

ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY, POZNAŃ

EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report presents the results of the evaluation of Adam Mickiewicz University (AMU), Poznań, Poland. The evaluation was carried out at the request of the university and over two separate visits in 2020. The first visit was conducted on site in March. A second site visit planned for June 2020 was postponed until November of the same year and was carried out virtually, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) which 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 Adam Mickiewicz University's profile

AMU dates from 1919, having its origins in the former University of Poznań (now succeeded by four separate institutions) and being named “the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań” in 1955. AMU is a public university, acting as an academic institution in accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) of 2018, which gave Polish universities a greater degree of organisational, management and financial autonomy, moving from a model where a university was a “soft federation”

of highly autonomous faculties with devolved powers (to create their own study and doctoral programmes, for example) to a more centrally managed institution.

AMU is located on three main campuses (Central, Morasko and Szamarzewo) in Poznań, and also has branches located elsewhere in north-western Poland: in Gniezno (the Institute of European Culture); Kalisz (the Faculty of Pedagogy and Fine Arts); Piła (the Nadnotecki Institute of Adam Mickiewicz University) and Ślubice (the Collegium Polonicum, a joint unit of Adam Mickiewicz University and the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder)). AMU has nearly 3,000 academic staff and nearly 2,300 support staff as well as about 35,000 students on study and research programmes for AMU awards across the three Bologna cycles.

Poznań (population just over half a million) is the capital of the region of Wielkopolska (population approximately three and a half million), which is located at the crossroads of important international transport networks and which has the third highest gross domestic product (GDP) and lowest unemployment in Poland. Wielkopolska is one of the most important industrial and entrepreneurial centres in Poland, even though the service sector and agriculture are also significant branches of its economy. (Eurostat, 2019).

At the start of the evaluation AMU was in the middle of preparing its new strategy for 2021-2030, following on from its previous strategy for 2009-2019. In its synthesis of its Mission, Vision and Strategy (put together for the evaluation and which factored in major strategic enhancements to the strategy for 2009-2019 in 2011, 2013, 2018 and 2019) AMU described its vision as a university “[...] which takes up global challenges, carries out large projects and joint initiatives with the most outstanding researchers and the best academic centres in the world; is one of the leading universities in Europe, present in world rankings, with a high level and innovative research, student-friendly, well-managed, renowned for tolerance, openness and diversity; is an authority in the social, economic and political life of the country; is an integral part of the city, thanks to which academic Poznań definitely stands out from Poland; it guarantees within modern University campuses conditions for studying and research work corresponding to the highest European standards; harmoniously combines, at various levels of teaching, universality and massiveness with exclusiveness of studies; it provides students with the possibility of individual education under the care of the most outstanding scientists - masters.”

AMU stated its four overarching strategic objectives, each underpinned by more detailed operational objectives, to be: “Research at the World level. The highest quality of education. University open to the Environment. Professionally managed university.”

Finally, in the draft strategy for the years 2021-2030, AMU stated its most likely strategic objectives, not least because of its engagement with the Initiative of Excellence – “Research University” Project (EIRU) (See Section 4, Research below), would be:

- Radical increase of the internationalisation of research - international strategic partnerships.
- Increasing the effectiveness of fund raising for research from national and European funds - implementation of an effective support system.
- Increasing the effectiveness of publishing in scientific journals of high prestige - implementation of an effective support system.
- Restructuring of Adam Mickiewicz University related to the selection and functioning of Priority Research Areas.

- Establishment and development of the "Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities" - aggregation of scientific potential in the area of social sciences and humanities.
- Building strong links between the financing of Adam Mickiewicz University's organisational units and linking the financing of research and research-educational staff with the results of research.
- Increasing the internationalisation of Adam Mickiewicz University research and teaching staff
 - implementation of the AMU Excellence Visiting Postdoctoral Researchers and AMU Excellence Visiting Professors programmes.
- Establishment of the Doctoral School of Adam Mickiewicz University and its strong internationalisation.
- Revitalization of the programs of second level degree studies in the field of "research-based learning".
- Implementation of an effective "talent management" system.

AMU senior management advised that, in the context of the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0), the EIRU project and a downturn from the demographic boom, which had previously seen a concentration on teaching and learning, AMU's concentration was now to be on research.

1.3 The evaluation process

AMU senior management explained that the initial idea to commission an IEP evaluation had originated four years ago amongst those staff with responsibilities for accreditation, supported by the Deputy Rector (Teaching and Learning). The aim was to obtain a supportive, non-Polish perspective on the range of its current developments and initiatives, so as to move from being a "very good" Polish university to being an "excellent" university with a European perspective. It was the first such evaluation of AMU. AMU had therefore successfully competed for external funding from the Ministry of Higher Education (the Ministry) for external evaluation and the Senate had approved an application to IEP.

The self-evaluation process was led by a Self-Evaluation Group (SEG) of 13 members, selected by the Rector and chaired by the Deputy Rector (Teaching and Learning), comprising senior staff, academic and other staff, and student representatives. The SEG used a SWOT analysis already prepared for submission to the EIRU project application; met a wide variety of staff and students; and regarded the process as a "cloud space" in which to think about what AMU did and what it intended to do. The SEG then put together a draft self-evaluation report (SER) and supporting documentation.

The SEG members whom the evaluation team met confirmed that the Deputy Rector (Teaching and Learning) had met the University Council and presented the draft SER for discussion. The draft SER was discussed at faculty, department and other unit levels. All university stakeholders were kept informed about the evaluation process through updates in the AMU newsletter and by its wider publication across AMU.

The SEG members whom the evaluation team met advised that a lot of positive feedback had been received in the process. AMU leadership, the academic staff community and students all saw an international evaluation to be important, welcoming the move towards seamless management processes; the move to internationalisation, especially in research; the mirroring of other AMU developments such as the EIRU project and external developments such as the European University

Initiative. This direct consultation had also elicited specific detailed amendments, minor improvements and points of correction. In general, but with exceptions in certain faculties, the evaluation team found those staff and students whom they met to have a reasonable level of understanding of, and conversance with, the process but very few remembered having had any formative influence on or involvement with the SER.

The SER was concise, relevant and frank, with a degree of self-criticality but without thorough reflection and analysis of AMU's performance against its main objectives. A particular difficulty was that the SER had necessarily to describe arrangements before the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0), consequent transitional arrangements and also intended arrangements when all associated changes were fully implemented. On occasion the evaluation team had difficulty disentangling those three elements of past, present and future description.

Supporting documentation in the form of appendices to the SER was provided to the evaluation team who received a positive response when requesting other additional supporting documentation after the first visit. AMU translated what it viewed as key documentation (or extracts from documentation) into English and was very positive in its response to additional translation requests from the evaluation team in preparation for the second visit.

The report and appendices were sent to the evaluation team in good time before its two visits 9 – 11 March and 3 – 6 November 2020. In light of the postponement of the second visit, AMU agreed to produce an update of the SER, highlighting any significant changes since the first visit. All meetings (with the exception of the meeting with the SEG who wanted the meeting in Polish so “the voice of the University” was heard correctly and precisely) were conducted in English without need of interpretation, although AMU did kindly provide independent simultaneous translation where necessary as a backup.

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

- Janis Vetra, Chairman of the Council of Higher Education of Latvia and Professor, formerly Rector, Riga Stradins University, Latvia, team chair;
- Erdal Emel, Chairman, Department of Industrial Engineering, formerly Vice-Rector, Uludag University, Turkey (Dr Emel was prevented by unforeseen travel difficulties from attending the first visit but otherwise was a full participant in the evaluation);
- Melita Kovacevic, formerly Vice-Rector for Research and Technology, University of Zagreb, Croatia;
- Liv Teresa Muth, PhD candidate, Ghent University, Belgium;
- Gregory Clark, formerly Associate Secretary, University of Salford, United Kingdom, team coordinator.

The team thanks the former rector, Professor Andrzej Lesicki, for the original invitation to evaluate AMU, although he was unable to meet the team during the first visit, and the current rector, Professor Bogumiła Kaniewska, for allowing the evaluation to continue to its delayed second visit. The team thanks all the staff, students and external stakeholders of AMU for their hospitality and their engagement in the evaluation process and, in particular, Dr Agnieszka Kamisznikow-Machniewska, for her courteous and welcoming approach to the team members and her unceasingly supportive and helpful contribution to the evaluation process as institutional contact person.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

The Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) instituted major changes in the governance and management of AMU and of all Polish higher education institutions. AMU's successful bid to the EIRU project complemented and amplified these changes. Although the changes were not initiated by AMU, the aim of AMU's leadership was not just to cope with but to derive maximum advantage from them.

Corporate and academic governance arrangements are well specified and articulated in detail through the Organisational Regulations which support AMU's Statutes, which were provided in summary to assist the team. The corporate governance of AMU was now through a nine-member University Council (four external members, four internal members and a student member). The eight non-student members are appointed by the Senate, after a nomination process involving both the rector and an ad hoc group of Senate members. The Chair of University Council was appointed by the Senate after a similar nomination process but had to be an external member. In their meeting, the team found the University Council well informed and fully conversant with the wider context of challenges and opportunities facing AMU.

The academic governance of AMU was conducted through a Senate of 59 members with the rector as ex-officio chair. The other 58 members are elected by their respective constituencies through an election process which factors in the relative size of schools and faculties and the relative proportion of students. In detail they comprise 31 academic staff of professorial rank; nine other academic staff; six professional services staff; and 12 students. Deputy Rectors, the Chancellor, the Bursar, Trade Union representatives and the Director of the University Library may be in attendance. Additionally, there are subsidiary standing and ad-hoc committees, including the Education Committee and the Doctoral School Board, which advise the appropriate deputy rectors.

All such committees must include student members. The team heard that the Senate and its committees met regularly and effectively and that generally staff members ensured that student members were encouraged to participate and were heard.

At a more local level, barring one particular exception, academic governance is vested in the deputy rector in charge of the school, who is assisted by the School Council, and in the dean in charge of the faculty, who is also the chair of the Scientific Discipline Council. Teaching and learning matters (such as common, cross-school rules for enrolling students and for implementing the study process and advice on new study programmes) are reviewed by the School Education Committee. At an even more local level there are Degree Programme Committees (See Section 3, Quality Culture below). There are also advisory and consultative School and Faculty Councils to assist the Head or Chair of School and Dean respectively in their management roles. However, for research matters, although there is a Scientific Discipline Council in each faculty, there is no equivalent to the University or School Education Committees, co-ordinating research matters across the university. The team had some concern that, without some co-ordinating framework, this high volume of localised inputs and the further differentiation across five Priority Research Areas might fail effectively to influence and improve institutional policy on research.

The team's first visit took place whilst the process for appointing a new rector was in train. Team members had the opportunity to discuss that process with members of the University Council who approve candidates for rector, with advice from the Senate, to an electoral college made up of academic and professional services staff and taught and doctoral student representatives. University Council members acknowledged that, under the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0), the rector enjoyed a considerable and broad range of powers and responsibilities, including chairing the Senate.

Those powers extended to final approval of new study programmes and curricula as well as of personnel policies. The rector is also responsible for the appointment of executive postholders, especially the deputy rectors, although the student body was specifically consulted on the appointment of the Deputy Rector (Student Affairs) and the Deputy Rector with responsibility for doctoral students. At the second visit the new rector stated that, for her rectorship, five of the seven deputy rectors would have both cross-institutional responsibilities as well as school responsibilities as “Chair” rather than “Head” of School, emphasising the co-ordinating rather than line management nature of that role. The rector also appoints deans, after due nomination by the respective Scientific Discipline Council. Even with the support of a team of deputy rectors, the team viewed the prescribed role of rector as a gargantuan challenge for even an experienced and accomplished executive manager.

Deans were similarly supported by their own leadership teams of deputy deans, although for the most part appointment and configuration of those teams was in transition, with the arrangements from the previous pre-Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) structure still running out. Once again, the team heard the view that it was too early yet to judge the effectiveness of these recently introduced institutional and local level executive management changes.

Structurally AMU now comprised, in compliance with the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0), 20 faculties of quite wide-ranging sizes within five schools. The team heard repeatedly the view that some faculties were not in the school of their natural bedfellows, for example biology was perhaps arguably oddly placed with geography rather than with chemistry. This non-standard juxtaposition was attributed to a rigid allocation in line with the government’s research categories and to the fact that subject disciplines did not necessarily dovetail with those research categories. There was a considerable divergence of opinion about this structural change and especially whether the introduction of a school layer added value or detracted from already well functioning faculties.

Schools were proposed as the layer co-ordinating teaching and learning and promoting interdisciplinary study. This allowed the faculty to concentrate upon research and freed up academic staff to dedicate more time to research. Through its Council and Education Committee, which again the team heard were meeting effectively and regularly, the school is meant to discuss such matters as the development of all study programmes and curricula. Teaching and learning matters, including the process for the quality assessment of study programmes, are now to be planned at school rather than faculty level.

However, apart from the regular response that it was still too early to tell, the team heard a number of adverse or merely neutral comments from faculty level academic staff:

- The five schools seemed independent one of another and procedures did not seem standard across AMU. There were now “five universities”.
- Interdisciplinarity was not a tradition in Polish Higher Education and it might take more than an imposed structural change to alter the position. Alternatively, the role of the school was not yet clear and interdisciplinarity could also be achieved without it, as had been the case before.
- A previously successful faculty would continue to build on its success whatever the structural change.

- The Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) assumed all past problems were because the faculty was at fault. Consequently, faculties had been forced unnecessarily to lose their independence.
- The real work was still being done at faculty level. Now an intermediate level, the school, was looking for a role for itself. The faculty had lost study programme development and planning but was still assigning academic staff to teach a given module.
- The school was generating a bureaucratic burden but with no added value experienced by its faculties.

These comments, however, were balanced by some supportive recognition amongst academic staff. According to them, the administrative burden relating to teaching and learning was reduced by the structural change and, as intended, research-active staff now had time for research freed up. This had created a situation where there was “nowhere to hide” for non-research-productive academic staff. Moreover, the attention given to the better organisation of teaching and learning was starting to show noticeable benefits.

Indeed, by the time of the second visit, the team was being encouraged to recognise the residual role that faculties, as well as their vice-deans for student affairs/teaching and learning, were still playing in teaching and learning. Study programmes were implemented in individual faculties and it was the deans who decided upon the assignment of courses to individual faculty members. It was the faculties who initiated the establishment of new degree programmes and, through Degree Programme Committees, faculties proposed and implemented modifications to existing degree programmes. The Degree Programme Committees were headed by vice-deans who, along with other faculty representatives designated by the deans, formed the School Education Committees. The vice-deans for teaching and learning were the liaison between the faculties and the School Education Committees.

From these responses the team gleaned that there was a variable experience of this major structural change across AMU, both in terms of its actual implementation and of its impact. The team noted that the position contrasted with the majority view amongst academic staff of the rollout, and the greater acceptance and appreciation of the Doctoral School (See Section 5, Research below) whose leadership was firmly behind the changes proposed and who had clearly communicated their potential benefits in order to convince others.

The SER (p2) set out the main mechanisms for communicating with staff and other stakeholders about the IEP process “[...] communications and notes on the University's website, in the Adam Mickiewicz University newsletters and in the *Życie Uniwersyteckie* - the official journal of the University.” The team heard that there had been a period of intensive internal discussions with broad, cross-university representation on the application of the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) and similarly on the EIRU application, and that indeed this discussion had also informed the current IEP process. However, lack of communication, especially with the AMU leadership team, was a consistent complaint about the new academic structure. Deans, in particular, regretted during the first visit the demise of regular formal meetings with the Rector and Deputy Rectors (say of Research or of Teaching and Learning) replaced by those solely with their individual Head of School. In particular, some deans felt that the matrix of arrangements for research and teaching and learning did not yet balance the competing pressures of separation and integration. How could those arrangements “square the circle” of separating out research whilst still ensuring that teaching and learning were research-based? As an example, they cited academic staffing issues such as new staff appointments and the deployment

of staff to teach in study programmes with the now somewhat complex interplay between the faculty and the school in those processes. During the second visit the team learnt that calendared but informal meetings with the rector and deputy rectors had now been introduced. Whilst the team welcomed this informal remedial step, the issues it sought to remedy might arguably better be addressed by rethinking the overall formal structure to find a more unifying and integrating framework.

Whilst there was to a certain extent a (sometimes grudging) acceptance of the new academic structure, despite how well this was formally specified and articulated in detail, and with the exception of the Doctoral School, broad staff identification with that new structure was not apparent to the team. The leadership of AMU might wish to consider how best its internal communications strategy might address this high volume of change. For an effective and definitive transition to the complete and consistent adoption of these new academic governance arrangements and to promote their acquisition and acceptance, all staff and students should be fully conversant with the respective remits and responsibilities at faculty, school and university levels.

At the time of the evaluation the new AMU Strategic Plan was still in formation. (See Section 1.2, Adam Mickiewicz University's Profile above). The university reiterated that this comprised a broadly consultative and formative process with internal and external stakeholders, building on work done for the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) and the EIRU application. Also factored in was the strategic platform put forward by the new rector for her election to office. In particular, the new rector emphasised the need to embed diversity and anti-discrimination within "the friendly university" and the importance of the university's role as a societal influencer. The university offered detailed operational plans offered in support of the EIRU application as the model for the operational plans and monitoring processes which would underpin the new AMU Strategic Plan.

Potentially such operational plans and monitoring processes would allow the university to analyse the success factors responsible for its academic and reputational achievements, with an eye to the future. That is, it could assess whether those achievements were attributable to structure, governance, quality systems, academic mind-set, or to the performance of staff, student and external stakeholders. Not least amongst those achievements was the way in which the university had responded, with some variability at faculty level, to the unprecedented demands of the Covid-19 pandemic by streamlining management, research and study processes, so that it could transition quickly and efficiently, for example, to distance learning and more simplified operation. As already mentioned, there was seldom a unified view across the university as to whether something had worked because it was already working well; because a structural change had improved its operation; or because improved processes or resources had been made available.

The team learnt that exploratory discussions had already been held with the other autonomous elements of the former University of Poznań and other higher education institutions in Poznań on some form of mutually beneficial federal arrangement, building on existing interdisciplinary collaborations, joint research activity and joint study programmes. The team saw this as well worth pursuing as potentially adding value through co-operation with other institutions, especially where AMU does not have disciplinary expertise. For example, an economics-based initiative was cited by University Council members with Poznań University of Economics.

The team was not advised how Professional Services had been realigned to support considerable structural change but learnt that the former rector had carried out a revision of administrative functions but that effectively there had been no significant impact. This may be related to the relatively low standing of Professional Services posts and, so the team heard, the non-competitive salaries for AMU administrative posts, especially in areas such as IT, despite a thriving regional

economy. Indeed, in discussion with the chancellor and bursar, the team gained the impression that overall, the role of the Professional Services was more that of servicing rather than of influencing strategic direction.

At first sight there seemed to the team to be a proliferation of support entities some of which may have had only a nominal existence. The approach appeared to be to support new emergent need (such as increased support for research bidding) rather than a zero-based approach where the optimal Professional Services structure was redesigned to underpin the new academic structure. The team heard a less sanguine view from academic staff, including dean's leadership teams. They reported imprecision and unknown costs, plus potential duplication and unnecessary bureaucracy, as a result of an evolutionary rather than fundamental approach to the reshaping of Professional Services to their redesigned and reallocated tasks.

The team heard little on how the internal financing system and financial decisions were evaluated for effectiveness. Having acquired in 2019 a new comprehensive and centralised Financial Information System (Enterprise Resource Planning - ERP), the team believed the university now to be better placed to do so, even though some outstanding reporting functionality still had to be finalised.

The team learnt that "research university" status presented a better financial settlement for the university, but at the moment AMU's main income source remained chiefly "soft money": a government general grant (for teaching and learning and increasingly for research) and an EU structural grant, as opposed to EU research grants (although increased external research grant funding was a key objective of the EIRU process and was already achieving some successes) and commercial "project research" income. AMU cited the legal constraints upon the generation and use of private funds by public universities. Since 2015 the government grant had been subject to a revised algorithm factoring in a range of multipliers in support of government policies and demographic change including, as examples, a reduced weighting for student numbers and an increased weighting for research quality. Additionally, every two years the university prepared a five-year forward capital investment plan for drawing on central and local level and costed proposals. Again, the university primarily looked to state and EU capital grants to finance that investment plan.

Despite the academic restructuring, faculties remained the main recipients of the government grant with a small top slice for the home school from each faculty budget as well as the central AMU top slice. Faculties retained discretion to expend any balances after capital and revenue expenditure had been discharged. The new internal financing system was nevertheless different from the previous one. In the past the government grant had simply flowed through to the faculty. Now decisions were made by the rector in accord with an internal algorithm. Nevertheless, the team believed that this limitation on a school's financial influence must inevitably inhibit a school's ability to resource or to promote a particular proposed change.

Overall, however, the staff whom the team met felt AMU to be much more stably and better resourced than previously, most of all owing to the additional monies accruing (and potentially able to be generated) from its "research university" status. The team heard how this was reflected in such initiatives as, for example, the launch of a new internal research grant system for a minimally research active faculty; institutional level incentivisation of academic staff upon the approval of external research grants; and the funding of student support programmes like the BEST Student Programme to support outstanding students, not least in their research.

The team recommends that the university:

- assess how best to streamline the input of such a considerable number of faculties and faculty-based Scientific Discipline Councils into its more centralised approach to research;
- assess how best to integrate the separated teaching and learning and research responsibilities of schools and faculties within some formal unifying framework;
- ensure that all staff and students are fully conversant with the respective remits and responsibilities at faculty, school and university levels under the new academic governance arrangements so as to achieve an effective and definitive transition to the complete and consistent adoption of those new arrangements;
- embed within its processes the systematic analysis of the success factors responsible for its academic and reputational achievements and similarly analyse the overall positive experience of its streamlining of management, research and study processes in response to the pandemic;
- further explore the considerable potential synergies to be derived from federal arrangements with the other autonomous elements of the former University of Poznań and other HEIs in Poznań;
- review its Professional Services in the context of the underpinning of its revised structure and consequent redistribution of functional responsibilities between faculties, school and university levels rather than on the basis of emergent need.

3. Quality culture

In its SER, AMU sets out the development, over the time period of the strategy for 2009-2019, of its approach to quality. AMU describes it as the “Educational Quality Management System”. Overseen by the Deputy Rector (Teaching and Learning) and codified in resolutions of the Senate and regulations promulgated by the rector in a compendium, it forms the AMU equivalent of a quality assurance handbook. Such a document, however, was not once referred to by the staff with whom the team discussed quality culture and assurance. This approach to quality, which was internally reviewed in 2013 and 2016, allowed a certain autonomy at faculty level whilst retaining oversight at both faculty and institutional levels. The approach was said to be increasingly “bottom up” and to promote a cycle of continuous improvement.

According to the SER (p12), key tasks at institutional level included “[...] to define procedures and policies in the area of education quality assurance, to support and monitor the activities of faculty committees, to provide tools for diagnosing problems and to carry out this diagnosis on an annual basis, to present recommendations for improvement measures, to monitor their implementation and to report to the Rector and the Senate.” Key tasks at faculty level included “[...] periodical reviews of the existing curricula and giving opinions on new ones, monitoring the quality of education, developing faculty recommendations and their implementation, monitoring the introduced changes and publication of the results of education quality assessment and corrective actions.” Staff were less clear about how those tasks then fell to the recently established School Education Committee and University Education Committee (on behalf of the Senate) and the residual, lower level Degree Programme Committees in accordance with the changes required by the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0). However, the additional supporting documentation provided by the university at the request of the team after the first visit did indeed explain the respective faculty, school and university responsibilities post transition.

Although the SER claimed that the respective responsibilities of all staff and entities were clear, the team found the various mechanisms and procedures somewhat fragmented, with no centralised unit to oversee the operation of the approach to quality. As an example, the annual dean’s report on a faculty’s achievements on the university’s main strategic objectives, whilst of value in itself, varied in its focus, format, detail and parameters from faculty to faculty. There seemed to be more a reliance upon the undoubted professionalism of experienced academic staff rather than a systematised and articulated quality system needed to support its mission, strategy and operational objectives. The team saw clear scope for the university to better integrate and cyclically schedule its quality systems, linking them into key performance indicators (KPIs) against which to assess the effectiveness of implementation and operation against a transparent timetable.

The team also saw scope for the newly created School Education Committee, as it became more embedded, to lead in bringing greater co-ordination, standardisation, clarity and purpose through effectively discharging its intended enhanced remit.

There was familiarity in AMU with a range of external quality assurance processes: national accreditation of study programmes, national evaluation of research, industry-specific accreditations, professional bodies’ accreditations and EU audits. Internal quality assurance processes for teaching and learning and for research are also described below (See Section 4, Teaching and Learning and Section 5, Research below).

Mainly from discussion with leadership and faculty staff, rather than from overt consideration or description in formal documentation, the team took AMU’s quality culture to stem from elements of

benchmarking against national competitors. The team took it to stem also from an aspiration to excellence and a desire to achieve stakeholder satisfaction (both employer and student) by enhancing the employability of its programmes and embedding entrepreneurialism within them. In such a time of transition, the team would argue that an actual quality handbook might be particularly useful in articulating respective responsibilities in regard to quality. Provided it brought clarity, it could be an actively used and easily maintained tool to stimulate an active quality culture and promote a stronger internal stakeholder awareness and ownership of the approach to quality.

Academic staff appraisal is conducted through the mechanisms of periodic evaluation in the context of research and consideration of internal student surveys on teaching and learning. The university has acquired a centralised Student Information System, USOS, which was reported to work well, especially in the rapid rollout of distance learning in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Students had confidence in, and felt duly informed by, USOS. As the university becomes more familiar with and optimises the use of USOS, this should permit a simplification of decision-making procedures and a reduction of bureaucratic burden on staff.

Degree Programme Committees, in addition to monitoring study programmes, also consider the responses to internal student surveys on local level delivery of teaching. In the surveys, institutional matters, such as infrastructure, are considered at a higher level with data being reported up to school level. Student surveys are undertaken at the end of each module with students asked anonymously in writing, in some faculties electronically, about the quality of lecturers' work and what could be improved. There is variability in student response rates. However, there is also a general acknowledgement that the process is useful in that feedback is given to the students, sometimes at the initiative of individual staff in face-to-face meetings, matters raised can be considered, and change may result. Practice on the actual application of the student survey process appeared to vary from faculty to faculty, and there was some discretion in adding local additional bespoke questions to the student survey. In some faculties, lecturers supplemented the student survey with their own individual questionnaires. In some faculties, student representatives reported back directly to their peers.

The students whom the team met were aware of the Student Parliament and Doctoral Student Parliament, their direct representational role and their part in nominating or electing candidates to student membership of the University Council, the Senate and its committees. The Student Parliament was able to make an application and business case setting out the projects on which expenditure would be made. The university would then consider approving a grant. In the team's view direct financial support for the Student Parliament, for that body to determine the prioritisation of at least part of its expenditure, rather than support provisional upon a business case setting out the projects on which expenditure would be made, would be more appropriate and consistent with an autonomous student body.

Generally, students enjoyed a fifth of the overall memberships of the Senate and its academic deliberative committees. These bodies saw themselves as active partners and, throughout the evaluation, all the staff whom the team met confirmed that students made an important contribution to academic quality assurance in those committees. There was a consensus amongst both staff and students that student issues were taken seriously and that student feedback was acted upon.

Students had mixed backgrounds and different reasons for seeking admission to AMU, but the institution's standing and reputation were much cited. AMU was aware of the challenge for teaching and learning quality which would arise from any reduction in entry standards and actively sought students with higher entry standards. It did so not only to comply with national requirements and as

a matter of academic integrity, but also as a determinant of its reputation, profile and attractiveness to employers and students.

The team was advised by the students whom they met, with some variability by faculty (and especially how that faculty's study programmes were balanced between the theoretical and the practical) and among individual lecturers, that generally AMU enjoyed a good staff/student relationship. The students were broadly satisfied with the accessibility and responsiveness of academic staff and such aspects of student life as the usefulness and timeliness of assessment feedback; the standard of teaching; class sizes (both for lectures and for laboratory work); academic workload; the availability of personal tutoring support and general student services; local level administrative support; and the opportunities within programmes for work placements and research. Overall, student satisfaction levels were good, and the students reported that opportunities to engage as student representatives or through quality assurance mechanisms were taken up. Students were generally aware of where to find information on, and where to raise, an academic appeal or complaint.

The team recommends that the university:

- look to integrate and cyclically schedule its quality systems, linking them into key performance indicators (KPIs) against which to assess the effectiveness of implementation and operation against a transparent timetable;
- consider the introduction of a regularly updated online Quality and Operational Handbook which would be readily available to staff and students;
- provide direct (rather than provisional upon a business case setting out the projects on which expenditure would be made) financial support for the Student Parliament for that body to determine the prioritisation of at least part of its expenditure.

4. Teaching and learning

In the SER (p15), AMU declares, in relation to its strategic approach to teaching and learning, that its teaching offer “In accordance with the University’s mission [...] is closely related to research [...] (and [...] particular emphasis is placed on interdisciplinarity and internationalization (education in foreign languages, studies conducted jointly with other, also foreign universities) [...] (and that there is) [...] flexibility [...] aimed at shaping the competences of graduates in accordance with the expectations of society and the labor market.”

AMU has a wide portfolio of study programmes across the three Bologna cycles, comprising nearly 90 bachelor’s study programmes, master’s study programmes and also doctoral studies within the Doctoral School. Study programmes are modular in nature, articulate learning outcomes, and use ECTS credits. The team heard that AMU had participated over the past decades in the national expansion of the higher education participation rate from 10% to 40%, for example by broadening the range of vocational study programmes. The team heard that undergraduate student recruitment had now plateaued but there was considerable variation, faculty to faculty, on scope for selectivity. Some faculties had seven applications for each available place while others had a single application for each place. The minimum entry level is a 30% minimum pass in the national secondary school examination. However, the more selective faculties can require a much higher mark. Within this context of a move from quantity to quality, AMU proactively conducts targeted student selection from high school graduates, for example, offering the most motivated secondary school students the opportunity to practice and engage in various events at AMU.

The SER advises that AMU is subject to the periodic external evaluations of its teaching and learning by the Polish Accreditation Commission (PKA) which carries out a mandatory evaluation of each study programme. The team learnt that the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) would also introduce an additional new type of evaluation, “comprehensive evaluation”, which aimed to evaluate the institution more holistically. This “comprehensive evaluation” has yet to be undertaken at AMU. The university also has a new detailed internal process, again consistent with the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0), for the approval or amendment of new taught study programmes. This sees initiation of academic consideration at the local level Degree Programme Committee, and consultation with and comment from the next level, the School Education Committee. The process also requires cross-AMU circulation of the study programme proposal to all other schools so as to identify any duplication and to invite interdisciplinary collaboration. The proposal is then considered at the institutional level, the University Education Committee. Administration is overseen by the Deputy Rector (Teaching and Learning) supported by the Education Support Process Division. However, any recommendation by the University Education Committee must be approved by the rector before final submission to the Senate.

The team heard of significant recent changes in the curriculum, again in the context of the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0), such as the standardisation (and usually shortening of duration) of master’s programmes in some disciplines, their alignment with the government’s research categories/subject disciplines, some greater scope for interdisciplinarity and "research-based learning".

The team heard a mixed message on interdisciplinarity. The restructuring of teaching and learning into schools seemed conducive to it but, despite the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0), Polish higher education was still viewed as inhibited by legislation from greater interdisciplinarity, with requirements for bachelor’s study programmes still to offer a prescribed main discipline. The team was however advised that a further relaxation of legislation was being discussed with Polish

universities. The team heard of a number of interdisciplinary collaborations, with both internal (AMU) and external partners, especially elements of the former University of Poznań. Many of these developments were however attributed to fallout from joint research activity (where interdisciplinarity and collaboration were regarded as more standard) rather than the early fruits of the more interdisciplinary school structure. AMU was proposing to extend opportunities for students to take elective modules from other study programmes, both within and across schools, within the more interdisciplinary school structure, and under a framework of individualised study pathways. Whilst students favoured such an approach, they reported that such opportunities were in actuality not that common.

Given the expected changes in future employment patterns globally, as well as the university's approach to student-centred learning, the team saw a need for the university to develop a larger-scale, flexible, guided framework within and across schools. The framework would be not only for defined interdisciplinary study programmes but also for defined individual study pathways in monoprofile study programmes. Guidance and definition would be key elements in this framework. The aim was not a "free for all" but an enhanced student choice within a fully accredited and coherent study programme. In that context and in co-operation with external stakeholders and student representatives, the university needs to evaluate the existing opportunities and development potential of individual study pathways, so that they may be planned as a realistic opportunity for those students willing and able to use them.

The position was more advanced in relation to "research-based learning". The team heard how research informed the development of associated curricula, how academic staff were deployed to teach in their areas of research expertise and how, especially for taught postgraduate programmes, academic staff, employers, current students and other stakeholders contributed to flexible curriculum building over a 12-month consultation period. Thus, "research-based learning" was built in, not just in the final dissertation, but through many different avenues: student involvement in research teams in the delivery of research grants, and projects including external client commissions; student-initiated research projects; internal grants to promote such research projects; training in research methodology and techniques; the promotion, both internally and externally, of the faculty's research profile; the promotion of student-led scientific organisations known as "academic circles"; buddying arrangements with more research-experienced student colleagues; a transition from scouting and encouragement at the bachelor's level to involvement at the masters' level; opportunities for students to attend internal and external conferences and other networking events; and even through co-authorship by students.

It was less clear to the team how a less research-active faculty would be able to offer all its students that range of research-related opportunities. Moreover, the team noted that, even at a "research university", research-based teaching and learning needed to reflect the likely eventual employment of graduates outside an academic career. The impact of the "research university" should be expanded therefore to include not just the academic discipline but also soft skills development and enhanced employability for graduates.

The students whom the team met reported that the student experience of teaching was highly dependent on the individual module and lecturer. Student-centred teaching did take place and might offer a varied diet of practicals, experiments, seminars as well didactic delivery. Students were familiar with the delivery of the curriculum both in person and through AMU and faculty virtual learning environments (VLEs). Overall, the university had done well in accelerating the rollout of distance learning as part of its response to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the student experience of the use of those VLEs, both in steady state and in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, was variable. Academic

staff were aware of, and had drawn upon, institutional level training in the use of VLEs and described the availability of dedicated technical support for its maintenance. Students reported some opportunities for academic support in academic skills and softer skills, both stand-alone and in some programmes integrated into the curriculum, including employability and entrepreneurialism. Internship and work placement opportunities (mandatory in some study programmes) were also viewed positively by the students.

Academic staff at AMU comprised approximately 15% research staff, who only taught in the Doctoral School (and who were not assigned formal contact hours); 60% teaching and research staff who both taught and carried out research (and amongst whom typically a professor might be assigned 180 contact hours a year and other staff, say, 330 to a maximum of 400 contact hours a year); and 25% teaching only staff. Professors might be appointed after due evaluation by the state—the more prestigious route—or by the rector. There were 300 and 600 of each type respectively at AMU. One recent development was that the evaluation of professors now included the possibility of promotion being awarded on the basis not solely of excellence in research, as previously, but also for excellence in teaching. The team was advised that AMU was about to make its first appointments of that type.

The employment relationship of academic staff with AMU is regulated by a single employment contract with different responsibilities including administration, research, discharge of management and other specific roles effectively offsetting the workload of formal contact hours. Management roles also attracted some financial reward. Academic staff reported that workload allocation was flexible and might allow, for example, for the teaching load to be concentrated in one semester and research in the next. Salaries were competitive in the context of the regional economy, and academic staff had licence to undertake external work with management permission. The balance of the competing pressures of separation and integration within the matrix of arrangements for research and teaching and learning with the now somewhat complex interplay between the faculty and the school, including in relation to the deployment of staff to teach in study programmes, has already been mentioned. (See Section 2, Governance and Institutional Decision-Making above) As the responsibility for teaching and learning lies with schools which do not have their own structural units, in the team's view the earlier proposed formal unifying and integrating framework should encompass the development of the pedagogical skills of faculty-based researchers. It should also include a system which sustainably ensures the implementation of study programmes with the appropriate number of relevantly qualified academic staff. Again, the matter at hand is the weighting and balancing of the influence of School Education Committees and of the faculties where staff are employed.

The team heard that there was opportunity at both institutional and local level for academic staff to undertake training in improved teaching methodologies and other staff development. Examples offered were: programmes in English for academics; training in more active delivery to students (such as group analysis of research papers); forums for the exchange of good teaching practice; AMU and faculty "teaching quality days"; and placements and exchanges abroad. AMU also offered awards for outstanding teaching. However, the team repeatedly heard of wide variability in academic staff delivery to students. The university might therefore wish to look to the further enhancement of academic staff development (especially in pedagogy), building on existing university-wide teaching workshops and the best of local level provision, so as to create a wider platform/forum for a centrally monitored and frequent exchange of experience and development of skills.

The team was advised that academic staff appraisal was carried out by the dean, assisted by members of the faculty senior management team. In at least one faculty, the dean's active involvement in the appraisal function was kept under review so as to avoid any adverse impact on the dean's leadership and oversight of the faculty. The team was also advised that one faculty intended to broaden the

inputs to the appraisal process through supplementing it by a self-evaluation. Again, in the context of the wide variability in academic staff delivery to students, the university could consider the overall centralisation of the academic staff appraisal system. This would offer greater oversight and promotion of student-centred and research-based learning in a co-ordinated manner.

During the first visit the team was given a short guided tour of the Morasko campus and team members also visited the central campus. AMU constructed a useful programme of visits to different buildings (most faculties tend to have their own discrete building) and of experiences of teaching and learning actually in progress. The team saw a small sample of laboratories, studios, classrooms, specialist facilities and equipment, libraries (which appeared well stocked with ample IT access and electronic learning resources), administrative areas, academic staff offices and communal and refectory areas. The overall impression was one of a fit for purpose, suitably sized, well managed and well-maintained university estate.

The team recommends that the university:

- develop a larger-scale, flexible, guided framework within and across schools, not only for defined interdisciplinary study programmes but also for defined individual study pathways in monopofile study programmes and, in that context, evaluate the existing opportunities and development potential of individual study pathways, in co-operation with external stakeholders and student representatives;
- expand the impact of “research university” status on teaching and learning, to include its impact not just on the academic discipline but also on soft skills development and enhanced employability for graduates;
- encompass within the earlier proposed formal unifying framework the development of the pedagogical skills of faculty-based researchers and a system which sustainably ensures the implementation of study programmes with the appropriate number of relevantly qualified academic staff;
- look to the further enhancement of academic staff development (especially in pedagogy) so as to create a wider platform/forum for a centrally monitored and frequent exchange of experience and skills development;
- consider the overall centralisation of the academic staff appraisal system so as to offer greater oversight and promotion of student-centred and research-based learning in a co-ordinated manner.

5. Research

AMU reframed its strategic approach to research to bid successfully through a national competitive process, involving the submission of a presentation on past performance and intended development from 2020-2026, to become one of only ten Polish “research universities”. (At the end of that period two of the ten may be demoted from that status to be replaced by two other promoted institutions). Its stated strategic objectives included:

- “Increased internationalization of research - international strategic partnerships.
- Increasing the effectiveness of national and European research funding - implementing an effective support system.
- Increasing the effectiveness of publishing in high prestige journals – implementing an effective support system.”

The team repeatedly heard this reframing as reflecting AMU as a “Humboldtian University”—that is, one which holistically combined research and studies. For example, all master’s study programmes must have a compulsory research element, and the award would not be made if that research element were assessed as unsuccessful.

The Polish government, who were the instigators of this stratification of higher education, rewarded the successful competitors with additional funding. AMU received an additional 50 million Zloty, of which at least 20% had to be dedicated to the support of students through scholarships, stipends, conference attendances and associated measures. AMU recognised that EIRU should not be regarded merely as a project (a funded initiative of certain duration), but as a fundamental repositioning for its future. It would, for example, position the university better to achieve significant partnerships and compete for external funding, both national and international. A good example is the AMU Homing Programme, funded under EIRU, which will strengthen AMU’s research by attracting outstanding potential leaders of research groups or indeed whole research groups. The stratification was complemented by the structural changes required under the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) (See Section 2, Governance and Institutional Decision-Making above). Research is overseen managerially by the Deputy Rector (Research) at the institutional level and by the respective dean at faculty level. As already mentioned, a primary purpose of the structural changes was to free up time for academic staff to dedicate to research rather than teaching and learning.

In its application to EIRU, AMU indicated a choice of five newly delineated Priority Research Areas: Life Sciences; Science except Chemistry and Materials; Chemistry and Materials; Environment and Agriculture; and Humanities and Social Science. However, AMU acknowledged that there was a high degree of variability in terms of the research activity of different discipline areas and their academic staff, with Humanities and Social Science consistently identified as illustrative of a discipline area with generally low research production. AMU’s intention was to address this by concentrating together active researchers in an “Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities”, granting them funding support equal to that for other Priority Research Areas. The expectation was that this would have a multiplier effect and research groupings would grow organically as more successful researchers attracted and developed colleagues to greater research activity. AMU was taking advice from an EPICUR partner with relevant similar experience of such a development, but the team heard little about what flesh would be on the bones of the intended institute.

However, members of the University Council admitted that a significant proportion of AMU (and not solely in Humanities and Social Science) was currently not at the level of research activity befitting a

“research university” and that this was, if not a threat, certainly a challenge. They speculated that, under the leadership of the new rector and at least for an interim period, a more “balanced scorecard” approach, with differentiated rates of progress in each Priority Research Area, might be appropriate. The team perceived another danger for AMU in an over concentration on “research university” status, especially when around half the university was not that research active and was far from the “islands of excellence” status designated in the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0). The danger was that other arms of strategic importance might be overlooked or underfunded. The team suggested that, in cooperation with the University Council and external stakeholders, the university should regularly evaluate its research activities and achievements, not just in themselves, but also in relation to its other strategic objectives in teaching and learning, staff development and service to society, to ensure sustainable development and compatibility with wider societal and individual needs.

Furthermore, as part of its implementation of the EIRU project for 2020-2026, the team saw scope for AMU to create and regularly monitor some form of transparent risk management and action plan in order to support the development of its less research active areas. This would ensure that no parts of its Priority Research Area were left behind, thus satisfying one of its other strategic objectives of sustainable balance among subject disciplines.

The team learnt from discussion with academic staff that the move to “research university” status was generally welcomed as allowing for the creation of a successful individual research profile; enhanced employability; greater potential for staff exchange and better promotion prospects (as expressed in the SER). Research active staff, especially those at higher grades, confirmed that they had had time freed up for research, for which they now had sufficient time. The team heard about support for the three cited strategic objectives: partnerships, external funding and publications. On partnerships (See also Section 6, Service to Society and Section 7, Internationalisation below), some staff, especially from already research active discipline areas noted little, if any, change. Others at least anticipated that the redesignation as a “research university” would be attractive to potential partners. Academic staff in less research active areas thought the journey might be more gradual, with experience being gained initially as junior partners in research grants co-ordinated by more experienced international grant holders.

On funding, there was limited awareness amongst academic staff of the extended service made available via the newly established “Project Support Centre”, which aimed to support and improve the quality of research grant applications. The team was advised that this would be based at the central campus but would have a presence on each major campus, eventually reaching a strength of 11 staff members, including new appointees competitively selected for their experience and expertise. Academic staff hoped that the stratification of Polish higher education and establishment of “research universities” might improve what they perceived to have been an historic undervaluing of Polish research elsewhere in Europe, impeding AMU’s ability to obtain external research grants. The team also heard of institutional and individual faculty mechanisms to pump prime research grant development and bidding. Academic staff confirmed to the team that they had full discretion in applying for research grants and wide discretion in the use of additional income generated (for example for their own staff development or towards publication of their research). On publications, academic staff did generally have an awareness of the need to improve quality, targeting higher quality and international journals rather than merely local journals. They were again generally aware of financial support available for translation (usually into English) and proofreading for that purpose.

Once more the team noted that the variability in the levels of past and current research activity meant that different faculties and research groupings needed differentiated types and levels of support. The centralisation or de-centralisation of research support had to take into account the varying levels of

research capacity and experience of its research groupings. For example, taking into account the varied levels of experience in the identification of, and application to, international research projects, the university might further strengthen its centralised support in the field of international research projects, co-operation and partnerships. However, while newer research groupings would benefit from centralised support, long established research groupings would work better with de-centralised project management.

The national external research evaluation of AMU was scheduled for the next academic year. In the SER, AMU reported very good outcomes from the previous evaluation in 2017, with three units receiving the highest category “A+” and nine units category “A” out of the then 16 evaluated units (faculties). This forthcoming evaluation was crucial to AMU as a “research university” not least because the Polish government now effectively linked research funding to research results (the quantity and quality of research publications and the effectiveness of obtaining funds for research from external sources). Internal evaluation of the research output of academic staff takes place every four years at the faculty level. AMU’s status as a “research university” means that the bar must be set high for staff in terms of the achievement of certain levels of research output including publications (books, journal articles or conference proceedings). Research output is also monitored as part of the annual appraisal of each member of the academic staff with the dean, where overall performance and career development are discussed.

To some extent the Doctoral School is in the forefront of AMU’s approach to the impact on research of the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) and the acquisition of “research university” status. Indeed, AMU emphasised that “overwhelmingly” that approach was informed by compliance with the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) and governmental regulations and that the Doctoral School would anyway have been established to meet that external requirement. Five Heads of Doctoral School are appointed by and report to a Deputy Rector. They meet regularly as a group of six to plan the co-ordination of doctoral studies, exchanging good practice, correcting and improving documentation and generally operating, as it was expressed to the team, as one Doctoral School. This means they operated with essentially the same mechanisms but with five sections, with some flexibility in each section in setting independent aims. Their work is overseen by a Doctoral School Board, and they advised that they also regularly consult supervisors at the local level as a form of informal, ongoing evaluation. The position is, however, complicated in that the revised regulations and arrangements which underpin the Doctoral School apply fully only to newly registered doctoral students and a state of transition therefore applies. Existing doctoral students are continuing mostly under the previous regulations and arrangements. Some supervisors whom the team met noticed little difference between the old and the new, although a small majority felt that while the new offered potential for better operation, it was too early definitively to evaluate. In general, doctoral students, both old and new, whilst not fully conversant with the other grouping’s regulations and arrangements in detail, were generally in favour of the new changes, especially those relating to more secure and greater funding.

Significant changes in regulations and arrangements included a common admission process; stricter application of quality thresholds (so as to eliminate weaker students more likely not to complete the programme) ; admission by an independent body to ensure that stricter application of quality thresholds; earlier proposal of a research plan (including intended thesis content, possible publication outputs, possible work placements and internships) and proposal of a supervisor by the doctoral student, which was then considered by the Committee and signed off by a Deputy Rector, although AMU later advised that this appointment process had changed again since and was now the sole responsibility of the Scientific Discipline Council ; and the introduction of a mid-term evaluation

potentially leading to a requirement of partial resubmission or of discontinuation. The detail of the mid-term evaluation process was yet to be finalised. However, the team heard the claim that the effectiveness of doctoral programmes was more likely to be assessed by research quality and publication record rather than any slight non-compliance with given deadlines. Most importantly, in compliance with a statutory requirement, AMU made a commitment to more secure funding for all doctoral students (available previously for only around 50% of doctoral students), although a concomitant was a sharp decrease in registration numbers.

This more secure funding, which was made possible by the additional resources flowing from “research university” status, although not directly expendable on doctoral scholarships, addressed the difficulties previously often facing doctoral students, such as the relatively low level of stipend compared with employment salaries; a consequent reliance by many doctoral students on part-time employment additional to their research studies; an annual review to have continued funding approved (AMU now makes a four year funding commitment upon approval of a research plan); and the loss of stipend if a research grant funding doctoral studies ran out. In the same spirit, AMU, again in compliance with a statutory requirement, now funded a 40% increase in the level of stipend upon successful completion of the mid-term evaluation.

The team also heard from supervisors and doctoral students that the Doctoral School was beginning to improve internal interdisciplinarity and mobility, particularly in research training where several cross-faculty initiatives were in play. Doctoral students in various sections of the Doctoral School were able to choose from a range of central and local, both compulsory and optional, research training opportunities, not only in discipline-specific developments but also in softer skills such as entrepreneurialism, IPR, ethics, presentation of information and outreach. The team heard also of a growing range of planned opportunities for doctoral students such as contributions from visiting professors, the promotion of research grant opportunities, internal conferences and multi-disciplinary events, and guidance on academic writing competence so as to improve the chances of publication. Similarly, the team heard about funded opportunities to attend external conferences and to build up profile by publication.

The Doctoral School oversaw other changes such as the more demanding criteria for appointing supervisors (who must be not only experienced but also research active in terms of publication and research grants) and the appointment of supervisor teams, potentially with cross-disciplinary and even external input. The Doctoral School co-ordinated research training and equalised the volume of research training for all doctoral students, reducing the workload in some disciplines by the elimination of redundant or duplicatory provision. Doctoral students received guidance on appropriate training needs and could source provision at other institutions, including abroad, if not available at AMU. By extension, doctoral students received career guidance, reflecting an awareness in AMU that doctoral studies could lead to external employment and not just to an academic career. A Doctoral School Office of three staff members supported this work and more operational matters such as verification of foreign awards, support for foreign doctoral students and servicing the Doctoral School Board. However, there was a view that during this transitional period some of the administrative burden was actually being discharged in the faculties as doctoral students under the old regulations and arrangements were seen out.

The Doctoral School aimed to build on new and existing initiatives such as those permitting exceptional bachelor’s students to be fast tracked to doctoral studies and such as the strong research focus within master’s study programmes which, through the acquisition of research skills and experience, facilitated transition to doctoral studies. Supervisors and students confirmed that AMU promoted student involvement at all levels in academic staff research projects. Doctoral students

were complimentary about the research infrastructure and facilities, including IT and library resources, which supported their doctoral studies, and about opportunities offered for active involvement in research projects. There was also a perception that communication with doctoral students via the Doctoral School was more consistent and more useful than under the previous more variable arrangements. Some doctoral students believed the Doctoral School enhanced AMU's external profile and provided access to external specialist facilities and networks. However, several doctoral students regretted that they were still viewed internally more as research students rather than early researchers (with some equivalence to staff).

Nevertheless, despite the broad welcome from doctoral students registered under the new arrangements and a degree of envy from those under the old arrangements, there was some lack of clarity on what support and services were available, especially some of the new arrangements for later in the doctoral study which were still in development. Taking into account the complicated transition from a collection of diverse doctoral programmes in separate faculties to a single Doctoral School, the team suggested the development and implementation of an easy-to-use doctoral student guide. This would create a transparent source of information on how to apply for doctoral studies; how those studies are implemented; which different AMU units have responsibility in the doctoral studies process; and the duties and responsibilities of doctoral students.

Overall, there was a recognition that the Doctoral School had added value to AMU, integrating fragmented elements, equalising provision and enabling greater interdisciplinarity. The impact on recruitment was seen as positive in terms of intake standards, although in some disciplines numbers had fallen slightly. There was a hope that the availability of the statutorily required four-year stipends and an AMU-approved intake quota by discipline might eventually mean the attraction of high-quality foreign students to make up for any fall in recruitment.

The team recommends that the university:

- regularly evaluate its research activities and achievements, in cooperation with the University Council and external stakeholders, not just in themselves, but also in relation to its other strategic objectives in teaching and learning, staff development and service to society to ensure sustainable development and compatibility with wider societal and individual needs;
- create and regularly monitor some form of transparent risk management and action plan in order to support the development of its less research active areas, thus also satisfying one of its strategic objectives of sustainable balance among subject disciplines;
- ensure that practical research support is centralised or de-centralised, as appropriate, so as to take account of the variable levels of research capacity and experience of its research groupings, for example, further strengthening its central support in the field of international research projects, co-operation and partnerships;
- consider the development and implementation of an easy-to-use supervisor and doctoral student guide, creating a transparent source of information.

6. Service to society

The recent changes brought about under the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) included the establishment of a University Council as a body overseeing AMU's governance. As already set out, this comprises one student member and eight other members of whom four have to be external, underlining the importance of such externality. The team met a range of external stakeholders, both members of University Council and other regional employers, several of whom were either alumni or employers of AMU graduates. All recognised AMU's importance to the further economic development of the region. All also expressed goodwill towards AMU and were generally appreciative of its provision and its benefit to them. However, several noted the scope for further engagement, especially with regard to the development of employability and entrepreneurialism and with regard to further applied research.

In its SER, AMU offered a range of examples of how it sought to take account of the needs and expectations of employers. In particular, there are faculty-based Employers' Councils (composed of representatives of companies, public administration institutions, local government institutions, non-governmental organisations, educational units and cultural institutions). The SER also cites examples of significant co-operations with major employers. Some are university-wide such as the Adam Mickiewicz University Foundation, which collaborates with the Poznań Science and Technology Park on the provision of research project opportunities for all levels of student and on the creation of start-ups (although the team learnt that uptake was variable according to faculty), and the Wielkopolska Centre for Advance Technologies, a research and implementation unit in Chemistry and Biology, of which AMU is the main stakeholder in a consortium of the universities based in Poznań, institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the city of Poznań, Adam Mickiewicz University Foundation and Poznań Science and Technology Park. However, many of these co-operations with major employers are faculty-based.

The team recognised the value of the wide range of interactions and cooperation between AMU, at both central and local levels, and its external stakeholders and partners, such as:

- their influence on the formation and maintenance of up-to-date industry and practitioner-related curricula for new and existing programmes, often by direct contact between faculty staff and employers;
- the responsiveness of the curricula to industry-identified needs;
- mutually beneficial practice placement and work opportunities which were often a prelude to permanent recruitment;
- the occasional contribution of individual external stakeholders, including alumni, as guest practitioner lecturers or workplace mentors;
- the engagement with local secondary schools through lessons; laboratory workshops; the "Poznań Model United Nations" (a sector-leading student forum which had attracted international attention and extensive private and public sponsorship); and "Oxford Union" debates in English in co-operation with the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism;
- the search for added value by co-operation with other institutions deriving from elements of the former University of Poznań in areas where AMU does not have disciplinary expertise, for example, in economics with Poznań University of Economics;

- joint research projects, in such areas as artificial intelligence and big data, and the opportunities, especially for doctoral students, to ground research in the real world of commerce and industry;
- direct engagement with the public through presentations of research outputs and scientific awareness and a range of literary, artistic and other cultural activities;
- access for the people of the region to AMU facilities such as the Botanical Gardens, the University Library and sports facilities;
- the retention of educated and talented graduates in the region and the creation of an employable pool of skilled staff for current and future enterprises, not least by ensuring the embedding of entrepreneurial competencies as a key part of its curricula.

It was less clear to the team how AMU strategised and co-ordinated service to society, both in terms of further developing individual relationships and increasing the diversity of such activities, simultaneously generating additional income in a permanent and sustainable way. In the team's view the university should build on its existing successes in service to society, drawing on its status, reputation and potential and maximising that potential through systematic customer (stakeholder) relationship management. AMU would then be better placed to oversee the appropriate level of contact, university or local, with stakeholders, and to ensure the internal exchange of information and good practice across the university. Moreover, this would allow it to carry out more readily the systematic identification of employer and business needs, and analysis of its offer's compatibility with those employer and business needs.

Although the team was made aware of specific and meritorious faculty-based examples, there was (other than an aspiration to grow the activity) a comparatively low level of engagement with "Project Research", the more direct commercial exploitation of research expertise with external employers. On several occasions the team heard that this activity was not a strength of the university, but little beyond that on how the position might be improved. The identification of employer and business needs, just referred to, would assist in the development of "Project Research", as would the existing strong research focus and acquisition of research skills within Master's study programmes (and obviously doctoral studies programmes). The development of its research-based masters' theses and doctoral theses offered the university the opportunity to advertise to employers the potential benefit of commissioning larger contract research projects to increase "Project Research". This might be of mutual benefit to both parties, offering a problem-solving focus to employers and deepening the pool of industry-relevant ideas and perspectives for the university. Indeed, it was also the team's view that, more generally, the increased potential afforded by the "research university" status deserved to be much more proactively marketed to the wider society at large, precisely setting out the resulting available benefits. An astute use of a newly established in-house public research database, which profiled research active staff and units, and which was currently used for performance monitoring, was another possibly helpful tool.

The team also read and heard about AMU's approach to lifelong learning, continuous professional development and non-accredited commercial training, especially its "Open University" initiative began in 2016, and the pre-pandemic high volume of extramural style commercial courses, especially in Humanities and Arts.

The team recommends that the university:

- build on its existing successes in service to society, through systematic customer (stakeholder) relationship management, enabling the university to: oversee the appropriate level of contact, ensure the internal exchange of information and good practice across the university, and systematically identify and analyse employer and business needs;
- through its development of research-based master's and doctoral theses, advertise to employers the potential benefit of commissioning larger contract research projects to increase "Project Research";
- more proactively market to the wider society at large the available benefits of working in co-operation with the university as a "research university".

7. Internationalisation

AMU understood that the primacy of research in a “research university” necessarily brought internationalisation into focus and advised that its approach to Internationalisation would be embedded in its new strategy for 2021-2030 rather than in a separate internationalisation strategy. As a surrogate to such a separate strategy, AMU cited the internationalisation strategy developed for its submission to EIRU. (See Section 4, Research above). The strategic objectives under EIRU have already been set out. (See Section 1.2, Adam Mickiewicz University’s Profile above). These confirmed that in order fully to become a “research university” internationalisation was a major driver for AMU. The university would need therefore to ensure the systematic implementation of its internationalisation strategy through co-ordinated and monitored oversight at central level.

In discussion with staff, at both institutional and faculty levels, the team found that, although uptake in individual faculties might lag, generally there was increased international activity, ongoing and planned, which would help AMU to deliver the cited strategic objectives. Some of this activity had been prompted by AMU’s membership in the European Partnership for an Innovative Campus Unifying Regions (EPICUR), a University alliance formed with seven other European universities. The team heard different views on the importance of EPICUR. A minority saw it as a glorified branding with limited real goals, chiefly beneficial to taught student exchanges, limiting AMU’s focus to those particular partner universities and only doing what could be done outside any such framework anyway. A majority saw it as offering important complementarity to EIRU, allowing the development of crucial strategic partnerships with other strong European universities and fundamentally changing the mindset from some scepticism about the European Union to one which welcomed greater European integration. According to this view, EPICUR could put AMU on the path towards becoming a “European University within the first tranches of the Macron Initiative”.

Examples were offered of central and local level uptake of the opportunities presented by EPICUR. Senate approval had been obtained for a programme developing infrastructure for extensive student exchanges, setting a goal of 50% of students being involved in joint projects and exchanges, and provision for remote online classes in English. The rector had nominally accepted the lead but operationally had delegated oversight to the Deputy Rector (Student Affairs) and faculty level co-ordinators had been appointed, faculties being represented on the project’s managing board. The next proposed step was to develop more coherent and focused strategic themes in collaboration with partners. In addition, the President of the AMU Student Parliament had been selected to be part of the organising committee of one of the eight EPICUR work packages, Student Action.

The team heard local level examples of this programme having an actual impact at faculty level, especially in the science faculties where there was already significant experience of joint master’s study programmes. For example, one science faculty was seeking to introduce an improvement in research methods across an EPICUR joint research area. A weeklong conference was planned and funding had been sought. Another non-science faculty reported its interest in an EPICUR consortium working on improved mobility for both students and academic staff. The team heard about proposals not just for student exchanges and but also new jointly funded master’s programmes under ERASMUS Mundus. They heard that funding had already been secured for five international majors under EIRU and that others were in the pipeline.

The team agreed with the majority view in the university that EPICUR, as a major external partnership consortium, is indeed a significant development and a major plank of the university’s internationalisation approach, a potential “door opener” for many international activities in both teaching and learning and research. The team encouraged AMU to continue its efforts to maximise

the significant opportunities presented through EPICUR by ensuring that engagement with EPICUR's activities permeates the content and philosophy of every structure of the university, both in its academic and professional services units.

The team saw AMU's focus on internationalisation, and central support for it through such mechanisms as EPICUR, as a valid way of addressing the challenge reported to the team by different constituencies across AMU that "in international cooperation, all projects build on past achievements" or "are based on individual contacts". This implied that those discipline areas already strong in such activities might continue to benefit but that those discipline areas with no track record might struggle to succeed. Interestingly the SER (p23) advised that "In the field of research, faculties and Deans have full autonomy in establishing international cooperation. Proposals for new cooperation agreements are verified only by the Deputy Rector (International Co-operation) especially in the context of their optimal use [...]." The team wondered whether such a devolved approach allowed scope for those discipline areas with no track record to break through. Additionally, many whom the team met, though welcoming AMU's strengthened focus on internationalisation, considered it too early to assess how the revised faculty-school structure would impact internationalisation.

The Deputy Rector (International Co-operation) also supervises the work of the International Relations Centre, which administers international co-operations (co-ordinating the visits of foreign delegations; co-ordinating the arrival and departure of foreign staff, doctoral students and students; and co-ordinating the Erasmus+ programme), and the Welcome Centre, currently under construction, which will support all foreign staff and students at AMU. Both centres might also offer the university ready mechanisms to assist in standardising and monitoring local level targets for student exchanges and the suitability of local level conditions for a good student exchange experience.

The team heard that, with some faculties still retaining high levels of outgoing student mobility and indeed even requiring it, overall outgoing student mobility was declining. This was attributed to various factors: a frequent dependence of Polish students to leave the part-time employment which was often funding their studies; the comparative weakness of the Zloty's exchange rate; a preference for domestic work placement opportunities and internships; under Erasmus+ an increasingly prescribed discipline content of study in partner institutions; and a reluctance to give up the ongoing research opportunities which often complemented their study programmes. This was despite a consistent student acknowledgement that they were kept informed by AMU, both online and in person, of the opportunities presented by, and the support available for, outgoing student exchange.

On the other hand, in the context of AMU's strategic aim to increase the number of foreign students at all levels, both on exchanges and in full-time study, incoming student mobility was increasing. This was happening through improved full-time recruitment, through Erasmus arrangements and through particular, more informal, reciprocal arrangements with partner institutions. Much of this increase was down to local level initiatives: summer schools (one faculty was a co-organiser of a Foundation for International Secondary School Completers); returning students registering for full-time further study after a successful exchange experience; the targeting of "unusual" foreign countries as opposed to fishing in a crowded pool where other institutions were already operating; study programmes offered jointly with other national universities including those deriving from the former Poznań University; and long standing joint programmes with international partners. In the team's view the university should continue its efforts to increase the number of exchange students, both incoming and outgoing. While promoting its institutional level support it should also be monitoring whether, at the local level, achievable targets are set and local conditions made conducive to a good student experience.

The story was partly similar with regard to staff outgoing mobility – variability in take up and a mixture of long standing local and institutional opportunities. However, it was also different in that demand for outgoing staff mobility was much higher. AMU reported that there were more candidates than opportunities amongst academic and professional services staff for ERASMUS exchanges. It also differed in that AMU's concentrated expansion in research meant increased opportunities for academic staff to work with, and also to host, foreign partners. Similarly, AMU intended to increase recruitment and hosting of foreign lecturers, including visiting professor and foreign guest lecture programmes. AMU also valued the wide range of foreign work and study experience of many of its academic staff.

Overall, the university recognises the significance to internationalisation of furthering provision in foreign languages and especially English. The extent of provision in English varied by faculty, although there was a general acknowledgement that increased provision was welcome and resulted in higher levels of foreign student recruitment. Even faculties with low levels of such recruitment were committed to increasing those levels. There were some faculties with whole study programmes in English, and some with delivery to parallel cohorts separately in Polish (for domestic students) and English (for international students). Where Polish and international students studied together the language of instruction was usually English, while other programmes had only certain modules delivered in English.

The students whom the team met were very keen to see increased provision in English, for their own enhanced employment opportunities; for access to study material and reference works published in English; and for access to further study opportunities. They also recognised that the increase in foreign students on campus permitted a richer student experience. Students in study programmes delivered in English confirmed to the team that AMU did indeed insist upon sufficient English proficiency as an admission criterion. The students reported some variability in the English proficiency of academic staff but nevertheless reported the general level of proficiency to be good. They did not regard AMU yet to be a bilingual university. The team concluded that the university should accelerate its expansion of English language and other foreign language delivery, both bilingual and multilingual study programmes, responding both to local student demand for enhanced employability and to its attractiveness to incoming foreign students.

To some extent the education of doctoral students, now in the Doctoral School, is in the vanguard in terms of AMU's approach to internationalisation. Reasons for its leading position in this regard are twofold: increased levels of outgoing and incoming student and staff mobility (through the opportunities inherent in joint research projects but also through targeted funding, often flowing from AMU's successful EIRU application, for such activities as conference attendance, joint supervision, doctoral study scholarships and stipends, placements and internships, networking, and research training); and high levels of staff and student proficiency and delivery in English. The Doctoral School staff whom the team met claimed about 50% of activity was now in English and that it was a reasonable expectation that in future the Doctoral School would be bilingual. Doctoral students had anyway been allowed to write up their thesis in English for almost two decades. AMU discipline areas with taught study programmes delivered in English tended to enjoy much better recruitment of doctoral students.

The team recommends that the university:

- ensure the systematic implementation of its internationalisation strategy through co-ordinated and monitored oversight at central level;

- continue its efforts to maximise the significant opportunities presented through EPICUR by ensuring that engagement with EPICUR's activities permeates the content and philosophy of every structure of the university, both in its academic and in its professional services units;
- continue its efforts to increase the number of exchange students, both incoming and outgoing, promoting its institutional level support but also monitoring that at the local level achievable targets are set and local conditions made conducive to a good student experience;
- accelerate its expansion of English language and other foreign language delivery, both bilingual and multilingual study programmes, responding both to local student demand for enhanced employability and to its attractiveness to incoming foreign students.

8. Conclusion

The team acknowledges that the AMU has faced significant challenges in adapting to the demands of the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) and reorienting the institution towards an emphasis on research rather than on teaching and learning at a time of increasing competitiveness, internationally and nationally. In broad terms its approach has been one of managed and gradual transition, allowing older systems to run out and incrementally adopting newer systems. This transition was then fundamentally impacted by the requirement for the university to adapt to the unprecedented demands of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The reaction of staff to this major exercise in adaptation and reorientation has varied. Some claimed to see the upshot as business as usual with minimum change other than increased bureaucracy and centralisation. Others see an opening up of new opportunities, more room in which to operate and systems which are fitter for purpose. All agree that AMU has continued to function well. There is, however, some underlying suspicion amongst some staff that problems may yet emerge as adaptation and reorientation continues and begins to impact more fundamentally on past systems. The team sensed a certain reluctance amongst staff to voice opposition to, or express concern about, the direction of the process. The mood seemed to be one of letting the process take its course, hoping for the best but to some degree fearing, if not the worst, then a worsening.

Under its rebranding and reorientation as a “research university”, AMU has continued to build its national profile and to develop its international profile further. Supported by an able and professional academic staff, AMU has a sound reputation amongst regional employers and other stakeholders who see opportunities for partnering with AMU in the further development of commerce and industry in the region and beyond.

AMU is at a point of transition with a new rector just appointed to a post considerably empowered by the Law on Higher Education and Science (2.0) and just concluding the creation of a new strategy for 2021-2030. AMU may wish to take this opportunity to consider the team’s recommendations in its report as a means of thinking through the strategic and operational implications of the adaptation and reorientation process it is pursuing. The recommendations take account of the landscape of change in which the university now operates and through which its new strategic plan and new rector will seek to draw up a roadmap through that landscape. The team believes that, working within the now significantly legislated and more regulated context, there is still scope for the university to maximise the potential benefits arising from that context.

Summary of the recommendations

The team recommends that the university:

- assess how best to streamline the input of such a considerable number of faculties and faculty-based Scientific Discipline Councils into its more centralised approach to research.
- assess how best to integrate the separated teaching and learning and research responsibilities of schools and faculties within some formal unifying framework.
- ensure that all staff and students are fully conversant with the respective remits and responsibilities at faculty, school and university levels under the new academic governance arrangements so as to achieve an effective and definitive transition to the complete and consistent adoption of those new arrangements.

- embed within its processes the systematic analysis of the success factors responsible for its academic and reputational achievements and similarly analyse the overall positive experience of its streamlining of management, research and study processes in response to the pandemic.
- further explore the considerable potential synergies to be derived from federal arrangements with the other autonomous elements of the former University of Poznań and other HEIs in Poznań.
- review its Professional Services in the context of the underpinning of its revised structure and consequent redistribution of functional responsibilities between faculties, school and university levels rather than on the basis of emergent need.
- look to integrate and cyclically schedule its quality systems, linking them into key performance indicators (KPIs) against which to assess the effectiveness of implementation and operation against a transparent timetable.
- consider the introduction of a regularly updated, on-line Quality and Operational Handbook which would be readily available to staff and students.
- provide direct financial support for the Student Parliament for that body to determine the prioritisation of at least part of its expenditure.
- develop a larger-scale, flexible, guided framework within and across schools not only for defined interdisciplinary study programmes but also for defined individual study pathways in monoprofile study programmes and, in that context, evaluate the existing opportunities and development potential of individual study pathways, in co-operation with external stakeholders and student representatives.
- expand the impact of “research university” status on teaching and learning, to include its impact not just on the academic discipline but also on soft skills development and enhanced employability for graduates.
- encompass within the earlier proposed formal unifying framework the development of the pedagogical skills of faculty-based researchers and a system which sustainably ensures the implementation of study programmes with the appropriate number of relevantly qualified academic staff.
- look to the further enhancement of academic staff development (especially in pedagogy) so as to create a wider platform/forum for a centrally monitored and frequent exchange of experience and skills development.
- consider the overall centralisation of the academic staff appraisal system so as to offer greater oversight and promotion of student-centred and research-based learning in a co-ordinated manner.
- regularly evaluate its research activities and achievements, in cooperation with the University Council and external stakeholders, not just in themselves, but also in relation to its other strategic objectives in teaching and learning, staff development and service to society to ensure sustainable development and compatibility with wider societal and individual needs.
- create and regularly monitor some form of transparent risk management and action plan in order to support the development of its less research active areas, thus also satisfying one of its strategic objectives of sustainable balance among subject disciplines.

- ensure that practical research support is centralised or de-centralised, as appropriate, so as to take account of the variable levels of research capacity and experience of its research groupings, for example, further strengthening its central support in the field of international research projects, co-operation and partnerships.
- consider the development and implementation of an easy-to-use supervisor and doctoral student guide, creating a transparent source of information.
- build on its existing successes in service to society, through systematic customer (stakeholder) relationship management, enabling the university to: oversee the appropriate level of contact, ensure the internal exchange of information and good practice across the university, and systematically identify and analyse employer and business needs.
- through its development of research-based master's and doctoral theses, advertise to employers the potential benefit of commissioning larger contract research projects to increase "Project Research".
- more proactively market to the wider society at large the available benefits of working in co-operation with the university as a "research university".
- ensure the systematic implementation of its internationalisation strategy through co-ordinated and monitored oversight at central level.
- continue its efforts to maximise the significant opportunities presented through EPICUR by ensuring that engagement with EPICUR's activities permeates the content and philosophy of every structure of the university, both in its academic and in its professional services units.
- continue its efforts to increase of the number of exchange students, both incoming and outgoing, promoting its institutional level support but also monitoring that at the local level achievable targets are set and local conditions made conducive to a good student experience.
- accelerate its expansion of English language and other foreign language delivery, both bilingual and multilingual study programmes, responding both to local student demand for enhanced employability and to its attractiveness to incoming foreign students.