



**RE-ACCREDITATION OF THE FACULTY OF CIVIL
ENGINEERING, UNIVERSITY J.J. STROSSMAYER, OSIJEK**

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COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERT PANEL

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INTRODUCTION

Short description of the evaluated institution

The Faculty of Civil Engineering Osijek was established 35 years ago.

Actually, the Faculty passed through several stages in cooperation with or as a part of different institutions like cooperation with High Technical School Osijek, or as a part of the Civil Engineering Institute Zagreb (Department for Materials and Structures in Osijek). Since February 1992 the Faculty has been acting as an independent scientific and research constituent of the University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer of Osijek. During 35-year period the Faculty has been located in various locations. Now the Faculty performs its activities at three locations: Drinska Street and Crkvena Street as tenants, and partly in a temporary laboratory within the University campus. In 2005 the realization of the project of a new Faculty building within the Osijek University campus has begun. Recently, the construction of a new building has started.

The Faculty is headed by a Dean who is supported by four Vice-deans with specific responsibilities. The organizational structure of the Faculty of Civil Engineering Osijek consists of the following organizational units: departments, chairs, laboratories, library and secretariat.

Six departments have been established at the Faculty level. Department is the fundamental organizational unit of the Faculty in performing teaching, scientific and professional work. Departments self-organize their work and uphold their work discipline. Department members are teachers, associates and research assistants who perform or participate in performing of teaching in accordance with the study programme and implementation plan of the Faculty. The Head of Department represents and manages the work of the department and is appointed by the Faculty Council by majority vote for a two-year term, on the proposal of the Dean and previous opinion of department members.

Laboratories are the organizational units of departments established to conduct scientific and professional research and projects, as well as practical work in teaching. Laboratory work is organized and managed by the Head of Laboratory.

Chairs are organized in order to make the educational process and scientific activities of the Faculty more efficient, and are established for one or more courses. Chair members are teachers, associates and scientists who teach or participate in teaching of the respective course or related ones. The Head of Chair, who represents the department, manages its work.

Faculty Council is the expert council of the Faculty. The Faculty Council consists of all full professors, associate professors and assistant professors, three representatives of the teachers appointed into teaching grade, two representatives of associates appointed into associate grade who have an employment contract with the Faculty and student representatives.

The Faculty Board is the Dean's advisory body. It consists of the Vice Deans, the Secretary, the Head of Quality and the Heads of the Departments. If necessary, it can be extended to other relevant lower organizational units, officials and heads. It is convened as needed to coordinate and monitor the overall activities of the Faculty, for upgrading of services and alignment of all operating activities of the Faculty.

In the academic year 2005/2006 the University started the implementation of studies of civil engineering in accordance with the Bologna Declaration in all cycles and profiles – university undergraduate, graduate, as well as in postgraduate and undergraduate professional study programmes. Right afterwards a postgraduate (doctoral) university study programme started, as well as the so-called bridging year study programme which prepares Professional Bachelors of Civil Engineering to meet all the requirements to enrol in the graduate university programme

and to continue the education. In the academic year 2010/2011 the Faculty initiated the postgraduate specialist university study programme and the specialist graduate professional study programme. In this way, the Faculty of Civil Engineering Osijek started to perform all study programmes and cycles in the field of civil engineering.

The enrolment quota for undergraduate university study programme in the last three years did not significantly change and ranged from 115 to 130 students. The graduate university study programme offers three specialisations: load-bearing structures, hydraulic engineering, construction management and technology. An enrolment quota is in line with the quota of the undergraduate study programme because the Faculty management supports the idea that all undergraduate students must be able to continue their studies in the second cycle of education.

In the Postgraduate (doctoral) university study programme up to 10 students per year (minimum of 5) are optimally enrolled. The study has three specialisations: load-bearing structures, hydraulic engineering, construction management and technology. The minimum enrolment quota for the first generation of Postgraduate specialist university study programme was a minimum of 5, and that was the number of students enrolled (in the academic year 2010/11). The study is organised on the basis of specialisations in earthquake engineering, project management and environment protection. The enrolment quota for Professional study programme in the academic year 2010/2011 was 55 for full-time students and 60 for part-time students. In the academic year 2010/2011, 39 students were enrolled in specialist graduate professional study programme. This study offers specialisations in construction site management, as well as in monitoring and maintenance. In the same academic year, 40 students were enrolled in the so-called bridging year study programme.

The structure of full-time employees of the Faculty is as follows:

- Full professors 8
- Associate professors 10
- Assistant professors 6
- Teaching grades 11
- Teaching assistants 14
- Assistants 5
- Professional assistants 1
- Junior researchers 5
- Technical staff 3
- Administrative staff 19
- Supporting staff 7.

The work of the Expert Panel

For its work the panel drew upon the self-evaluation report, prepared by the Faculty of Civil Engineering of the University of Osijek. They carried out a site visit to the campus of the Faculty on the 21st of May and to the Model testing Hall on the 22nd of May. During the visit to Osijek they saw the premises and physical resources and held meetings with the following groups:

- The Faculty Management Board
- The Self-Evaluation Group and the QA Committee
- The Heads of Departments
- The Teaching Assistants
- The Students
- The Vice-Dean for Curriculum and Student Affairs,
- The Heads of Study Programmes (undergraduate, graduates, professional and postgraduate)
- The Vice-Dean for Professional Work
- The Vice-Dean for Science
- The Leaders of research projects

They also examined the facilities at the Osijek campus and visited a few classes, in two of which they held a brief question and answer session with the students.

DETAILED ANALYSIS BASED ON STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR RE-ACCREDITATION

1. Institutional management and quality assurance

- 1.1. The mission statement of the institution states that it will contribute to society by improving knowledge through the education of students and their creative skills and competence development, as well as contribution to the science through conducting scientific and technological research and professional activities in the field of civil engineering. However, the engagement with its stakeholders in this process is not well developed or clearly formalised. *The institution has some clearly defined strategy mechanisms, but it is not clear how they work in practice.*
Therefore it is recommended that the institution define key performance indicators for its employees and seek greater involvement of all key stakeholders in order to align better the daily work with the strategy of the institution.
- 1.2. Currently the institution has relevant legal documents that set out formally its organisational structure. However, it is not clear how this organisation performs in its daily duty.
It is therefore recommended that the institution reviews the organisational structure with a view to the daily work, in order to achieve greater clarity and provide the most efficient basis for operation.
- 1.3. Study programmes offered by the institution are aligned with its mission of providing higher and professional education related to civil engineering. The institution has initiated defining the university's mission.
Through its participation in various committees and in developing University strategy, the panel is satisfied that the Faculty contributes positively to University policies and strategy. The institution takes a strong responsibility for regional development in the field.
- 1.4. The institution recognises its distinctiveness as being the only such faculty focusing on civil engineering and able to perform professional programmes in that field in Slavonia, and it draws a high proportion of its students from other parts of the region and from neighbouring countries.
However, the institution has to indicate some strong points which distinguish them among other higher civil engineering education institutions.
- 1.5. Study programmes are partly aligned with the baseline of the Croatian Qualifications Framework, **but learning outcomes should be expressed more properly.**
- 1.6. The institution has implemented systems of quality assurance. However, the systems have generally limited impact on institutional level because results of detecting and resolving problems are relatively poor. **The panel finds that external stakeholders should have a crucial role in QA committee. QA committee should be better used to recognize and resolve institutional problems** as the panel finds that the impact of the QA committee is too low.

It is recommended that the systems for quality assurance and their impact should be strengthened and that the involvement of stakeholders in all such systems shall be strengthened.

- 1.7. The institution has implemented formal mechanisms for the monitoring and improvement of the quality of its teaching. However, the feedback from the monitoring is not fully provided to the students or members of faculty.
It is recommended that a formal system of regular feedback of quality monitoring, especially from the student survey, is instituted for staff and students.
- 1.8. The institution has some formal mechanisms for monitoring and improvement of the research quality, **but the mechanism should be more efficient and stronger in order to bring out better results.**
- 1.9. The institution has established formal rules and ordinances for the highest level of ethical conduct and so far it has had some experience of putting these into operation.
- 1.10. The staff and the students are not well acquainted with the rules of ethical behaviour according to their answers.

2. Study programmes

- 2.1. The enrolment quotas are determined by the needs of the civil engineering industry and by employment opportunities. At present the information about these needs and opportunities are analysed.
The panel finds that the institution analyses the needs and opportunities for employment of civil engineers in a sufficient way.
- 2.2. **The panel finds that the institution analyses the pass rate and that the enrolment quotas are in line with the institutional resources.**
- 2.3. Student learning outcomes at the level of a study programme are set by the teachers and are clearly communicated to the students. The students indicated that they are aware of the expected learning outcomes, but **it is recommended that the institution finds more appropriate mechanisms to ensure the quality of exams.**
- 2.4. The teachers have some choice in the ways in which the students' learning is assessed and that this relates appropriately to the learning outcomes and represents the full range of learning being assessed. However, the teachers' choice is constrained by the fact that all units of learning have a percentage of the assessment in the form of a final examination. This may not be the most effective or appropriate form of assessment for some units.
It is recommended that the institution review its approach to assessment to ensure that the assessment for all units of learning most appropriately assesses the learning for each unit.

- 2.5. Appropriate arrangements are in place to calculate the allocation of ECTS credits so that it reflects the work load of the students. The students generally understand the arrangements for the allocation of credits although they reported that there was some imbalance in the implementation of the associated workloads. At present the institution does not carry out regular assessment of the appropriateness of the relative credit weightings.
It is recommended that the credit weighting and associated workloads is reviewed with input from the students.
- 2.6. The content and quality of each study programme conforms to internationally recognised standards in a way that the qualifications can be internationally recognised. On completion of their programmes the students are provided with a certificate accompanied by a diploma supplement document.
- 2.7. A range of different teaching methods is used and all learning materials are available on-line. The students' views about the appropriateness of the teaching strategies were mixed. In some cases the students indicated that the strategies and teaching material were not well matched. Notably, the problem is a big group of students with lack of motivation and some students complained of some out-dated material, lack of international case studies and lack of practically relevant exercise.
It is recommended that the institution reviews the teaching strategies being employed in its programmes to ensure that they are the most appropriate and effective
- 2.8. The panel is satisfied that the institution made available appropriate amount of supplemental resources, including electronic databases and other sources, which aid knowledge acquisition.
- 2.9. Students have some opportunities to experience practical applications in internships in professional study programmes. However, the number of internships available is relatively limited. **It is recommended that the institution develops and expands its links with domestic and international industry to provide better opportunities for student practice.**
- 2.10. The institution has defined formal processes for the proposal, approval and implementation of new study programmes and has appropriate arrangements in place for the development, innovation and improvements of programmes. There is some stakeholder involvement in these processes.

3. Students

- 3.1. The information packages available to potential students clearly inform them about the level of the programmes, qualifications and academic titles as well as possibilities for further education and employment. Application for enrolment is made via the Croatian Agency for Science which publishes the Faculty's programmes, and the call for enrolment is made in the press and on the Faculty web pages. The Faculty web pages and printed material provide information about the programmes, modules, courses of study and

academic titles. The Faculty participates in an annual recruitment fair organised by the University of Osijek.

- 3.2. Based on the State matura, the admissions criteria and procedures are publicly stated and consistently applied.
- 3.3. Given that acceptance is based on the State matura there is no need for additional criteria to determine acceptance.
- 3.4. The institution supports the students very well in a number of ways in their extra-curricular activities, including sport, cultural and other activities. By contrast, the standard of services provided to the students is often poor.
- 3.5. The institution offers counselling and mentorship to the students.
It is recommended that the institution gives more attention to explaining to the students the support system and encouraging them to use it to their advantage.
- 3.6. The institution cares and raises the level of the students.
- 3.7. The institution supports the work of the Student Council.
- 3.8. The institution publishes its methods and procedures for student assessment but the students do not understand the assessment arrangements.
- 3.9.1 Although the institution gains information about employment of graduates from connections with professional associations and surveys, the amount of information that the institution has about the employability of its graduates is relatively limited.
It is recommended that the institution strengthens its statistical information relating to employment.
- 3.10. The panel is satisfied that institution maintains contact with alumni.
- 3.11. With student membership of the deliberative committees of the institution, appropriate opportunities are provided for the students to participate in decision making processes and in the resolution of matters affecting their experience.
- 3.12. The panel is satisfied that the institution provides information aimed at prospective students and the public about its study programmes, learning outcomes, qualifications and employment opportunities.
- 3.13. Opportunities are provided for the students to express their views and to suggest areas for improvement, including through the student membership of deliberative committees.
- 3.14. The panel finds that the students are informed about the measures implemented on the basis of their suggestions and opinions.

4. Teachers

- 4.1. The qualifications of the teachers are adequate although there is a need to extend the expertise offered by the teachers to cover the core disciplines.
It is recommended that more academic staff be recruited with qualifications to support teaching and research activity.
- 4.2. The institution carries out a good policy for the growth and development of human resources.
- 4.3. Given the number of students recruited each year the institution barely employs sufficient full-time teachers to meet the needs of the teaching programmes and maintain quality.
It is recommended that plans are formalised to ensure a student-staff ratio that will provide sufficient teachers to ensure the quality and continuity of programmes.
- 4.4. As noted in 4.3 the ratio between students and full-time teachers is relatively high, and is well above the goal for the research institution.
It is recommended that the institution needs to have a more ambitious strategic goal to reduce the student-staff ratio.
- 4.5. The institution has some developed policies for its teaching staff and pedagogical training is currently limited, **so institution should have to work that their impact can be seen.**
- 4.6. The institution's procedures for promotion and other advancement by the teachers are appropriately developed, understood and accepted. They are implemented in a fair and consistent manner and there are opportunities to appeal.
- 4.7. The policies governing the assignment of teachers' workloads are generally fair between teachers but they do not pay adequate attention to the balance in the teachers' work between teaching and research. This creates particular pressure on the teachers in maintaining and developing their research outputs.
It is recommended that the institution carefully monitors the balance between time for teaching and research.
- 4.8. The institution is alert to the needs of teachers to devote time to their teaching duties and that this is not compromised by commitments external to the institution. Such external commitments are only agreed on an exceptional basis.

5. Scientific and professional activity

- 5.1. Although monitoring in progress of research students and associate professors is in place and training for mentors of doctoral students is provided, other mechanisms to ensure the efficient operation of the research activities are not well developed, for

example, in relation to the balance between research and other activities. Also the monitoring of researcher performance is not well developed. Partly as a result the research output fails to reach the levels expected for a centre of research of this type.

It is recommended that the institution strengthens and develops the mechanisms to ensure that research activities are improved.

5.2. In planning and implementing its research agenda the institution is developing good links in Croatia, but cooperation abroad is poor.

The institution is recommended to continue in its efforts to realise its plans for national and international cooperation.

5.3. While the importance of research is clearly in evidence in the institution's mission and there is a broad awareness among the academic staff of the importance of research, this is not clearly translated into an apparent awareness of the importance of achieving the highest quality outputs. As a result, the research efforts do not fully make an intellectual contribution to the institution's reputation.

It is recommended that the institution makes efforts to increase the outputs in top quality international (English language) academic journals.

5.4. The institution maintains good arrangements for supporting its young researchers. Support ranges from opportunities to attend conferences, including at international locations and regular monitoring of progress. The research students indicated that they were satisfied with the levels of support and with the resources and a survey of students shows that they are very satisfied with their mentors.

5.5. The institution does not use evidence of productivity of its research activities including publications and presentations at conferences and the scientific research of the Faculty is not at present systematically monitored. Also there is little evidence that information is being used in a strategic way to enhance the quality of research by, for example, distinguishing clearly between types of outputs.

The institution is recommended to take a more strategic approach to indicators of research activity so that they will support the improvements in research quality.

5.6. The institution has showed some developed policies of encouraging academic publishing, **but they should be better implemented.**

5.7. The institution supports the professional activities of its researchers in line with its mission and it monitors these activities.

5.8. The panel is satisfied that institution supports professional activities and services.

6. International cooperation and mobility

6.1. The institution has arrangements for acknowledging ECTS credits gained by incoming students but actually the inward mobility of students from other Croatian Higher Education Institutions is very limited. Most PhD students also completed their studies

within the faculty. This relatively low level of inward mobility partly reflects the fact that it is not highly promoted.

The institution is recommended to encourage and facilitate inward mobility including offering more provision in English language and attracting more regular foreign guest lecturers.

6.2. The students have opportunities to take some proportion of their studies abroad. The institution has set up a number of bilateral agreements. This level of mobility is relatively low for a faculty which itself benefits from international linkages.

It is recommended that the institution continues to develop the opportunities for more students to benefit from international experience.

6.3. The extent of international cooperation and mobility of teachers is satisfactory. The institute provides support and encouragement for this although opportunities for extended periods abroad are limited by the demanding teaching schedules given the high student numbers.

6.4. The institution is involved as a member of a range of international organisations associated with its areas of study.

6.5. The opportunities for attracting students from abroad at present are fairly limited because only very limited parts of the programmes, confined to electives, are delivered in English or in a language other than Croatian. The development of ECTS credits for all programmes will support future developments in attracting foreign students but until programmes are made readily available in English or other languages this will remain very limited. The quality of the resources including student accommodation also acts as a constraint on attracting international students.

It is recommended that the institution moves towards offering a greater proportion of its programmes in English and takes steps to improve the resources offered to international students.

6.6. The institution offers lifelong learning programmes in the form of short and part-time courses in various professional aspects relating to civil engineering sectors. However, its involvement in the EU Life Long Learning (LLL) Programme is not yet developed.

It is recommended that the institution explores opportunities for cooperation in the EU.

6.7. The institution has developed other forms of international cooperation by, for example, welcoming guest foreign lecturers, visits by foreign student groups.

The institution is recommended to continue to develop and extend its international links.

7. Resources: administration, space, equipment and finances

7.1. Many of the resources for enrolled students are good. These include IT resources and the virtual learning environment which provides access to course information as well as electronic journals. Classroom and practical work rooms have appropriate equipment.

The institution also provides group and individual study spaces, library resources and appropriate equipment. Some of the spaces, including the library, are limited in size for the number of students. The space for academic staff is also limited.

- 7.3. The space for library and laboratories can be improved.
- 7.4. The institution provides appropriate equipment and technical support. The equipment and technical equipment is provided in a manner that is appropriate to its use by students and staff. One of the rooms containing IT equipment is accessible by students on a bookable basis.
- 7.5. The institution collects, analyses and uses information about its activities although this could be available and used in a more systematic way to support programmes of improvement. Notably, the system for feedback of information to students from the student satisfaction surveys is not well developed.
It is recommended that information is obtained and used more systematically as a management tool.
- 7.6. The library is generally equipped with up-to-date material and it houses the main relevant journals, mostly online. There is an active purchasing programme for the library resources. However, the library space is very small for the number of students, and it has very limited study areas. Also there are inadequate multi-copies of some key texts.
The institution is recommended to review the space allocation to the library and the library budget to ensure that it has adequate supplies of book stocks.
- 7.7. The current ratio of academic to non-academic staff is about 3:1. This represents an appropriate balance. However, given the existing number of students it means that there is considerable understaffing, particularly of academic staff with a concomitant high student-staff ratio and restrictions on the amount of time available for research.
- 7.8. Budgetary resources are limited especially given the size of the student cohorts.

FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE EXPERT PANEL FOR THE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

The Faculty of Civil Engineering, University J. J. Strossmayer, Osijek, is a well-established regional institution facing three major problems:

- Due to lack of motivation for some students, the average time used to finish a master is approx. 6.5 years.
- The international cooperation is on a very low level.
- The researchers of the institution do not publish enough in international journals for a modern research institution.

It is recognised that the institution has worked with all three points, and some improvements have been seen over the last few years.

ADVANTAGES (STRONG POINTS)

- The institution is aware of its problems. That is a very good basis for change
- The institutions has worked hard with implementation of a new strategy
- The institution produces candidates of high technical and academic levels
- The institution has some on-going research at international level

DISADVANTAGES (WEAK POINTS)

- The institution has recognized the need for changes, and still these changes happen too slow.
- The institution has still not full control over the allocation of resources to various groups or activities of employees (e.g. what goes to lecturing, research etc.)
- Presumably due to the war, the institution has not employees/researchers in all ages. The pyramid of the employees/researchers ages is not well structured. There seems to exist a high age group and a low age group of personnel.
- Incentives to engage in research and academic publishing are not strong enough.
- The institution desperately needs the new building, which is already under construction.
- It is difficult for the institution to get research money due to low competitiveness in research issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY

1) Management of the Higher Education Institution and Quality Assurance

- It is recommended that the institution seeks to align better its strategy with actual goals, define key performance indicators and seek greater involvement of all key stakeholders.
- It is recommended that the institution reviews the organisational structure with a view to achieving greater clarity.
- The institution has to indicate some strong points which distinguish this institution from all others.
- Learning outcomes should be expressed more clearly.
- The panel finds that external stakeholder should have a crucial role in QA committee. QA committee should be better used to recognize and resolve institutional problems as the panel finds that the impact of QA committee is very low. It is recommended that the systems for quality assurance and their impact be strengthened and that the involvement of stakeholders in all such systems be formalised and strengthened.
- It is recommended that a formal system of regular feedback of quality monitoring, especially from the student survey, is instituted for staff and students.

2) Study Programmes

- The panel is satisfied that the institution analyses the needs and opportunities for employment of civil engineers. This practise should continue.
- The panel is satisfied that the institution analyses the pass rate and that the enrolment quotas are in line with the institutional resources. Though, it is recommended that the institution finds more appropriate mechanisms to ensure the quality of exams.
- It is recommended that monitoring of the credit weighting and associated workloads are carried out on a regular basis and with input from the students.
- It is recommended that the institution reviews the teaching strategies being employed in its programmes to ensure that they are the most appropriate and effective.
- It is recommended that the institution develops and expands its links with domestic and international industry to provide better opportunities for student practice.

3) Students

- It is recommended that the institution gives more attention to explain to the students the support system and to encourage them to use it to their own advantage.
- It is recommended that the institution strengthens its statistical information relating to employment

4) Teachers

- It is recommended that more high qualification academic staff is recruited
- It is recommended that plans are formalised to ensure a student-staff ratio that will provide sufficient teachers to ensure the quality and continuity of programmes. The institution should adopt a more ambitious strategic goal to reduce the student-staff ratio.
- It is recommended that the institution carefully monitors the balance between time for teaching and research.

5) Scientific and Professional Activity

- It is recommended that the institution strengthens and develops the mechanisms to ensure that research activities at international level are improved.
- The institution is recommended to continue in its efforts to realise its plans for national and international cooperation.
- It is recommended that the institution makes efforts to increase the outputs in top quality international (mainly English language) academic journals.
- The institution is recommended to take a more strategic approach to indicators of research activity so that they will support the improvements in research quality.

6) International Cooperation and Mobility

- The institution is recommended to encourage and facilitate inward mobility including offering more provision in English language and attracting more foreign students.
- It is recommended that the institution continues to develop the opportunities for more students to benefit from international experience.
- It is recommended that the institution moves towards offering a greater proportion of its programmes in English and takes steps to improve the resources offered to international students.
- It is recommended that the institution explores opportunities for cooperation in the EU Life Long Learning programme
- The institution is recommended to continue to develop and extend its international links.

7) Resources, Administration, Space, Equipment and Finance

- It is recommended that information concerning all institution activities is obtained and used more systematically as a management tool.
- The institution is recommended to review the space allocation to the library and the library budget to ensure that it has adequate supplies.