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Institutional accreditation

ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional accreditation of Jinan University, Tripoli, Lebanon

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Contents

1. Jinan University

Jinan University is a private Lebanese institution for higher education and scientific re-search. It was founded by the Jinan Association in 1988, becoming the first private uni-versity in Tripoli, Lebanon. The main campus of the university is located in Tripoli and offers the three levels of high education. Additionally, the university operates another campus in Saida that offers bachelor's degrees.

The university grants a variety of 15 undergraduate, 32 graduate, and 4 postgraduate study programmes for nearly 8,000 students in 6 faculties and 1 institute in the follow-ing fields:

1. Faculty of Literature and Humanities
2. Faculty of Business Administration
3. Faculty of Education
4. Faculty of Public Health.
5. Faculty of Communication
6. Faculty of Sciences.
7. Political Science Institute.

The teaching system at Jinan University is semester-based using the American credit system. Programmes are offered in different languages, including Arabic, English, and French.

Jinan University is independent from any external funding body, and relies on students' tuition and fees.

Table 1 shows an overview of Jinan University in numbers.

Jinan University	
Founding year	1988
Number of students	7,981
Tripoli campus	7,395
Saida campus	586
Undergraduate	2,010
Graduate	5,626
Postgraduate	345
Academic units	6 faculties, 1 institute
Full-time academic staff	170
Students and full-time academic staff per academic field:	
Public Health:	834 students full-time academic staff: 17
Sciences	114 students full-time academic staff: 6
Political Science	117 students full-time academic staff: 5
Communication	803 students full-time academic staff: 5
Education	1,250 students full-time academic staff: 22

Literature and Humanities	2,868 students	full-time academic staff: 81
Business Administration	1,938 students	full-time academic staff: 34
Part-time academic staff		195 heads / full-time equivalent: 98
Administrative and technical staff		117
Number of programmes:		30
Undergraduate		15
Graduate		32
Postgraduate		4
1st year students		741
Graduates		186
Drop-out rate		7.1% (from 2nd year to 3rd year)
Percentage of non-Lebanese students		72.2%
Percentage of non-Lebanese full-time academic staff		8.8%

Tab. 1: Jinan University in numbers, academic year 2021-2022
(Source: Jinan University)[1]

The academic year starts in September and ends in August of the following year. Classes take place in three periods. The examinations are held in the month following the class period:

Academic year 2022/23

- Fall: classes from around 19 September 2022 until 20 December 2022

- Spring: classes from 20 February 2023 until 31 May 2023

- Summer: classes from 8 July 2023 until 19 August 2023

The teaching system at Jinan University is semester-based using the American credit system: Typically, courses are 3 credit hours each, meaning that students meet in class for 2.5 hours a week and complete academic work outside class at least five hours a week over a fifteen-week semester or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.

A Bachelor's degree requires 99 credits, a Master's degree 42 credits[2], a Ph.D. 54 credits. Programmes are offered in different languages, including Arabic, English, and French.

Jinan University is independent from any external funding body, and relies on students' tuition and fees.

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[1] The budget of Jinan University was also considered in the assessment. For reasons of data protection, no figures are given in the public report.

[2] Exception: Master's degrees in Public Health require 36 credits.

2. The accreditation procedure

The assessment procedure was carried out with an informed peer review on the basis of a self-evaluation report provided by Jinan University. The site visit was made by two members of the expert panel while the others participated online in the meetings.[3] Following the visit, the experts prepared their report (this document), which formed the basis for the **evalag** Accreditation Committee's decision.

The procedure applies the fitness for purpose approach which assesses to what extent the institution is able to achieve its self-set objectives. The point of reference is **evalag**'s criteria for international institutional accreditation[4] that follow the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area dated 15 May 2015.[5]

These criteria focus first of all on the profile and the strategies of the institution which are in the centre of the procedure. The governance structures which are used to implement strategies, the fields of activities of the institution and cross-cutting issues which influence the implementation and the success of the institutional strategies are also examined. By assessing compliance with the criteria, **evalag** checks whether the institution has objectives with regard to each criterion, whether it implements activities which serve to reach the defined objectives, and whether it uses mechanisms to assess the results of its activities. Additionally, **evalag** assesses if the institution meets academic standards that are accepted in Europe and internationally.

The following criteria are used:

- Institutional profile and strategy
- Governance
- Resources
- Teaching and learning
- Research
- Institution and society
- Quality assurance

The experts express the extent of compliance of the criteria with the following assessments: "passed", "passed subject to conditions", "suspension of the accreditation procedure" or "failed". Depending on the degree to which the institution meets the criteria, the institution will be accredited, accredited with conditions or not accredited.

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[3] For this purpose, ZOOM was used as technical platform. Only authorised persons had access to the meeting sessions, no discussions during these video conferences were recorded.

[4] https://www.evalag.de/fileadmin/dateien/pdf/akk_international/standards_kriterien/inst_acc_process_criteria_171201.pdf (accessed 15 April 2023).

[5] https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf (accessed 15 April 2023). The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a group of 49 countries that cooperate to achieve comparable and compatible higher education systems throughout Europe. Member countries of the EHEA follow the directives of the so-called Bologna Process to achieve these goals.

As a first step of the procedure and in preparation for the site visit, Jinan University produced a self-evaluation report based on guidelines from **evalag**. At the same time **evalag** formed an international expert panel consisting of two professorial experts, one expert with QM background and one student expert:

Academic experts:

- Prof. Dr. Catherine Léglu, Vice-Rector for academic affairs at the University of Luxembourg

- Prof. Dr. Dr. PH Timo Ulrichs, Programme Director "International Emergency and Disaster Relief (B.A.)", Professor of International Emergency and Disaster Relief and Chair of Global Health and Development Cooperation at Akkon University of Human Sciences, Berlin, Germany

- Dr. hab. inż. Justyna Bugaj (Poland), Rectors Proxy for Quality of Education at the Uniwersytet Jagielloński Kraków, Poland.

Student expert:

- Damon Mohebbi, student for B.A. Social Sciences & M.D. Human Medicine at Düsseldorf University, Germany, nominated by the QA pool of the European Students' Union (ESU)

All experts had declared to be free of any conflict of interest.

From **evalag**'s side, Georg Seppmann coordinated and carried out the project. Prof. Dr. Figen Kadirgan from FEDEK (=The Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of University Programs in Mathematical, Natural and Social Sciences, Istanbul, Turkey) took part in the proceedings as a guest.[6]

The site visit took place from 16 until 18 March 2023 with several meetings on the campus at Tripoli.[7] During the site visit the expert team met with the President, the Vice President, the General Director, with deans and the heads of departments, with academic and administrative staff, students and alumni, and visited selected facilities of the university.

The expert team produced this assessment report which was submitted to the university for correction of potential factual errors on 26 May 2023.

The report is structured along the assessment criteria which are the basis of **evalag**'s institutional accreditation. After a short description of the criterion, each chapter starts with a presentation of the current status regarding the criterion which is based on the information in the self-assessment report of the university and the information gathered during the site visit meetings. On this basis, the expert team assesses the criterion. Finally, the experts list their recommendations for further improvement.

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[6] As part of the cooperation policy of the CEENQA network, of which evalag is a member, and with the financial support of Jinan University, Prof. Kadirgan was invited as a guest observer.

[7] Prof. Léglu and Prof. Ulrichs participated online.

3. Institutional assessment

3.1. Institutional profile and strategy

The institutional profile and strategy define the main activities of a higher education institution and therefore are at the centre of the institutional accreditation procedure. Applying the fitness for purpose approach, the experts mainly check whether an institution has a clearly defined strategy that fits the institutional profile and whether the strategies and profile of the institution comply with internationally accepted standards. The experts also review the processes for the definition of strategies. Furthermore, they look whether the strategies are adequate to reach the institutional objectives.

Current status

Strategic profile, mission and vision

According to the self-report, Jinan University positions itself as a national and regional institution for higher education which provides educational services to the job market and the societal development: While taking into consideration the livelihood and economic levels of students the university seeks to build a strong, open and mutually supportive society. The founder of the University, Professor Dr. Mona Haddad Yakan, strongly believed in the importance and necessity of social responsibility, which continues to shape the university today in its efforts to promote academic and ethical values, scientific research and innovation which means:

- to apply the latest quality standards in education and the best academic experiences, and

- to provide all students with both scientific competencies and skills for service to the community.

In its own words, Jinan University continuously seeks excellence, universality and sustainable development in all societies by keeping pace with scientific progress, spreading the spirit of partnership with various institutions and adopting effective mechanisms to consider multiculturalism and diversity management. Among the most prominent priorities of the university at the present time is the expansion and increase in the number of buildings, and improving university facilities available to students. As for future plans, Jinan University seeks to open new faculties and majors, and to establish new branches both inside and outside Lebanon.

Excellence in specialised scientific research, participation in the building of a universal human civilisation, and the formation of individuals with values, moral ideals and concepts of citizenship capable of excellence, innovation and interaction form the strategic imperatives of Jinan University, which are reflected in the university's stated core values:

- Justice and equality: establishing the principle of justice, equality and equal opportunities among members of the academic and administrative bodies, as well as among students.

- Respect for the value and dignity of the human person: preserving the dignity of the human being and his entity, in a way that guarantees respect for his freedom, self, value, belief, culture and nationality.

- Integrity and transparency: acting with integrity and transparency and setting appropriate standards to achieve this, by providing the appropriate amount of information to the relevant parties.

- Institutional responsibility and loyalty: commitment and full responsibility for the decisions taken, in order to ensure the protection of the rights and power of human resources necessary to perform their work to the fullest.

- Communication and effective partnerships: strengthening internal and external communication, disseminating information, and opening up to the environment to achieve common scientific benefits and ensure respect for the right of access to information.

- Innovation and Excellence: supporting innovation, creativity and adopting a culture of excellence in all disciplines and creating a positive climate to help students transform their ideas into practical results that contribute effectively to scientific progress.

- Team spirit: developing team spirit among all employees and among students to achieve the objectives of the university.[8]

Objectives derived from the university mission

The university develops its strategic planning on the basis of the profile described above and names as strategic goals for its fields of action for the next five years:

I. Governance
- Strategic Objective No. 1: Developing institutional performance to ensure the achievement of the University's vision.
- Strategic Objective No. 2: Work on activating the concept of administrative transparency.
- Strategic Objective No. 3: Modernization and development of information systems, to develop and strengthen means of coordination between departments.

II. Financial Resources
- Strategic Objective: Increasing and diversifying the university's income sources.

III. Human Resources
- Strategic Objective No. 1: Planning and Development of HR.
- Strategic Objective No. 2: Enhancing job security.

IV. Facilities and Services
- Strategic Objective No. 1: Keeping pace with the digital age in facilities and services.
- Strategic Objective No. 2: Developing facilities supporting the process of education and scientific research.
- Strategic Objective No. 3: Increasing and developing university services.

V. Teaching and Learning
- Strategic Objective No. 1: Providing outstanding education at all levels of university study.
- Strategic Objective No. 2: Creating a student-centred learning environment.
- Strategic Objective No. 3: Foreseeing the future in digital learning and teaching.

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[8] Self-evaluation report, annex 1

VI. Scientific Research
- Strategic Objective: Activating scientific research locally and globally.

VII. University and Community
- Strategic Objective No. 1: Increasing the activation of cooperation mechanisms with institutions and society.
- Strategic Objective No. 2: Enhancing the social responsibility of the University.
- Strategic Objective No. 3: Improving the University's Branding.
- Strategic Objective No. 4: Establishing new branches of the University in Lebanon and abroad.

VIII. Quality Assurance
- Strategic Objective No. 1: Implementing internationally approved quality standards in a sustainable manner.
- Strategic Objective No. 2: Obtaining institutional accreditation and programme accreditation.

IX. Students Affairs
- Strategic Objective No. 1: Students' enrolment and retention and graduation.
- Strategic Objective No. 2: Students' personal and intellectual development: Study locally, think globally.
- Strategic Objective No. 3: Promoting Students' health awareness as a lifestyle for prevention.[9]

Definition process

According to the self-evaluation report, strategic planning is considered an ongoing process in which all stakeholders of the university should be involved, esp. all academic units. The objectives are set at the general institutional level based on the university's vision and mission statement and formulated at the faculty level according to the university's organisational hierarchy. The role of the university management is not only to keep pace with the aspirations of the faculties in order to develop implementation mechanisms that are academically renewed, but also to implement the plans drawn up by the various departments and transform them into a practical procedural path that is subject to constant evaluation. The University strives to achieve its goals at the institutional and faculty levels in a way that keeps pace with scientific and technological challenges, through monitoring and regular evaluation based on specific performance indicators.

The long preparation period for the assessment procedure by **evalag** was used to carry out internal strength-weakness analyses with members of all faculties and the leadership in the above-mentioned fields of action and to develop the current field of action planning from them.[10] According to the self-evaluation report and the on-site talks, the development process as well as the strategic objectives are largely known at the university.

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[9] Ibid.

[10] A detailed documentation of all SWOT/SCOC analyses was submitted together with the self-evaluation report.

Assessment

Strategic profile

In the experts' view Jinan University has a clear profile with a strong emphasis on high quality education and research as well as social responsibility and progress, especially for the Tripoli region in the north and the Saida region in the south. The experts greatly appreciate the university's commitment to creating educational opportunities at university level, especially in these regions.

Jinan University is characterised by a distinctly multicultural and tolerant approach to education: It reaches out to all factions of Lebanese society and opens up study opportunities to students in educationally disadvantaged areas. The expert panel witnessed a strong university community. During the site visit, the experts talked to students and staff who are explicitly convinced about having chosen the right institution to study or to work for. Furthermore, all staff, students and alumni whom the experts interviewed expressed their strong commitment to the university's goals and mission, they know and accept what is expected and how to contribute.

According to the expert panel, profile and strategies of Jinan University correspond to internationally accepted standards in higher education. The current economic crisis poses great challenges for Lebanese higher education institutions. It must be emphasised that Jinan University is making great efforts to enable its students to study and to retain its staff. The panel appreciate the commitment expressed by several of the staff to making the university a stable and supportive environment for both students and graduates (they stressed that they supported student employability, e.g., by creating jobs in the University).

Definition process

Departments and deans seem to be very strong. The management level of the university takes this into account and includes the deans in the further development of the university strategy. This is generally welcomed by the experts, but care should be taken that faculties or individual departments do not become too independent or that competition between single units does not undermine an overall strategy of the university.

The experts welcome how the university has used the self-reflection process for the accreditation procedure for its own strategic further development. The comprehensive documentation of the SWOT / SCOC analyses testify to a high degree of transparency. The experts gained the impression that really all areas of the university are taken into account.

However, the student body has no formal active role in the strategic development. In the view of the experts, this lack of involvement represents a missed opportunity for the university to benefit from the valuable insights and perspectives that students can offer. By considering greater involvement of the student body in planning processes, the university could tap into the creativity, innovation, and diverse experiences of its students, fostering a more inclusive and student-centric approach to strategic development. The experts are aware that this would still be quite innovative for universities in the Arab region, but the opportunities are there. To avoid political pressure in election procedures, alternative methods of appointment could be tried out: lottery procedures, open tenders, etc..

Adequacy of the strategies

The experts assess that the strategies that Jinan University uses to reach its objectives appear consistent and fit for purpose. All activities not only consider the university's mission and the original intentions of the founder but go far beyond. The university's acquired reputation, which was evident in the discussions with employers and social representatives, proves that the strategies chosen are appropriate.

In the experts' view the strategies both on university and on faculty level conform to the university mission.

Areas for improvement

From the experts' point of view, the excellent results and experiences from the preparatory phase of accreditation should be used to develop a formal continuous process: The energies and synergies released should definitely be preserved. Regular SWOT analyses of the university's individual fields of action before the start of each new academic year would contribute to this and could become a general component of university planning processes.

Recommendations

The formal roles of the departments, the service institutions, the deans and the university management and their joint contribution to the strategic development of the university should be more clearly defined, especially the new departments that have been launched recently, to develop a more transparent set of responsibilities and reporting.

Students should become an active part in the university's planning processes, for example by presenting and discussing intended plans at specially convened student assemblies.

3.2. Governance

The criterion focuses on the internal governance and decision-making processes of the institution. The experts check the clarity and transparency of the organisational provisions and governance structure. They examine whether governance structures are adequate to support the institutional strategies and how decision-making processes are organised. Furthermore, the experts check how stakeholder groups are involved in governance, whether the institution provides relevant information about its activities for the internal and external public and whether academic freedom is assured.

Current situation

Governance structure and decision-making processes

The governance structure of Jinan University is set out in the Statute on the Internal Administrative Organisation of Jinan University.

The general supervision of the university lies with the Board of Trustees which ensures that its mission and objectives, set by Al-Jinan Association and officially approved by the specialised authorities, are met in a way that maintains the academic level, achieves students' interests, and guarantees the interests of the license holder (Al-Jinan Association). The Board of Trustees consist of twelve members:

- President of "Al Jinan Association" as chairman
- Three members chosen by the administrative board of Al-Jinan Association from among its members
- Eight members selected by the administrative board of Al-Jinan Association with academic, legal, financial, and administrative expertise, community presence and diversity in specializations

The Board of Trustees and the Al-Jinan Association are jointly responsible for appointing the executive staff of the university (President, General Director, Deans and Heads, etc.). Members of the Board of Trustees cannot have any job position at the university. The University President attends the Board of Trustees' meetings without voting rights.

The executive power of Jinan University lies with its President, who is assisted by several university councils as there are the Board of Directors, the Scientific Council, the Faculty Councils and the Department Council:

- The University Board of Directors consists of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, the University President, the General Director and the Branch Manager of Saida campus. The Board of Directors decides on administrative, financial, and organisational issues, sets rules for accepting new students, determines their numbers in faculties and departments, determines the registration fees, university tuition, and discounts; reviews the draft university budget, and appoints the administrative and financial directors of the university.

- The Scientific Council consists of the President of the University, the General Director, the Branch Manager of Saida campus, Dean of Academic Affairs and Scientific Research, Dean of Student Affairs, and the Deans of Faculties. The council sets the general plan for education, curricula, and research; determines courses, and the exam system and assessment. It also decides on all academic issues. Additionally, the council organises plans for cultural cooperation with universities and approves the internal regulations of the faculties.

- Each Faculty Council consists of the Dean of the faculty (Chairman), the Faculty Affairs Coordinator, the Heads of scientific departments or, in the absence of a department head, representatives of departments from full-time professors, so that all specialisations in the faculty are covered. The Secretary of the Faculty Council is selected by the Dean of the Faculty from the faculty's administrative staff or employees with the approval of the President of the University. The Faculty Council proposes study plans and curricula, propose decisions related to postgraduate studies and scientific research, determine the faculty's need for new professors and laboratory equipment, and drafts the budget for the faculty.

- The Department Councils consist of the Head of Department (Chairman) and full-time or part-time faculty members or contractors, so that all specialisations in the department are covered. The council proposes study plans and curricula, propose decisions related to postgraduate studies and scientific research, determine the department's need for new professors and laboratory equipment, and drafts the budget for the department.

- Students are represented by the Students' Council. The council shall consolidate the sense of belonging to the University, the home country and the nation, promote cooperation among students and encourage and, where appropriate, provide financial support for student activities in the academic, cultural, social and sporting fields. It advises the University administration to solve

students' problems, develop their contributions and uphold their rights in the various affairs of the University. The Students' Council participates in some of the faculty's decisions

Very recently, the administrative structure has been extended, as new departments have been created in the university (the Presidency Divan, the Directorate of Plans and Curricula, and the Health Monitor and a Psychological-Educational guide, JUL-TEC, Al Mashghal). Additionally, student affairs were separated, the admission from the registration, and now the registration exists as a separate department in each faculty.

Stakeholders' involvement in governance

The university strives to involve all groups and units in governance: academics, non-academics, students, externals.

The academic staff is involved in the governance structures and practices as follows: Full-time professors participate in faculty councils and develop academic plans. They have also an active role in the orientation meetings held by the faculties at the beginning of each academic semester. All heads of the departments and academic coordinators are full-time professors. Part-time professors are also part of various events and activities of the university. They participate as well in meetings of the educational body in the faculties. The organisation of research is entirely the responsibility of the academic community. Professors focused on scientific research develop guidelines for presenting research projects and a researchers' guide for theses and university dissertations. They are also responsible for the directory of research topics in each faculty keeping pace with the latest developments in the specialty.

Representatives of non-teaching staff/ non-academic employees can be invited to the Scientific Council as well as all other councils.

The branch manager of Saida campus manages the administrative affairs in the branch and takes appropriate decisions within his permissions. To ensure the cohesion of the two campuses, the branch manager is an essential member of the Scientific Council and participates when needed in the meetings of the Board of Directors.

Students are involved in the structures through the Students' Council. During the pandemic, there were no student elections; instead, councillors were appointed on the basis of personal contacts between academics and students.

Former students are invited to participate in the Alumni Club and support the university in promotion measures for recruiting new students.

Employers and labour market partners are encouraged to engage in an ongoing dialogue about what the university should offer; there are also joint actions that also focus on improving the situation of the local community.

The university emphasises the good relationship with the local authorities, which, however, do not interfere in the internal university processes.

Clarity and transparency and information policy

The university mission and vision are published and available online at http://www.ji-nan.edu.lb/. All Academic services are also presented on the website including the

academic catalogue, freshman academics, undergraduate and graduate majors, course offerings, rules and regulations, student services, and the exchange programmes.

Jinan University makes broad use of social media services to address the public: WhatsApp, Facebook (about 138.722 followers), Instagram (about 4,226 followers) and Twitter (about 3,019 followers). The university's YouTube channel has 1,730 followers.

Academic freedom and hiring procedures

The institution guarantees academic freedom in various aspects, the most prominent of which is the dean's freedom to choose members of the teaching staff according to the institution's needs and considering the specialization. It also allows for the participation of the teaching staff in selecting the research topics within their interests and directing students toward them. Furthermore, professors are allowed to participate in amending the curricula where necessary and setting the curriculum in line with scientific development.

The institution also guarantees freedom for students through the Students' Council to present some suggestions and express opinions on some academic matters. Also, academics participate in the Faculty Council (decisions by consensus and by vote) and proposals are put forward. Non-members of the Faculty Council can also contact the coordinator and chair with ideas and suggestions, which are then passed on to the faculty and the Faculty Council.

Any full-time professor wishing to participate in any external activities is required to submit an official letter addressed to the president of the university through the dean of his faculty indicating the activity or task they want to perform. The request is studied, and the person concerned is notified either for approval or not.

Recruitment and appointment procedures are carried out on a scientific basis, ensuring that professors are appointed at the university based on academic degrees, practical and research experience, and academic criteria, in compliance with the academic appointment rules applied at the university.

Assessment

Governance structure and decision-making processes

The experts assess the governance of Jinan University as clearly structured and documented. The responsibilities and procedures of the main university bodies are set and described in the constitution, the bylaws, and in the several policies. All appears well thought out and applicable. All the people working in the administration and management that could be talked to appeared very experienced and competent. The university is obviously well equipped and efficient in terms of governance.

Adequacy

The experts assess the presented governance structures as working in both formal and informal ways. They have no doubts about the efficiency and applicability of the university governance. The good framework conditions are also reflected in the fact that the University of Jinan has so far coped well with the current economic crisis and,

unlike many other universities in Lebanon, has not lost any staff. The university continues to offer students a good university education despite all adversities. It is hoped that despite the current severe crisis in the country, the good staffing will be maintained and even expanded.

Stakeholders' involvement in governance

An open-door policy was emphasised several times in the discussions on site. The university makes efforts to get its stakeholder groups involved. Various councils and committees support the management and actively contribute to the smooth operation and development of the institution.

As mentioned in chapter 3.1, the deans and the departments have quite a strong and formative position. Obviously, there is also good cooperation and everything feels connected to the same cause. Nevertheless, the university management should be careful that individual departments do not develop too much autonomy. In this context, it would make sense to make the respective (and different) roles of faculties and departments more clear.

The Board of Trustees plays an important part, and it also appears to have the right mix of academics and social representatives in its personnel composition. Perhaps the labour market could be represented a little more strongly in the board.

Clarity and transparency and information policy

According to the experts, the university lives a transparent and easily accessible information policy. Everything important about studying and the university is easily accessible, and the university is very active on social media: the timeliness of the posts and the number of followers speak for themselves. However, most of the information is only accessible in Arabic. If the university wants to further develop its international profile and – as emphasised several times – especially address foreign students as well as (potential) teachers or cooperation partners from the non-Arab world, more emphasis should be placed on a bilingual external presentation (although the experts are aware that Jinan University explicitly positions itself as an Arabic-speaking university and attaches great importance to international students also learning Arabic).

Academic freedom

From the experts' point of view, the independence of academic decisions is guaranteed. The university owner, the foundation, does not interfere. All responsibility for research and teaching lies with the academics. Based on the discussions held and the documents provided by the university, the expert panel concludes that independence is guaranteed in both academic and teaching activities.

Areas for improvement

Representation of the labour market on the Board of Trustees could be strengthened. At faculty level, student representation seems weak and consideration should be given to strengthening this part.

Recommendation

The university should return to the election of student representatives instead of nomination.

3.3. Resources

The criterion focuses on adequate resource endowment and deployment to sustain the core activities. The experts check the existence and sustainability of a professional funding and financial management. They also check whether the qualification and number of the (academic) staff (full-time and part-time) are adequate to support the institutional strategy as well as to ensure the intended learning outcomes. Further, they review which strategies and processes for the staff recruiting and staff development are used and if the search, hiring and tenure procedure are in line with international academic practices. The resources, facilities and equipment are also part of the criterion. Therefore, the experts examine if the amount and quality of facilities and equipment allow the provision of the programme (library, laboratories, teaching rooms, IT equipment) and if the resources are adequate to reach the objectives of the programme and are in accordance with the institutional strategy.

Current status

Financial resources and management

The basic funding resources of the institution come only from students' tuition fees: Tuition fees make about 96% of the income. Therefore, the economic stability and sustainability is mainly dependent on the student numbers. 11% of the income is invested in scholarships, 17% in salaries and 1% in research in the narrower sense.

All financial decisions are taken by the university leadership based on the data and analyses prepared by the financial department. Financial control is carried out by accountants, supervised by the Finance Manager and the General Manager who report to the University President. The annual accounts are audited by an external auditor who prepares the annual financial report.

From the self-assessment report and the discussions on site, it appears that the financial resources made available are sufficient for both current operations and future planning, esp.:

- Expansion of the university by opening new branches in different Lebanese cities

- Introduction of new faculties and programmes to meet the labour market requirements

- Provision of an electronic scientific library

- Organisation of specialised training courses for staff

- Purchase of a new dorm

- Periodical increase of the salaries in line with the high rise of the dollar rate to the Lebanese Lira

- Increase of the budget of the scientific research to at least 5%.

The financial resources are currently divided among the departments as follows:

Faculty	Percentage of the budget
Literature and Humanities	39.5%
Business Administration	17%
Education	14%
Public health	13.5%
Communication	7%
Science	7%
Political Science	2%

Tab. 2: Distribution of the budget between the faculties, academic year 2021-22
(Source: Self-evaluation report, p. 11)

This division essentially corresponds to the size of the faculties.

Human resources and the recruitment process

At the moment, about 550 people are working at Jinan University. Table 2 shows the numbers:

		Tripoli	Saida	Total
Fall 2021-2022	**Type**			
Teaching	Full-Timers	76	31	107
	Part-Timers	173	55	228
Research	Teaching and scientific research permanent contract	51	6	57
	Supervision & scientific research permanent contract	34	9	43
Administration	Administrative Staff	100	14	114
Total		**434**	**115**	**549**

Tab. 3: University staff in numbers, academic year 2021-22
(Source: Self-evaluation report, p. 15)

According to the self-evaluation report and the on-site meeting, the university regards its staff as an important factor for success and therefore attaches great importance to staff selection and development. Academic as well as administrative staff undergo training courses and workshops in order to improve their performance and competencies organised by the Human Resources Office and the Center for Consultation, Training and Continuing Education. Members of the academic staff are encouraged and motivated to publish articles and research papers in the local university's journal as

well as in international journals. Newly hired employees are trained to perform their duties and assess their performance.

To improve the competitive teaching and research performance of faculty members, the university provides a financial reward for anyone who publishes research in a recognised international journal and stimulates publication by subsidizing the cost of research and paying the cost of publication. Specialised contracts for scientific research were allocated starting in 2015.

The university also financially supports for conferences and workshops with externals.

During the Corona 19 closure period, the university provided all administrative and academic staff with an online platform, which was used for teaching, evaluating students, and monitoring the effectiveness of academic staff members remotely, as well as discussion of research projects and theses defence with the support of qualified administrators. However, practical work remained in the laboratories, directly and in attendance, to maintain technical skills and ensure students' acquisition.

Human resource development involves either the administrative and academic body members participate in identifying their needs or the institution maintains ongoing administrative and educational process updates:

- On the administrative level, the administrative staff first determine their need to develop their skills in a specific field (computer skills, a specific programme, a foreign language), then the Human Resources Office, in cooperation with the Consultation, Training and Continuing Education Center, organises the appropriate course, seminar or workshop for them.

- On the academic level, the relevant departments (for example, the Information Technology Department) provide training or explanations on how to use all additions and developments related to technical support for the educational process, and each new member of the academic staff undergoes a training on how to use the electronic university system.

In line with the development of student numbers and the need for new study programmes, the university is continuously expanding its staff.

The recruitment of new members of staff shall follow a defined procedure: The need for academic vacancies in a particular specialisation is announced in the local or external educational community through advertisements on the university's website and the university's accounts on social networking sites. Candidates submit their CVs along with a copy of the certificates. The Dean and the university administration review the CVs and select suitable candidates for the vacant positions. Thereafter, the interview dates are scheduled in the presence of the university president, the general manager, the branch director, the relevant dean with the potential candidates, and a presidential decision is issued in favour of the successful candidate, then the relevant internal authorities are notified of the decision. The Human Resources Office follows up with procedures for signing the contract and completing the application and supporting documents with the accepted candidate.

The workload for teaching and research is determined administratively by the University Council. This is expressed through multiple contracts that mark the teaching quorum, each according to his rank. The faculty member may also perform simple administrative tasks.

Each full-time permanent lecturer works for 5 days – 35 hours per week (teaching and administrative work), and the quorum ranges between 12 and 16 teaching hours per week. Permanent lecturers work for 4 days – 28 hours per week (teaching and administrative work), the quorum ranges between 10 and 13 teaching hours per week. Half-time lecturers work for 3 days – 18 hours per week (teaching and administrative work), the quorum ranges between 7 and 9 teaching hours per week.

Research contracts are different: Full-time researchers work for one day only – 8 hours per week (teaching and administrative work), teaches one subject (3 credits) and be available to supervise research, part-time researchers supervise scientific research, meet with students but have no administrative responsibilities.

Staff quality assurance and evaluation

The branch's heads of departments and faculty coordinators monitor the quality of work performed by academic staff members as well as the number of hours covered, and they are also responsible for following up on exams and scores that are uploaded to the electronic system of the university.

Facilities

As mentioned before, Jinan University operates two campuses: in Tripoli and in Saida.

Tripoli campus is home to the library, several laboratories (for Public Health Sciences, Nursing, Science, IT, Languages), a mass communication studio, the Centre of Innovation & Pedagogy, the university dorm, the cafeteria, the university theatre, sports halls and gym, Al Mashghal (=Social Innovation Hub), a prayer room, the conference Hall, and classrooms with a teaching capacity for 1,751 students.

At Saida campus, there are classrooms with a teaching capacity for 520 students, an auditorium, two computer labs, a cafeteria, 9 offices and one instructor's room.

At the moment, the university is constructing an additional new building opposite the main campus in Tripoli.

Laboratories

The university runs several laboratories in Tripoli and Saida: several IT labs with computers for students, medical and natural science labs for biochemical and medical analyses, language labs for practical exercises.

The objective of the laboratory work is to develop practical skills. Students learn how to use equipment, tools, etc. The provided labs should help students to develop skills in using scientific equipment correctly and safely, making observations, taking measurements, and performing well-defined procedures. The increasing number of students is seen as a challenge in view of the currently available laboratory facilities. In the short term, cooperation with clinics and laboratories helps.

Library

The library contains about 53,000 books, which are kept on shelves and are immediately accessible. The electronic library contains almost 90,000 books, access is only possible from the library rooms. The university has also a subscription to ScholarVox

through an agreement with the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie au Moyen-Orient (AUF). In addition, the library has about 500 CDs as well as a large, accessible media database with images, educational films and documentaries.

As an educational institution, the media office works on equipping the media library with materials that preserve the history of the institution's activities in terms of student activities, events, conferences and meetings, which enrich the media library where the history and achievements of the institution are documented.

IT and Jinan University Information System (UMS)

Jinan University runs an advanced electronic university system that provides the administration with a single platform to manage and control all administrative, financial and academic operations in its two branches, Tripoli and Saida. It allows professors to manage classes, attendance, academic content and receive academic assignments in an organised manner. It is also connected to academic services with student accounts, links to virtual lectures and suite accounts connected to the professor and student mail. Students can access all financial details via their accounts and payments are also possible. With the UMS, they also have access to their virtual classrooms: In the fall semester of 2021-2022 and due to the pandemic, professors delivered part of their courses remotely online and the other part on campus (hybrid teaching & learning).

The UMS was established in 2008. The system is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for all accounts and in all its administrative, financial, academic, scientific and student axes.

Assessment

In the view of the experts, Jinan University provides sufficient resources to sustain its operation at the desired quality level. The campuses appear well-maintained. On the Tripoli campus, the existing facilities are adequate and, as the university itself says, have just enough capacity to meet the estimated maximum demand for services. In Saida, the main challenge is to establish adequate and sufficient facilities that meet the students' requirements. The university itself points to the need for numerous facilities that play a role in attracting students, such as a theatre, a sports hall, a day care centre and student accommodation.

Financial resources

Together with the self-evaluation report, Jinan University provided the financial statements of the last five academic years. In the experts' view the financial management is professional; the process of preparing the yearly budget is clear and executed with the collaboration of the faculties. The university relies for its funding almost exclusively on its tuitions. This seems very risky to the expert panel, but it is also clear to the experts that at the moment it is practically impossible for the university to tap additional sources of funding.

The expert group welcomes the fact that the university is doing everything possible to ensure that students with less financial support can also enrol. The severe economic crisis in particular is a great challenge for everyone, and the fact that the financial administration is trying to keep fees low is a great signal of social responsibility for the

experts. Also, it is inclusive: good practice in ensuring access to all students and to supporting them to finish their studies.

Staff

In the view of the experts the staff of the university – academics and non-academics as well – seems appropriate to run a higher education institution which provides high quality education to its students. Many of the staff have academic degrees from foreign universities.

All teachers the experts could talk to presented themselves as highly motivated. The students who could be spoken to emphasised the good teaching climate and the open-door policy that characterises the teaching staff. The university's procedures for recruiting and later continuous training and developing staff seem appropriate and fulfil academic standards: The selection of academics is always based on an academic decision that is justified and documented in a standardised manner.

According to the expert panel, the dynamic staff members, both academic (full time and part time) and administrative are a big asset of Jinan University. The proportion of full-time teachers seems appropriate (around 47%).

International mobility is obviously promoted, e.g., for short period stays abroad, for participation of conferences, workshops etc.

The experts appreciate the existence of a concept for human resource development covering all staff.

Facilities

The facilities of the university appear as appropriate. The buildings are in good condition, as are the classrooms. This suggests good facility management, with renovations being carried out regularly. A renovation backlog was nowhere apparent. The rooms that can also be used for non-university events – the sports hall, the theatre – impressed the experts.

The experts appreciate the barrier-free buildings that allow students with disabilities to access almost all areas of the campus. For the evaluators, this is another sign of the social responsibility to which Jinan University is committed.

The library has a rather small stock of reference books, but this is more than compensated for by the large libraries accessible online. From the experts' point of view, however, more library workstations for students would be useful. Also, the university could rearrange the main space in the library reading room to accommodate for smaller boxes (for 1, 2, 5, … 10 people) that would allow students to read quietly or to work in groups on projects, not disturbing and not disturbed by others. Such a space would be more conducive to learning, and it would encourage more students to spend their time in between classes there.

The IT infrastructure of the university is up to date and equipped with modern and functional software which was also affirmed by different stakeholder groups during the site visit. The UMS system complies with the latest standards.

Not least because of the pandemic, the offer and use of virtual learning environments has become an integral part of the university portfolio. This seems to have been achieved smoothly; the university's systems were obviously prepared. Training

measures were also apparently easy to implement, as there is already an ongoing training programme for teaching staff. The experts appreciate the fact that teachers receive technical and didactic support in the development of virtual learning offers.

Areas for improvement

The experts value the existing contacts and partnerships with universities abroad as a good starting point for increasing staff and student mobility.

The library could be transformed into a more open learning and communication space for students. From the experts' point of view, there are far too few public power sockets.

Off-campus access to digital libraries would be a welcome addition for students and faculty who also work from home.

The university should consider becoming part of the eduroam network. This would be an important contribution to internationalisation, both with regard to the university's own members and to international guests.

The existing cooperation with the WHO should be practically used for further improvements of the lab equipment.

Recommendation

The university should establish more places with tables and sockets dedicated to students across all campuses. Overall, the number of work spaces permanent available should meet at least 13% of the number of students.[11]

3.4. Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is one of the main topics of higher education institutions. In the accreditation procedure the experts check whether the study programmes comply with the institutional strategy and national regulations. They also check the academic standards of the study programmes and how research and teaching are linked. The experts review whether the institution employs student-centred teaching and learning processes which pay respect to the diversity of students and their needs. Moreover, they assess how the assessment of intended learning outcomes is organised and how the student life cycle is organised.

Current status

Academic standards of the study programmes

Jinan University adopts the standards and regulations of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, which must be implemented by the licensed universities and institutes, due to the Higher Education Law 285/2014). The institution has also undertaken

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[11] According to a study by the German HIS Hochschul-Informations-System GmbH, universities should provide workplace for students in an amount of altogether 13% based on the number of students. (Cf. Vogel / Woisch: Orte des Selbststudiums. HIS Forum Hochschule 7/2013, online at https://www.dzhw.eu/pdf/pub_fh/fh-201307.pdf, accessed 15 April 2023)

to implement the courses in accordance with national regulations, ensuring transparency and the application of circulars and resolutions issued by the competent authorities, by adhering to the content and syllabi of the courses. Implementation is monitored by the heads of department and through student questionnaires.

The university has a common concept of learning and teaching in general and the decisions related to it are issued by all faculties. Each faculty has its own privacy regarding applied courses and each instructor has the right to use his own method of teaching, but the curricula and the content of courses are unified. The common concept is demonstrated by enhancing the interaction between faculty staff and students, by promoting active learning and cooperation between students and providing quick feedback, as well as setting high expectations that motivate students to achieve their best. It also aims at respecting diversity, talents, expertise and learning styles.

The university ensures that the content of the study programmes meets the current academic standards through establishing a complete system for the quality of education that periodically enables the objective evaluation of the programmes, through several tools, while relying on documented evidence in a way that includes all components of the programmes, including inputs, outputs, teaching strategies and evaluation methods, by providing required data for the evaluation process and preparing reports. This is also ensured by the success of students in national official exams such as the colloquium exam for holders of a B.Sc. in Nursing and Laboratory Analysis.

Student-centred study

According to the self-evaluation report, at Jinan University the 4MAT learning style[12] is promoted which distinguishes four learning phases:

- Experiencing
- Conceptualising
- Applying
- Refining

It is seen as a way that suits all learning styles and uses learning information in a creative and dynamic manner. Following this model, the teaching and learning methodologies used at Jinan University are:

- The classic and traditional way of teaching
- Interactive learning
- Participatory learning
- Activity based learning
- Project based learning
- Training based learning

Faculties and programmes may differ within the same faculty between theoretical and practical programmes related to the appropriate teaching methodology and to the faculties' courses. However, a general student-centred learning approach is promoted.

Assessments of intended learning outcomes

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[12] The 4MAT model was originally developed by Bernice McCarthy in 1980, cf. https://aboutlearning.com/ (accessed 15 April 2023)

Jinan University has set a general framework for evaluation and assessment at the undergraduate and graduate levels, focusing on the following:

- Student participation in class during the learning and teaching process.

- Evaluation of the student's research abilities and skills through the preparation of research papers.

- Evaluation of the student's knowledge through midterms and final exams.

- Evaluation of the student's practical skills through project presentations or by testing the required skills in laboratories or the workplace.

The institution organises the evaluation process by establishing a general policy that makes the evaluation purposeful and based on specific and clear objectives. The evaluation deals with all components of the educational process, tracking it from the early stages of planning until the appearance of results. It is used to assess various strategies and tools. The institution also ensures that the assessments are based on competence by linking the evaluation process to the goals set in each course, considering the evaluation as a continuous process, and ensuring the diversity of the evaluation process and methods.

Practice-oriented study

The university determines and implements the appropriate balance between theory and practice in its study programmes through the presence of a specific number of practical courses, and through specific syllabi. Each course even if it is theoretical, includes at the least the following:

- Research and homework
- Activities and practical projects
- Cooperative learning activities

Each academic programme shall have practical courses that qualify students for subsequent employment. The university pursues this under the supervision of the university management, which sets the general policy. The Counselling, Training and Development Center conducts training and workshops and targeted activities at the request of the faculty and with the approval of the university management to bridge the gap between academic and practical acceleration until the curricula are officially changed.

Diversity

Most of the students at Jinan University are between 18 and 30 years old and merely from the middle class. On Tripoli campus, there are students from Tripoli, Koura, Zgharta, and Akkar (just to name a few). On Saida campus, there are students from Beirut, from the south and from most of the neighbouring areas.

The variety of students in time periods occurred according to variables in higher education decisions, international or local developments, or labour market requirements. Most recently, during the Corona period, the number of the elderly age group, especially those pursuing their studies after retirement age, increased, and the number of

non-resident students in Lebanon from Lebanese and of different nationalities increased.

There is a significant increase of student numbers from year to year. The number of students is expected to increase to approximately 50% in the Bachelor's programmes. The institution deals with this development by increasing the teaching staff and in parallel increasing the administrative and technical staff. Additionally, classrooms, laboratories, and equipment are expanded.

As highlighted in all meetings during the site-visit, the following measures ensure that the teaching and learning plans meet the needs of all students:

- Taking into account the general differences (social, economic and political)

- Organising workshops for the academic staff on the importance of diversity in the educational process

- Opening several sections in different languages for the same course during the semester, in order to take into account, the different languages of students

- Opening a new required course for international students in the goal of adapting the given curriculum with the curriculum in their countries.

- Developing a special curriculum for transfer students from vocational education (Nursing Sciences) to higher education in coordination with the Nurses' Syndicate.[13]

- Creating language courses for international students in the master's program.

- Taking into consideration students with special needs.

Student Life Cycle

The university organises the student life cycle starting with the "Orientation Day" for undergraduate students, where the new student in Tripoli and in Sidon becomes familiar with the university's regulations written in the student guide, the responsible personnel, and the facilities available in one day. Afterwards, each dean and his academic and administrative team meet with new students before or during the first week of studies to explain the details related to studying, courses, exams, and get to know the students to break the ice between everyone, among the students themselves and between the students and the faculty administration. Then, the student engages in the university life through activities, the most important of which are "Open Day", courses, student committees, and clubs.

The profile of the desired student is read from the submitted application that includes much information, including the student's name and identity, certificates, address, etc. Some information about the future students is obtained from the school visits and fairs

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[13] Unfortunately, this programme is currently suspended year because the acquired knowledge in Lebanese vocational education was very low during the Corona pandemic.

that the orientation office organises during the year and through the student's answers to the followings:

- How did the student know about the university.

- The student's ambitions after studying.

- The student's status and social level to determine the extent of the need for scholarships.

Admission is regulated by the Admission Rules and Study Regulations. The Bachelor candidates undergo a placement test. The Faculty of Public Health adds an assessment of personal skills and a personal specialised interview with specialised committees in nursing, laboratories or health supervision.

The university offers various services, including:

- Sports clubs
- Center for Consultation, Training and Continuing Education
- Social Work
- Equivalency of certificates
- Center for Foreign and Arabic Languages for Non-Native Speakers
- Transport (before the Corona pandemic and the economic crisis)
- Office of Grants and Financial Support:
- Scholarships between 20 and 50%
- Work in exchange for a grant
- Students' job opportunity after graduation at the university: Many students have become employees at the university.

After graduating from a Bachelor's programme, students may apply for a Master's programme. The application has to be sent to the Admission and Registration Department and will be studied there. The final decision is taken by the Dean of Academic Affairs.

Last not least, Jinan University offers many opportunities in the field of continuing education through the Consultation, Training and Continuing Education Center by providing training sessions (long term), or workshops (short term); upon success, the trainees get certificates (Diploma) by the centre.

These options in the field of education and scientific research are related by providing individuals with skills that are complementary to educational programmes, so that the personal skills of learners increase, which positively affects their productivity in the labor market and their skills in scientific research.

Assessment

Teaching and learning with a view to the university strategy

Jinan University was founded out of a sense of social responsibility and commitment. Higher education is to be brought to areas that are weaker in terms of educational facilities. Teaching and learning is seen as the central mission of the university flanked by research and offers and activities that support the local community.

The university considers the needs of the Lebanese labour market and the surrounding communities in its study portfolio. Teaching appears modern and up-to-date.

In the view of the experts, the university is well positioned given its size and opportunities. Without any doubts, Jinan University allocates appropriate resources to teaching and learning. The staff met during the site visit was very dynamic and motivated and expressed a high commitment to Jinan University. In general, the experts deem the student-staff ratio to be appropriate.

Student centred study system

In the view of the experts Jinan University cares for its students and shows interest in the students' success: The students' learning process is continuously observed with the help of the electronic university information system, and problems and difficulties are dealt with in close consultation between students, student services and academics. The experts appreciate how the university cares even for students in financial, social and psychological straits.

Form the student side, there were no complaints regarding the workload, and the experts estimate it generally as appropriate and applicable. Students as well as staff explicitly appreciate the services offered by the university and report a well organised study process with flat hierarchies and a policy of open doors.

Academic standards and curriculum development

The expert panel assesses the academic standards of the study programmes as generally being met. The university has appropriate procedures for the development of study programmes. The responsibility of the programme content is up to academics, the compliance with university and national regulations and an appropriate study organisation are ensured.

According to the university, the content of the study programmes is based on professional and international standards and recommendations, but no programme accreditations have yet been carried out.

An intensive evaluation of the content of individual study programmes could not be carried out within the framework of the institutional assessment, but what the experts could see made a positive impression.

Practical relevance seems to be present in all programmes.

Areas for improvement

Just to name only a few: The field of Public Health is characterised by an excellent mix of teaching, research and engagement with the local community. The same applies to the Entrepreneurship Hub. From the experts' point of view, teaching benefits significantly from this: students experience the effectiveness in their daily learning. Teaching thus becomes truly activating.

The university should consistently pursue this approach in other areas as well.

Including students and alumni in the programme assessment process, and opening a discussion with them on the topic of quality of education, would be beneficial for the improvement of the learning & teaching process.

Accreditation of study programmes (especially in business and computing) would enhance the reputation of studies. However, the costs and benefits would have to be

weighed up well – annual licence fees for accreditation status alone do not seem to make sense to the experts, especially in view of the current crisis in Lebanon.

Recommendation

The university should consider establishing explicit mobility windows for outgoings and (in the context of greater cooperation with other universities) also for incoming students in all study programmes in order to promote internationalisation. Even more opportunities for virtual exchange should be established: Virtual mobility using the international partnerships is worth exploring.

3.5. Research

The criterion focuses on the research profile and academic goals of the institution and whether the profile fits the institutional strategy. Moreover, the experts check whether the academic standards are fulfilled, how the research process is organised and supported by the institution and how research is evaluated within the institution. They also check how the training of young researchers is organised, how the institution assures the academic standards of the training of young researchers and their rights.

Current status

Research and institutional strategies

Research is part of the institutional strategy and organisation. Jinan University has established a Scientific Committee for Evaluation and Review, in which members from all faculties and departments work together to develop a joint research strategy for the future and, in consultation with the departments and the university management, draw up proposals for research activities to be included in the planning. The various research priorities and "research axes" are updated annually with ideas from departments and faculties, from individual researchers and students, and from neighbouring communities.

Research and promotions

Research takes place at Jinan University in almost all faculties in the form of special projects, in the health laboratories, and through publications (also in an own journal, the Al-Jinan Journal) and through external collaboration.

Table 4 presents some numbers on research activities at Jinan University.

	No. of researchers	Research expenditure (2021-2022), L.L.	Publications 2020/2021/2022
Total	84	1,428,428,902	114
By academic unit			
Business Administration	11	285,685,780	25
Literature & Humanities	38	714,214,451	51
Communication	3	157,127,179	3

Public Health	8	185,695,757	4
Education	18	71,421,445	21
Science	2	8,570,573	2
Political Science	4	5,713,716	8

Table 4: Research activities at Jinan University

Academic cooperation plays an important role in the university's research policy. There are several agreements on joint research with foreign universities. For instance, the Faculty of Public Health has a years-long record of scientific collaborations in different aspects of applied research. Since 2010, an active research group published scientific findings in collaboration with various institutions including the Lebanese University and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture of Tripoli and North Lebanon. Parts of this long-term research were funded by the Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research. Separately, a newer line of research was established in 2015 in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean to analyse health research in the Eastern Mediterranean, which has also resulted in some publications to date. Besides, this cooperation made the Faculty of Public Health a "WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Research and Bibliometrics".

Due to the increasing importance of research, the university has taken several support measures, including the adoption of research contracts, the contractual obligation of university professors to produce annual research papers and the promotion of research partnerships between professors and students. According to the self-evaluation report, Jinan University is committed to create an environment that encourages and supports research in all areas. For instance, academics as well as students of higher semesters are recommended to participate in local and international conferences. Participation is explicitly welcomed and financially supported if even possible. Students are encouraged to conduct research that addresses the needs and demands of the society and the job market.

The university laboratories and the library are continuously improved and developed. The Scientific Committee strives to follow the latest developments in the scientific, medical, material, intellectual and legal fields and to take their findings into account when the research axes of the faculties are discussed.

Training of young researchers

Table 5 shows some numbers on PhD students at Jinan University.

Fall 2022-2023	No. of PhD students	% Female	% International	PhD graduates (last 3 years)
Total	338	85 ~ 25.1%	241 ~ 71.3%	132
By academic unit				
Business Administration	42	6 ~ 14.3%	25 ~ 59.5%	2021-2022: 19 2020-2021: 22 2019-2020: 6

Literature & Humanities	296	79 ~ 26.7%	216 ~ 73%	2021-2022: 28 2020-2021: 30 2019-2020: 27

Table 5: Young researchers formation

According to the self-evaluation report, Jinan University is deeply committed to building and enhancing the scientific and knowledge-based research aspect of its researchers. It strives to provide high-quality experiences centred around the researcher and their research. This is achieved through guidance on how to prepare research and equip researchers to participate and engage effectively and responsibly in a changing world. In this context, the university has set up a guidance office to provide appropriate academic counselling tailored to the abilities of all interested parties. Besides, a training centre exists that works to keep up with young people from inside and outside the university with training courses in health, economics, and administration (e.g., SPSS, specialised training, etc. …)

In general, Jinan University wants to provide a stimulating research environment that relies on multiple methods to help researchers develop their capabilities, it is also keen on providing outstanding academic programmes that rely on modern and innovative methods that improve and enhance the skills of researchers. Some of the concepts and measures that support the qualification of young researchers include:

- Providing a university environment capable of accommodating researchers and investing in their abilities.

- Jinan University provides an academic body made up of specialists in various fields who possess proven scientific knowledge and skills.

- The nature of selecting and dealing with scientific material is based on conviction and awareness.

- Enriching the university library with its electronic and paper content.

- Assisting the researcher in checking literary theft and controlling content, where plagiarism rates are checked through precise software.

Currently, the Jinan University is planning an annual youth conference that will focus on current research and will be organised and led by the students themselves. The university will provide the relevant scientific facilities and equipment.

Young researchers are invited to be an active part in the university community either in academic or administrative positions.

Jinan University regularly organises doctoral days that focus on topics of multiple disciplines, allowing esp. young researchers to present their projects and exchange opinions about them with supervising professors in dialogue sessions to evaluate their research and put it on the accurate scientific path.

Assessment

According to the experts, Jinan University is very active in research. The experts appreciate that research activities of the academic staff are encouraged by the university. Research interest and publication frequency are considered when hiring new

academics. The on-site discussions also revealed that students are encouraged to participate in research projects.

Young scientists are obviously supported and promoted by the institution in many ways. The university is aware of international requirements for good research, the protection of the rights of young scientists and the fight against plagiarism.

The experts welcome the fact that there is a research agenda in each faculty, which is discussed and coordinated internally and with the university and is closely linked to the study content. Compared to the total budget, the share of own funds invested in research is low. However, the experts are aware that there are virtually no government funding opportunities in Lebanon. This makes the diverse activities around Erasmus and WHO funding even more welcome.

The equipment of the medical and biochemical research laboratories offers good conditions for current and future research. In order to maintain and preserve these research conditions, it is crucial to prioritize and respect security measures within the laboratories. Adhering to safety protocols, and handling materials responsibly, are essential to uphold a safe and conducive research environment for both present and future endeavors.

The Department of Public Health and the Faculty of Literature and Humanities can be described as real beacons: thoroughly internationally competitive, diversely networked and with an affinity for research. The visibly interested and motivated staff and the research-savvy deans certainly play a decisive role in this. In general, the experts acknowledge a broad engagement of the staff in research activities and its integration in the curricula through projects and during internships.

From the experts' point of view, there are remarkable examples of research projects in cooperation with local communities, e.g., the project to explain street names in Tripoli with explanatory panels under the names.

Areas for improvement

The university already has a wide range of contacts that could also be expanded into doctoral opportunities. For example, joint doctoral schools with foreign universities would be conceivable.

Recommendations

Jinan University should continue to support and increase its policy of incentives for research achievements of its academic staff. Sabbaticals for research should also be considered.

Strategic partnership contracts with universities abroad should be increased to offer more postgraduate/doctorate for the young scientists (e.g., via Erasmus+ cooperations).

3.6. Institution and society

The experts check whether the strategy of the institution takes the needs of the society into account. They also examine the activities with which the institution connects to the society among others with cooperation, internationalisation, entrepreneurship, diversity. In addition, the experts review whether the activities fit the strategy.

Current status

Considering the needs of society

According to the self-assessment report, Jinan University aims to address the needs of local society in all its offerings and policies. The central goal of the university is to provide access to higher education for the largest majority of the local community. This is clearly demonstrated by the affordable tuition fees, which are being maintained even after the economic crisis has worsened, in order to prevent young people from being deprived of their educational opportunities. Moreover, Jinan university offers scholarships to marginalised categories ensuring access to education. Special scholarships are given to students with disabilities in all three study levels.

Among its strategic goals, the university attaches great importance to social responsibility; this appears practically either through the reasonable tuition fees from which a high number of students have recently benefited – or through various services such as volunteering to which students are encouraged via the Volunteering Club which was established to provide services and aids to a wide variety of the local community. The strategic goals of the university show, in the society section, the interest given to expanding collaboration with societal actors, serving its causes, and keeping up with its various problems.

Jinan university aims also to provide the community with continuous learning which led to promoting the use of technology in its educational tools, especially during the remote teaching period due to the COVID-19 crisis; the university succeeded in shifting to online teaching through training offered to its staff and concluding contracts, mainly the one with Google that contributed to this success.

In the view of the university management, several indicators give evidence on the success of the strategic goals regarding society:

- An increase in the number of registered students that benefited from the affordable tuition fees during the last few years, after the beginning of the economic crisis, indicates the achievement of the goal to avoid youth deprivation from education.

- The continuity of accepting students with disabilities indicates the benefit of the scholarships given to this category of students.

- An increase in collaborating entities indicates wider cooperation with society.

- An increase in the number of service users (skills development programmes, Turkish language courses…)

- The focus on offering the "Social Entrepreneurship" course to the majority of students indicates the wish to empower students by providing them with social responsibility and entrepreneurship tools to solve community problems.

The university carries out a range of cultural and intellectual activities on important and contemporary topics in cooperation with many associations and organisations, such as the concepts of citizenship, conflict resolution and arbitration, and human rights. The university has also established the Center for Islamic Studies and Sharia to cover the needs of those who wish to study Sharia sciences, in addition to qualifying the Foreign Language Education Center (English, French, Turkish, Chinese, etc.) and the Arabic Language Education Center for non-speakers, in addition to providing services in the

fields of consulting and training to support the university staff for continuous professional development. The university relies on dialogue and awareness-raising, as it enhances and develops the social vision, based on its own vision of transparency and honesty.

Since its foundation, the university has worked on ratifying internal and external agreements with different objectives such as training or academic cooperation. One of its strategic goals is also to promote cooperation with the surrounding community inside and outside the country and to seek new opportunities that may further advance the profile of the institution as well as graduate opportunities.

According to the self-evaluation report, one of the most important objectives of the university remains in reinforcing its relations with the alumni, promoting their presence and cooperation in the improvement of the institution, and shedding light on their success inside and outside Lebanon.

Connection to civil society

Jinan University seeks continuously to present itself as a reflection of the community of Tripoli – the city of origin – with its diversity and differences. The university sees itself as an image of the Lebanese population, reflecting the diversity in religions, and nationalities of its residents since it includes a big number of Syrians and Palestinians.

Different forms of cooperation with different institutions have been established: academic, research, business sectors, and societal actors with the main aim of achieving better education and meeting society's issues and problems. One example may be the training agreements for students:

- The Faculty of Public Health signed many cooperation agreements offering training to Nursing and Medical Laboratory Technology students with healthcare institutions in Tripoli, Koura, Saida, Nabatieh, Tyre most notably Mazloum, Haykel, Jabal Amel, Hamshari, and Hammoud university hospitals and many others.

- The Faculty of Sciences signed cooperation agreements with the Union of Municipalities at Minieh-Dennieh and Minieh Governmental Hospital, to ensure training to the students and obtain data for scientific research.

- The Translation Department (Faculty of Literature and Humanities) signed agreements allowing students to receive training in private translation offices.

Besides officially signed agreements, Jinan university collaborates with a wide number of institutions to provide students with training through semestrial or yearly correspondences: in the medical sector, in the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture of Tripoli CCIAT, in the Beirut stock exchange, Tripoli Port, the Central Bank of Lebanon as well as many other banks and industries.

Last not least to name the Faculty of Mass Communication: since its establishment, the faculty has collaborated with different media companies such as the main TV channels of the Country (LBC- NEW TV) and main newspapers such as Annahar. This fact has recently been affected by COVID-19 and the economic crisis that made students transfer their training to local companies in Tripoli.

An important university project to be mentioned is "The Hub"[14], a social project that aims at addressing the problems of university students in particular and young people in general. It is a focal point for all activities and innovations, not only for university students but also for the surrounding community in Tripoli and the North in general. This project offers a long list of services that aim at promoting social entrepreneurship and empowering the community youth through various activities and services.

Within the framework of motivating students to social entrepreneurship, Jinan University and the Consulting and Training Center at the university participated in the "Hult Prize" global competition[15], an international competition open to university students from around the world in which they compete to prepare distinctive projects aimed at addressing difficult and chronic social challenges, and the focus of the competition that year was to fight unemployment.

Assessment

The experts highly appreciate the strong and active affection of Jinan University to its local neighbourhood as well as to Lebanese society needs. The university's mission confirms both the commitment and the responsibility for the society, which is concretely implemented in events, courses and other activities aimed at the public. From the experts' point of view, the focus on disadvantaged regions in Lebanon is particularly positive.

The self-evaluation report as well as the discussions on site also gave proof that university executives, staff and students actively live the university mission. There is close cooperation with institutions in the surrounding area and the university sees itself as an important part of the further development of society. In the eyes of the experts, the activities around the Entrepreneurship Hub have lighthouse character. Especially in the current crisis, a commitment that focuses on the strengths of the individual and promotes taking one's destiny actively into one's own hands is indispensable.

The experts gained the impression, that all academic training is closely linked to the labour market and to the local communities as possible future employers. However, there are no formalised processes for involvement in curriculum development; exchanges are more informal and individual.

Diversity is visible when you enter the university. The accessibility immediately catches the eye, as do the disabled-friendly sports facilities, which are a matter of course at Jinan University.

Explicit education about and action against hate speech is taken at the university, which sees itself as a safe space in which disputes may only take place in a scientifically guided and factual manner. The experts highly appreciate how Jinan University promotes human values, respect, and human rights in society. The fact that the university encounters a grateful and fertile environment can be seen as a great advantage that opens opportunities for further development.

It should also be emphasised that Jinan University plays a major role in the field of health care, both in education and in laboratory work and cooperation with health care institutions, both locally and internationally.

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[14] http://www.jinan.edu.lb/pages/en/al-mashghal--the-hub/#tab-Why-Al-Mashghal-547 (accessed 15 April 2023)

[15] https://www.hultprize.org/ (accessed 15 April 2023)

Areas for improvement

The strong link with society could be used to implement more applied research projects with society, focusing on issues of modern Lebanon, and could become a subject of teaching. This could also open doors to international researchers.

Recommendation

Jinan University should involve alumni and employers in formal curriculum development processes.

3.7. Quality assurance

The criterion focuses on the internal and external mechanisms used by the institution to monitor and improve its quality. The experts check the existing quality assurance concept of the institution, which indicators are used for monitoring the achievement of objectives and how the institution and the persons responsible for the programme systematically collect, analyse, and use relevant information about their activities. Moreover, the experts examine whether quality assurance is used regularly, systematically, and effectively for quality enhancement, if quality feedback loops are closed and how the institution fosters the development of a quality culture in general.

Current status

The quality assurance concept

According to the self-evaluation report, the quality management of Jinan University aims to provide the best achieved and developed services throughout the university at the level of academic, administrative and university services. The following strategic quality goals are set:

- Implementing internationally approved quality standards in a sustainable manner
- Obtaining institutional accreditation and programme accreditation

To achieve these objectives, the following principles are implemented:

At the administrative level:

- Clear and flexible working mechanisms
- Integrated management team
- Decentralization of decisions
- Continuous planning and development

At the student level:

- Student council
- Activation of the Alumni Directorate

- Activities inside and outside the university

The internal quality assurance system is designed as a holistic system that covers teaching and learning as well as the administration and daily management.

At the students' side, graduates and undergraduates participate in online end-of-term course evaluations. These are anonymous evaluations in which their data is used for many several ends, used by instructors for improving their courses when they teach the course again, also may be used by departments in considering tenure and promotion. Students usually complete the survey when they receive notification that their grade for a course has been posted, however, students are prevented from being able to view their online grade for a class until they submit the evaluation.

Indicators and collection of information

The Quality Department conducts a variety of surveys and data collection activities on a regular basis. Data is collected on the students' relationship with the University in all its elements (lecturer evaluation, course evaluation, staff evaluation, annual evaluation, etc.) through questionnaires in the UMS (University Management System) that students can fill in. The results will be analysed and reported to the university management for conclusions.

The following performance indicators are used in the various surveys:

- Direct communication with the students

- Programme compatibility with the technological development

- Compliance with the educational standards

- Students' success rates

- Compatibility with the labor market

- Masters' admission and acceptance rate

Another source of information and suggestions are the "Complaints and Suggestions Boxes" distributed in all areas of the University. These, together with the suggestions of the Quality Department, are forwarded to the relevant offices.

Quality management distinguishes between qualitative and quantitative information:

Qualitative information include feedback from students and faculty on their experiences and satisfaction with the institution, information about the learning environment and teaching methods used by instructors, data on the success of specific programmes or initiatives, form of the dean's opinion on the performance of the university professor, end of course report, Annual report, etc. ...

Quantitative information include student enrolment and graduation data, student achievement and performance data (test scores, grades), financial information, such as budget and expenditure data, information about faculty and staff, including their qualifications and teaching experience, Data on the availability and utilization of resources (classrooms and equipment).

A whole set of practices aims at improving and maintaining the quality of work across different university's units. First, the quality manager reviews data to find potential issues that cause delays in specific operations and, consequently, decrease productivity

and waste time. Then, quality will be assessed and evaluated. Data assessment helps defining operations that are the most affected by poor quality. In this step, the quality team implements the previously documented data quality standards and processes to manage the robust quality of the data throughout its lifecycle. The team may organise meetings to explain to employees the new data management rules. also, the quality team members can train employees on how to use a quality tool to perform remediation.

Regarding the end-of-semester assessment by students:

Responsibilities for quality assurance are distributed among different levels; this is done by:

- Adopting a teaching method that focuses on developing analytical and creative abilities.

- Evaluating educational effectiveness: evaluating the teaching methods used, the adequacy of facilities and equipment, and analysing students researches to reflect the level of academic achievement.

- Developing research capabilities, building personal identity, professional creativity, and moral awareness…

Systematic analysis and closing feedback loops

At Jinan University, the information gathered and analysed is typically used to assess the achievement of its objectives in several ways. First, the information is used to assess the overall effectiveness of the university's programmes and services.

Second, the information is used to assess the progress of the university towards its specific goals and objectives. The university's goal is to increase graduation rates, graduation rate data is used to track the university's progress towards achieving this goal over time.

Finally, the information is used to inform decision-making and planning at the university. If the data indicates that a particular programme or service is not meeting student needs, the university uses this information to make changes and improvements to the programme. The information collected and analysed is seen as an important tool for evaluating the institution's performance and making evidence-based decisions to support its mission and goals.

University quality culture

The culture of quality at the university is focused on controlling the completion of work with the greatest accuracy and effort, while developing the educational process and providing the best service to students, as well as activating teamwork with a commitment to quality work, working mechanisms and policies that achieve an effective management system, administrative and academic staff distinguished by their professional performance and scientific and practical experience. With the aim of fostering a culture of quality, the university endeavours to

- Strengthen continuous awareness about quality culture.

- Provide reference standards for quality assurance institutions and bodies to provide their services.

- Apply permanent development in quality management.
- Adopting programmes to motivate and reward individuals who excel in applying quality.

Assessment

At Jinan University, quality and quality assurance is given a high priority from the experts' point of view. The Quality Department appears well staffed. The quality issue is widely accepted in the university. Regular surveys and data collection take place: on course level, on faculty level. No matter who was asked, they all emphasised the importance and usefulness of these data collections and surveys, and that it is precisely through them that the need for action can be identified and improvements in courses, but also in management, made possible.

All members of the Jinan community are committed to keeping the university and its courses attractive, up-to-date and competitive, and to developing them further – thus ensuring a high level of quality in higher education. In discussions with students and alumni, the experts were able to see this high level for themselves.

In the opinion of the expert panel, the concept, the approach to quality management is there. However, the details of implementation still need to be worked out. Data is collected and made available to the faculties – but the real analysis, the basis on which this is institutionalised, the further handling of the data, the definition and specification of key performance indicators in general are still a long way off.

The experts here almost have the impression that the university assumes that all you must do is collect enough data of different kinds and the departments will know what to do with it. In the experts' view, the systematic approach is lacking here. The experts feel confirmed in this assessment by the various interviews: The interviewees all knew that surveys take place regularly, from which figures are generated and forwarded to the department and the management. But what actually happens, which analyses lead to which results and measures, they could not say.

Areas for improvement

Existing quality management practices should be systematised at all levels:

- At the level of courses, programmes, departments, and faculties, as well as at the level of university management, the indicators to be used for assessment and for further development are to be identified and defined.

- Once the indicators have been defined, they need to be analysed and action taken. It is important to link this to quality management and university administration and then define the follow-up process.

- The analysis, results, actions, and follow-up should be documented and made be transparent and accessible to all members of the university, who can also be actively involved in the whole process. The analysis of strengths and weaknesses in the preparation of the self-evaluation report would be an excellent starting point. However, it should not be left to the compilation alone; the structured analysis and evaluation is crucial.

Recommendation and conditions

Jinan University must elaborate its quality management system with clear indicators for the different aspects of higher education on all levels of the institution and make it transparent for all members of the university community.

Together with the Quality Management Department, all levels of Jinan University – departments, faculties, services, laboratories – must formally define and document their quality processes (e.g., data collection – analysis – action – follow-up) and regularly feed back to the university management.

Feedback-loops, esp. with students, must be closed (e.g. at the beginning of a new semester make public what has been changed or improved and why, along the lines of: "you said … – we did …").

Students should be given a more active part in the QA processes.

4. Final assessment

Overall assessment

Jinan University showed a clear profile with a strong emphasis on high quality education and research as well as social responsibility and progress.

During their visit, the experts observed a strong commitment to creating educational opportunities, particularly in the more educationally deprived areas around Tripoli and Saida. Besides, Jinan University is characterised by a distinctly multicultural and tolerant approach to education. The experts talked to students and staff who are explicitly convinced about having chosen the right institution to study or to work for.

Profile and strategies of Jinan University correspond to internationally accepted standards in higher education. The strategies both on university and on faculty level conform to the university mission and appear consistent and fit for purpose to reach the institution's objectives. All activities not only consider the university's mission and the original intentions of the founder but go far beyond. However, the student body has no formal active role in the strategic development. The university should consider greater involvement of the student body in planning processes.

Departments and deans seem to be very strong. The management level of the university takes this into account and includes the deans in the further development of the university strategy.

The governance of Jinan University appears to be clearly structured and documented. The responsibilities and procedures of the main university bodies are set and described in the constitution, the bylaws, and in the several policies. All appears well thought out and applicable. All the people working in the administration and management that could be talked to appeared very experienced and competent. The university is obviously well equipped and efficient in terms of governance, which is also reflected in the fact that the University of Jinan has so far coped well with the current economic crisis and, unlike many other universities in Lebanon, has not lost any staff.

An open-door policy was emphasised several times in the discussions on site. The university makes efforts to get its stakeholder groups involved. Various councils and committees support the management and actively contribute to the smooth operation and development of the institution.

Jinan University lives a transparent and easily accessible information policy. Everything important about studying and the university is easily accessible, and the university is very active on social media: the timeliness of the posts and the number of followers speak for themselves.

The independence of academic decisions is guaranteed. The university owner, the foundation, does not interfere. All responsibility for research and teaching lies with the academics. Based on the discussions held and the documents provided by the university, the expert panel concludes that independence is guaranteed in both academic and teaching activities.

In the view of the experts, Jinan University provides sufficient resources to sustain its operation at the desired quality level. The campuses appear well-maintained, the buildings are in good condition, as are the classrooms. The experts appreciate the barrier-free buildings that allow students with disabilities to access almost all areas of the campus. For the evaluators, this is another sign of the social responsibility to which Jinan University is committed.

The financial management is professional; the process of preparing the yearly budget is clear and executed with the collaboration of the faculties.

The expert group welcomes the fact that the university is doing everything possible to ensure that students with less financial support can also enrol. The severe economic crisis in particular is a great challenge for everyone, and the fact that the financial administration is trying to keep fees low is a great signal of social responsibility for the experts.

In the view of the experts the staff of the university – academics and non-academics as well – seems appropriate to run a higher education institution which provides high quality education to its students. Many of the staff have academic degrees from foreign universities. All teachers the experts could talk to presented themselves as highly motivated. The students who could be spoken to emphasised the good teaching climate and the open-door policy that characterises the teaching staff. The university's procedures for recruiting and later continuous training and developing staff seem appropriate and fulfil academic standards: The selection of academics is always based on an academic decision that is justified and documented in a standardised manner.

International mobility is obviously promoted, e.g., for short period stays abroad, for participation of conferences, workshops etc.

The experts appreciate the existence of a concept for human resource development covering all staff.

The library has a rather small stock of reference books, but this is more than compensated for by the large libraries accessible online. From the experts' point of view, however, more library workstations for students would be useful. Besides, off-campus access to digital libraries would be a welcome addition for students and faculty who also work from home.

The IT infrastructure of the university is up to date and equipped with modern and functional software which was also affirmed by different stakeholder groups during the site visit. The UMS system complies with the latest standards. The experts appreciate the fact that teachers receive technical and didactic support in the development of virtual learning offers.

Teaching and learning is seen as the central mission of Jinan University flanked by research and offers and activities that support the local community. The university

considers the needs of the Lebanese labour market and the surrounding communities in its study portfolio. Teaching appears modern and up-to-date.

In the view of the experts, the university is well positioned given its size and opportunities. Without any doubts, Jinan University allocates appropriate resources to teaching and learning. The staff met during the site visit was very dynamic and motivated and expressed a high commitment to Jinan University. In general, the experts deem the student-staff ratio to be appropriate.

In the view of the experts Jinan University cares for its students and shows interest in the students' success: The students' learning process is continuously observed with the help of the electronic university information system, and problems and difficulties are dealt with in close consultation between students, student services and academics. The experts appreciate how the university cares even for students in financial, social and psychological straits.

The expert panel assesses the academic standards of the study programmes as generally being met. The university has appropriate procedures for the development of study programmes. The responsibility of the programme content is up to academics, the compliance with university and national regulations and an appropriate study organisation are ensured.

According to the experts, Jinan University is very active in research. The experts appreciate that research activities of the academic staff are encouraged by the university. Research interest and publication frequency are considered when hiring new academics. Young scientists are obviously supported and promoted by the institution in many ways. The university is aware of international requirements for good research, the protection of the rights of young scientists and the fight against plagiarism.

The experts welcome the fact that there is a research agenda in each faculty, which is discussed and coordinated internally and with the university and is closely linked to the study content. The equipment of the medical and biochemical research laboratories offers excellent conditions for current and future research.

The Department of Public Health and the Faculty of Literature and Humanities can be described as real beacons: thoroughly internationally competitive, diversely networked and with an affinity for research. The visibly interested and motivated staff and the research-savvy deans certainly play a decisive role in this. In general, the experts acknowledge a broad engagement of the staff in research activities and its integration in the curricula through projects and during internships.

The experts highly appreciate the strong and active affection of Jinan University to its local neighbourhood as well as to Lebanese society needs. The university's mission confirms both the commitment and the responsibility for the society, which is concretely implemented in events, courses and other activities aimed at the public. From the experts' point of view, the focus on disadvantaged regions in Lebanon is particularly positive.

The self-evaluation report as well as the discussions on site also gave proof that university executives, staff and students actively live the university mission. There is close cooperation with institutions in the surrounding area and the university sees itself as an important part of the further development of society. In the eyes of the experts, the activities around the Entrepreneurship Hub have lighthouse character. Especially in the current crisis, a commitment that focuses on the strengths of the individual and promotes taking one's destiny actively into one's own hands is indispensable.

Explicit education about and action against hate speech is taken at the university, which sees itself as a safe space in which disputes may only take place in a scientifically guided and factual manner. The experts highly appreciate how Jinan University promotes human values, respect, and human rights in society. The fact that the university encounters a grateful and fertile environment can be seen as a great advantage that opens opportunities for further development.

At Jinan University, quality and quality assurance is given a high priority from the experts' point of view. The Quality Department appears well staffed. The quality issue is widely accepted in the university. Regular surveys and data collection take place: on course level, on faculty level. However, the details of implementation still need to be worked out. Data is collected and made available to the faculties – but the real analysis, the basis on which this is institutionalised, the further handling of the data, the definition and specification of key performance indicators in general are still a long way off.

Otherwise, however, the University of Jinan presents a convincing picture and, in the opinion of the panel of experts, meets European higher education standards.

Assessment levels

Level	Assessment	Description
A	**Passed.**	The institution fulfils or exceeds all criteria. All activities are in line with the profile and objectives of the institution and provided at a high academic level.
B	**Passed subject to conditions**	The institution does not fulfil some relevant criteria. However, the institution should be able to remedy the shortcomings **within nine months** after the assessment.
C	**Suspension of the accreditation procedure**	The institution does not fulfil relevant criteria, but it is likely, that it will be able to remedy the shortcomings within 18 months after the assessment. The HEI may apply for a resumption of the accreditation procedure.
D	**Failed**	The institution does not fulfil relevant criteria, and is not expected to be able to meet all assessment criteria within 18 months' time.

Assessment grades

No	Assessment criteria	Assessment
1	Institutional profile and strategy	A
2	Governance	A
3	Resources	A
4	Teaching and Learning	A
5	Research	A
6	Institution and Society	A

7	Quality assurance	B

Conditions:

- Jinan University must elaborate its quality management system with clear indicators for the different aspects of higher education on all levels of the institution and make it transparent for all members of the university community.
- Together with the Quality Management Department, all levels of Jinan University – departments, faculties, services, laboratories – must formally define and document their quality processes (e.g., data collection – analysis – action – follow-up) and regularly feed back to the university management.
- Feedback-loops, esp. with students, must be closed (e.g., at the beginning of a new semester make public what has been changed or improved and why, along the lines of: "you said … – we did …").

5. Accreditation recommendation of the expert panel to the evalag Accreditation Commission

According to the expert team, Jinan University meets **evalag**'s criteria for institutional accreditation. Therefore, the team recommends Jinan University for accreditation and recommends awarding the **evalag** label for institutional accreditation.

The team attaches the following conditions (C) and recommendations (R) to the accreditation recommendation:

Institutional profile and strategy

R 1 The formal roles of the departments, the service institutions, the deans and the university management and their joint contribution to the strategic development of the university should be more clearly defined, especially the new departments that have been launched recently, to develop a more transparent set of responsibilities and reporting.

R 2 Students should become an active part in the university's planning processes, for example by presenting and discussing intended plans at specially convened student assemblies.

Governance

R 3 The university should return to the election of student representatives instead of nomination.

Resources

R 4 The university should establish more places with tables and sockets dedicated to students across all campuses. Overall, the number of work spaces permanent available should meet at least 13% of the number of students

Teaching and learning

R 5   The university should consider establishing explicit mobility windows for outgo-
ings and (in the context of greater cooperation with other universities) also for
incoming students in all study programmes in order to promote internationalisa-
tion. Even more opportunities for virtual exchange should be established: Virtual
mobility using the international partnerships is worth exploring.

Research

R 6   Jinan University should continue to support and increase its policy of incentives
for research achievements of its academic staff. Sabbaticals for research should
also be considered.

R 7   Strategic partnership contracts with universities abroad should be increased to
offer more postgraduate/doctorate for the young scientists (e.g., via Erasmus+
cooperations).

Institution and society

R 8   Jinan University should involve alumni and employers in formal curriculum de-
velopment processes.

Quality assurance

C 1   Jinan University must elaborate its quality management system with clear indi-
cators for the different aspects of higher education on all levels of the institution
and make it transparent for all members of the university community.

C 2   Together with the Quality Management Department, all levels of Jinan Univer-
sity – departments, faculties, services, laboratories – must formally define and
document their quality processes (e.g., data collection – analysis – action – fol-
low-up) and regularly feed back to the university management.

C 3   Feedback-loops, esp. with students, must be closed (e.g., at the beginning of a
new semester make public what has been changed or improved and why, along
the lines of: "you said … – we did …").

R 9   Students should be given a more active part in the QA processes.

6. Statement of Jinan University to the assessment report

1-   Institutional profile and strategy:

As for "Recommendations":

evalag:

The formal roles of the departments, the service institutions, the deans and the univer-
sity management and their joint contribution to the strategic development of the

university should be more clearly defined, especially the new departments that have been launched recently, to develop a more transparent set of responsibilities and reporting.

Students should become an active part in the university's planning processes, for example by presenting

and discussing intended plans at specially convened student assemblies.

University's comments:

- Regarding the recommendation for regular SWOT/ SCOC analyses of the university's individual fields of action, we recognize the value of such assessments. Incorporating SWOT analyses before the start of each new academic year could provide valuable insights for the university's planning processes, and we will certainly consider implementing this suggestion.

- In response to the recommendations about defining the formal roles of departments, service institutions, deans, and university management, we understand the importance of clarity and transparency in responsibilities and reporting. While developing our strategic plan, we emphasized on down-top inputs. We understand the importance of fostering collaboration and inclusivity in the planning process.

- In our self-assessment, we have emphasized the framework that was adopted to develop the strategic plan, however, a formal policy/procedure that defines the roles and responsibilities of different departments, service institutions, deans, and university management is important. This framework will help ensure that the strategic development process is effective and aligned with the overall objectives of the university. In our pursuit of a defined framework for strategic development, we will consider your concerns about the importance to prevent faculties or individual departments from becoming overly independent or engaging in competition that undermines the overall university strategy. While we recognize the need for compromises and flexibility in a dynamic environment, we ensure that any adjustments align with the general objectives of the university. This approach safeguards the institution's overall direction and goals while allowing for adaptability in the face of changing circumstances.

- Additionally, we appreciate the suggestion to involve students in the university's planning processes. We believe in the power of student engagement and their unique perspectives. By organizing student assemblies dedicated to presenting and discussing intended plans, we can create an inclusive environment that fosters collaboration and enhances the overall university experience. We acknowledge that we are in the early phase of this journey and understand that student engagement requires a continuous and long-term effort.

Currently, we are actively engaging our students through various means. We conduct surveys such as end-of-course assessments and the University Wellbeing survey to gather their feedback and ensure their voices are heard. These surveys provide valuable insights into their experiences and help us make informed decisions.

Furthermore, we are focused on developing our alumni network as part of the student engagement process. By maintaining a strong connection with our alumni, we can benefit from their experiences and insights, which in turn positively impact our current students.

Additionally, we have taken steps to involve students in different accreditation committees. This involvement allows them to contribute to the decision-making process and have a direct impact on shaping the university's future.

While we acknowledge that these efforts may not be exhaustive, we are fully aware of the importance of student engagement and are committed to continuously improving in this area. We understand that it is a long journey, and we will continue exploring new avenues and opportunities to enhance student involvement as you have suggested and create a truly student-centric environment.

2-   Governance:

As for "Assessment":

evalag:

It is hoped that despite the current severe crisis in the country, the good staffing will be maintained and even expanded.

University's comments:

Maintaining and expanding the administrative staff: you find a report stating the number of employees during the is at three years showing how the university has increased the number of administrative employees:

Academic years	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Total number of employees	69	106	130

evalag:

- If the university wants to further develop its international profile and – as emphasised several times – especially address foreign students as well as (potential) teachers or cooperation partners from the non- Arab world, more emphasis should be placed on a bilingual external presentation (although the experts are aware that Jinan University explicitly positions itself as an Arabic-speaking university and attaches great importance to international students also learning Arabic).

University's comments:

To be considered.

evalag:

Perhaps the labour market could be represented a little more strongly in the board.

University's comments:

The labor market is represented in the Board of Trustees:

N.N.[16]   Former Minister of Social Affairs

N.N.   Member of Parliament

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[16] Anonymised for publication

N.N.   Professor at the Lebanese University

N.N.   Banker

N.N.   Engineer

N.N.   Engineer

N.N.   Lawyer

As for "Recommendation":

evalag:

The university should return to the election of student representatives instead of nomination.

University's comments:

- The students' council members must be elected instead of being nominated.

We will take this issue into consideration and re-elect the students' council members in the upcoming university years.

3-   Facilities and equipment:

As for "Recommendation":

evalag:

The university should establish more places with tables and sockets dedicated to students across all campuses. Overall, the number of work spaces permanent available should meet at least 13% of the number of students.

University's comments:

We would like to kindly draw your attention that we are currently in the process of constructing a new building, as such, the need for new classrooms, laboratories and accordingly new chairs, desks and sockets will be taken into account.

4-   Research:

As for "Areas for improvement":

evalag:

The university already has a wide range of contacts that could also be expanded into doctoral opportunities. For example, joint doctoral schools with foreign universities would be conceivable.

University's comments:

Joint doctoral programs are excellent ideas. It will encourage scientific cooperation between Jinan University and foreign research teams. Actually, the university is working to expand the scope of scientific research by adopting doctoral curricula. However, due to the economic and political crisis that the country is going through, there are some obstacles that may delay a bit from opening a field for a doctorate. For instance, in some faculties, the number of associate professors should be reached a certain number in order to estimate a convention with abroad for doctoral studies.

Therefore, we are currently striving to develop research cadres and surge the number of associate professors at the university to achieve this goal, which makes it easier for the student researcher to improve the quality of the research by completing postgraduate studies between JU and foreign universities. Wherefore, this goal is the requirement for each faculty to pursue the continuity of scientific research in the university and to develop its policy in this field.

As for "Recommendations":

evalag:

Jinan University should continue to support and increase its policy of incentives for research achievements of its academic staff. Sabbaticals for research should also be considered.

Strategic partnership contracts with universities abroad should be increased to offer more postgraduate/doctorate for the young scientists (e.g., via Erasmus+ cooperations).

University's comments:

Regarding the recommendations, the university is constantly keeping pace with the development of its policy in the research field, especially in developing and renewing laboratory equipment and in supporting the researchers on the financial level to motivate them to publish articles. The most important thing for the development of policy in scientific research is to work on increasing sabbaticals for research which may expand the university's opportunities to enlarge its relationship with abroad and make agreements to attract young scientists and achieve their postgraduate studies.

Emphasizing the development of scientific research policy, we would like to spotlight the courses and conferences conducted by the Faculties of Education and Communication. In addition, the university is encouraging scientific research by announcing competitions with new titles related to reality and choosing the best research, as happened in the role of working women competition, where female researchers were distinguished and won financial rewards.

Furthermore, there are procedures taken on the necessity of activating the university page and presenting the discussion titles along with the summary and the most important recommendations. We are activating the role of research committees and proposing new axes and developing them by linking the specializations. Ultimately, the university will save time for the scientific research field and openness with foreign universities under the umbrella of the scientific research progress within Jinan University in various domains.

Strikingly, we'll shed light that due to the exigency to raise the level of scientific research and with the aim of surging the level of the university's classification globally, quoting Presidential Resolution No. 712, the university has approved the following:

1.   A researcher wishing to publish research in an international journal accredited by Scopus and within the list of names of journals announced at the university, is required to submit a letter to the Dean of the Faculty that includes the title and purpose of the research and exposes it to the competent councils to approve its registration.

2.   The university affords the fees for publication of the registered research according to the rule specified above, up to 500$ per research.

3. The researcher or research team will receive a financial reward of 500$ for each published research in the aforementioned journals.

4- The Resolution applies to professors who hold master's and doctoral degrees.

Hence, the university works firmly and robustly to improve and support its policy in research achievements to attain a high level in this field.

5- Institution and society:

As for "Assessment":

evalag:

a commitment that focuses on the strengths of the individual and promotes taking one's destiny actively into one's own hands is indispensable*.

University's comments:

*concerning the entrepreneurship Hub, we would like to announce that the Hub has recently elaborated its scope of activities to include the following:

- entrepreneurship competition in partnership with entities and well-known entrepreneurs from the community.

- Activities and meetings with entrepreneurs under the title of „Don't Wait for the Opportunity, Create

- Your Own "to encourage students to take charge of creating their own future careers.

- Extra-curricular trainings – in collaboration with the training center – to promote job skills and allow students to enter more confidently into the labor market.

- Promoting partnerships with external entities (inside and outside Lebanon) for projects that serve the community and respond to the social responsibility of the university.

- Curriculum development workshops and market studies research with faculties.

- Career Hub (Job fair) to be performed periodically at the Entrepreneurship hub in collaboration with different entities inside and outside the country.

- Provide a platform for activities either from within the university or the surrounding community.

As for "areas for improvement":

evalag:

The strong link with society could be used to implement more applied research projects with society, focusing on issues of modern Lebanon, and could become a subject of teaching. This could also open doors to international researchers.

University's comments:

The "institution and Society" committee has recommended in the self-evaluation report to ensure that future research projects respond to society's needs. These researchers may lead to useful outcomes to the society and may become subject for teaching. Another recommendation was to re-consider all the signed agreements and activate the

useful ones, possibly leading the way to exchanging researching researchers with universities and research entities from outside the country.

As for "Recommendations":

evalag:

Jinan University should involve alumni and employers in formal curriculum development processes.

University's comments:

Concerning the involvement of the alumni and employers in the curriculum development process. It is crucial to mention the following:

- The "institution and Society" committee has recommended in the self-evaluation report to activate the Alumni department at the university, and consequently, to involve the alumni in different activities related to the university, including the process of curriculum development.

- The "institution and society" committee has recommended in the self-evaluation report ot inquire about the performance of the graduates through periodic surveys conducted with different stakeholders (employers). The collected data is expected to assist the university in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of its students thereby directing the course of modification and updating of the curricula to modern standards of higher education thereby equipping the students with the needed skills and knowledge.

- It is also important to mention that some of the employers are Jinan Alumni, which is expected to make them more involved in this process.

- The Hub is planning to organize workshops about issues concerned with curriculum development.

7. Accreditation decision of the evalag Accreditation Commission

In its meeting on 29 June 2023, the **evalag** Accreditation Commission unanimously decides to accredit Jinan University with the conditions (C) and recommendations (R) mentioned in chapter 5. The Accreditation Commission takes note of the university's statements. They attest to the university's high commitment to high-quality education.

Annex: Site visit schedule

Thursday, 16 March 2023

08:00 – 09:00	Internal meeting of the expert panel Transport from the Hotel to Jinan University
09:00 – 09:30	Welcome meeting with leadership of the university and quality management
09:30 – 11:30	Internal meeting of the expert panel
11:30 – 12:30	Meeting with leadership of the university and quality management
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:00	Meeting with the heads of schools and deans
15:00 – 15:30	Break, internal meeting of the expert panel
15:30 – 16:15	Meeting with teachers (full-time)
16:15 – 16:30	Break
16:30 – 17:15	Meeting with teachers (part-time)
17:15 – 18:00	Internal meeting of the expert panel: review of the first day Transport from Jinan University to the Hotel
Evening	Dinner with representatives of the university

Friday, 17 March 2023

08:00 – 09:00	Internal meeting of the expert panel Transport from the Hotel to Jinan University
09:00 – 10:30	Meeting with students
10:30 – 11:00	Break, internal meeting of the expert panel
11:00 – 12:00	Meeting with academic support units (registrar, library management, laboratory management, student services …), technical staff
12:00 – 12:30	Break, internal meeting of the expert panel
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:00	Meeting with employers, members of the local community, alumni
15:00 – 15:30	Break, internal meeting of the expert panel
15:30 – 16:30	Meeting with quality management

17:15 – 18:00	Internal meeting of the expert panel: review of the second day Transport from Jinan University to the Hotel
Evening	Short evening trip to Byblos, Dinner

Saturday, 18 March 2023

08:00 – 09:00	Internal meeting of the expert panel Transport from the Hotel to Jinan University
09:00 – 10:30	Campus visit (Tripoli campus facilities, library, laboratories)
10:30 – 12:30	Internal meeting of expert panel: review and assessment
12:30 – 13:00	Closing meeting with representatives of Jinan University
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch
Afternoon	Social programme (city visit)
Evening / night	Departure