

## Decision of the Accreditation Commission of AQAS

on the study programme:

**“Tourism Guiding” (B.Sc.), Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences (Turkish programme)**

offered by Istanbul Gelişim University, Turkey

**Based on the report of the expert panel and the discussions of the Accreditation Commission in its 70<sup>th</sup> meeting on 19/20 February 2018, the Accreditation Commission decides:**

1. The study programme **“Tourism Guiding” (Bachelor of Science, Turkish programme)** offered by the Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences of **Istanbul Gelişim University** is accredited according to the AQAS criteria for Programme Accreditation.

The accreditation is conditional.

The study programme essentially complies with the requirements defined by the criteria and thus the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version. The required adjustments can be implemented within a time period of nine months.

2. The conditions have to be fulfilled. The fulfilment of the conditions has to be documented and reported to AQAS no later than **30 November 2018**.
3. The accreditation is given for the period of **six years** and is valid until **30 September 2024**.

### Conditions:

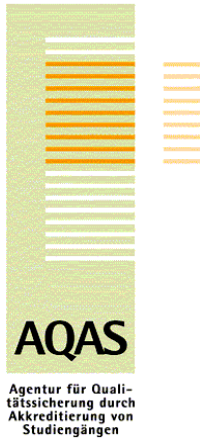
1. The intended learning outcomes on the programme and the course level have to be refined and linked to courses.
2. The course descriptions have to be updated and revised to reflect the actual assessment tools and teaching methods utilized in the courses.
3. A larger number of assessment tools, especially oral and practical assignments, has to be utilized to correspond more adequately to the learning outcomes of courses.
4. A programme-specific diploma supplement needs to be handed in.
5. The university has to present a hiring plan covering the intended positions and qualifications of staff to accommodate increasing student numbers.

The conditions were fulfilled on time.  
The Accreditation Commission confirms this with its decision of 25./26.02.2019.

The following **recommendations** are given for further improvement of the programmes:

1. The university should analyse and use data on student feedback and progression in a more consistent way, including a formal process to provide results to students.
2. Communication and guidance skills as well as language skills should be strengthened.
3. Practical applications should be used more frequently.
4. The university should hire international staff for short-term and intensive courses and lectures in order to strengthen the international profile of the programme.
5. The university should set up a research plan on the programme level.
6. The availability of state-of-the-art literature, especially of books published in English, should be improved.
7. The department should draft a quality action plan.

With regard to the reasons for this decision the Accreditation Commission refers to the attached assessment report.



## **Experts' Report**

on the bachelor degree programme:

**“Tourism Guiding” (Bachelor of Science)**

offered by Istanbul Gelişim University

Visit to the University: November 13 - 15, 2017

### **Panel of Experts:**

<b>Prof. Dr. Galal Mohamed Hamza</b>	Sultan Qaboos University, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Oman
<b>Uğur Koçum</b>	Travel Guide, Istanbul (labour market representative)
<b>Prof. Dr. Manfred Lieb</b>	Heilbronn University, Faculty of International Business, Germany
<b>Elisa Löwe</b>	Student of University of Applied Sciences Dresden, Germany (student representative)

### **Coordination:**

Dr. Dorothee Groeger, Andrea Prater      AQAS, Cologne, Germany

## **Preamble**

---

AQAS – Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes – is an independent non-profit organisation supported by more than 85 member institutions, both higher education institutions (HEIs) and academic associations. Since 2002, the agency has been accredited by the German Accreditation Council (GAC). It is therefore a notified body for accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes in Germany.

AQAS is a full member of ENQA and also listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) which confirms that our procedures comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), which all Bologna countries agreed upon as a basis for internal and external quality assurance.

AQAS is an institution founded by and working for higher education institutions and academic associations. The agency is devoted to quality assurance and quality development of both academic studies and teaching in higher education institutions. The activities of AQAS in accreditation are neither restrained to specific academic disciplines or degrees nor to a certain type of higher education institution

## **I. Accreditation procedure**

---

This report results from the external review of the bachelor programme in “Tourism Guiding” offered by Istanbul Gelişim University (IGU).

### **1. Criteria**

The assessment of the programmes is in accordance with a set of criteria for programme accreditation developed by AQAS. The criteria are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) 2015 and feature a set of indicators used to demonstrate the fulfilment of each criterion. However, criteria are met even if single indicators are not fulfilled. The indicators need to be discussed in the context of the programme as not all indicators are necessarily applicable to a programme.

### **2. Approach and methodology**

#### *Initialisation*

Istanbul Gelişim University mandated AQAS to perform the accreditation procedure in June 2017.

The university prepared a Self Evaluation Report (SER). In July 2017, IGU handed in a draft of the SER together with the relevant documentation of the study programmes and an appendix.

The appendix included e.g. an overview over statistical data of the student body (e.g. number of applications, beginners, students, graduates, student drop outs), CVs of the teaching staff, information on student services, core information on the main library and undergraduate academic regulations

AQAS checked the SER draft for completeness, comprehensibility and transparency. The final version of the SER was handed in in September 2017.

The accreditation procedure has been officially initialised by a decision of the AQAS Accreditation Commission on 28–29 August, 2017.

### *Nomination of the expert panel*

Composing the expert panel follows the stakeholder principle. Involved are consequently representatives from the respective discipline/s, the labour market and students. Furthermore, AQAS follows the principles for the selection of experts by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).

The Accreditation Commission nominated the expert panel in September 2017. AQAS informed the university thereafter about the members of the expert panel and IGU did not raise any concerns against the composition of the panel.

### *Preparation of the site visit*

Prior to the site visit, the experts reviewed the SER and submitted a short preliminary statement including open questions and potential points in need of additional information. AQAS forwarded these preliminary statements to the university as well as the panel members to increase transparency in the process and upcoming discussions during the site visit.

### *Site visit*

After review of the Self Evaluation Report, the site visit to the university took place 13 - 15 November, 2017. On site, the experts interviewed in separate discussions different stakeholders, such as the management of the university, the programme management, teaching and other staff as well as students, and consulted additional documentation as well as examples of graded work from students achievements. The visit concluded with presenting preliminary findings by the experts to the university's representatives.

### *Report writing*

Following the site visit, the expert group drafted the following report assessing the fulfilment of the AQAS criteria for programme accreditation. The report included a recommendation to the Accreditation Commission. The report was sent to IGU for comments.

### *Decision*

The experts' report together with the comments by IGU form the basis for the AQAS Accreditation Commission to make a decision regarding the accreditation of the programmes. Based on these documents, the Accreditation Commission decided on the accreditation on 19 - 20 February, 2018. AQAS forwarded the decision to IGU. The university had the right to appeal against the decision or any of the imposed conditions.

In March 2018, AQAS published the report and the accreditation result of the accreditation along with the names of the panel of experts.

## **II. General Information on the University**

---

Istanbul Gelişim University (IGU) was founded in 2008 as a private vocational school by the Gelişim Foundation for Education, Culture, Health and Social Development. In 2011, the institution acquired university status and has since expanded its programmes and number of students. Today, the university is characterized by a student population of ca. 22.000 and a number of teaching staff of ca. 500.

The university is divided into 3 faculties, 3 institutes, 4 graduate schools and 2 vocational schools, which offer a wide range of graduate and postgraduate programmes in the fields of economics and social sciences, fine arts, engineering and health sciences:

The university pursues the goal of becoming an international education and learning institution by running joint projects with internationally recognised schools, by setting up a global research network and by providing high quality professional education in Turkish and English. A strategic plan

2016–2020 defines these objectives together with those of further developing and implementing graduate education and improving service processes as the main targets to be achieved by the university in the near future.

According to the university, its educational approach follows the principle of creative teaching and participatory learning. The university aims at educating civically engaged, self-reliant individuals by providing excellence and highest quality in its study programmes and by fostering critical intellectual development.

Istanbul Gelişim University offers continuous scholarships, free courses, internships and job opportunities to students. It supports international student exchange programmes. At the same time, it aims to support students' individual, social and academic development during university life. Students can receive consultation and help for their needs at the Psychological Counseling Guidance Unit. As outlined by the university, it supports its students in extra-curricular activities such as student clubs and student councils, summer schools and conferences.

IGU participates in the Erasmus+ programme and encourages student and staff mobility. As outlined by the university, the number of European partner institutions is currently 73. The International Relations Office takes responsibility for the organization of mobility programmes.

The Bachelor programme “Tourism Guiding”, which started running in the academic year 2016/17, is part of the Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, the largest organizational body at IGU with regard to student numbers. It currently comprises 21 study programmes; students have the opportunity for a double major degree. Graduate and PhD programmes complement the undergraduate education. The faculty is governed by a Dean.

### III. Assessment of the study programmes

---

#### 1. Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance

*The programme is subject to the Higher Education Institution's policy and associated procedures for quality assurance, including procedures for the design, approval, monitoring, and revision of the programmes.*

*A quality-oriented culture, focusing on continuous quality enhancement, is in place. This includes regular feedback mechanisms involving both internal and external stakeholders.*

*The strategy, policies, and procedures have a formal status and are made available in published form to all those concerned. They also include roles for students and other stakeholders.*

[ESG 1.1]

#### Description

As outlined by the university, one of Gelişim University's main objectives in quality assurance lies in the effective participation of internal and external stakeholders in all activities in accordance with international quality standards.

The establishment of the quality assurance system of the university is based on ISO 9000 Quality Management System, TS EN ISO-9001: 2015, Higher Education Law No. 2547 and “Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation”. The aims, mission and vision of the university are determined according to these criteria and their appropriateness is said to be measured.

Feedback of internal and external stakeholders shall be collected within the framework of the University Quality Commission. It consists of the Rector, Vice-rector and 14 members from various faculties, institutes, vocational schools and colleges. The commission is supposed to define, implement and further develop factors necessary for the improvement of quality standards. It thus

evaluates reports, surveys and suggestions by students and external stakeholders. Additionally, an Office of Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance has been implemented which is working in coordination with the commission. The main performance indicators set at Istanbul Gelişim University are: A) Number of Programmes, b) Number of Students, c) Number of Academic Personnel, d) Rate of fullness, e) Number of Programmes teaching in English, f) Erasmus Mobility, g) Student Activities, h) Number of Research Sources, and i) Scientific Publication Numbers of Staff.

A student council offers further opportunities for students to participate in the supervision of programmes, as presented by the university.

The incorporation of feedback of internal and external stakeholders forms the basis for the further development of study programmes. Evaluation reports have to be approved by the Rector, reviewed by Deans and Heads of study programmes and acknowledged by the Senate.

Furthermore, several measures are considered to be in place to monitor a programme's quality: regular course and teaching staff assessment questionnaires as well as student assessment and internship evaluation questionnaires. As mentioned above, the university obtains data covering various activities of its programmes. At the end of term, student's evaluations are supposed to be taken into account in a success analysis.

Istanbul Gelişim University Graduates and Members Association was established in May 2017 to continue the university's relation with its graduates, to increase information sharing, to foster the graduates' solidarity and to follow-up on their career developments.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

Awareness of the importance of quality assessment and assurance has been increasing in the higher education sector in Turkey in the recent past. With the establishment of a Quality Commission at the Higher Education Council YÖK, a strong focus on quality enhancement has been set. Likewise, IGU considers quality assurance as an essential and important element in its approach to teaching and learning. The university outlined a quality assurance plan on the institutional level connected to certain aims and performance indicators which measure the quality of IGU as well as its success as a foundation university. The university has set itself strategic goals in developing further, both on the academic and institutional level. The panel of experts could clearly detect the commitment of the management to enhance quality and to raise quality awareness at IGU. The decision to aim for a European accreditation is a clear reflection of this.

A quality action plan, however, is missing on the department level, at least in a written form. The plan should be aligned with the overall university and faculty plan. The experts gained the impression that the department has set itself aims and targets to be met. However, in order to increase transparency and to channel efforts and measures into a more formal and trackable path, the department has to summarize its quality assurance plan in a written form (**Finding 1**). Such a plan is especially important for a new programme and department, like tourism, which has to monitor and check its teaching concept and its quality in its initial development stages.

Responsibilities within the programme and the university are clearly defined and available to students. Decision-making procedures are established from the department level up to the Senate. Measures and instruments for monitoring quality are in place which include mandatory course evaluations and evaluations on the learning environment and support services. Data are collected on the progression of students, their success and the actual workload in courses. Furthermore, informal ways of collecting feedback work very well. The panel of experts could detect that the communication between students and staff, as well as between staff and the management, is open and effective. Complaints are taken into consideration and staff and students reported about modifications and adaptations that have been made on the basis of student feedback. Student satisfaction is highly important to the university, as could be detected by the experts.

However, even though formal procedures are in place, the panel of experts gained the impression that the use of these procedures on the department level still needs to be enhanced. The university gathers an impressive amount of data on its students and staff. These data should be used in a more consistent and structured way, under the guidance of academic personnel at every level. Course evaluation results, for example, should be considered more thoroughly by teachers and the department as such; the actions taken on them should be documented and made transparent; and finally, results should be reflected back to the students (**Finding 2**). Formal and informal means for gathering feedback should be used to comparable amounts. The university could also consider testing further tools for evaluation as regards for example the workload of students than using just a questionnaire. The findings of a more precise workload assessment could then be connected to the students' success and the development of the curriculum in general.

During the discussions, the panel of experts learned about various connections and ties of the department with the labour market. As stated by the department, labour market representatives such as associations of tourist guides have been involved in designing the curriculum. Furthermore, local travel agencies or tour guide networks offer internship opportunities and practical applications for students. The panel of experts would encourage the university to institutionalize these rather informal ties with the labour market. An advisory board, for example, could be implemented in which feedback and current developments and needs of the market can be gathered in a regular and structured way.

IGU follows all national regulations for quality assurance measures, such as the implementation of a quality commission consisting of management, faculty and student representatives. Minutes document the work of the commission. Students are represented on all decision-making levels, starting from student representation on the department level up to membership in the Senate.

Since the programme has only started in 2016, data on the career progression of students is not available yet. However, IGU has established an Alumni Association and several individual measures are used on different levels to keep track of its graduates. The panel would like to highlight that Alumni connections are extremely helpful and fruitful in enhancing the quality of programmes and would thus support the university in strengthening future Alumni connections.

## **Conclusion**

The criterion is partly fulfilled. IGU has aligned its quality assurance measures to clear strategic goals. However, a quality action plan is missing on the department level. Adequate instruments allowing quality monitoring of study programmes are implemented. The use of data retrieved from these instruments should be professionalized.

## **2. Quality of the Curriculum**

*The intended learning outcomes of the programme are defined and available in published form. They reflect both academic and labour-market requirements and are up-to-date with relation to the relevant field. The design of the programme supports achievement of the intended learning outcomes.*

*The academic level of graduates corresponds to the requirements of the appropriate level of the European Qualifications Framework.*

*The curriculum's design is readily available and transparently formulated.*

*[ESG1.2]*



## Description

Students of the programme “Tourism Guiding” shall be trained to become qualified tourist guides as well as middle and upper level manager candidates in the tourism industry. Graduates are supposed to acquire the abilities to work effectively both independently and with others as well as think critically and analytically; they shall possess knowledge of the tourist industry, of management and organizational aspects and be able to understand and analyse the history, culture and geography of Turkey. Social values as well as communicative competences constitute the foundation for the skills of leadership and representation, as outlined by IGU.

The university lists the following elementary knowledge which shall be conveyed by the programme: specialized knowledge on local and social customs, cultural contexts, psychology knowledge on group behaviour as well as aesthetic knowledge.

The programme comprises 240 CP which are distributed as 30 CP each among 8 semesters. The curriculum contains compulsory, elective and complementary courses. In the beginning of the studies compulsory courses prevail while the number of electives increases throughout the semesters. Complementary courses include, among others, general economics. In total, 7 electives have to be taken from within the study programme, 3 from external fields of study. Mandatory courses include topics such as tourism marketing, geographical and cultural characteristics of Turkey and communication and human relations. A course on “Academic requirements and research methods” prepares students for the graduation project, which students carry out in the final semester and which entails the practical application of knowledge. Turkish courses and a class on the “History of Atatürk’s Principles and Reforms” are mandatory – as nationally pre-scribed by the Turkish Council of Higher Education YÖK.

Elective courses from within the programme cover topics such as “Hotel Management”, “Tourism and Environment” and “Museums in Turkey and the World”. Non-major electives stem from Psychology, Sociology and Marketing,

According to the information provided by the university, the programme is compatible with both the European and the Turkish national qualifications framework.

In particular, the curriculum covers the following:

Semester 1: Turkish Language I, English for professional purposes I, General Tourism, Tourism Geography, History of Civilization, Tourism Guidance I, Introduction to Economics

Semester 2: Turkish Language II, English for professional purposes II, Behavioral Sciences, Recreation, Tourism Guidance II, Tourism Law

Semester 3: History of Atatürk’s Principles and Reforms I, English for professional purposes III, Survey Methods, Tourism Sociology, Health Care and First Aid, Art History I

Semester 4: History of Atatürk’s Principles and Reforms II, English for professional purposes IV, Turkish and World Cuisine, Art History II, Communication and Human Relations, Movements in the World Tourism

Semester 5: Ticketing I, Tourism Marketing, Travel Agency and Tour Operation Management, Major Electives

Semester 6: Ticketing II, Archaeology, Major Electives, Non-major Electives

Semester 7: Culture Tourism and World Cultural Heritage, Fauna and Flora of Turkey, Mythology, Major Electives, Non-major electives

Semester 8: Graduation Project, Special Interest Tourism, History of Religions, Major Electives, Non-major Electives

Graduates are supposed to work in the public and private tourism guidance sector as e.g. free-lance tourist guides as well as in the middle and upper level management of the tourism sector. Professionals such as tourist guides, hotel managers or international experts are invited to share their experiences during conferences.

The study programme works together with other business and management-related programmes of the faculty to provide up-to-date information and innovations in the field of tourism industry. The study programme is supervised by a Head. According to the university, the coordination of the programme is ensured by experienced academic staff and the department board.

The university provides a student handbook which is updated every year under the supervision of the Head of the programme and the approval of the Dean.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

Tourism and tourism guiding constitutes an important economic sector for Turkey. Providing an academic 4-year education for tourist guides instead of a 2-year vocational school programme is surely beneficial for the sector and for students wanting to work in the field.

The department has set itself two aims with the programme: students shall be enabled to work as tourist guides as well as in management positions in the sector such as in travel agencies. This approach is considered favourably by the experts as it provides graduates with career alternatives which are welcomed by both students and labour market representatives.

However, the definition of intended learning outcomes (ILOs) both on the programme and course level is currently insufficient. The description is rather vague and often remains on a general level. The learning outcomes concerning tourism guidance and management aspects have to be clearly defined to reflect the knowledge, skills and attributes which the programme aspires to equip graduates with (**Finding 3**). On the course level, testing the achievement of the ILOs should be linked to the assessment process and the methods of assessment to be used in each course.

The process of reforming and modifying the ILOs on the department level should be conducted jointly between the faculty, the programme and the stakeholders; the same process on the course level should be done by the programme staff jointly.

As a result of the more precise formulation of ILOs, the department might refine the curriculum to newly weigh the balance between tourism guiding and management. Currently, the curriculum contains a variety of courses which do not clearly reflect the students' specialization.

As teaching staff, students and stakeholders are clearly willing to continue providing a combination of tourism guidance and tourism management courses – as expressed towards the experts –, a restructuring of courses is recommended to ensure providing related knowledge and skills in these two areas of tourism education.

It is recommended that the core curriculum should continue to keep its focus on tourism guiding while electives can offer the possibility to specialize in a tourism related management field, such as Hospitality Management or Marketing & Sales. The university may consider restructuring the curriculum into a major in tourism guiding and separate minors in tourism management areas.

The curriculum on tourist guiding is adherent to the requirements of the national regulations for tourist guiding programmes. The experts would, however, recommend fostering the training of three skills which are crucial for the successful work as a tour guide or manager in the tourism sector: Communication skills, practical guidance skills as well as foreign language skills (**Finding 4**). Communication and guidance skills can be taught more intensively in specialized courses, via specific didactic methods or in practical applications (see also Chapter III.3). Furthermore, an increased effort by the university to improve the language skills of students is recommendable. Proficiency in English and further languages is essential for the future success of a tour guide.

Even though the programme contains mandatory English language courses and optional Arabic and Russian courses as well as free of charge English courses on Saturdays, further enhancement actions should be considered. There are various possibilities in fostering these skills: the programme could be taught partly or fully in English, international guest lecturers could be invited or further languages courses could be made mandatory.

The academic degree awarded to the graduates corresponds to the appropriate level of the European and the Turkish National Qualifications Framework. Courses and their functions are documented. However, information is not always complete and up-to-date. The defined teaching and assessment methods do not always correspond to what is actually taught in class; in several examples it became clear that teachers are using assessment tools which are not mentioned in the course description. This is intransparent for both students and teachers. As well, class instruction is far more varied and student-centred than indicated in the course description. In order to increase transparency, the course descriptions need to be updated and revised to reflect the actual assessment tools and teaching methods utilized in the courses (**Finding 5**). Compulsory and elective elements are defined. The order of curricular elements supports the learner's progression.

The curriculum covers subject-specific and cross-subject knowledge, as well as subject-related, methodological and general skills. Courses are offered exclusively for the programme. Instead of a thesis students carry out a graduation project in order to apply their knowledge and skills towards the end of the programme. Workload is assigned to courses based on ECTS credits.

### **Conclusion**

The criterion is partly fulfilled. Intended learning outcomes are defined but require further revision. The programme adheres to the regulations of national requirements for tourist guides and offers training in tourism management as well. However, the experts recommend restructuring the curriculum to provide a new balance between tourism guidance and tourism management. This process should also lead to a strengthening of communication and guidance as well as language skills of students.

Curriculum documentation is available but has to be updated to provide sufficient transparency about teaching modes and assessment forms. The latter ones should be diversified.

### **3. Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Students**

*The delivery of material encourages students to take an active role in the learning process.*

*Students are assessed using accessible criteria, regulations, and procedures, which are made readily available to all participants and which are applied consistently.*

*Assessment procedures are designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.*

[ESG 1.3]

#### **Description**

##### Learning, Teaching

At Istanbul Gelişim University, one academic year consists of two periods. It is based on the workload corresponding to 30 ECTS per semester, including a total of 60 ECTS credits in one academic year (1530 hours of student workload).

The curriculum of the programme is conveyed as face-to-face education, mostly via lectures and seminars, according to the university. Teaching is supposed to be student-centred and encourages class discussion, review and analysis. Furthermore, the programme is supposed to have

flexible learning spaces designed to support the range of learning activities including collaboration and individual study.

Distance education complements regular class hours. As outlined in the self-evaluation report, several courses are delivered face-to-face as well as digitally, among those Turkish, English and “Principles of Atatürk”.

### Assessment

Instructors decide on the examination type and evaluation tool. The “Associate Degree and Undergraduate Education-Training and Examination Regulations” allow for exams, homework, application, quiz, report, presentation, verbal assessment, thesis presentation, document presentation, expert appraisal and computer assisted presentation. In addition, coursework assignments, presentations and active participation in class are graded and form part of the overall student assessment. The ratio to be taken into account in evaluating student’s success is provided by the instructor at the beginning of the semester. Special examinations for students with disabilities are offered.

Examinations take place mid-term and end-of-term. A Planning Unit as well as exam coordinators bear responsibility for the organization of the examinations. Times and locations are being published on the student information system OBIS. Make-up exams for excused students are being offered.

### **Experts’ Evaluation**

For some learning outcomes methods of teaching and learning are appropriate. However, tourism guidance is mainly a practical educational area which requires numerous field studies, technical visits and applications which prepare students for their work in the field. According to the course descriptions, none of the above mentioned applications are offered. The experts were, however, informed that students are supported in taking field trips outside the curriculum and that some courses require the visit of cultural sights. These kinds of practical applications need to be made transparent within the course descriptions (**Finding 5**, see above). More important, however, is the recommendation that further practical applications shall be used in teaching and learning about the field. The department should enhance and increase practical applications within the courses (**Finding 6**).

Methods of teaching and learning respect and take into account the diversity of students and their needs.

Most courses are assessed via a mid-term and a final exam. As tourism guiding is by default a practical educational area, it requires a different style of assessment. The experts learned during the site visit that the mid-term exam may be replaced or supplemented by other assignments such as homework or projects. Teachers seem to be using this option to varying degrees. Students are, for example, sent to visit a cultural sight in Istanbul and give a presentation afterwards. These assignments are graded. The experts consider these kinds of oral and practical assignments extremely important and acknowledge the effort made by the teachers. However, the actual amount of these assignments in comparison with the written exams seems to be small. Assessment tools thus have to be diversified (**Finding 7**). The spectrum of different assessment forms needs to be diversified, especially with regard to the intended learning outcomes of courses. Changes in assessment regulations should be discussed in the quality commission and monitored by the faculty. Assessment regulations are defined and published and requirements for examinations are transparent.

Furthermore, even though teachers and students reported about occasional homework and project work, the applied assessment forms are not documented in the course descriptions. It is, however, crucial that students are aware of the tools by which they will be assessed. The course descriptions need to be updated accordingly (**Finding 5**, see above).

Instructors use different didactic methods to engage students in class discussion, as for example group work, role play and student presentations. These methods stimulate student motivation and

self-reflection. However, as tourism guiding is a very practically oriented occupation, students need to train their communication skills. The panel therefore recommends to diversify teaching methods and to apply further didactic methods to stimulate student's engagement in class.

The exam period is fixed at the beginning of the semester in the academic calendar. Grading scales are provided in the official regulations of undergraduate studies. Responsibilities and structures related to the organisation of the exams are defined. Suitable opportunities to re-sit an exam are offered when necessary.

### **Conclusion**

The criterion is partly fulfilled. Instructors use a variety of teaching and assessment methods which the experts evaluate very positively. However, in order to better achieve the intended learning outcomes, assessment forms have to be diversified and practical applications should be applied more frequently.

## **4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification**

*Consistently applied, pre-defined, published regulations are in place which cover student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.*

[ESG 1.4]

### **Description**

#### Admittance to the study programme

Admission to the programme is based on a central examination system regulated by the national Council of Higher Education. The requirement for admission to IGU is a pre-defined score in the Transition to Higher Education Examination and the Undergraduate Placement Examination. Furthermore, students must pass a foreign language proficiency test if a programme is offered in English. Opportunities for transition to IGU from vocational high schools or other higher education institutions are subject to the "Regulations on Transfer among Associate and Undergraduate Degree Programs, Double Major, and Subspecialty and the Principles of Credit Transfer among Institutions in Higher Education Institutions". At the time of the accreditation, 28 students were enrolled in the new programme: 16 in the first year and 12 in the second year.

IGU charges tuition fees but provides financial support such as scholarships and discounts.

#### Creditation and recognition

Istanbul Gelişim University is part of the European Higher Education Area and applies ECTS credits to all its study programmes. ECTS credits and workload are assigned on the basis of the weekly course hours, midterm and final exams as well as other assignments, laboratory work, seminars and other learning component. 1 ECTS credit equals 25,5 hours of workload. In addition, IGU uses local credits.

Outgoing students sign a learning agreement and receive full academic recognition of their courses taken abroad. According to the university, ECTS transfer is guaranteed. Likewise, incoming students receive a Transcript of Records with ECTS credits and grades for recognition at their home institution.

Further transitional conditions are provided by the "IGU Course Directive on Equivalence and Adaptation Guidelines".

#### Certification

Students receive a Diploma Supplement on completion of their studies in English and Turkish. The Diploma is based on the model developed by the European Commission, the Council of Eu-

rope and UNESCO and provides a standardized description of the nature, level, context and status of the studies completed by its holder.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

Formal procedures for the admission, progression, recognition and certification of students and the study programme are in place and are running well. Admission to university in Turkey is centrally organized and steered; a selection procedure at university does not take place. IGU keeps track of the qualitative and quantitative data on the admission of students.

Even though the study programme is financed by tuition fees, IGU offers a considerable number of scholarship opportunities to students, which the experts highly appreciate (see below).

Regulations for recognition of learning outcomes from other universities, such as from an exchange semester abroad, are defined. IGU encourages its students to go abroad by offering Erasmus scholarships and by covering travel costs. Students of "Tourism Guiding" have reported that they are aware of these opportunities and are planning on going abroad. The faculty offers a network of Erasmus partnerships and it has even succeeded recently in setting up a partnership with a university in the UK, one of the most desired destinations for students to go abroad. Learning agreements are used by the university.

Graduates receive a diploma supplement; a programme-specific document needs to be provided, however (**Finding 8**).

### **Conclusion**

The criterion is partly fulfilled. Procedures for the admission, recognition and certification of students' achievements are in place. Support for a study abroad semester is generous. The department needs to provide a programme-specific Diploma Supplement.

## **5. Teaching Staff**

*The composition (quantity, qualifications, professional and international experience, etc.) of the staff is appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.*

*Staff involved with teaching is qualified and competent to do so.*

*Transparent procedures are in place for the recruitment and development of the staff.*

*[ESG 1.5]*

### **Description**

As outlined by the university, human resource management is supported by the "Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Office" with the aim of a consistent distribution and equal workload of members among the faculty. Currently, IGU employs overall 466 full time academic staff, according to the numbers given in the self-evaluation report. Among those are 43 professors, 10 associate professors, 180 assistant professors, 148 teaching assistants, 70 research assistants as well as 15 lecturers. IGU outline that it adheres to a defined process for hiring new staff. Within the scope of the Turkish Higher Education Law, appointment and promotion conditions for higher education institutions are taken as the basis for recruitment and appointment of teaching staff.

Based on the information given by the university, teaching staff for the programme comprises 2 assistant professors with each 6 teaching hours; 2 research assistants support the professors.

IGU provides an orientation programme for newly hired professors under the guidance of the Head of the study programme and supported by research assistants. Regular training programmes shall be offered to staff as well as English courses especially for administrative staff.

## Experts' Evaluation

The panel of experts met very committed and motivated staff at IGU. The current student/teacher ratio is very favourable as student numbers are still low in such a new programme. At the time of the site visit, the department comprised 6 teaching staff members: 2 assistant professors, 2 research assistants and 2 lecturers with a varying number of teaching hours. The number of staff is currently sufficient for the running of the programme. However, as student numbers are expected to increase, further staff is required to ensure teaching and counselling. The university has reported that positions are either currently advertised or will be advertised starting at the end of the year. A precise hiring plan on the exact number and denomination of teaching positions as well as the required qualifications of candidates has to be prepared and handed in to the panel (**Finding 9**). This plan has to outline the specific teaching field/specialty to be covered and the individual courses which shall be taught by the new teaching staff.

The panel agrees with the university that finding qualified personnel in the field of Tourism can be challenging. The experts would thus recommend hiring international staff for short-term and intensive courses and lectures (**Finding 10**). This would not only help in filling possible/potential gaps in offering course units, it would also increase the intended international characteristic within the programme. Internationalisation is a crucial aspect both for the field of tourism guiding *per se* as for the university, since it is one of its defined aims. Inviting guest lecturers from the field, via e. g. Erasmus mobility, who will offer English-taught classes would be an asset for students and staff as students would receive further training in English (see above) and staff would have the opportunity to initiate international and/or interdisciplinary research. Gaining international staff for a permanent position should be aimed at.

Academic staff is supported in carrying out research with individual measures: a scientific research unit allocates university funds to applicants on approval of (research) projects, financial incentives are set for the publication of articles in (national/international) journals. This financial support is considered very positively by the experts. However, research activities should not only be steered by monetary measures but also by a research plan which focuses on the quality and quantity of research which shall be achieved. The experts would encourage the university/department to set itself goals with regard to research and make them transparent in a plan (**Finding 11**).

The university offers trainings to further develop appropriate didactic qualifications of its teaching staff. Furthermore, attendance of conferences is supported by IGU by covering costs which the panel acknowledges as a very positive and effective measure by the university. Teaching staff reported about its activities in attending national and international congresses on Tourism in the recent past.

## Conclusion

The criterion is partly fulfilled. Teaching staff is very committed and enthusiastic and students feel well taken care of. However, with regard to increasing student numbers, the university has to present a hiring plan for the department which will ensure that the favourable student/teacher ratio will remain. Teaching staff receives ample support in conference attendance by IGU. The drafting of a research plan would enhance research activities in a coherent way. In order to further internationalize the programme, the experts encourage the university to hire international staff on a short-term basis.

## 6. Learning Resources and Student Support

*Appropriate facilities and resources are available for learning and teaching activities.*

*Guidance and support is available for students to advise on achieving successful completion of their studies.*

[ESG 1.6]

### Description

#### Facilities and resources

IGU is distributed over 3 campuses in the neighbourhood of Avcılar, Istanbul. Overall, facilities shall comprise 24.400 m<sup>2</sup> of indoor areas with classrooms, conference rooms, reading rooms and exhibition rooms. Students can benefit from 13 fully equipped computer laboratories and several libraries, as defined by the university. In addition, the campuses host cafeterias, health centers, a fitness club and a radio and television studio.

Students can access learning material and online courses via a Learning Management System provided by IGU. A Student Information System and a Student Mail System facilitate registration and the information exchange. The Department of Information Technology monitors all soft- and hardware systems and IT areas for students and staff.

IGU Library and Documentation Centre currently contains ca. 115.000 items of learning material, including electronic sources such as E-Books and online journals. The seating capacity amounts to 200. According to the university, the library and documentation centre is designed to meet all kinds of information and documentation requirements of its students, academic and administrative staff.

The study programme is financed mainly by tuition fees. According to IGU, the financial resources of the university are determined and distributed in the budget period every year considering the physical and technical requirements for the sustainability of programmes as well as student and teaching staff numbers.

#### Information, consultation and guidance

Information to interested students is distributed in so-called Promotion Days, in which the university presents its programmes and schools. During registration, students receive guidance and support by the Directorate of Public Affairs as well as by the Head and research assistants.

According to the self-evaluation report, IGU aims to support students' individual, social and academic development during university life. The university applies an academic advisor support system in which advisors help students with all academic as well as administrative issues during their studies. Instructors offer regular consultation hours. The university highlights the Psychological Guidance, Counselling and Research Center, the Centre for Continuing Education as well as the Office of Career Development as further support units which offer guidance in personal as well as professional development and growth of students' personalities.

Among the services offered by the Office of Career Development are consultation, seminars and conferences, the invitation of experts and specialists as well as the allocation of internships. The Psychological Guidance, Counselling and Research Center holds meetings, seminars and organizes social activities to help students adapt.

Students who wish to do a semester or internship abroad may apply for Erasmus+ or Mevlana, an international student and teaching staff exchange programme established by the initiative of Turkey. Support is provided by the International Relations Office and by research assistants. According to the university, the budget allocated by the National Agency to IGU is used in its entirety for financial support to students.



The university offers assistance to a diverse student body: Working students benefit from courses carried out via distance education. International students receive support by the International Relations Office, which organizes an orientation programme and offers guidance concerning visa and other administrative issues. Students with disabilities are supported by a Disabled Student Unit within the framework of the "IGU Regulation on the Advisory and Coordination of Higher Education Institutions". The unit provides guidance and makes arrangements to facilitate the student life of disabled students. For example, special examinations are offered which address the individual need of the student. According to the university, the campus and its facilities are suitable for disabled students.

IGU actively supports students in their effort to found student clubs and student councils. Moreover, it organizes summer schools and conferences. These bodies invite various experts and specialists from private and public sectors to the university and they also organize technical visits.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

The experts acknowledge the support that the management is giving to the new department of "Tourism Guiding". Facilities are well-equipped; modern and sufficient classrooms are available. The campus constitutes a friendly atmosphere with adequate study spaces. With the expansion of the campus to a new building nearby, the university continues to provide excellent learning facilities.

The experts were impressed by the technologies provided on campus for distance learning. The modern hard- and software for the delivering of courses online – be it recorded or live – constitutes a very good basis for following up on this didactic method. Courses such as "The History of Atatürk" are provided in both online and offline form, i.e. as face-to-face classes. The experts encourage staff to make use of these technologies, for example in providing flexible learning opportunities to students.

Documentation on the programme is available. However, as-mentioned above, intended learning outcomes along with course descriptions require revision to be complete, coherent and up-to-date. Strategies are defined which ensure that courses offered are coordinated on both content and organisational levels to avoid overlap. The department board meets regularly to address all programme-related issues. The experts are convinced that procedures are adequate so that students will be able to complete their studies within the expected period of time.

Access to literature is provided in paper form in the library as well as via access to databases covering E-books and E-journals. The databases are accessible from the home devices of students. Nevertheless, the scope of literature on tourism guiding should be enhanced. The availability of current literature, especially English books, could be improved (**Finding 12**).

The university and the department invest considerably in student support and students feel well taken care of, as they reported in the discussion with the experts. For new students, introductory sessions are offered, which also include social events to get to know fellow students. Teachers are readily available. They offer regular consultation hours.

In addition, a set of further support services for subject-specific as well as generally study-related issues is provided, among those the Psychological Counseling Center.

The university has been very active to increase the number of international incoming students. Students receive free accommodation as well as a scholarship. Erasmus coordinators offer special counselling to incoming students.

Even though the programme does not require an internship, students are supported by their teaching staff and by the Career Service to practice their skills outside the classroom. Furthermore, the university aims at fostering an entrepreneurial spirit of its students: Lectures on entrepreneurship are held, the university supports students in setting up their own business by e. g. providing office

spaces at the university. Experts from the field are invited to share their experience. In addition, IGU conducts annual Career Days to bring students and future employees into contact.

Research projects of students can be funded by applying to the Scientific Research Unit at IGU which provides funding not only to academic staff but to students as well.

Student diversity is considered when allocating, planning, and providing learning resources and student support. For example, individual support to students with disabilities is provided. Scholarships may even be increased to remedy certain disadvantages of disabled students.

Finally, the experts would like to highlight the generous provision of scholarships by IGU to its students. By granting these scholarships, the university enables students to pursue their studies.

## **Conclusion**

The criterion is fulfilled. Facilities are excellent with regard to the campus and the learning environment. The availability of current literature, especially English books, could be improved in the library, though. Student support is generously provided and constitutes one of the strengths of IGU.

## **7. Information**

*Data is collected from relevant sources and stakeholders, analysed, and used for the effective management and continuous enhancement of the programme. [ESG 1.7]*

*Impartial and objective, up-to-date information regarding the programme and its qualifications is published regularly. This published information is appropriate for and available to relevant stakeholders. [ESG 1.8]*

### **Description**

Based on the report of the university, IGU gathers information from internal and external stakeholders and holds regular meetings with academic staff, students and local, regional and national stakeholders. Questionnaires among students are regularly distributed and analysed. Deans, the Heads of the study programme and lecturers are supposed to monitor the scope of programmes with regard to changes in the business world. The Office of Career Development regularly examines the potential employment opportunities of graduates.

The university publishes information on study programmes on its website. Students and staff receive information via the Student Information System, the Student Mail System and the Personnel Information System. The university confirms that it collects data on students' profiles and progression, their satisfaction as well as on the effectiveness of teachers with the help of an information system.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

The university gathers data on all relevant aspects of its students' composition and progression. The experts gained a clear picture of the processes and the data management system. However, as mentioned-above, the university needs to enhance its use of data by analysing data more thoroughly and regularly (see Chapter III.1).

Labour market representatives are consulted and have been involved in designing the curriculum, as was reported during the site visit. The experts would encourage the university to strengthen these ties by institutionalising the labour market involvement (see Chapter III.1). This is especially important for tourism guiding as the market is changing rapidly and trends are developing quickly in the sector.

Interested students and the public are informed about the study programme and admission criteria via the well designed and structured website of IGU. The programme outline and course de-

descriptions are available. Despite their accessibility, intended learning outcomes and course descriptions require revision (see Chapter III.2).

### **Conclusion**

The criterion is fulfilled. The university applies an adequate data management system and collects feedback from relevant stakeholders. Information on the programme is provided.

### **Recommendations of the panel of experts**

---

The panel of experts recommends to accredit **with conditions** the study programme “**Tourism Guiding**” (B.Sc.) offered by **Istanbul Gelişim University**.

Findings:

1. The department has to draft a quality action plan.
2. The university should analyse and use data on student feedback and progression in a more consistent way, including a formal process to provide results to students.
3. The intended learning outcomes on programme and course level need to be refined and linked to courses.
4. Communication and guidance skills as well as language skills should be strengthened.
5. The course descriptions have to be updated and revised.
6. Practical applications should be applied more frequently.
7. A larger number of assessment tools has to be utilized.
8. A programme-specific Diploma Supplement needs to be handed in.
9. The university has to present a hiring plan.
10. The university should hire international staff for short-term and intensive courses and lectures.
11. The university should set a research plan on the programme level.
12. The availability of current literature, especially English books, should be improved.