

**REPORT
of the Expert Panel
on the
RE-ACCREDITATION OF
DIU Libertas International University**

Date of the site visit:
10th November 2015

December, 2015

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INTRODUCTION

This report on the re-accreditation of the DIU Libertas International University was written by the Expert Panel appointed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE), on the basis of the self-evaluation of the institution and supporting documentation and a visit to the institution.

Re-accreditation procedure performed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education, a public body listed in EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) and ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) full member, is obligatory once in five years for all higher education institutions working in the Republic of Croatia, in line with the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

The Expert Panel is appointed by the ASHE Accreditation Council, an independent expert body, to perform an independent peer-review-based evaluation of the institution and their study programs.

The report contains:

- a brief analysis of the institutional advantages and disadvantages,
- a list of good practices found at the institution,
- recommendations for institutional improvement and measures to be implemented in the following period (and checked within a follow-up procedure), and
- detailed analysis of the compliance to the Standards and Criteria for Re-Accreditation.

The members of the Expert Panel were:

- Professor Joseph Mifsud, London Academy of Diplomacy, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Panel Chair)
- Professor Mladen Knežević, Univerza v Mariboru, Republic of Slovenia
- Professor Heri Bezić, Faculty of Economics of Rijeka, Republic of Croatia
- Professor Tatjana Bertok-Zupković, Academy of Arts University Josip Juraj Strossmayer of Osijek, Republic of Croatia
- Corina Šćulac, student, Faculty of Economics and Tourism "Dr. Mijo Mirković", University Juraj Dobrila of Pula, Republic of Croatia

In the analysis of the documentation, site visit and writing of the report the Panel was supported by the ASHE staff:

- Sandra Bezjak, coordinator
- Mirjana Gopić, support to the coordinator
- Vlatka Derenčinović, interpreter and report translator

During the visit to the Institution the Expert Panel held meetings with the representatives of the following groups:

- The Management;
- The Working Group that compiled the Self-Evaluation and representatives of the Quality Assurance Committee;
- The students;
- The Teachers.

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library, IT room, student register desk, and the classrooms at the DIU Libertas International University, where they held a brief question and answer session with the students who were present.

Upon completion of re-accreditation procedure, the Accreditation Council renders its opinion on the basis of the Re-accreditation Report, an Assessment of Quality of the higher education institution and the Report of Fulfilment of Quantitative Criteria which is acquired by the Agency's information system.

Once the Accreditation Council renders its opinion, the Agency issues an Accreditation Recommendation by which the Agency recommends to the Minister of Science, Education and Sports to:

1. **issue a confirmation** to the higher education institution, which confirms that the higher education institution meets the requirements for performing the higher education activities or parts of activities, in case the Accreditation Recommendation is positive,
2. **deny a license** for performing the higher education activities or parts of activities to the higher education institution, in case the Accreditation Recommendation is negative, or
3. **issue a letter of recommendation** for the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should remove its deficiencies. For the higher education institution the letter of recommendation may include the suspension of student enrolment for the defined period.

The Accreditation Recommendation also includes an Assessment of Quality of the higher education institution as well as recommendations for quality development

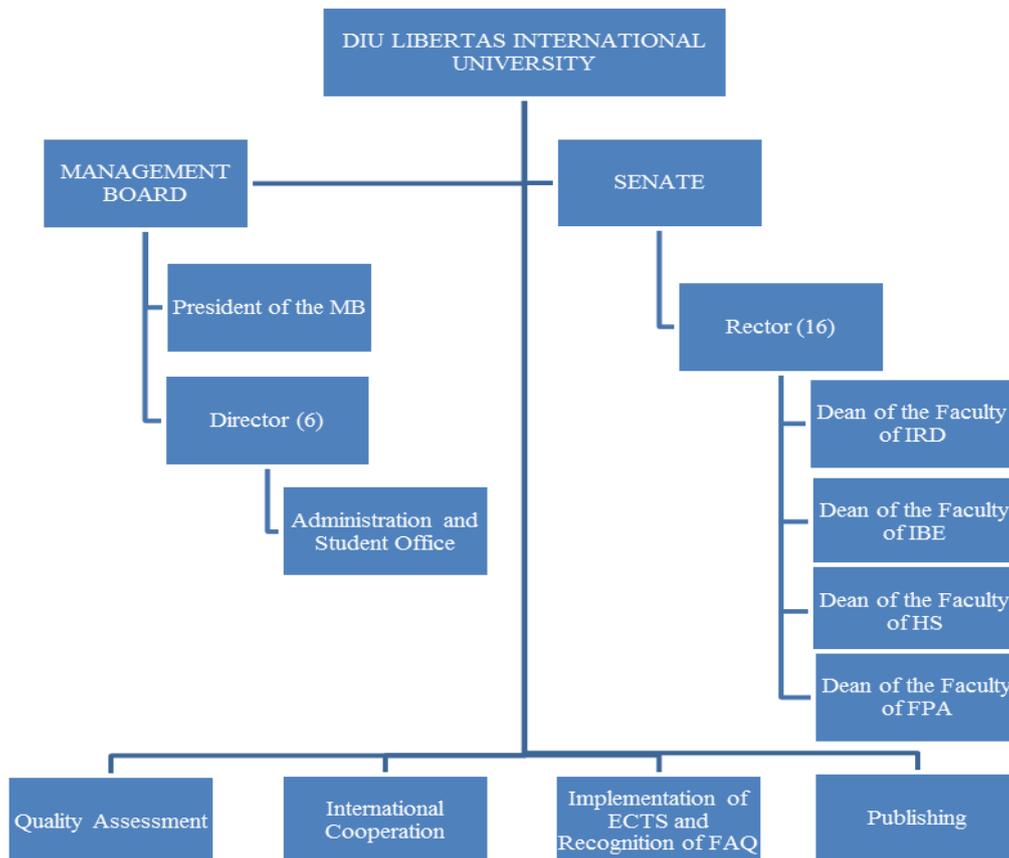
SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED INSTITUTION

NAME OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: DIU Libertas International University

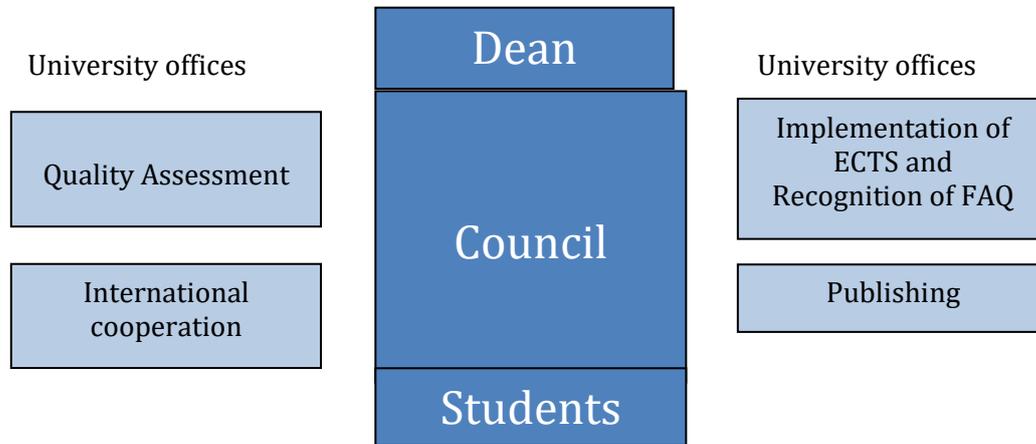
ADDRESS: Trg. J. F Kennedyja 6b, 10000 Zagreb

NAME OF THE HEAD OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: Professor Božidar Jelčić, PhD, Rector

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE (from page 10 of the Self-evaluation report):



The functional organization of the components of the Faculty (from page 11 of the Self-evaluation report):



STUDY PROGRAMMES:

Undergraduate university study programmes:

- International Relations
- International Business
- Acting/Performing Arts

Graduate university study programmes:

- International Relations and Diplomacy

NUMBER OF STUDENTS: 150 full-time students, 102 part-time students - Table 3.1., page 72, Self-evaluation report

NUMBER OF TEACHERS: 12 full-time staff appointed to scientific teaching grades, 16 external associates - Table 4.1., page 81, Self-evaluation report (appendix)

NUMBER OF SCIENTISTS (doctors of science, elected to grades, full-time): 12 full-time staff appointed to scientific teaching grades

TOTAL BUDGET (in kunas): 3.910.982,73 KN (2013 calendar year) - Table 7.11. Financial evaluation, Self-evaluation report

MSES FUNDING (percentage): -

OWN FUNDING (percentage): 3.910.982,73 KN (2013 calendar year) - Table 7.11. Financial evaluation, Self-evaluation report

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:

DIU Libertas International University was founded in 2008 as the first private university in the Republic of Croatia, under the name of Dubrovnik International University, with its headquarters in Dubrovnik. In 2009, the University enrolled the first generation of students at the Undergraduate Study Programme of International Relations, and the Undergraduate Study Programme of International Business, delivered in the English language.

In 2013 the name of the University changed into DIU Libertas International University and until the end of the same year its headquarters moved to Zagreb. The two mentioned undergraduate study programmes started to be carried out in Zagreb in the Croatian language, together with the joint Graduate University Study Programme of International Relations and Diplomacy beginning in the academic year of 2014/2015. Moreover, the Faculty of Film and Performing Arts enrolled the first generation of students to the Undergraduate University Study Programme of Acting in Zagreb.

The University currently employs 12 teachers appointed to scientific teaching grades and 252 students.

The University consists of four faculties:

- Faculty of International Relations and Diplomacy (IRS)
- Faculty of International Business and Economics (IBE)
- Faculty of Film and Performing Arts (FPA)
- Faculty of Health Science (HS) (forming process).

CONCLUSIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL

ADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION

1. Niche institution, very focused on its areas of expertise.
2. Family atmosphere for staff, students and the national/international academic community.
3. Very tight links between programmes, research and the employability factors.
4. Top academics and practitioners (national and international).
5. Very supportive of entrepreneurial ideas from staff, students and the community.
6. Set to expand in the right direction, with consolidation of current practice.
7. A model of private higher education that can be exported globally by Croatia.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION

1. Not serviced by the State in terms of reference research.
2. The interdisciplinary nature of its courses can be utilised more profitably by its core components.
3. The organisational structures can be operated within its various sectors in an optimal nature if supported also by the state organisations such as a higher education agency.
4. Human resources are limited due to its size, age and potential.
5. Can operate (at this stage) in the specific areas reviewed unless investment and support is guaranteed by public or private funding.

FEATURES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Very focused and in support of the disciplines in which it targets.
2. Clearly excellent relations – both social and academic (including research) between central administration, staff and students.
3. Great potential as an academic lighthouse in the fields of international relations and diplomacy.
4. Critical self-assessment and articulation of future directions by the faculty and leadership of an academic unit were good performance indicators.
5. Delivering a decent academic and research contribution as a private institution in higher education at the EU level.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Management of the Higher Education Institution and Quality Assurance

- Set committees to report directly every three months on targets that are reached.
- Inservice training of teaching staff to continue and be supported by the central authorities of the University.
- Online publication of the internal reviews linking the trust of the Institution with its QA obligations.
- Definition of which unit is responsible for bridging the strategic mission of the institution and the QA obligations.
- A tripartite QA culture to be imbedded in the official documents of the University, linking students, staff and the wider community.
- An evolving nature of QA to be targeted as part of the strategic mission of the University.
- An annual publication on the efforts of the Institution on QA.

2. Study Programmes

- An annual review of the study programmes with minuted changes suggested for Deans/Heads of departments to follow.
- A link between study programmes and the world of work to continue to be at the central point of collaboration.
- Development of study programmes must continue to focus on just in time objectives.
- New study programmes to be elaborated once the current study programmes are shown to be consolidated and established.
- The fine tuning of study programmes and the responsibility of this fine tuning must be set by the central organisation of the University (which so far has been excellent in its current focus).

3. Students

- The Institution should increase enrollment quotas for students due to the deficit of experts in the selected segment in the global market.
- It is recommended that the University introduces internships as mandatory rather than optional to allow the students to acquire necessary practical knowledge.
- University should inform the public about their activities and the benefits to the community through participation in public life.

- As an international University, the university should focus on and encourage the involvement of students in international exchange programmes, not only for short, but also for a longer period of time.
- In the newly opened study programme of acting, University should work on technical equipment of premises to enable better qualitative work for students. University should also focus on enabling the use of larger operational premises.
- Students should also be given an opportunity to spend a part of their education abroad to increase the internationalisation of the Institution.

4. Teachers

- Inservice training for teachers should be further encouraged, including sabbaticals, research periods abroad and bringing in international advisors to support the University.
- Teachers' profiles should be upgraded to focus specifically on the niche areas of the University.
- Publications and research portfolios of teachers should be made more accessible on the website of the University.
- The name and fame of the teachers can now be taken to the international field hence supporting the internationalisation of the University.
- More interdisciplinary teaching and cross faculty and cross university teaching should be encouraged.

5. Scientific and Professional Activity

- The focus of the University to bring science and professional education in conjunction with teaching must continue to flourish and be encouraged.
- The opening up of seminars, courses and teaching to lifelong education by the University is tremendously encouraged.
- The organisation of annual or semester events bridging the two areas of activity should be further explored.
- The roping in of international and national experts in science and professional development should also be one of the main targets of the Institution.
- Further consolidation of research and professional activity should be explored and funded.
- The use of EU and national/international funds should be targeted to support the bridge between research and employability nature of the University.
- Supporting research at the service of teaching should remain one of the core obligations of the University.
- The idea of bringing in professionals as in-house researchers should be encouraged and used as a model for other institutions in Croatia.

6. Mobility and International Cooperation

- The current practice of international cooperation and mobility should be further encouraged.
- A semester abroad for students, seen the niche nature of the courses, should be further encouraged.
- The use of foreign languages including the teaching of the six UN languages should be actively supported by the institution. More courses in English should be encouraged.
- The key role that Croatia has in the Western Balkans should be actively assisted by the Institution through its key courses. It can be foreseen that the University can profitably expand inside the regional area that it operates it, as a model of internationalisation.
- The use of the web must be further exploited to develop the above mentioned points and to act as a portal to the niche areas that are being developed in research, in practice and in employability avenues.

7. Resources: Administration, Space, Equipment and Finance

- The resources - administration, space and equipment (and finance) are consonant with the European model of a small niche university operating as this one.
- If further expansion is required, then more of the above must be garnered before the Institution can open its doors to more disciplines.
- In the performing arts sector, it is clear that resources, space and equipment must be greatly increased to offer a better academic/professional model of higher education.
- The interdisciplinary mode of teaching and learning are encouraging the good use of resources in terms of value for money.
- Further use of space will be required if the University expands to other areas and disciplines in line with its mission statement.

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE TO THE STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR RE-ACCREDITATION

Two key things for the Institution are the consolidation of what they have and better reporting of what they do (inclusion of student bodies). This is a clear must, including internationalisation. The University is punching above its weight and this should be nationally acknowledged. The reporting of what is happening at the University should be divulged via the website periodically to ensure transparency and enhance academic credibility.

Institutional Management and Quality Assurance

- 1.1. Strategic plan includes strategic goals, operational plans and monitoring mechanisms. It would be good if the Institution would upgrade the Strategy periodically to ensure openness and development.
- 1.2. Appropriate organisational structure. Faculty of Health Studies would be more appropriate title than the Faculty of Health Sciences.
- 1.3. N/A.
- 1.4. All programmes are in line with the institutional mission.
- 1.5. Data management appears to be well handled with. There is also good recording of data and correct use of analysis processes. It is clear that QA data once collected is acted upon with clarity and focus.
- 1.6. Mechanisms for monitoring and improving teaching quality are in place. More work needs to be done in this field as this criterium is still partially implemented.
- 1.7. Functional mechanisms for monitoring and improvement of research quality are present. The idea of the importance of reporting and evidence collection is still not fully implemented due to the age and nature of this niche institution.
- 1.8. Fairly effective mechanisms for monitoring unethical behaviour are present.

Study Programmes

- 2.1 Procedures for monitoring quality of study programmes are in line with existing practice.
- 2.2 The Institution should have more students, because experts in this field are needed on the global level.

- 2.3 The quotas are in line with the existing resources of teachers, space and equipment. If further development is envisaged, then further enhancement of the above must take place.
- 2.4 Course content and learning outcomes are well suited to the programmes in which they operate.
- 2.5 The assessment of student learning in line with learning outcomes is partly implemented. There are good recording and analysis processes of QA data.
- 2.6 Students seem to like the existing system of ECTS allocation - each module is allocated the same number of ECTS. This is also in line with practice of smaller institutions inside the higher education area of the Bologna Process.
- 2.7 More international materials are needed. International relations and diplomacy programmes are in line with internationally recognised standards. It is very important to note that they are still young university, still walking, not running. A Niche University. University should concentrate on the areas they are doing now. New programmes should be consolidated with the existing ones. An interdisciplinary approach is a must for this University.
- 2.8 The teaching methods which are utilised appear to be congruent with the teaching/learning philosophy of the Institution and again are in line with niche institutions such as Libertas.
- 2.9 As a young institution, the Faculty of Film and Performing Arts does not have enough additional facilities. This is something that should be complemented in order to enable the students to acquire necessary knowledge and employability skills. The other study programmes are geared more towards employability and have a targeted approach towards the world of work.
- 2.10 The Student Career Centre connects students with business partners of the Faculty. They should be more visible. Furthermore, internships should be part of study programmes (now students have a possibility for internship on voluntary basis). The Career Centre should also be included in organising internships for students of the Faculty of Film and Performing Arts. The timing and exploration of a study abroad semester for students could be an excellent space for students to join the world of work, not just nationally but also globally.

Students

- 3.1 During the enrollment process taking the state graduation examination or any comparable entrance examination should be required. The Institution should list exact and clear criteria for applicants on its web site, all year long, including the terms of providing scholarships for those that qualify but do not have financial support. Increase in enrollment quotas would bring an inflow of new students, due to a great deficit of experts in this field in the global market. Competencies of candidates at enrollment to study Film and Performing Arts are very clear and detailed.

- 3.2 There are possibilities for improvement in relation to encouraging students in extracurricular activities. This could be realized through involvement of a greater number of students in various competitions in the field of their profession as well as in different sports activities. Regarding the School of Film and Performing Arts support is present and should be further expanded.
- 3.3 The Institution offers counseling services to students, as well as the possibility of guidance and mentoring and by the office known as Career Centre. Space for improvement exists in the form of introducing and increasing the required professional practice for students. Faculty of Film and Performing Arts is specific itself and work without mentoring and cooperation with the mentor is impossible.
- 3.4 Students receive detailed feedback with recommendations for improvement. According to students, professors dedicate their time to each student in order to clarify any ambiguities in the process of assessment. Also, every process, starting with enrollment to college, is clearly displayed and available from the website. Students have the possibility to appeal the assessment of the knowledge they have received.
- 3.5 University has developed mechanisms by which it remains in contact with former students and monitors their success and career development. The advantage is the fact that it is a young and small university making it easier to keep in touch with students and monitor their development after graduation. The setting up of a professional alumni organisation is clearly advocated.
- 3.6 University regularly informs the public about the programmes of study and the results as well as the opportunities that students have after graduation. Informing the public about the activities of the University is realized through their web page. However, the University lacks in information about its activities through participation in public life. This is particularly related to the Faculty of Film and Performing Arts that should be represented in public.
- 3.7 Students are encouraged to express their opinions at any time, as well as through evaluation activities, for example via student surveys that are completed at the end of each semester. Through evaluation activities, students evaluate their satisfaction with the lectures and professors, and in accordance with the results the appropriate measures are taken. Students can participate in making certain decisions by their elected representatives.
- 3.8 Students have publicly available feedback about the problem or situation that needs solving on the web site of the University. Size of the University allows a close student-professor relationship and face to face communication, which gives students a better insight into certain situations.

Teachers

- 4.1. It is appreciated to have many distinguished external experts, but the Institution should also have staff employed full-time. The Institution should invest in their young staff. Having in

mind a specific nature of the Faculty of Film and Performing Arts, if they enrol the new generation of students next year, more qualified full-time teachers should be employed. According to the licence issued for the Acting/Performing Arts Study Programme, the Study is carried out jointly by the DIU Libertas International University and the Academy of Arts of the University of Split. If they decide to perform it on their own, then it is clear that the Institution should employ more full-time teachers. The growth of the Institution should go together with the growth of administrative and academic staff.

- 4.2. From what we perceived during the study visit and during the interviews with the management, the Institution has a defined HR policy – it would be useful to have it published on the website for transparency and clarity of intent.
- 4.3. At the Faculty of Film and Performing Arts the number of teaching staff should be considered because for this generation, it is optimal, but next year a new generation of students will be enrolled and there will not be the optimal ratio of permanent staff and students if it is left on the current numbers.
- 4.4. The Institution invests in their staff. More feedback to students and the wider community is actively encouraged.
- 4.5. The teacher workload appears to be in line with that of other institutions both in the public or private HEI realm in Europe. The difference between teaching and research/administrative duties needs to be better explained in the HR policies.
- 4.6. Teachers and staff were consonant and clear about their roles which aim to enhance the prestige and the name of the Institution nationally and internationally.

Scientific and Professional Activity

- 5.1 The Institution has a strategic research agenda. Journals published by the University are in line with its strategy. There is reporting related to appointment of teachers into teaching/scientific grades. They should regularly do monitoring and review of their research agenda.
- 5.2 There exists a possibility of increasing research, therefore there is scope for expanding cooperation with other scientific organizations in Croatia and abroad.
- 5.3 It is also clear that whilst there is a need of enhancing the numbers and profile of the researchers currently employed, the Institution appears to be punching above its weight in a positive way because of the number of research publications that it actually generates.
- 5.4 The area of publishing must be enhanced substantially with more funds from public and private sources. The research component is going to be the key one if they are planning to run new courses in the future. Research must also be continuous for the current areas and a better defined published research strategy was promised for 2016.
- 5.5 A fund has been mentioned for awarding teachers (e.g. for attending conferences) – clear lines should be set so that people are aware of what this fund will consist of, how to make applications, and what will be the final result of such an investment both financially and in HR.
- 5.6 DIU Libertas is the co-publisher of the international scientific journal "Journal of Philosophical Economics" (JPE). The other two publishers are Bucharest Academy of

Economic Studies (Romania) and Boston University. Publishing policy aligns with all three universities. Another Journal that the university began to publish a journal Acta Turistica Nova. Teachers and researchers from the University intensively working on publishing various forms of scientific and professional papers. In the years 2014 and 2015 was published altogether 88 works, of which 10 books or book chapters, 36 articles, 33 participation in international and national conferences, and organized 9 professional conferences and workshops. Researchers from the University are published in a dozen international journals, some of which are referenced in the secondary SSCI and Scopus databases, and other secondary and tertiary forms of citation.

- 5.7 It was reported about international project on “Napoleonic Cities” and a project in collaboration with the University of Zadar – “Small Countries in the Global Environment” (countries such as Malta, Cyprus).
- 5.8 Lifelong learning programme and industry: a special center for lifelong learning has been established within DIU; programme for EU Funds applications has been offered for partners industry; training the public in the field of tourism has been provided etc., entrepreneurs and professionals were invited to participate in the training. There is a clear internal policy regulating area of cooperation for the transfer of knowledge with the industry and/or public sector this. A number of teachers have also a practical experience besides their academic work. DIU has good connections with the labour market; a lot of practical work is done. These activities are very good and very useful amendments to the core activities of the Institution.
- 5.9 Many DIU teachers come from practice. The professional/counseling activities are helping students to perceive the importance and opportunities to connect theoretical knowledge acquired at the academic level and practical skills that are developed in direct action in practice
- 5.10 N/A.

Mobility and International Cooperation

- 6.1. It was clear during the visit that students attending this institution had also obtained an experience inside Croatian Public higher education institutions. The students remarked that the current experience was much more positive due to the family type environment and to the fact that they were challenged better in a reflective manner than in their previous student experience.
- 6.2. In keeping with their international mission, the number of students who complete part of their studies abroad should be increased significantly.
- 6.3. In keeping with their international mission, the number of teachers who go abroad should be increased significantly.
- 6.4. Networking with similar institutions abroad should be improved. The Faculty of Film and Performing Arts also has networking capabilities.

- 6.5. In Dubrovnik, study programmes are taught in English, while in Zagreb they are taught in Croatian. It is recommended to carry out study programmes in English. More English Language programmes need to be defined and set up. This will enhance the international standing of the Institution.
- 6.6. It was clear that international faculty had been utilised diligently to enhance the teaching and learning experience. This international focus must be also monitored as it is not just an add on but a coherent part of the academic programmes of the Institution. More long term planning must be made in this regard.
- 6.7. It necessary to expand international cooperation because considering the potential so far is not enough. The University is involved in Erasmus Plus activities which augurs well for the future in terms of positioning the University.

Resources: Administration, Space, Equipment and Finances

- 7.1 The Institution has to think about securing space in the future for the Faculty of Film and Performing Arts. Other programmes have been allocated adequate HR, physical and programme resources in line with the expected final teaching outcomes.
- 7.2 According to the Self-evaluation, at DIU Libertas International University there are currently 22 employees, 12 of which in the scientific and teaching area, four in assisting area and six in the technical and administrative area. Student needs require appropriate administrative and technical staff. The current number of employees is more than sufficient for proper functioning of the University and facilitates professional service, in teaching and technical and administrative areas.
- 7.3 Policies for professional development of non-teaching staff (important because of internationalization of the institution).
- 7.4 N/A.
- 7.5 It is necessary to provide modern equipment for the young Faculty of Film and Performing Arts. Other faculties and the University as a whole secure adequate equipment.
- 7.6 Equipment of library for the students of Performing Arts is at the moment considered to be insufficient and can easily be improved. It is necessary to improve this as the first aim coming from this review. The current resources appear to be adequate for catering for the current numbers and for the programmes that the Institution has in its scope. Further enhancement of this is required if new programmes are added. Also a digital modernization of all its library resources is due.
- 7.7 Financial sustainability is ensured in accordance with University's mission. Financial means for functioning of the University are adequate.

7.8 As a private institution, one gathers that only institutional funds are currently being used to support the quality of teaching and scientific activity. It would be useful and heartening to hear if the Government can also be supportive for the niche contribution that private HEI does (sometimes better) in Croatia and in the European sphere.

APPENDIX

Table 4.1. Staff structure

Staff	Full-time staff		Cumulative employment		Full-time teachers who are employed part-time in other institutions	External associates	
	Number	Average age	Number	Average age		Number	Average age
Full professors	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	9	73
Associate professors	2	51.5	0	n/a	0	1	46
Assistant professors	10	41	0	n/a	0	3	63
Teaching grades	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	2	64
Assistants	4	32	0	n/a	0	1	30
Expert assistants	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	0	n/a
Junior researchers	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	0	n/a
Technical staff	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	0	n/a
Administrative staff	5	45.6	0	n/a	0	0	n/a
Support staff	1	23	0	n/a	0	0	n/a