

Gdańsk University of Technology

EVALUATION REPORT

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Team:

Sokratis Katsikas, Chair

Marisol Morales-Ladrón

Janis Vetra

Silke Kern

Lewis Purser, Team Coordinator

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Governance and institutional decision-making.....	6
3. Quality culture.....	11
4. Teaching and learning	17
5. Research	22
6. Service to society.....	27
7. Internationalisation	29
8. Conclusion	33

1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the Gdańsk University of Technology (GUT), by the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP). The evaluation took place in 2018.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The distinctive features of IEP are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

All aspects of the evaluation are guided by four key questions, which are based on a “fitness for (and of) purpose” approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 Gdańsk University of Technology profile

Gdańsk University of Technology (GUT) is a medium-sized technical university (c. 16,800 students) situated in the historic city of Gdańsk. GUT is the largest and oldest technical university in northern Poland (re-established in 1945, as the successor to the original Technische Hochschule of 1904).

GUT has nine faculties: architecture; chemistry; electrical and control engineering; electronics, telecommunications and informatics; applied physics and mathematics; civil and environmental engineering; mechanical engineering, ocean engineering and ship technology;

and management and economics. GUT's main research areas reflect these major fields also, with a broad range of research laboratories, centres and other facilities to support these.

The city of Gdańsk has for centuries been a major trade and shipping centre, with a diverse and developed range of commercial, economic, cultural and scientific activities. Following the collapse of communism in the late 1980s, a major economic and social transition took place, including significant restructuring of the shipyards and other large industries. Today the Gdańsk urban agglomeration is home to more than one million inhabitants, and the capital of the Pomeranian region with a population of over 2.2 million people. Local and regional development is now driven by a range of new industries and businesses, including many indigenous start-up companies alongside foreign direct investments.

The importance of GUT to the city and region may be illustrated by the fact that GUT is one of top ten universities in Poland in attracting EU structural funds, having successfully obtained over 100 million euros for a wide range of projects involving cooperation with many European partners. The Gdańsk region is likewise one of only four in Poland which currently attracts students from other parts of Poland and from abroad. In a context of significant demographic challenges in Poland, and in particular in the Pomeranian region, the importance of retaining and attracting talented young people to study and work in Gdańsk cannot be overstated from a social, cultural or economic perspective. The increased focus at GUT on internationalisation of the student body, of teaching and research programmes and of the campus, including the improved international awareness of GUT and recognition of its degrees, is an important contribution to the local and regional context.

Polish government policies in recent years have significantly raised expectations regarding Polish universities and their contribution to national wellbeing, in particular in promoting employment and economic development and raising human capital levels in key areas of the economy. In 2018 an ambitious new legal framework for Polish higher education was being proposed, which would include - for the first time – a specific “research university” category, which would receive preferential government support. This new legal framework and possible new status were still under informal discussion at the time of the IEP visits, but if implemented would lead to significant changes at GUT, including the need for substantial internal restructuring, a new funding model, and a new human resources strategy.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a committee composed of ten members, of which seven were from a range of GUT Faculties, and the others from the International Relations Office, the Quality Office and the Research Office. The committee chair was appointed by the Rector. A student representative was also involved in the self-evaluation process.

The IEP team was informed that the entire self-evaluation process took around three months, during which the committee sought input and feedback from across the university. The final draft self-evaluation report was brought to the GUT Senate's attention, and all deans and

vice-deans received presentations on the report. The IEP team was informed that GUT's prior experience of preparing reports for other bodies, including accreditation reports, had proved useful in the self-evaluation phase. However, during its visits to GUT, the IEP team found that the self-evaluation process was not widely known across the university, which lessened the impact of the good work undertaken by the self-evaluation committee.

The GUT self-evaluation report was sent to the evaluation team in March 2018. The two visits of the evaluation team to Gdańsk took place from 16 to 18 April and from 20 to 23 May 2018, respectively.

The IEP evaluation team (hereinafter named the team) consisted of:

- Sokratis Katsikas, Rector of the Open University of Cyprus, team chair
- Marisol Morales-Ladrón, Vice-Rector, University of Alcalá, Spain
- Janis Vetra, Chair of the Latvian Council of Higher Education, former Rector of the Riga Stradiņš University, Latvia
- Silke Kern, post-graduate student at the Graz University of Technology, Austria
- Lewis Purser, Director Academic Affairs, Irish Universities Association, team coordinator.

The team would like to thank the Rector for his invitation to GUT and for his kind hospitality. The team would also like to thank Karolina Wysocka, head of the International Relations Office who was a most effective and pleasant contact person for the entire process. The team also expresses its gratitude to all the GUT staff, students and stakeholders it met during the two visits, and who generously shared their expertise, experience and opinions with the team.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

2.1 Background

The GUT mission focuses on the three classical roles of a university, with a particular emphasis on science and technology: high quality education of relevance to the economy and society; high quality scientific research of international standing; and innovative projects which support and enrich societal development. This mission underpins the GUT Development Strategy for 2012-2020, which outlines a number of strategic goals and tasks for the university, across the three strands of the university's mission. These goals and tasks are underpinned by an extensive set of key performance indicators (KPIs) set by the university. The use of these KPIs will be discussed later in this section and also in Chapter 3.

However, the implementation of this strategy has been interrupted by the announcement by the Government of a proposed new University Law, to be introduced during the second half of 2018. At the time of the team's visits, this law had not yet been published, although a number of the likely major changes had been informally communicated, and the Rector had been active in organising internal discussions at GUT to help prepare for these changes.

One of the major changes to be proposed in this legislation is the creation of a "research university" category in Poland, to be obtained by a very small number of universities nationally, which would then be funded by the Polish government on a differential basis to the other universities. Other changes regarding governance structures, academic structures, research categories, funding mechanisms and doctoral education are all also likely to be proposed.

The team was informed that these proposed changes presented a significant opportunity for GUT to restructure itself and reinforce its institutional cohesion and decision-making processes, while at the same time strengthening its national and international profile. It was expected that there would be a two-year implementation process for these changes, following the promulgation of the new law.

As a result of these forthcoming legislative changes, the GUT 2012-2020 Development Strategy appears to have been put to one side, along with the related KPIs, and all available resources and energy are being put into preparing for future changes under the proposed new law, in particular in preparing to meet criteria (which at the time of the IEP visits remained unknown) for the new category of "research university".

Given this context, the team has tried to ensure that this evaluation can be useful in terms of understanding the existing strengths and weaknesses of GUT and improving these to ensure the university is as well organised as possible to meet the challenges of the new legislation, so that it can emerge as a strong institution with highly effective governance and decision-making processes which underpin the delivery of the GUT mission to the highest possible quality.

2.2 Decision-making bodies and processes

GUT has a typical governance structure, with a traditional set of decision-making bodies. These are the Senate and Rector, and the Faculty Councils and deans. In addition, GUT has an Advisory Council composed of relevant external GUT stakeholders, the members of which are proposed by the Rector and approved by the Senate.

All members of the Senate are elected by the different constituent groups: professors, other staff, students and doctoral candidates (20%), with office holders in each faculty also members. In addition, the Senate meetings are also attended in an advisory capacity by the university chancellor, the bursar, the director of the main library and representatives of the trade unions at GUT (one from each union). The Senate meets every month, and has a number of sub-committees (Education, Internationalisation, Commercialisation, Technology and Cooperation with Economy, Budget).

Candidates for the position of Rector must come from among the GUT professors, and the Rector is elected by an electoral body representing Senate membership. Vice-rectors are proposed by the Rector, and elected by the same electoral body. The number of vice-rectors can be changed by the Rector. Deans and vice-deans are similarly elected by faculty level electoral bodies. The faculty representatives in the Senate are elected by faculty members, following quotas for different categories of staff. Heads of department and chairs within the faculties are proposed by the deans and then elected.

The heads of department are responsible overseeing the teaching process and the teaching timetables in each department. They distribute internal funding to researchers and also decide on promotions. The heads of department meet with their respective deans and vice-deans to coordinate activities across each Faculty.

During its meetings, the team was informed that, resulting from these decision-making structures, GUT currently resembles a federation of faculties rather than a strong institution in its own right. Likewise, the Senate is seen as a place of discussion but not an easy place in which to take decisions. The team heard evidence during a number of meetings that decisions regarding matters of relevance to students and staff often varied across different departments and faculties, leading to inconsistencies in internal academic, financial and human resource procedures. **The team recommends that regulations for such matters be applied consistently across the entire university, in the best interests of students, staff and the institution.**

It also appeared to the team that there was considerable scope for greater university-wide structures to support the work of the faculties and to help them meet these common regulatory requirements. Such structures could be seen as shared services offering support to decentralised decision makers across the academic, research, financial and human resource fields. **The team recommends that GUT explore possible options regarding such shared internal services.**

One of the findings of GUT's self-evaluation process was that internal university stakeholders are not well informed regarding how the university works, and GUT structures have not been well communicated. This is also a challenge for external stakeholders. The team was informed that GUT was now trying to produce a clear organisational chart to aid understanding by relevant groups.

External stakeholders commented to the team that these cumbersome internal processes meant that the university spent too much time on its own internal bureaucracy and did not have sufficient time for its own strategic development and external relations. They also suggested that a number of GUT advisory bodies at different levels should be combined, thus helping to build coherence and critical mass and improve communications.

2.3 Performance indicators and monitoring

The university's KPIs were set as part of the GUT Strategy 2012-2020, in order to identify and measure the key strategic objectives at the time. These cover a number of parameters under the main areas of teaching, research, innovation, organisational/financial processes, quality and cooperation, and are all assessed each year as part of the GUT annual activity report.

However, these internal KPIs are not used for national reporting purposes, which require a set of standard statistics, and where the student/staff ratio is now the most important national indicator. In previous years, up to 25% of national funding was based on student numbers, with other elements of funding based on research, but this is no longer the case.

These changes in national reporting requirements and the new emerging legislative context have resulted in less attention being given to the internal GUT KPIs. The Quality Office continues however to be responsible for these, and at the time of the IEP visits was preparing the 2017 annual activity report on that basis. The team was informed that a review of the GUT Strategy was planned which would provide an opportunity to consider other measures and indicators not covered by the existing internal KPIs.

2.4 Role and involvement of students

As key internal partners and stakeholders, students have a vital role to play in the successful functioning of the university, as individuals and through their organisations, and through their active participation in the life of the institution, including its academic and governance structures. This role has been central to the Bologna Process in European higher education for the last twenty years, and is also firmly embedded in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The team was pleased to find that student involvement is also central and prominent in GUT, at both university and faculty levels. Student representatives - elected by the student parliament - have 20% of the seats in the Senate, and likewise in the Faculty Councils. They are also involved in the sub-committees that are of most relevance to students.

However, the team also found that student representatives were not trained or supported in any systematic way to undertake these roles, apart from relying on informal advice from outgoing Senate members and their own previous experience.

While student representatives are obliged to explain to new students at beginning of each semester the role of student organisations, student rights, etc., they also noted to the team that there were very low levels of awareness among the general student body regarding student participation in GUT decision-making processes, and that it was a continuous challenge to raise information levels about these. This also resulted in small numbers of candidates being proposed for election as student representatives.

In order to support and strengthen the positive role that students should play in the life of the university, **the team therefore recommends that incoming cohorts of student representatives across the faculties receive formal training from the university to help them fulfil their specific roles in an effective way. This annual training should be accompanied by an awareness raising campaign regarding the role of students at the university and how they can participate.**

In addition to being represented on the university's various internal structures, the students organise a range of different events for students, with funding from the university. Examples of such events include workshops to develop business plans; talks by GUT graduates and employers; career fairs and lectures; quizzes; thematic parties; an international women's day event; science club participation in competitions, field trips, charity actions, Erasmus days, etc. Students noted that the GUT student organisation was probably one of the better-financed student organisations in Poland, and that it also successfully obtained external sponsorship for specific activities. However, the team also heard that agreeing the student budget with the university could be a slow process, and that detailed additional negotiations were sometimes needed to ensure disbursement of monies, including the need for strict procurement procedures. **The team recommends that GUT should facilitate and simplify where possible the financial planning and budgetary processes for student organisations, granting them more autonomy in their own affairs.** It was suggested that the creation of a student foundation, such as exists at other Polish universities, could provide an efficient and suitable example to follow.

There is also an Erasmus student network at GUT whose role is to support Erasmus students who come to the university, and which also includes other international students where possible. The activities of this network are funded from the Erasmus+ programme. The Erasmus student network coordinators receive support from the international office for their activities, and also for the financial and reporting requirements linked to the Erasmus funding. The team was informed that cooperation with some faculties regarding support for Erasmus students was easier than with others, mirroring the very diverse levels of international students across the GUT faculties.

2.5 Human Resources

The university's self-evaluation process revealed poor levels of knowledge among many GUT staff regarding basic human resource procedures such as hiring and promotion, competitions for positions, etc. It further identified that these poor awareness levels were due to a combination of complicated and bureaucratic GUT procedures, to variations across faculties, and especially to poor communication from the university on these matters. The implementation of university regulations contained in the statutes is up to each faculty, leading to variations in recruitment practice. This issue was also raised in the EU HR4R (Human Resources for Research) strategy document in 2017. The team was told that some activities are planned to improve this situation, including better use of internal IT tools and better communication of the regulations. Given that the Rector (i.e. GUT) is the formal employer, a common general procedure is required, which can include some relevant local details for faculties and centres. In terms of academic promotion, the team was informed that the procedures for this are defined at a national level, and that GUT should follow these.

In the current context, where the staff structure in Polish universities is often a reverse pyramid, with more people higher up than lower down, and where it has become increasingly difficult to fill open positions at GUT because the salaries available cannot compete with the private sector, it is crucial that the university finds workable solutions to these issues. The team was informed that in 2018 the unemployment rate in Poland was dropping to below 5%, and that it was much lower in the Gdańsk region, so competition for good young staff will remain very high for the foreseeable future. The university therefore needs to have effective and efficient recruitment processes which encourage suitable candidates interested in the possibility of an academic career in a leading Polish technical university.

The team was also informed that, as a result of the HR4R exercise, the university was now moving towards an open system of recruitment and promotion, but that hiring external staff is a new phenomenon for Polish universities, given that the tradition has always been to hire and promote internally. **The team would like to encourage the university to use this opportunity to develop further diversity among GUT staff and improve the visibility of GUT at national and international levels.** In this context, having relevant information and documentation, including contracts, available in both Polish and English would support these efforts.

The team learned that the proposed new legislative provisions were likely to have a significant impact on the existing employment model at Polish universities, as well as in areas such as the evaluation of staff. In this context also, the existence of strong university-wide regulations and the effective implementation of these, including good communications processes, will allow GUT to move efficiently to whatever new requirements may arise.

3. Quality culture

3.1 Quality concepts and instruments

The team explored the concept of quality culture and what this means at GUT during its visits. The more visible formal aspects of this culture include processes for programme development and approval, a strong focus on student learning and the student experience, the annual meetings organised by the Quality Office with internal and external stakeholders, a series of publications on relevant quality assurance (QA) topics, and many other relevant examples. The team was left with a clear opinion of widespread awareness at GUT of the importance of quality culture and the need to enhance this.

A significant number of surveys are undertaken by GUT each year as part of the overall quality process. These cover the assessment of teachers, the assessment of courses, the assessment of administrative staff, and the assessment of faculty authorities. Decisions regarding which surveys are used and when are taken by the faculty deans, as well as the choice and use of follow-up quality enhancement measures.

Possibly the most important instrument is the main GUT QA document, the “Education Quality Book” which is updated annually, and which sets out the quality assurance activities at each level across the university. It outlines the quality system in place to verify that student learning outcomes are achieved, and to determine how programmes should be improved. Unfortunately, this was only available in Polish so the team was unable to consult it in detail.

Through the range of instruments used, GUT collects considerable amounts of quality-related data on a regular basis. The team found however that limited overall analysis and use is made of this data, either for the purposes of feedback to staff and students, or for input to the central university decision-making processes. This disconnect may be due to the lack of apparent coherence between the GUT KPIs as per the 2012-2020 Strategy, and the QA data gathered locally within the university. Likewise, the ESG have not been used within GUT to date, but following a decision of the GUT Senate in 2017, the aim is to ensure compatibility between the GUT QA indicators and the relevant standards of the ESG. The team also found that the only indicator relating to quality assurance used when reporting to the Polish Ministry was the staff/student ratio. The team therefore recommends that **GUT should undertake better analysis of the quality assurance data already available to it, both for internal decision-making processes and for better feedback to staff and students.**

In terms of GUT’s engagement with external quality assurance agencies, the team was informed that the Polish Accreditation Council (PAC) examines strategic coherence across the university, the institution-wide QA system, the quality of staff who teach, academic programme structures, GUT infrastructure, student supports and internationalisation efforts. The team was likewise informed that the criteria used by PAC are those of the ESG, integrated into PAC’s procedures. GUT has already successfully obtained international accreditation for

some of its study programmes and is aiming to obtain more, and also is seeking to become more prominent in external ranking exercises.

The experience of preparing for these various external QA, accreditation and ranking exercises, including the range of indicators they use, can be useful for GUT in terms of making greater analysis and use of its existing datasets, and **the team recommends that GUT uses this experience to align its internal QA processes more coherently with those used in national and international best practice.**

The team suggests that the university review and strengthen its quality assurance concepts and instruments by aligning its quality assurance indicators, so as to meet internal and external requirements in a coherent and efficient manner. Furthermore, **GUT should assess the relevance and coherence of the various quality assurance instruments in use, both internal and external, including those in place for research, to ensure that all essential issues are adequately covered,** but that there the phenomenon of “evaluation fatigue” and “over-measurement” is avoided.

The team also recommends that the university improve its feedback and reporting to key internal and external stakeholders regarding quality assurance across the university and steps being taken to improve this.

3.2 Structures and implementation

As evidenced in the GUT self-evaluation report, the team found that there are well-documented quality assurance structures at GUT. This system is built around a number of internal committees at university and faculty levels, and a committee for educational quality in the didactic centres, all supported by a central Quality Office.

As well as supporting the internal committees, the Quality Office contributes to internal GUT data analysis processes and prepares data for the national and international rankings exercises. Given that there was no central QA function at GUT before 2012, there is clear evidence from the available documentation that awareness levels within GUT regarding quality assurance have developed considerably since then. The plans to expand the Quality Office, using recent grants, will serve to advance this further.

At the level of the university, the University Committee for the Assurance of Education Quality (UCAEQ) brings together - on a monthly basis - representatives from each faculty and the didactic centres, as well as all other key internal partners, with a total of around 20 members, to develop quality assurance procedures for the faculties and other units to follow, covering areas such as subject curricula, learning outcomes, doctoral theses, etc. This committee also plays a major role in improving internal communications regarding quality assurance, and responds to queries from relevant bodies, for example from students, and organises an annual “GUT Quality Day” seminar. The committee makes annual use of a checklist to ensure that procedures are working satisfactorily and presents an annual report on QA to the GUT Senate.

At the level of the faculties, there are Faculty Committees for the Assurance of Education Quality (FCAEQ), which meet each month and are responsible for the management of educational quality at each faculty, focused in much more detail on the study programmes. These Faculty Committees are responsible for meeting the requirements laid out in the "Education Quality Book" and completing an annual report on this signed by the dean, in which student grade distributions and the high-level results of the student evaluation of staff are also presented.

Within the faculties, there is a study coordinator for each programme, among whose responsibilities is to bring together a number of QA elements regarding that programme, twice per year. The focus of this activity is to monitor the programme learning outcomes, in particular those components which may have been identified as presenting difficulties in previous years. Although this programme-level QA activity is embedded within the faculties and now seen as part of general procedures, the team found that it was not detailed in any documentation. The team also found that this monitoring of learning outcomes did not extend to the monitoring of student feedback across the programme, or bringing together individual staff evaluations across the same programme as part of the broader QA process.

In addition, during its meetings the team found that many of the faculties have different internal structures, with different internal players taking lead roles for programme quality. Based on the team's discussions with a broad range of players during its visits, it is apparent that a diverse range of QA measures and implementation mechanisms have been developed across different faculties. More fundamentally, it appears to the team that the values and attitudes to quality culture also appear to vary between faculties. These differences contribute to challenges in developing and presenting an overall picture of quality at GUT, and also limit the overall visibility and impact of QA and quality culture at the university.

The team therefore recommends that the results of student feedback and staff evaluations be included in the overall quality assurance and evaluation of GUT programmes, and that the university explore ways to embed a deeper quality culture at programme level, less reliant on student performance metrics and which takes into account a broader range of quality indicators. If developed sensitively, this would add value to the current QA system at both faculty and central university levels, and also encourage and support greater innovation in teaching and academic performance across the university.

GUT should also ensure that a common approach to quality assurance is implemented across the entire university, with a similar standard of procedure in place at all levels to ensure that academic programmes and support services are evaluated and improved on a regular basis.

3.3 Students

The role of students is central to any well-structured and well-functioning quality assurance system. As one of the major stakeholders in the university, and the major beneficiary of the university's education mission, the role of students in contributing to the assurance and

enhancement of quality at all levels has been recognised widely in national and international best practice, and is firmly embedded in the ESG.

At GUT, students are members of the UCAEQ and the various faculty committees. At an individual level, they are asked to complete the evaluation and assessment forms regarding teaching and members of staff. The team learnt that response rates to these feedback mechanisms had improved somewhat since the forms were shortened, and that some faculties have successfully encouraged students to respond in much higher numbers, using various incentives to motivate students.

However, the team also learnt from students that the feedback process itself was in many cases less than satisfactory and therefore did not encourage students to respond. Examples of this included forms which were used across the entire university, making it time consuming and complicated for students to respond to the sections relevant for their programme and/or teachers; questions which focused more on teacher behaviour than the quality of teaching; and a lack of feedback in some faculties and programmes following completion of the student surveys.

Furthermore, the lack of information regarding response rates at local levels means that student representatives have so far not been able to assist with raising student awareness regarding the importance of student engagement with this essential element of the QA process. The team was pleased to learn however that the Quality Office was planning to help student organisations on this particular issue.

The team recommends that GUT should ensure that students across all faculties and programmes can contribute fully to the quality of their programmes, faculties and the university, and that all faculties and programmes are responsive to the issues these students may raise.

3.4 Staff

During its visits, the team explored the topic of academic staff awareness of the university QA system. The monthly meetings of quality committees at university and faculty levels provide the opportunity to discuss what can be improved. Feedback to students is seen as an important element. The team also heard that the experience developed over the last eight to nine years in implementing the virtual learning environment Moodle, which has been used voluntarily by many academic staff, has been very helpful in improving contact with students and improving the learning and teaching process.

Within the faculties, the heads of department have the main responsibility for evaluating teachers. Beyond the regular monthly meetings with heads of department, the dean may also become involved in the evaluation of staff where this is required. Each member of academic staff is evaluated internally every four years. Staff complete a report on their research, teaching and organisational activities, including the results of student evaluations of that staff member that year.

This report is reviewed by the head of department, and then if deemed necessary also by the faculty committee, where the staff member in question may be asked to attend. These evaluations may also be undertaken on a more frequent basis, at the request of the head of department. The research element of the evaluation includes consideration of progression from PhD to achieve Habilitation, within the permitted eight year period. The head of department is also obliged to visit a class of each teacher every year, as part of this staff evaluation.

In terms of the evaluation of staff by students, the results of this are available to the relevant head of department, as well as to the dean and vice-deans for education at the faculty. Part-time external specialist teaching staff are also covered by this survey, and the results are important in terms of renewing contracts. When faculties had to reduce the numbers of academic staff, the quality of teaching was one of the criteria taken into account. In situations where the student assessment of academic staff is not positive, then the teacher is asked to comment on why the assessment is poor; if in the second semester this has not changed, then the teacher is removed. Students themselves however express a concern that their assessment of academic staff was not always treated anonymously, leading to reluctance among students to provide feedback.

In addition, doctoral supervisors are evaluated every year, as part of updating the lists of approved supervisors and available grants which are published every year, to assist potential students to consider what and who is available.

The team learnt that a number of proposals to change these staff evaluation methods had been considered at GUT, including a much more detailed self-evaluation survey which had been introduced previously and which led to a certain amount of controversy. However, the lack of alignment between the KPIs in the GUT 2012-2020 strategy, the criteria established by the Ministry, and the measures used by the PAC, means that it is currently difficult to design a staff evaluation process as part of an overall strategic development process. This is one area which could usefully be improved once the legislative framework is in place and the strategic directions are clearer. In particular, **the team recommends that the use of self-assessment methodologies by staff should usefully be linked to mentoring for staff development, and to the formal periodic external assessment process.**

3.5 Stakeholders

As part of the broader quality assurance system, the university also receives other relevant feedback from the GUT careers office (which publishes detailed annual reports of graduate employment and other outcomes), from alumni, and from external professional stakeholders involved in some programmes. This feedback is used at faculty level as part of the process of quality enhancement, in particular in programme evaluations. The team learnt that the concept of peer review using external expertise from other universities or relevant organisations is rarely used, although there are examples of good practice being incorporated as a result of collaboration with other Polish universities as part of specific projects or

national networks. Likewise, there are a small number of European projects where GUT has developed double degree programmes with other universities. These programmes imply that each partner university should accept each other's quality assurance procedures, and also provide good opportunities to observe good practice in other contexts.

4. Teaching and learning

4.1 Structures and regulations

In its discussions regarding the GUT teaching and learning mission and strategy, the team was informed that the Polish academic tradition has been that professors and academic staff are above all scientists and then also teachers. Academic performance has therefore traditionally been evaluated mostly in terms of research. In more recent years this traditional perception of an academic career has broadened somewhat to also include cooperating with industry.

However, as pointed out to the team, there is a contradiction between this traditional approach and the system for paying academics, where salaries are linked directly to the number of teaching hours. Research income is seen as additional; the additional salary payments which may arise from this do not appear to be limited.

There are two main types of academic staff at GUT: those involved in both research and teaching; and those who only teach. For teaching only staff, the team was informed that the annual obligatory teaching workload is 360 hours; for professors who both teach and conduct research, the annual teaching workload is 180 hours, while the basic annual teaching load is 210 hours for assistant professors and 240 hours for teaching assistants. These do not include consultation hours or other contact hours. If staff teach more than their normal teaching load, they can increase their salary. The team was informed that occasionally deans have had issues with staff wanting to abuse this opportunity.

As a result, the team noted that the teaching load for most academics at GUT appears to be quite reasonable, which in theory should offer lots of time for research or other activities. However, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter 5, the average research outputs at GUT are very low. The team was informed that the organisation of teaching schedules in some faculties doesn't always facilitate effective time for research. The IEP team also heard that the distribution of teaching hours among teachers was occasionally not always ideal from the perspective of programme coherence. **The team would encourage GUT to ensure that such matters are always considered primarily from the student perspective, to ensure as supportive a learning environment as possible.**

In addition, following a change in government policy in 2014-15, GUT was required to reduce the student/staff ratio to 12:1, the rationale for this being that it would result in better learning for students, better interaction between academic staff and students, and better student involvement in research projects. The team noted that compared to most university systems in Europe this is a very favourable ratio, both for students and for staff. The method employed to achieve this student/staff ratio was to implement a significant reduction in the number of students at GUT, over a two year timespan, through decreased enrolments and stricter progression rules.

As a result of this overall situation regarding teaching loads and student numbers, the teaching and learning environment at GUT should be attractive. The team noted however that the move to obtain the proposed new status of “research university” may present a potential risk to maintaining the quality and importance of teaching and learning, both in terms of diverting attention from the education agenda, but also in terms of the existing funding model, on which the GUT teaching and learning strategy currently depends.

4.2 Design and approach to teaching and learning

The GUT head of department or didactic unit is responsible for the organisation of teaching, and also for monitoring the quality of teaching, for all programmes within that department or unit. Individual academic staff are in charge of their own teaching, as long as they stay within the framework of the programme as agreed. Each subject has a “subject book” which includes details of the programme and the expected learning outcomes. Lectures, laboratory work and tutorials all have assigned outcomes and how these will be assessed. As previously noted, programmes can be adapted and changed through an agreed process at local programme level and then at faculty level. A number of academic fields must respect European or international professional regulations regarding programme content and/or learning outcomes.

Some programmes are shared across faculties. Where these have large numbers of students, they tend to operate in two or three parallel student cohorts, sometimes with slightly different profiles; smaller programmes operate across faculties as a single group.

The team was informed that the successful introduction of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) at GUT had taken a long time, with ECTS rules now applied across all fields of study and verified through stakeholder feedback, resulting in better study programmes with greater orientation towards student learning outcomes. The GUT student feedback forms include some questions regarding the amount of time spent on different elements within the programme.

A number of issues regarding the design and implementation of study programmes were raised with the team that GUT should continue to monitor over the coming years. These include the proportion of programme content which remains elective, which appeared to vary very significantly between programmes. Elective components are important in facilitating individualised student learning paths and developing inter-disciplinary approaches. Likewise, the team learnt that the approach to the development of expected learning outcomes and the communication of these to students often depends on the individual teacher. In addition, the team was informed that there is no agreed university-wide system for examinations; it appears that each teacher decides what the assessment process will be and sets the required passing grades.

In terms of continuing to develop a student-centred learning philosophy at GUT, **it would be useful to have a certain level of consistency within faculties and across the entire university in such matters concerning programme design and implementation.** This will help facilitate

further desirable links between faculties and across programmes and contribute to the ongoing development of sustainable study programmes.

The team learnt that GUT operates a virtual learning environment (VLE) using Moodle, and that some 45,000 items were included already in this. While staff are not required to use the VLE, they are encouraged to do so and training is provided by the university's e-learning unit, including how to integrate a blended learning approach. Around 550 teachers (i.e. about one third of all GUT academic staff) were using Moodle at the time of the IEP visits. The team was also informed however that a number of different e-learning platforms existed in the faculties, but that these were moving towards using the GUT VLE platform only. The team supports this development, which - in conjunction with the necessary training to encourage best use of e-learning and blended learning opportunities - will improve the overall learning environment at GUT and strengthen e-learning opportunities and their overall profile. In particular, the team was told that students who study two courses find the e-learning platform very useful as this helps them overcome practical issues if two classes are scheduled for the same time.

In order to address some of the QA and sustainability issues arising, the Quality Office had recently undertaken an evaluation of distance education at GUT and a report was being prepared, with a plan to reduce the number of distance classes offered and to improve the quality of those retained, as part of the move towards consolidating these resources on the VLE. This is also designed to help the Rector to repeal the recent move to pay less for distance teaching hours, and to ensure that staff time spent on e-learning activities can be counted effectively, as part of a general policy of encouraging online and blended learning.

4.3 Student-centred learning

During the IEP visits, the team met groups of students at faculty and university level, as well as GUT alumni and external stakeholders. The feedback from these students was that they were happy with their overall experience at GUT, and the feedback from alumni and stakeholders was very positive.

In terms of the university's approach to active learning methodologies, positive aspects raised by all groups included the good focus on student-led team work and projects, and that they were able to provide feedback and suggestions to contribute to the ongoing development of teaching and learning at the university and at faculty level. In its discussions with faculties, the team noted that faculties encourage student projects but that staff time spent working with students on these more active forms of learning was not always easy to include in the official teaching load, and that more co-working areas for students, for group work etc. were needed.

Likewise, all stakeholders mentioned the importance of developing soft and transversal skills, including through internships, so that GUT students can be well equipped to step into the world of work on graduation. Students confirmed that these are developed as part of projects and group work (including project management skills). Employers in particular asked for a greater focus on the development of soft skills within GUT programmes and cited good

examples from some faculties where learning opportunities are organised in cooperation with external stakeholders, for example in adapting city architecture for people with disabilities. Students also stated that they would like greater contact with employers and industry.

In addition, the team was informed that GUT organises two hours of lectures every week (16 hours per semester) open to all students across a range of relevant social subjects. Examples of these include the history of technology, the history of chemistry, etc.

Stakeholders also expressed strong support for greater collaboration between different disciplines in programme design and delivery, including the opportunity for students to take more electives. As previously noted, while students already have some options in the choice of course elements, this appeared to vary greatly across programmes. Making more options available across more study programmes would allow students to develop a broader range of career options, some more technical or narrow, others broader and more general. There are obviously programmatic and logistical limitations to what the university can do, but the team would encourage the university to support and facilitate such flexibility wherever possible, including making full use of the opportunities presented by ECTS. The ECTS information package on the website was noted as useful for students and teachers to see what the curriculum can offer.

GUT encourages students to become proficient in English by integrating obligatory English language classes into the curriculum. A range of other languages are also taught through the GUT Language Centre. Given that many students already speak good English, the team learnt that such students would like to be able to take other language options instead, but that this was often not possible. In addition, many students did not appear to be aware of the range of options available through the Language Centre or stated that these options were not available at flexible times for students or as “free listeners”. The team was also informed that the minimum class size the Language Centre could accept was 20 people: this limits its ability to provide a more flexible service for staff and students across a broader range of languages. **The team therefore recommends that GUT should encourage and facilitate more students to use the Language Centre to develop their language competences across a broader range of relevant languages.**

As noted during the team’s discussions with GUT staff and employers, GUT stakeholders and graduate employers currently need lots of skilled graduates, with a broad range of competences. The university can help meet this need by improving awareness of the benefits among all staff of a student-centred approach to teaching and learning, with practical implementation of this across the full range of GUT programmes. While students confirmed to the team that they were happy with their overall experience at GUT, the team also noted that students appear to have “adapted” to the system, and as a result are not more vocal regarding their needs. GUT needs its students to thrive, to ask questions and to be curious; these are crucial in ensuring their success in subsequent employment or in further studies.

4.4 Staff support and development

As with any large knowledge-intensive organisation, universities must invest in their own staff to ensure they continue to be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to do their jobs. This is particularly important when important changes and reforms are introduced, such as are ongoing across European higher education and research.

While formal training courses play a part in this, academic staff have traditionally used opportunities such as staff mobility, including incoming visiting academics, to observe and learn from teaching methodologies, good practice and ideas in other universities, and to gain experience from working in different environments.

The team was informed that GUT had recently successfully obtained a large grant from the Polish Ministry to improve didactic methods across the entire teaching body, not just for teachers with identified needs. A broad range of staff development topics are now being put in place, such as the use of multi-media in a classroom context. The deans have been asked to nominate people to attend these courses, but they are also open to all interested staff members. Staff in professional units such as the Quality Office are able to participate in various international staff development opportunities and exchanges with other universities. The team was informed that staff can also participate in language learning courses.

Despite these positive elements, the team observed that there has not been any systematic provision at GUT of didactic support for teachers, and there is no GUT unit to help with methodological and pedagogical staff development. There is also considerable scope for much greater levels of mutual learning between faculties and centres.

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, teacher evaluation at GUT includes observation of teaching by the head of department, and can also include observation by other professors. Critical observation and feedback by an experienced peer is an internationally recognised method for staff development, and often takes place separately to any formal quality assurance or staff appraisal process. The team heard during its meetings that academic staff at GUT had found this experience positive, and that the feedback received had been useful and constructive. **The team suggests that there is scope to build on this systematically as part of the new staff development project. Together with the systematic provision of didactic training, this should be mainstreamed into normal GUT academic practice.**

Support and courses are also available to doctoral candidates across a range of different areas, including developing transversal skills, didactic training, or more specific to particular research fields. The proposed reforms to consolidate doctoral training at GUT were strongly supported by stakeholders, also from the perspective of strengthening the support and training available to these young researchers and making these more widely available across the university.

5. Research

5.1 Policy framework

As confirmed in the self-evaluation report, GUT's research mission is to conduct scientific research at the highest international level in order to participate in civilisation changes and enriching culture, in particular science and technology. During its visits to the university, the team found a long tradition of high quality research, and in particular a close and fruitful relationship with industrial partners which has evolved successfully as the economic and industrial environment has changed over time.

However, the team was also informed of significant differences in research capacity and performance across GUT faculties and across academic staff. GUT has published an internal ranking of all academic staff based on their citation records (Hirsch index), showing that almost 50% have very low citation records, possibly influenced by the traditionally lower publication outputs linked to certain fields of applied research. There are also very significant differences in research income between GUT faculties, with some faculties deriving as much as 90% of their income from research grants. While such disparities in research outputs across diverse academic fields are common in many universities, the GUT data highlights the need to increase baseline research performance across a broad range of academic staff, and to identify and provide more intense support for those with high research potential. The age profiles of GUT academic and other staff show that there is also a need to attract and retain young staff. While acknowledging the challenges this presents in the current university environment in Poland, the team suggests that a range of incentives and mechanisms will be needed in order to successfully attract and support a new cohort of high potential young staff at GUT.

In addition, the team observed that the research at GUT appears very applied, with limited mention of more basic "blue skies" work. While this may be as a result of limited independent funding for such research (see below), it is also evident through the list of GUT research partners and projects. As the GUT research agenda is essentially driven by teams and individuals at local level within the university, it naturally is more reactive to external stimuli such as funding or collaboration opportunities, rather than being driven by a university-wide strategic approach.

In terms of how research at GUT is funded, about 25% of the funding received by GUT from government is not directly linked to teaching, which means part of this can be used for research purposes. There are some small internal central funds available for a limited range of activities and to support the recruitment of young researchers from target countries. Faculties also have some financial capacity via their devolved budgets to stimulate research activity. However, the vast majority of research funding at GUT comes from external sources and is managed in a very decentralised way. These main sources are industry partners, for a very broad range of projects; the Polish National Centre for Research and Development, which funds applied research with grants of up to 2.5 million PLN (c. 500,000 EUR); the Polish

National Science Centre, which funds basic research for individual researchers and research teams, as well as doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships; and various European Union funding streams, in particular the Cohesion Funds, which have contributed to funding research activity and infrastructure at GUT and where GUT is the most successful of the Polish technical universities in obtaining EU funding.

Given this existing policy framework for research at GUT, the team explored with a broad range of actors what the consequences might be of moving towards the new “research university” status as is proposed under the new University Law. The following broad points were raised which are important in planning the next phase of GUT strategic developments in the field of research:

- The draft proposals at the time of the IEP visits were that the baseline state funding for “research universities” would be increased by 10%. This increase in itself was not seen as a gamechanger, but as something which could potentially lead to other advantages and open up other sources of funding. However, this would need to be balanced by the fact that many current members of the GUT academic community are unlikely to be successful in a more competitive research funding environment and are wary of other possible consequences of the new law.
- The team was informed of a dilemma regarding the proposed new law, relating to both research and teaching. The current reality at GUT is that some faculties have outstanding teachers but an average research record; some faculties conduct relatively little teaching but have strong research records in areas which are not clearly linked to industry needs; while other faculties have very close relations to industry and significant research activity which is directly linked to industry needs. Changing this current situation will require significant investment and a very clear strategy to attract new staff to the university.
- Many individual GUT academics are used to generating additional external income from consultancy and other professional services. If these external projects and income need to be approved by the university under the new law, then the team was informed that many academics - particularly more established academics in some disciplines - are likely to oppose the proposal.
- The move to “research university” status would also imply the need for increased efficiency in various research-related processes, such as application and success rates, support for doctoral students, and research support structures. Such internal reforms to improve efficiencies and enhance outputs across GUT would need to be continued and intensified where possible, in any scenario.

During the IEP visits, it became clear that the main issue for many academic staff was the uncertainty regarding their future situation at GUT. When clarity is obtained regarding national policies and the new legislation, then it appears likely that GUT will need to adapt very quickly. Most people would logically prefer a step-by-step approach, which would allow

for more gradual and possibly deeper and more effective change, while politics is pushing for rapid change.

In this situation, **the team recommends that GUT use the “research university” concept as an opportunity to transform GUT into research-oriented university, building on its current achievements and strengths to improve and enhance its research profile and performance,** but also to capitalise on its enhanced research profile to strengthen its teaching in related areas and ensure the ongoing quality of its graduates.

5.2 Support structures

In analysing GUT’s research strategy and existing strengths and weaknesses, the team also examined the mechanisms in place at the university to support successful research and to exploit its outputs.

The main such support structure is the Centre for Knowledge and Technology Transfer, which has successfully been providing expertise and support for the transfer of knowledge and technologies developed at GUT to a very broad range of external partners. Chapter 6 will cover this further.

In 2017, GUT obtained the HR Excellence in Research award from the European Commission, in recognition of GUT’s commitment to implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. This award was made following an evaluation of GUT’s human resources strategy and practices for research staff and represents an important achievement by the university in developing its research policies and practices.

The Research Office under the vice-rector provides advice and practical support for GUT researchers and the faculties where requested, in terms of national and European grants, project and other opportunities. **The team recommends the Research Office be significantly expanded and strengthened as a shared service for the entire university, providing specialised support services for grant applications and grant administration, and a source of expertise and assistance in terms of application and funding rules, legal requirements, financial management of research grants, financial reporting, etc.**

The GUT International Office also provides assistance when requested with applications by GUT staff for European and other international grants, including providing support for research applications.

While some faculties are already able to provide some of these services for their academics, the greater availability of such expert support for the entire GUT research community, including for external partners, would - in the opinion of the team – lead to considerably higher levels of grant applications and success rates, as well as increase the efficiency of research administration and management across GUT, thus providing a vital catalyst towards becoming a research-oriented university. The demand already exists for such support, as

evidenced by the regional conference organised by the Research Office for the National Science Centre, which attracted large numbers of researchers to help them prepare grants.

The team noted that the university is very aware of the research weaknesses at GUT, including the significant disparities in research performance between faculties. One of the options being discussed at the time of the IEP visits, in the context of the proposed new law, was the possibility of merging some faculties along the lines of the OECD disciplinary groupings to help consolidate and strengthen research in these fields. Such mergers would also need to make sense from an education perspective, but if carefully planned could help raise the profile of some academic fields and lead to GUT being more competitive in attracting high potential young researchers, many of whom are currently drawn to employment in the private enterprise sector.

5.3 Doctoral education

The current structure of doctoral education at GUT is decentralised to each faculty, with a separate doctoral programme in each of the nine faculties. Despite this situation, the team learnt that a certain level of commonality is achieved across these programmes, as all regulations are decided at GUT central level, and doctoral candidate scholarships are likewise allocated by the vice-rector for research.

Even though GUT successfully obtained the largest grant in Poland (10 million PLN, over 2 million EUR) for an inter-faculty project to support all doctoral candidates, when asked about the low numbers of doctoral candidates, respondents noted that current possibilities to award stipends were very limited, but that professors with research grants could use these to recruit good doctoral candidates, although this did not happen frequently enough. There also appeared to be considerable variation between faculties regarding whether a basic allowance was provided to all doctoral candidates or not. These financial difficulties also mean that many need to earn additional income and are therefore not fully engaged in their doctoral education process. These candidates are much less likely to complete on time. Given this situation, GUT is faced with a choice: to concentrate available financial and other support on a small number of high quality local doctoral candidates, or to recruit more candidates from abroad for whom the Polish stipends are sufficiently attractive.

As part of the proposed new university law, it appears that the right to award doctoral degrees will transfer from faculties to the university, thus providing the opportunity to move towards a smaller number of doctoral programmes based on groups of faculties or on broad fields of research. The new law may also ensure that stipends are offered to all doctoral candidates for the official duration of four years. This would be a positive move, allowing all students to obtain a certain level of financial support, and also influence current time-to-completion rates, which currently average around 4.5 years.

A more comprehensive system of financial supports for doctoral candidates would certainly help address the very real challenge of ensuring enough enrolments. A centralised approach

should also allow for a more coherent approach to attracting a broader range of doctoral candidates.

A further issue identified by the team was the need to ensure a regular stream of new doctoral supervisors, as part of normal academic planning, but also to prepare for an eventual increase in enrolments. Given these needs, but also the long-standing and traditional Polish requirements for academics to obtain the Habilitation within an eight year time period in order to become professors, and before they can supervise doctoral candidates, **the team suggests that GUT explore how more young academic staff can begin to participate and gain experience in the doctoral supervision process, even prior to becoming fully Habilitated.** The team noted that a process already exists to allow academics from countries other than Poland to become supervisors.

6. Service to society

6.1 Strategy

The team learnt during its visits that the university's third mission of engagement and service to society had become increasingly important for Polish universities in recent years. This was very evident at GUT, with lots of visible activity and many good examples of engagement with local and regional societal, cultural and economic stakeholders.

The team was informed that in previous years such activity had not been seen as strategically important, although many contacts had always existed between the university and its stakeholders. The economic reforms and the local and regional political structures since the 1990s have resulted in many new strategies and activities with the local and regional authorities, businesses and civil society, and in promoting new ideas and activities to the general public. These relationships cover both commercial and non-commercial cooperation and interactions. Some grants have recently become available to promote cooperation between universities and NGOs or local public bodies across a range of subject areas, with public participation now seen an important component of such cooperation.

In terms of GUT organisational structures, the vice-rector for quality assurance also has overall responsibility for cooperation, and there are vice-deans in each faculty for cooperation and business development. In practice however this third mission at GUT is split across a number of different vice-rectors and office holders. This dispersed approach results in a considerable dilution of the overall impact and awareness, both within the university and with its external partners, of the full extent of the university's very significant outreach, engagement and service activities. **The team therefore recommends that GUT examine how greater awareness could be achieved, including through assigning an overall coordination function.**

The team also identified considerable scope for greater support and coordination of activities across GUT to encourage more students and staff to become engaged in such activities. In this regard, there is scope for more systematic integration of student service-learning activities into the curriculum, as an ECTS credit-bearing element of their programme. The team also suggests that GUT consider ways to reward staff who are active in outreach and service to society.

6.2 Main areas of activity

A diversity of outreach and engagement activities in keeping with the university's technical profile take place at GUT, involving a very broad range of university players. Some of the most visible of these include:

- The GUT Centre for Knowledge and Technology Transfer is one of the leading Polish units managing the commercialisation of scientific outputs. It works with academics, companies across a range of business sectors, private and public sector employers,

students, science parks, business incubators, funding agencies, investors and other relevant players to promote and support a significant range of research commercialisation opportunities. In doing so, it attracts substantial private and public investment for GUT and partner organisation projects.

- The annual Baltic Science Festival, aimed at young people, attracts large numbers of schools and families onto the GUT campus to explore and learn about multiple branches of science. GUT students play a major role as volunteers organising and staffing the festival.
- The GUT Careers Service helps employers fill positions with suitable candidates and produces the annual GUT alumni report tracking the careers of GUT alumni two years after graduation. The Careers Service also cooperates with careers services from other universities in the Gdańsk region, through joint job fairs, career days, including for international students at GUT, etc. It also helps students find placements and internships and regional job counsellors are invited to GUT to advise students. During the IEP visits, both students and employers spoke highly of these services.
- The GUT Language Centre, where the promotion of languages and culture is part of its mission, is particularly aimed at GUT students and staff. Through the promotion of a number of non-European languages, including Japanese, Chinese and Hindi, the Language Centre also aims to encourage better cooperation and understanding between domestic and international students at GUT. In addition, it invites language teachers from primary and secondary schools to improve their teaching, and now also cooperates with senior citizens groups.
- The Open Polytechnic initiative aims to popularise science and culture, and operates a range of activities, organising public concerts at the university or in the city, contributing to European Museum Nights (there were over 1,000 visitors to this at GUT in the week preceding one of the IEP visits), public debates about topical issues such as energy policy, monthly events for the Polish Academy of Children, etc.

These are some of the more high-profile activities organised at GUT under this pillar of its mission. The challenge is to involve a broader range of students and staff in these and other relevant activities, and to engage carefully with the stakeholder community so that GUT can bring its expertise and resources, including its students, to assist in addressing challenges which these communities are facing.

7. Internationalisation

7.1 Policy

While there has always been an international dimension to education and research at GUT, this has developed very significantly in recent years, including through the formulation of a strategic approach and the effective implementation of this at central and faculty levels and through the GUT International Office. This approach focuses on improving the quality of teaching, learning and research as the main aim of internationalisation, and receives strong support from GUT senior management and the Senate. In the current legislative reform environment, it is recognised that a successful international strategy is also helpful in becoming designated by the government as a “research university”.

One result of this increased internationalisation in recent years is that approximately 4% of the GUT student body is now composed of international students, with over one third of these on the Erasmus programme. This figure masks however significant variation in foreign students between faculties: from over 12% to less than 1%, depending on the faculty. Of note is that the largest group of foreign students study in Polish, and are typically from a Ukrainian or Russian background. Other international students are taught through English. The number of foreign staff at GUT remains however very low, although some steps are currently being taken to increase this (see below). **The team recommends that GUT maintain and develop this healthy diversity of international students (Erasmus, non-EU and neighbouring countries) across the entire university.**

An important part of the internationalisation strategy is to seek international recognition of GUT programmes. During the 2018 academic year, seven such accreditation processes were underway, at both bachelor and master levels. This is an important step in ensuring better visibility and recognition for GUT abroad, and therefore in attracting more international partners, students and staff. The International Office provides support in this, but the work is led by the relevant faculty. The team was told that there is some financial support available from the Polish Ministry to seek such international labels.

The team was informed that the internationalisation strategy had broadened in the last two years to also include the development of double degree programmes with partner universities in other countries, notably in China. These bilateral contracts are now developing, with students studying two years at the Chinese partner university and then two years at GUT. GUT has found that this form of cooperation guarantees a better quality of student than individual applications. It was noted that it has so far not been easy to get Polish students to study in China, but some have done so for projects and research work. The strategic aim is also to exchange teachers as part of these academic cooperation programmes.

7.2 Activities

An important part of the strategy has been to ensure that each GUT faculty has at least one flagship programme taught in English to attract international students. This has been achieved, with a bachelor programme at each faculty and three master programmes now available in English. The education process for all international students is managed by the faculties, and each faculty has a local support structure in place for these students. The aim is to ensure a diversified student body across the university.

The International Office provides support for the faculties, and also promotes the implementation of the strategy across the university. It assists with ensuring that good orientation and support are available for incoming students, and that student accommodation is reserved for all international students, if they wish to avail of this.

While the internationalisation of research is managed locally at faculty level, GUT provides some key structural supports through the vice-rector for research and the International Office to assist for example in obtaining international grants, scholarships for visiting professors and doctoral candidates, logistics for visiting staff, etc.

GUT has put aside some of the additional money received in recent years from the Ministry to invest in internationalisation, using this fund to pay for visiting professors, students and postdoctoral researchers. This has led to a sharp increase in the numbers of visiting professors, who contribute to teaching in the faculties and are also helpful in supporting applications for national and European project funding. This investment has also been useful in trying to maintain a reasonable balance between incoming and outgoing staff and students in the faculties.

While a small number of academics from other countries have been employed at GUT for a number of years, these are mostly as a result of individual personal circumstances. The team was informed that there had been no active strategy to attract and recruit staff from abroad. This is now beginning to change, on the premise that employing staff from abroad will raise the quality of both teaching and research at GUT. Government support is available to attract academics of Polish heritage from abroad, and GUT has begun to use the ResearchGate portal to advertise available positions.

Although the situation at each faculty is somewhat different, with some needing more teachers, others more researchers, and others seeking longer term partnerships and exchanges, the team was told that GUT aims to have two or three international professors per faculty. The need to activate the Polish academic diaspora and encourage them to become involved is recognised.

The internationalisation strategy has also had a more general influence on recruitment and promotion strategies at GUT, with faculties requiring that new staff must speak fluent English, and some faculties offering a decreased teaching load for those most active in international

research partnerships, and financial incentives for those who teach on GUT programmes delivered in English and who publish in highly ranked international journals.

The IEP team recommends that the efforts underway to increase the numbers of international staff at GUT (permanent and visiting) be strengthened, as a key ingredient of meeting GUT's other strategic objectives.

In terms of international students, there are currently students from over sixty nationalities studying at GUT, on programmes taught in English and in Polish. GUT seeks to attract such students at different events abroad, as well as through an online recruitment portal, and has agreements with recruitment agencies in some target countries (for example on the Indian subcontinent, and now also in some countries in Africa).

The programmes taught in English are open to both Polish and international students. The team was informed that student groups within these programmes are also mixed, to ensure that students work together across different cultures. Some faculties have put in place additional initiatives to support this, for example to ensure that Polish students have intensive Chinese language classes, while also encouraging Chinese students to learn Polish.

Such initiatives are easier and more sustainable as part of the structured cooperation agreements between GUT and Chinese partner universities, with regular flows of students to the same programmes. It also means that GUT staff, and sometimes students, can visit the Chinese partners, and helps ensure that incoming students are prepared in advance of arrival at GUT, and that structured additional academic supports can be in place to support them when they arrive. **The team strongly supports these strategies to develop more double degrees with partner universities and to encourage students to maximise foreign language skills and recommends that they be further pursued.**

The team noted however that in some faculties, Polish students appeared to receive very limited encouragement to participate in mobility opportunities, and that these appeared to be limited to students already on English language programmes. Students in some cases reported that there were still significant challenges regarding recognition of their time and studies at a partner university, leading to situations where GUT students who participate in Erasmus programme mobility have had to consider this as an additional (sabbatical) year. Such a situation is obviously not conducive to effective student mobility or to the university's broader internationalisation objectives. **The team recommends that this issue be examined in detail by the university and steps taken to ensure that the ECTS credits from all approved student mobility periods abroad be fully recognised, as per the ECTS learning agreements signed by GUT and the partner university.**

7.3 Management and quality assurance

One of the challenges identified by the self-evaluation process is how to address the existing imbalance of international activities and mobility at GUT across the different faculties. The situation is currently changing, with declining local demographics and greater awareness

across all faculties of the importance of improved cooperation in both education and research. As a result, the initial reluctance in some faculties to be more actively engaged in international student recruitment has also changed. It was noted that larger faculties were better placed to take the necessary steps to adjust to these changes. The challenge is also greater for faculties where the traditional focus has been on delivering Polish professional qualifications, rather than for an international labour market. These issues will need to be carefully monitored by GUT leadership at both faculty and university levels, to ensure that students and staff in all faculties and programmes derive the same broad benefits from internationalisation.

While the Careers Service graduate outcomes reports only cover those graduates working in Poland, some informal tracking of international graduates has also been undertaken using social media. This tracking shows that these graduates are well employed across a range of occupations. The Polish government has now introduced a one year stay-back option for international students after graduation to allow them time to find employment. Given that Gdańsk has become an attractive place to work with a growing local demand for qualified graduates, this presents a number of opportunities for GUT. Likewise, finding local internships for international students has become much easier than before.

In its meetings with students, the team was made aware of a number of areas where small changes would be highly appreciated, particularly for international students. Students reported that obtaining or extending Polish visas was often very difficult. While GUT cannot change this on its own, it may be possible to join forces with other Polish universities who are experiencing the same difficulties to seek an improved service. Similarly, students noted that GUT facilities are often closed for religious holidays, while for many international students (and presumably Polish students also) it would be useful to have some level of access to these facilities on these days also.

8. Conclusion

At the conclusion of this evaluation, the IEP team would like to make a few additional general remarks. The university is a major institution in Gdańsk and the Pomeranian region, with significant levels of support from a very broad range of stakeholders. The university can capitalise on this to increase its visibility and recognition, both within Poland and internationally. In doing so, it can also build further on the very positive attitudes of students and alumni at GUT and thereby enhance the experience of future GUT students.

Regarding the current legislative proposals, the team would like to support the concept of becoming a “research university”, to the extent that this concept continues to support and further develop the GUT education mission. The best “research universities” in the world are also characterised by their excellent education. The university will need to ensure that a majority of staff support the project if this is to succeed: at the time of the IEP visits, the biggest barrier to this support was uncertainty and fear of the unknown. GUT leaders will therefore need to develop a clear rationale and communications strategy regarding any proposal.

The proposal will inevitably lead to the need for significant internal restructuring at GUT: open discussion and communication regarding possible options and their potential impact on the faculties, doctoral schools and governance structures of GUT will be required, at both central and decentralised levels.

Summary of the recommendations

In terms of governance and institutional decision-making:

- GUT should consistently apply the regulations for academic, financial and human resources across the entire university, in the best interests of students, staff and the institution.
- GUT should explore possible options regarding the creation of internal shared service structures to support decentralised decision making across academic, research, financial and human resource fields.
- GUT should ensure that incoming cohorts of student representatives across the faculties receive formal training to help them fulfil their specific roles in an effective way. This annual training should be accompanied by an awareness raising campaign regarding the role of students at the university and how they can participate.
- GUT should facilitate and simplify where possible the financial planning and budgetary processes for student organisations, granting them more autonomy in their own affairs.

- GUT should use the move towards an open system of recruitment and promotion to develop further diversity among GUT staff and improve the visibility of GUT at national and international levels.

In terms of quality culture:

- GUT should ensure that a common approach to quality assurance is implemented across the entire university, with a similar standard of procedure in place at all levels to ensure that academic programmes and support services are evaluated and improved on a regular basis.
- GUT should ensure that students across all faculties and programmes can contribute fully to the quality of their programmes, faculties and the university, and that all faculties and programmes are responsive to the issues these students may raise.
- GUT should assess the relevance and coherence of the various quality assurance instruments in use, both internal and external, including those in place for research, to ensure that all essential issues are adequately covered, but that the phenomenon of “evaluation fatigue” and “over-measurement” is avoided.
- GUT should undertake better analysis of the quality assurance data already available to it, both for internal decision-making processes and for better feedback to staff and students.
- GUT should use the experience of preparing for the range of external QA, accreditation and ranking exercises to align its internal QA processes more coherently with those used by national and international best practice.
- GUT should include the results of student feedback and staff evaluations in the overall quality assurance and evaluation of programmes, and explore ways to embed a deeper quality culture at programme level.
- GUT should link the use of self-assessment methodologies by staff to mentoring for staff development, and to the formal periodic staff assessment process.
- GUT should review and strengthen its quality assurance concepts and instruments by aligning its quality assurance indicators, so as to meet internal and external requirements in a coherent and efficient manner.
- GUT should improve its feedback and reporting to key internal and external stakeholders regarding quality assurance across the university and steps being taken to improve this.

In terms of teaching and learning:

- GUT should ensure that the planning of teaching timetables and distribution of teaching hours are always considered primarily from the student perspective, to ensure as supportive a learning environment as possible.
- In continuing to develop a student-centred learning philosophy at the university, GUT should ensure a certain level of consistency within faculties and across the entire university in matters concerning programme design and implementation, including access to elective courses and soft skills development.
- GUT should encourage and facilitate more students to use the Language Centre to develop their language competences across a broader range of relevant languages.
- GUT should build on existing staff appraisal practices, including peer observation and feedback, as part of the new staff development project. Together with the systematic provision of didactic training, this should be mainstreamed into normal GUT academic practice.

In terms of research:

- GUT should use the “research university” concept as an opportunity to transform GUT into research-oriented university, building on its current achievements and strengths to improve and enhance its research profile and performance.
- GUT should strengthen the Research Office as part of the central administrative services, in order to provide dedicated and specialised support services for grant applications and grant administration.
- GUT should explore how more young academic staff can begin to participate and gain experience in the doctoral supervision process, even prior to becoming fully Habilitated.

In terms of service to society:

- GUT should examine how greater awareness of the university’s third mission could be achieved, including through assigning an overall coordination function.
- GUT should ensure greater support for and coordination of activities across the university, to support more students and staff to become engaged in such activities.
- GUT should work towards a more systematic integration of student service learning activities into the curriculum, as an ECTS credit-bearing element in programmes.
- GUT should consider ways to reward staff who are active in outreach and service to society.

In terms of internationalisation:

- GUT should maintain a healthy diversity of international students (Erasmus, non-EU and neighbouring countries) across the university.
- GUT should ensure that the ECTS credits from all approved student mobility periods abroad be fully recognised, as per the ECTS learning agreements signed by GUT and the partner university.
- GUT should pursue its strategy to develop more double degrees with partner universities and to encourage students to maximise foreign language skills.
- GUT should strengthen the efforts underway to increase the numbers of international staff at GUT (permanent and visiting).