (like master's programmes or certificate programmes), individual regulations are defined, and such further education can form part of the annual target agreement.

Within administration, a special programme for leadership training is provided. The highly specialised nature of many of these positions means that opportunities for internal career promotion are limited. However, further personnel development is necessary, especially in the transition process to a more digitalised university administration, and the administrative structures are regularly reviewed with a view to improving the efficiency and transparency of the organisation. New opportunities for career development can arise from such reviews and via strategic projects.

The university considers the various aspects of its training and development for faculty as a strength. It recognises that, in certain fields such as executive education, further development in this area is needed, and that any future administrative reform could also lead to a complex change process.

Analysis

The accreditation panel was interested to find out from the staff and faculty it spoke to whether there was any discussion about the well-being of the university's faculty, staff and students. It was told that there had been a survey on this topic in 2020. One of the examples of action taken was to invest in line managers to give them better tools to support those who report to them. There is also ongoing analysis by the COVID analysis group to develop recommendations on the kind of training and support that is needed to move forward post-pandemic in a context in which some staff clearly preferred the way of working during the crisis and others did not.

The group of staff represented by the Mittelbau informed the accreditation panel that career development activities consisted mainly of a dialogue between supervisors and postdocs. Apart from one formal meeting a year, these tend to be informal but useful discussions with mentors. Such faculty also confirmed that they have an annual development discussion with the Dean. It was felt that the new career tracks have helped to take a big step forward in relation to career development and that there had been opportunities to share the perspective of the Mittelbau on the matter. There are now career development plans for all academics at every stage of their career. For those on the tenure track, they can work out where they are in terms of each of the

six dimensions and then work out which development programme they should undertake in order to meet the defined criteria at the end of six years.

There was agreement that this had resulted in a good structure but that it had yet to be universally implemented and that its success depended in part on the attitude of the individual line managers.

In relation to PhD students, the accreditation panel was informed that their progress was evaluated through the PhD programme (submission of pre-study and, at the end, submission of the thesis). Research assistants have an annual formal interview to agree and plan outcomes for the year ahead. PhD students who spoke to the panel were unclear as to the value of the Careers Service but said that young investigator programmes were aimed at helping PhD students with their development, both in topics like writing proposals and in future career development. The grant office also helps PhD students to apply for grants at other institutions.

The accreditation panel also discussed development and career opportunities with a group of administrative staff. It was informed that the development of staff is “seen as part of the job”. Although opportunities for development are improving, there is still no systematic process for offering open positions.

Based on its discussions with groups of faculty and staff at various levels of the university, the accreditation panel is of the view that those processes in place for academic faculty are appropriate. While the HR processes in place for administrative and support staff are in line or even above what is required from a responsible employer, the review panel considers them neither as extensive nor as developed as the processes for academic faculty. The panel is of the view that there is room for the university to further promote the career development of administrative staff in a systematic way and make sure all staff are aware of the services offered.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 4.3 as largely fulfilled.

Recommendation

The HSG suggests combining all existing activities into a systematic career development programme for administrative staff that includes career paths that lead outside the university and ways to be sure all staff are aware of the opportunities on offer.

Area 5: Internal and external communication

Standard 5.1: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall make public its quality assurance strategy and ensure that the provisions corresponding to quality assurance processes and their results are known to employees, students and if necessary external stakeholders.

Description

The SER states that, in relation to the communication of the quality assurance strategy and its instruments, two strategies are pursued:

- A direct communication of the quality approach and specific communication of quality assurance and development measurements.
- An integrated communication of quality dimensions within the university's core processes in teaching, research and services.

– *Direct communication of quality assurance and development*

Quality Development Guidelines and the Guidelines on the Evaluation of Teaching

Communication and approval regarding these documents take place in accordance with the formal governance structures and in the formal committees. In this context, the participation of

the individual stakeholder groups is ensured, for example within the work framework of a Senate commission.

As soon as these documents came into effect (and an English translation had been verified), they were accessible on the internal and external websites. Measurements derived from the Quality Development Guidelines and the Guidelines on the Evaluation of Teaching are described and presented with visuals via the intranet and are thus accessible for all internal university stakeholders.

The Quality Development Service unit communicates directly with instructors, students and programme directors through internal communication channels, using the intranet/FacultyWeb, email and internal news releases, which are issued at the beginning of each semester and if there are any changes to the central course evaluation processes.

Through systematic onboarding, the Quality Development Strategy and area-specific guidelines are presented. For example, the goal of the onboarding workshop for Deans of schools is to ensure that they understand their roles and associated processes related to university committees, programme management (teaching), human resources management of junior researchers and administrative staff, career path models, strategic departmental planning and budgeting.

Integrated communication of quality dimensions within the university's core processes in teaching, research and services

The university believes that, since the quality approach at the University of St. Gallen highlights the integration of quality assurance and quality development within the core processes, the integrated communication about quality within the core processes is even more important than direct communication.

The SER states that, at university level, quality requirements are defined and established in the overall performance mandate between the canton and the university. Within the formal organisational structure and governance processes, all central regulations are discussed in the different university bodies and committees. Specific strategies such as the research strategy, Executive Education Strategy, Teaching Guidelines, the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Sustainability Strategy specify the quality goals within each individual area. These are discussed in the meetings of the President's Board, the Senate's Committee and the Senate, and must be approved by the Senate and the Board of Governors.

Ranking and accreditation processes and results are organised and managed by the responsible persons, teams and units, in coordination with the Quality Development Service unit, and the results are communicated first-hand to the relevant stakeholders:

- Ranking results: the Delegate for University Development and Executive Education distributes an internal email with an initial analysis to, among others, the University President, the Vice-Presidents, programme managers and the Communication unit. A timely and data-focused follow-up discussion with the programme managers, together with the Delegate for University Development and Executive Education and the ranking team, takes place.
- Accreditation results: the Quality Development Service unit assesses and comments on the expert reports and ensures that the President's Board, the Senate and the Board of Governors as well as all areas and units affected by a possible need for action are adequately informed.
- The main results of rankings and accreditations are made public through press releases and external communications.

In the monthly internal newsletter, the university management addresses important projects, initiatives and results to a university-wide audience. Moreover, a more dynamic news function within the intranet, such as an internal news release, helps communicate important reports and

initiatives via the internal websites. For administrative staff, the university management (President, Director of Administration) holds a regular staff information meeting once a semester.

The communication of quality aspects and measurements related to teaching are structured according to the student life cycle, i.e.:

- Information on student admissions

All important aspects of admissions, such as admission criteria, regulations, etc., are presented centrally via the website (unisg.ch). Students on the bachelor's, master's and PhD programmes receive all the relevant information via StudentWeb (the internal information portal for students) and the COMPASS application. All regulations, FAQs and news are communicated through StudentWeb. Students can subscribe to this internal website to stay informed of any changes. The students also receive individualised information relating to their study programme, and their study progress (courses selected/chosen, courses taken, assessments, grades) is communicated via the COMPASS application. This allows real-time access to the relevant information at all times.

- Course information

Each course is described in detail in a course and examination information sheet. The information sheets provide students with information about the content, intended learning goals, course structure, literature, examination date and form of examination for the individual courses.

- General information and regulations

All the general information and regulations with regard to teaching are presented on FacultyWeb for academic staff members. For example, guidelines on the definition of quality in assessments and examinations can be found directly on FacultyWeb, together with resources for supporting assessment design. This is in order to present the quality-related information in the context of the particular core process to which it is applicable.

- Study reforms

Information about study reforms is generally provided on StudentWeb, and there is a page on FacultyWeb on curriculum development (managed by the General Programme Manager) with detailed information and guidelines for the development of study programmes. The communication of study reforms will be further channelled in future via the programme webpages on unisg.ch (external) and StudentWeb (internal) to avoid inconsistencies between the published information. Social media such as LinkedIn will only be used as a multiplier and will then refer to the official websites of the HSG or the leading institute or programme.

The SER states that, specifically for programme managers, information with regard to quality aspects is provided in various formats. The "Umsetzungskreis" is a regular informative meeting organised by the Studies, Programme Development and Study Reforms unit and the General Programme Manager. There, the programme managers and teaching-related administration and service units are informed about reforms, ongoing projects, etc. It also provides an opportunity for the programme managers to exchange good practice and discuss challenges.

Once a semester, the Quality Development Service unit organises an exchange workshop for all programme managers involved in the Programme Management Cockpit (PMC). This workshop provides information on new developments and upcoming improvements.

A dedicated MS Teams channel is in place for programme managers. This provides the opportunity to communicate guidelines, the programme reform handbook and general information from the Vice-President's Board for Studies and Academic Affairs, from the General Programme Manager and from the Quality Development Service unit (regarding the PMC). Moreover, the programme managers use this platform to exchange experiences and materials.

The Deans of the schools have regular meetings with programme managers with a view to discussing the present situation with regard to quantitative data (enrolled students, teaching

capacity, budgets) and developments. Qualitative aspects of programme development are initiated and reported. The Dean aggregates the data and the developments and uses this as the basis for the annual target agreement with the University President.

– *Executive education (degree and non-degree programme offer)*

The SER states that the Executive School hosts a central online catalogue that offers a target group-oriented selection of fitting programmes. This central interactive catalogue aids navigation through the different programmes offered, with links to the programme websites and a catalogue request function. The university provides central regulations for instructors in executive education.

The Executive School (organised as a university institute) agrees on an annual target agreement with the University President. The results and the outcome of the activities of the Executive School are reported and analysed in annual reports. These reports are presented regularly to the Senate and the Board of Governors.

The annual reports of the institutes, their presentations to their respective Management Boards (GLA) and their communications not only to the delegates of the Board of Governors but also with the whole Board of Governors provide insight into the qualitative and quantitative executive education offer within the institutes.

– *Research*

The SER explains that relevant information about the quality of research (e.g. strategic goals and measurements) is communicated in the research strategy, which is presented to all governing bodies (President's Board, Senate Committee, Senate, Board of Governors). There are also regular reports to the public via the annual media conference focusing on research. The website ResearchWeb and several weekly reports to the media also provide relevant information on the area of research.

– *Service to society*

The SER states that, in the services area, communication is highly differentiated towards the different target groups. In addition, the use of the interlinkage between internal analysis and external, quality-relevant, more market-driven information is a driver for further development.

The university has initiated various outlets to help facilitate public access, which provide knowledge and discourse on various topics. These include a series on the university's YouTube channel (Academic GIFts, #2minutes, HSG Focus) in addition to a vast number of videos on current topics and key activities at the university. More recently, two podcasts have become available: Meet the CFO, a discussion with top CFOs hosted by HSG professors; and the HSG Student Podcast, which involves topical discussions and interviews with people students will hopefully find interesting.

The university believes that its strengths in this area lie in the fact that communication about QA and its core processes is well-embedded and interlinks with feedback from external QA processes. Communication methods are targeted to their audience and information sharing is robust across academic bodies and committees. However, it recognises that the increasing size and scope of the institution will require more thought to ensure that the relevant information is provided in the most appropriate way to the various target groups in the future.

Analysis

The accreditation panel was able to view information about the quality assurance system that is made available on the university's website and also spoke to groups of staff, students and external stakeholders like the AO to discuss how well they believe the QA system and its instruments are communicated.

Staff and students corroborated the university's description of the development and communication of the new Quality Assurance Guidelines. They were able to describe the

committee route that the guidelines took and knew that the document was published on the intranet and the internet. Staff were also aware of the publication of the Code of Conduct and informed the accreditation panel that they had also been involved in the development of this document.

Students that spoke to the accreditation panel informed the panel of the new student app, which has had an 80% uptake and is proving to be a useful means of communication. The student app was launched at the start of May this year, and the university worked with students to develop it. Students believe that it is a good tool for bringing together all the information in an easily accessible app, thus centralising necessary information. They said that data security was very important and recognised the risks in this area, believing that working with the university helps to mitigate against such risks while allowing students to maintain their independence. The panel was able to see that the co-development of the app with the student body had had real benefits. The Student Union also has its own communication channel. The students stressed that they were mostly interested in practical information about their programme and that this was easily accessible to them, and that CampusLife was a useful means of communication.

Staff were also able to confirm that they were aware of training on QA instruments and of onboarding events, saying that reminders would be sent if a member of staff did not complete the necessary training or onboarding.

The accreditation panel was informed that the AO runs its own communication channels, while the university addresses alumni via LinkedIn. Programmes also have their own means of communicating with their alumni. All students that leave get an alumni email address. This is an alias for the address that they put into the system and thus remains anonymous.

The accreditation panel was informed that during the pandemic, sensitive information was managed successfully through a task force (including student representation) which discussed the basics for information and then passed this proposal on to teaching staff and students for their comments to ensure that all bases were covered in terms of equality and diversity. It was agreed that this was done in a very timely manner, with targeted information being provided and a dedicated link being established on the website.

The accreditation panel asked the appropriate staff about the quality assurance of the communication strategy. It was told that a strategy and clear goals related to the Roadmap were in place, including KPIs for measuring success. Communications staff plan content for different channels using the Newsroom software, and they have quality criteria to decide which content is published where. These channels are owned by the central Communication unit, which provides training and workshops for decentralised information. The university is completely bilingual (German/English) and many programmes are offered in English. All public communications are published in German and English, although most staff communication is in German. Communications staff told the panel that one of their biggest challenges was not over-informing certain groups who belong to multiple fora. Communications staff also spoke of the need to ensure that the sub-brand of an institute did not become stronger than the university's core brand; they spoke of significant effort in this regard at the moment.

Conclusion

The accreditation panel commends the excellent relationships that the university enjoys with both the AO and the Student Union, which have led to benefits such as the student app and the active role that the AO plays during Freshers' Week. However, it noted the comments of communications staff in relation to the need to promote the core brand of the university with interest, and would remind the reader of comments that it made under Standard 1 (Area 1?) of this report.

The expert group assesses Standard 5.1 as entirely fulfilled.

Standard 5.2: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall regularly publish objective information about its activities, its study programmes and the qualifications awarded.

Description

The SER states that the university has a comprehensive communications portfolio. Overall, the communication operations can be structured into four dimensions and are differentiated according to target groups. The first two dimensions are *internal communication* and *external communication*, while the other two focus on *quick response* and *slow response* services and products.

To ensure transparency for students and other stakeholders regarding university activities, and provide information concerning study programmes and degrees awarded, practical information is updated on the website and annual brochures are published for prospective students. This includes, for example, information on admissions, study programme descriptions, the curriculum and student profiles, as well as a fact sheet for each study programme (at bachelor's and master's level). The brochures are printed and distributed, but they are also available through the university's online publishing platform. Furthermore, all relevant data and numbers regarding the university are annually published in a "Facts and figures" brochure.

The university believes that, through its central communications team, it ensures high-quality and comprehensive management of all communication channels and topics. Furthermore, support and training are offered to faculty and staff across the university's schools, institutes and service areas. This ensures that web presence, website content, university graphics, press releases, research promotion and various social media channels are used according to university expectations, and are up to date and of high quality.

The SER states that the university website is by far the most important tool for reaching potential students and customers for further education, or generally for anyone who is interested in the university's activities and research. Two projects are now intended to help improve the website: one is organisational in nature (HSG Web Services), while the other is more technical (HSG Web Presence Requirements, with a CMS as the focal point). The intention is to establish the former, HSG Web Services, as an independent organisational unit to optimise web support and to standardise the templates for university websites and delete any outdated information. The latter is intended to maximise the HSG web presence

Central student communication is coordinated by the Vice-President's Board for Studies and Academic Affairs (Dean's Office, Head of Student Communication). Information is provided in the following categories (in accordance with the student life cycle):

- Potential students
- Applications
- Enrolments
- Onboarding
- During study: StudentWeb, FacultyWeb, COMPASS (a central portal for administrative processes for students, e.g. semester registration, grade decisions, exam registration and de-registration, change of degree programme. Students receive these official documents in their personal digital mailbox), StudyNet (Canvas – the central learning management system (LMS) via which students obtain course materials) and the Career Services centre
- Graduation
- After graduation: the strong university alumni network is very active and has a long tradition. Worldwide regional clubs organise network meetings, events and conferences

The university believes that it has well-established internal, target group-specific communication tools together with a broad and systematic portfolio of different communication instruments. It also has well-established connections with leading media outlets worldwide and is competent in monitoring and managing communication issues. However, it recognises that decentralisation results in a fragmentation of communication-related tasks and responsibilities across the entire organisation, leading to the need for significant effort to coordinate and maintain up-to-date information. It feels that any enforcement of a uniform approach to communications across all institutes and centres would be difficult due to their high level of autonomy.

Analysis

Through discussion with various groups of stakeholders and by scrutinising the information published on the institutional website, the accreditation panel was able to confirm that the university publishes objective information about its activities, its study programmes and the qualifications awarded. Such information is published in German and English and on an institutional and programme level. The panel noticed some discrepancy in the translations of various institutional functions and, for the purpose of clarification, it recommends that the university publish a clear list defining all functions in both languages.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses Standard 5.2 as entirely fulfilled.

Recommendation

The university should publish a clear list defining all functions in both languages.

5 Outline of the strengths and challenges of the system and its overall assessment

The accreditation panel is of the view that one of the great strengths of the university is that those responsible for senior management and governance at the institution display a strong team spirit and good links between the top and middle management. Commitment to the university across the board is strong and the implementation of the QA system embodies this spirit, with all stakeholders, including faculty and alumni, having the right to participate in the development and implementation of the framework. There is also a constructive and cooperative relationship with the cantonal government.

The relationship between the Alumni Organisation, the Foundation and the university also demonstrates exemplary cooperation.

Students feel that they are heard and that they can influence the university through a functional representation system.

The accreditation panel recognised the challenges raised by the university in its self-assessment report. In terms of the QA system, the university has a QA strategy, guidelines and key principles, and some targets/goals for the system are defined. However, full implementation of the recently transformed system is ongoing, making it difficult to pinpoint yet whether or not goals and metrics support outcomes. The panel was of the view that, at the moment, the system monitors rather than steers strategy and development. The key challenges in relation to the QA system are:

- A need to consider how to create and manage a stronger alignment between the centralised strategy and QA system and their implementation at a decentralised level. This is particularly important as the university faces increased growth and diversification.

- A need to evaluate the QA system to ensure that it allows for guidance and strategic planning as well as for information and monitoring.

At a more overarching level, the accreditation panel is of the view that the university must face the challenge of discussing what it means to become an integrative business school and, based on this discussion, prepare itself for future challenges by achieving a broader perspective on strategy and a more external and global perspective on its activities in order to refine its strategic direction for the future.

6 Recommendations for the future development of quality assurance

Standard 1.1

The university should develop targets and incentives for the implementation of the QA strategy.

Standard 1.2

The university should work to ensure that its QA and strategic planning frameworks are further developed to provide strong, systematic steering, as well as monitoring and enabling the institution to maintain a competitive edge both nationally and internationally.

Standard 1.4

The university should take into account comments and recommendations under Standards 1.1. and 1.2 when reviewing its quality assurance system, particularly with regard to developing targets and incentives for the implementation of the QA strategy and relevant KPIs for monitoring and steering purposes.

Standard 2.1

The university should use its growth strategy as a starting point for reviewing whether or not the current approach to processes and systems is sufficient or whether there is a need for a more formal approach to encapsulate growth and increasing diversification.

Standard 2.2

The university should ensure that its feedback loops at all levels are explicit and systematic.

Standard 2.4

The university should reconsider its focus on the UN SDGs to ensure that these have been prioritised appropriately and that sustainability is being considered in its broadest sense.

Standard 2.5

The university should increase its efforts to achieve its equality goals, especially with regard to the inclusion of a female member of the senior management team.

Standard 3.2

The university should introduce systematic and structured external peer-to-peer evaluation at unit level with respect to teaching and research.

Standard 4.1

The university should develop a plan for the use of its financial reserves.

Standard 4.2

The university should develop and implement a transparent system and communications strategy for the criteria for the extension of PhD contracts.

Standard 5.2

The university should publish a clear list defining all functions in both languages.

7 Position statement by the university

In its statement (see Section D of the documentation), the University of St. Gallen argues that no “serious deficiencies” can be derived from the analyses carried out and conclusions drawn in the report by the group of experts. The university considers the conditions proposed by the group of experts and adopted by the AAQ to be unfounded and asks for the conclusions to be reconsidered and for the conditions to be lifted or, if necessary, reformulated into recommendations.

The review panel notes that, in its position statement, the university does not point out factual errors but provides arguments for why the evidence available could be interpreted differently.

The review panel upholds its assessment of Standard 2.4, as the university did not provide evidence that it sets objectives with regard to sustainability. However, the review panel clarified its formulation of the conclusion and the condition. In particular, the review panel struck the reference to other standards.

The review panel upholds its analysis of Standard 4.3, but decided to use its discretionary powers in favour of the university, since the processes established by the university reflect current HR policy.

8 Accreditation proposal by the expert group

Based on the self-assessment report by the University of Saint Gallen of 5 July 2021, and on the virtual site visit that took place from 5–7 October 2021, the expert group proposes that the agency grant the University of St. Gallen accreditation subject to the following conditions:

Condition 1 to Standard 2.4:

The HSG must develop an overall sustainability strategy covering research, teaching, management and community service that shows how the university sets top-down objectives for ecological, social and economic sustainability.

The expert group envisages a timeframe of two years for the fulfilment of this condition, the review of which is to take place within the framework of a “sur dossier” review by two experts.



Section D

Position statement by the University of St. Gallen

21 December 2021



Institutional accreditation, response of the University of St.Gallen to the preliminary external assessment report

We wish to thank the experts for their critical and differentiated analysis, which seeks to foster continuous development. We appreciate their assessment of the structures and processes at the University of St.Gallen. Their classification will help us to strengthen and adjust the existing lines of development. We can mostly understand the analyses and will follow up on and implement the recommendations in our internal development processes.

We consider it necessary to comment on specific passages in the expert report, i.e. to establish and explain certain points of reference. In particular, this concerns findings that are either strongly based on individual statements or for which there was not enough opportunity for discussion. We therefore provide some background and expand on the present understanding of the points concerned.

We limit ourselves to those two standards where imposing conditions is being considered. In both cases, we believe that no sufficient grounds exist for qualifying the findings as major shortcomings or as considerable weaknesses in terms of the AAQ Guidelines (esp. 3.2.4). We do not entirely understand the derivation and formulation of the conditions in the corresponding passages in the expert report.

Standard 2.4:

«The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall give consideration to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in the completion of its tasks. The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.»

Preliminary Report, Condition 1:

«The HSG must develop an overall sustainability strategy covering research, teaching, management and community service, as well as taking into account the recommendations set out in standards 2.5 and 4.1.»

Response of the University of St.Gallen

The University of St. Gallen has adopted a multidimensional sustainability strategy, which it is implementing in the core areas of research, teaching, management and services.

This is also confirmed by the experts with regard to ecological sustainability. The formulation «mainstreamed» indicates how strongly rooted sustainability structures and processes are at

From insight to impact.

the University, a fact that is recognised by the AAQ experts. The review process also acknowledges the University's achievements in this respect: (1) the various strategy papers and activities developed in this area; (2) the integral nature of sustainability at the HSG; and (3) the structurally important appointment of a Delegate for Sustainability since 2010. Regarding social sustainability, the experts concluded (Standard 2.5) that the University of has distinguished itself in the area of equality and diversity. The University has defined clear targets (e.g. explicit gender targets by 2025; 30% share of women), and the experts have identified «pockets of excellence» in this area. Based on this analysis, the expert group concludes that the University largely fulfils Standard 2.5.

The HSG's strategic approach to sustainability and responsibility can also be broadly documented in terms of various SDGs. As part of the documentation submitted in relation to the PRME Report, activities relating to seven (PRME Report 2018) and nine (PRME Report 2020 SDG 4, 5, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17) of the seventeen SDGs were already documented in 2018. Many of the activities concerning social sustainability are undertaken with reference to the content and scope of specific SDGs (e.g. gender, equality, diversity, health and wellbeing). In our view, explicit reference to the SDGs is not a binding requirement in Standard 2.4.

We recognise the need for development identified by the experts: that the University's activities in the area of social sustainability should be included more explicitly, that the measures taken in this area should be better interrelated and, in particular, that all developments in the area of sustainability should be monitored in an integrated manner. This requires further developing and intensifying our previous approach, as well as coordinating the current measures even more strongly. In our view, however, this does not indicate need for structural change, as considerable shortcomings or weaknesses would require.

We are committed to the academic freedom of our research and teaching staff, who determine their priorities autonomously. This approach is required by the respective international rankings with regard to sustainability (see, e.g., Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings). In accordance with the various dimensions of sustainability, Standard 2.4 refers to the required overall examination of objectives and to the examination of processes and structures in relation to task implementation rather than to their concrete substantive focus on individual dimensions or to the explicit identification of individual SDGs.

We fail to understand the findings on the HSG Learning Center as currently formulated. One prerequisite for the granting of the building permit for the HSG Learning Center was that the building satisfied the ecological standards applicable in Switzerland, which can be regarded as ambitious by European standards. Beyond these ecological standards, a higher standard of ecological efficiency was achieved than is customary in and required by the Canton of St. Gallen (e.g. by integrating a photovoltaic system beyond the needs of the Learning Center,

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by using geothermal energy or by using recycled concrete). Thus, the HSG Learning Center pursues the University's goal of reducing the consumption of fossil fuels.

In response to the statement that the University is unable to define a sustainable a sustainable number of students, it should be considered that the Swiss higher education admissions system enables universities to plan definitive student numbers only to a limited extent. As mentioned in the discussions, the University aims to meet the federal requirements by keeping the growth in student numbers, which can be controlled only to a limited extent, as small and as reasonable as possible.

Regarding the formulation of condition 1, linking conditions with recommendations seems to be less understandable. This applies in particular to the assessment procedure according to the AAQ Guidelines. Aspects that are considered to be largely (Standard 2.5) or even entirely fulfilled (Standard 4.1) in relation to the respective standard thus acquire a connotation that revalorises these recommendations in the light of a considerable shortcoming or weakness. Similarly, the linkage between different standards does not seem to be supported by the AAQ Guidelines.

Standard 4.3:

«The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector supports the career development of its entire staff, particularly the new generation of scientists» (AAQ Guide, p. 43).

Preliminary Report, Condition 2:

«The HSG must ensure that career and developmental advice and opportunities are systematically available to staff in professional services and administration.»

Response of the University of St.Gallen

The University of St Gallen ensures that all staff, including its administrative and technical staff, receive systematic career and development guidance and a wide range of internal and external training. The University has also implemented specific procedures, processes and instruments to ensure the career development of its academic staff – as required by and reviewed in Standard 4.3.

The experts note that compared to academic staff less differentiated and comprehensive career and development opportunities exist for technical and administrative staff. In response, we refer to the University's HR strategy of March 2021, which helps better understand the existing measures for administrative staff (e.g. twice-yearly standardised and documented staff appraisals including a status review; competency evaluation; goal setting and further development; participation in the «HSGacademy», the University's internal training and

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development programme; support for further training (financial and time-wise), coaching & consultancy, leadership development, compliance training, management days, onboarding, offboarding).

Regarding career development in the University's specialist and service units, far fewer differentiated career stages exist in these areas. The external assessment report states that the highly specialised orientation of many of these positions limits internal career advancement opportunities. Regarding administrative staff, cantonal guidelines also have a stronger regulating effect (e.g. via the reference functions in the salary system). The experts' finding that career advancement opportunities for administrative and technical staff are less well developed or implemented compared to other staff is also surprising in light of (1) the investments made (including the HSGacademy, HRsuite, further training contracts), (2) the internal training conducted in recent years (approx. CHF 1.6 million from 2018 to 2021), and (3) the results of staff and supervisor surveys. The University ranked 6th (sector rank) in the 2021 Handelzeitung Education and Research Ranking in the category of «Best Employers in Switzerland».

Against this background, we fail to quite understand the assessment that serious shortcomings exist in the University's current staff and career development processes and instruments aimed at administrative and technical staff.

Overall (Conditions 1 and 2):

We were surprised by the formulated conditions, also because the oral feedback explicitly stated that no serious shortcomings had been identified. Overall, we find it difficult to comprehend to what extent the analyses and findings in the final report amount to serious shortcomings. To the best of our knowledge, there are no comparable evaluations of other Swiss universities and higher education institutions that would justify the formulated conditions in terms of consistent assessment.

Against the background of our explanations and comments, we request that the findings be reconsidered and that the conditions be revoked or, if necessary, be reformulated as recommendations.

St. Gallen, 21. December 2021



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