



Institutional Accreditation

Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik

(Lebanon)

Assessment report

11th October 2012

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Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik (USEK) in Lebanon commissioned **evalag** with the institutional accreditation of the university. The procedure was carried out by an international expert team that assessed the university according to **evalag**'s criteria for institutional accreditation. These criteria are in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The compliance with the criteria is a requirement of awarding **evalag**'s international quality label for institutional accreditation.

1. University and higher education system

1.1. Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik

The Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik (USEK) is a private, catholic university that was founded in 1949 by the Lebanese Maronite Order (OLM). The university was recognised in 1961 by the Lebanese state as one of the seven universities in Lebanon at that time. The main campus of the university is located in Kaslik, approximately 15 km north of Beirut. Additionally, the university operates three smaller regional centres in Chekka, Zahlé and Rmeich.

The university offers a wide variety of undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate study programmes for nearly 8000 students in eleven faculties and four institutes, covering nearly the complete range of academic fields:

- Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Business and Commercial Sciences
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Letters
- Faculty of Medicine and Medical Sciences
- Faculty of Music
- Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities
- Faculty of Sciences
- Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences
- Pontifical Faculty of Theology
- Institute of History
- Institute of Liturgy
- Higher Institute of Nursing Sciences
- Higher Institute of Political and Administrative Sciences

As specificity, USEK defines itself as trilingual university and offers education in French, English and Arabic. The students are able to choose their preferred language of education but are nevertheless required to have proficiency in all three languages.

As private university, USEK does not receive any public funding to provide its activities. Thus, the university relies on student fees as its main source of income.

Table 1 shows an overview of USEK.

| Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Founding year | 1949 |
| Number of students | 7792 |
| in Kaslik | 6987 |
| in Chekka | 315 |
| in Rmeich | 136 |
| in Zahlé | 354 |
| Full-time academic staff | 205 |
| Part-time academic staff | 650 |
| Administrative and technical staff | 285 |
| Academic units | 15 (11 faculties, 4 institutes) |
| Number of programmes | 329 |
| Undergraduate | 136 |
| Graduate | 136 |
| Postgraduate | 57 |
| Budget | \$47 Mio. |
| Average annual tuition | \$6.000 |

Table 1 – USEK in numbers

1.2. The Lebanese higher education system

The Lebanese higher education system is based on the first Law of Higher Education of 1961. At that time, seven universities were operating in Lebanon, among them USEK. These seven universities constitute the Council of Higher Education that recognises study programmes in Lebanon. Lebanon distinguishes between two types of higher education institutions: universities, which have at least three faculties, among them one in the humanities and one in the sciences and which can grant degrees on the bachelor, master and PhD level, and university institutes of technology or university colleges, which have at least one faculty and grant bachelor degrees.

Today, there is the Université Libanaise with 70.000 enrolled students as the only public university and more than 40 private universities, which educate together about 110.000 students. The overall enrolment rate for tertiary education in Lebanon is about 50%, which shows that academic education has a high priority in Lebanon.

The freedom and independence of higher education is guaranteed by the Lebanese Constitution and the regulation of the higher education sector is only limited. New institutions and study programmes of private universities have to be licensed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Otherwise, there are no regulations regarding the contents of study programmes. Furthermore, there is no national external quality assurance system.

Apart from the Université Libanaise, which is funded by the government and offers education tuition-free, private universities rely on student tuition as their main source of income, as there is no public funding for private universities.

Research activities are in general low in Lebanon. This is due to the fact that there is only limited state funding for research by the CNRS (Conseil National de la Recherche Scientifique). Generally, research activities have to be funded by the universities themselves. Altogether, there are five universities which offer doctoral studies in Lebanon, among them USEK.

2. The accreditation procedure

The assessment procedure was carried out with an informed peer review on the basis of a self-evaluation report provided by the university, a site visit of an expert team, an assessment report by the expert team and the accreditation decision which is taken by **evalag**'s Foundation Board.

The procedure applies the fitness for purpose approach which assesses to what extent the institution is able to achieve its self-set objectives. The point of reference is **evalag**'s criteria for institutional accreditation.

These criteria focus first of all on the mission and the strategies of the institution which are in the centre of the procedure. The governance structures which are used to implement strategies, the fields of activities of the institution and cross-cutting issues which influence the implementation and the success of the institutional strategies are also examined. By assessing compliance with the criteria, **evalag** checks, whether the institution has objectives with regard to each criterion, whether it implements activities which serve to reach the defined objectives and whether it uses mechanisms to assess the results of its activities. Additionally, **evalag** assesses if the institution meets academic standards that are accepted in Europe and internationally.

The following eight criteria are used:

- Institutional profile and strategy
- Governance
- Teaching and learning
- Research
- Services to society
- Internationalisation
- Quality assurance
- Resources

The review team expresses the extent of compliance of the criteria with the following assessments: very well developed, well developed, basically developed or not fulfilled. If all criteria are at least basically developed, an accreditation can be granted. The detailed description of the assessment criteria can be found in Annex 1.

As a first step of the procedure and as a preparation for the site visit, USEK produced a self-evaluation report based on guidelines provided by **evalag**. **evalag** formed an expert team consisting of three professorial experts and one student expert:

Prof. Dr. Annie Cheminat, Université de Strasbourg
Professor for Chemistry, Vice-Rector for quality assurance of Université de Strasbourg

Ms. Veronika Kölle, Hochschule Harz – University of Applied Sciences
Student of Media Management and Technology and Business Consulting

Prof. Dr. Dieter Leonhard, Hochschule Mannheim – University of Applied Sciences
Professor for Environmental Engineering, Rector of Hochschule Mannheim

Prof. Dr. Birgit Schäßler, Universität Erfurt
Professor for History of West Asia

All experts declared to be free of any conflict of interest.

The site visit took place from 11 to 14 June 2012 at USEK¹. During the site visit the expert team met with the Rector, academic and administrative staff, students, graduates and employers and visited selected facilities and laboratories of the university.

The expert team produced an assessment report of the university with an accreditation recommendation which was submitted to **evalag**'s Foundation Board. The board took the final accreditation decision on 11 October 2012.

From **evalag**'s side, the accreditation was coordinated by Mr Harald Scheuthle with the assistance of Ms Katja Götzen.

The following assessment report is structured along the eight assessment criteria which are the basis of **evalag**'s institutional accreditation. After a short description of the criterion, each chapter starts with a presentation of the current status regarding the criterion which is based on the information in the self-assessment report of the university and the information gathered during the site visit. On this basis, the expert team assesses the criterion. Finally, the experts list their recommendations for further improvement.

3. Institutional assessment

3.1. Institutional profile and strategy

The institutional profile and strategy define according to the criteria the main activities of a higher education institution. Therefore, it is at the centre of the institutional accreditation procedure. Applying the fitness for purpose approach the experts mainly check whether an institution has a clearly defined strategy, whether it pursues appropriate activities in order to meet its self-defined objectives, whether it uses its resources appropriately according to its strategy and whether it has mechanisms to monitor the achievement of its objectives. Furthermore, the experts also check the validity of the strategy, i.e. whether the strategy fits the profile of the institution.

Current situation

The Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik defines itself as a Maronite university that serves Lebanese society. Its main objective is to provide high quality education with humanistic and pluralistic values. The university describes itself as open to the world and to

¹ Prof. Dr. Leonhard was not able to attend the site visit.

new ideas and technologies. The mission of the university is described in the self-evaluation report and published on the website and in several university publications.

Strategic profile

The strategies of the university are derived from its mission and are reflected in all its areas of activity. Consistent with its mission, USEK describes its main focus as providing high quality education for Lebanese society.

Therefore, the main activity of the university is teaching and learning. In teaching and learning, USEK follows a student-centred approach in several aspects. The general teaching concept of USEK is to convey humanistic and pluralistic values to students. Additionally, the university supports this humanistic education with the concept of the general studies as part of all of its study programmes, where students are required to choose courses from other faculties. The university intends strengthening student-centred teaching and learning methods. Therefore, it offers a training programme for teaching staff in cooperation with University of Chester, United Kingdom.

The student-centred focus of USEK is also reflected in the support services that the university offers to its students and which cover the entire student life cycle. Of special importance to USEK is the financial support for students in need for which the university devotes about 15% of its budget.

Since political manifestations in Lebanon have a tendency to turn into violence, USEK does not allow political groups or manifestations on campus and ensures the compliance with this policy by consistent behaviour from the governance level. This differentiates USEK from most other universities in Lebanon which do not ban political groups from their campuses and is a specific characteristic in the Lebanese higher education context.

In terms of research and consistent with the will to serve Lebanese society, USEK focuses on applied research. Thus, many research projects of the university are related to topics rooted in a Lebanese environment. These objectives which also guide the internal research call of USEK are mainly related to a current problem of Lebanon which is sustainable development. This focus also extends to the current project of the university to invest in its campus and create the first carbon-free campus in Lebanon.

At the same time, an important objective of the university is to preserve the Maronite cultural heritage. Therefore, the university undertakes research on Maronites, maintains one of the largest libraries that collects and restores Maronite historical documents.

The mission of USEK is also reflected in university development. In order to provide education to Lebanese students, the university maintains three regional centres in Christian rural areas of the country which do not have easy access to a university. In these centres, it offers selected Bachelor programmes, mainly in business, computer sciences and languages and a few Master programmes. Moreover, a programme of the Higher Institute of Nursing Sciences was recently created in a fourth centre.

USEK has its origins in a humanities university but progressively expanded to new fields in the sciences, engineering and medicine. It is nowadays a multidisciplinary university offering nearly the full range of academic fields.

Despite its regional focus, USEK defines itself as a university which is open to the world – hence its trilingual language policy and its numerous cooperations with foreign universities, mainly in Europe and the Arab world.

Strategic development

The basic vision of USEK to serve Lebanese society is set by the Maronite order, which is the owner of the university. The university then derives its strategies from this mission.

The strategic planning process is mainly carried out at the university central level. The strategic plan of the university is primarily elaborated by the Rector who takes into account information gathered from faculties and from the administration. Each year, the strategic plan is discussed in the University Council and submitted to the OLM Board for approval.

In order to integrate stakeholders in the strategic planning of the university, USEK amended its bylaws and created a Strategic Board responsible for the strategic development of the university which should integrate the stakeholders' views. The Strategic Board is currently under designation.

Within the strategic lines given by the university, the faculties are responsible for their own strategic development. As observed during the discussion sessions of the site visit, the faculties take their responsibilities seriously. The processes to develop strategies at faculty level differ between faculties. While some of them have elaborated formal processes, in other faculties the processes are more informal. Moreover, the experts noticed that there is only little exchange and communication between faculties.

Nevertheless, there are not always clearly defined and easily available indicators to monitor and evaluate the achievement of the objectives at university level.

Budget allocation

The allocation of the budget is in line with the university strategy. Funds are mainly allocated in order to assure teaching and learning. Furthermore, the university allocates a large part of its funds for student support. On the one hand USEK offers a wide range of student support services to which it devotes about a third of its total staff costs. On the other hand the university spends a significant part of its income from student fees for scholarships (about 15% of the budget). The campus of the university also benefits from being a high priority of USEK. In this context, few resources are left and spent for research. For the direct research support from university sources USEK spends about 1% of the budget.

Assessment

Strategic profile

According to the expert group, the mission and vision of USEK is well defined and well-known to all stakeholders of the university. During the interviews with different status groups within the university it became clear that all university members are not only

aware of the mission and share its values, but that they have internalised the mission and act according to it.

The experts judge the mission of USEK as appropriate to the type of institution. The value-oriented mission and the strategies derived from it prove to be an advantage of the university as it is strongly valued by its staff members and its students. Especially the safe and quiet working atmosphere on the non-political campus was valued by the students and alumni who the expert team met during the site visit.

According to the experts, the strategies pursued by the university are closely and very consistently linked with the university mission and in accordance to the traditional expectations of Lebanese society, which mostly value teaching and learning. Thus, the university focuses its main activities on serving the Lebanese Christian communities and Lebanese society at large and to convey humanistic values. This explains the focus on teaching and learning and its strong student services and student support while pursuing research is clearly a lesser priority. This national context also explains the expansion on new academic fields to meet the needs of the Lebanese labour market. Regarding its international activities the trilingual language policy is most notable, whereas exchange activities are at lower levels. At the same time, these priorities are reflected in the budget of USEK, which clearly shows the student-centred focus of the university.

Overall, the experts assess the strategies of USEK as consistent with its mission and profile and the strategies adequate to achieve the intended objectives.

Strategic development

USEK uses a centralised and predominantly top-down process to develop its strategies. The Rector is the driving force behind the development of the university and is responsible for its strategic plan. In doing so, the Rector relies on the input and support of the faculties and his advisors. In the near future, the planned Strategic Board should involve stakeholders more formally in the strategic process. Nevertheless, the strategic process will remain focussed on the Rector since the members of the Strategic Board will be nominated by the OLM Board on his proposal. The university, however, relies on a more or less consensual internal strategic process as the current Rector pays attention to involve the views of the faculties and academics.

With a centralised strategic process the university can, according to the experts, benefit from an efficient strategic development that allows the institution to react quickly to changes in its environment. Nevertheless, especially in higher education institutions which depend on the motivation and participation of its members, stakeholder involvement and participation is essential. Currently, it seems to the expert team that internal stakeholders are appropriately involved in an informal way as the strategies of the institution are supported throughout the university. This, however, depends on the willingness and ability of the Rector to allow constructive criticism of institutional strategies.

On the faculty level, the Faculty Council is responsible for the faculty strategy. The experts got the strong impression that faculty strategies closely relate to the university strategy. The faculties to which the team spoke during the site visit had a clear vision of their own contribution and responsibility towards the general university mission. In

terms of process, the team could see differences between faculties which range from informal discussions among the faculty staff and formal discussions in the Faculty Council to a clearly defined and structured process of deriving faculty strategies from the university strategy with clear operational objectives and corresponding activities that are regularly monitored and adjusted if necessary.

Whereas some faculties have clearly operationalised objectives that are periodically monitored, on the university level, quantifiable objectives and their monitoring seem to be rather implicit to the expert team. The university was not able to present key performance indicators to the team. Clearly defined and monitored indicators – whether they are quantitative or qualitative in nature – could give the university a feedback on how well it achieves its objectives or whether adjustments may be necessary. Furthermore, performance indicators could be used in the external communication of the university to demonstrate the quality of its activities.

Whereas the university does not make any reference to its equal opportunities policy teaching staff at USEK seems to be appropriately balanced in terms of gender.

Budget allocation

The allocation of the budget is in line with the university strategy. The budget reflects the university mission and allocates appropriate resources to the priorities of the university.

Overall assessment

Altogether, the experts appreciate the clear mission and vision of the university and the commendable way how the university uses its mission and vision to derive its strategies. As the university mission is consistently transferred into university strategies, it is well known and accepted by all university members and well institutionalised so that the institution acts according to it. While pursuing its mission, USEK's activities meet the internationally accepted standards in teaching and learning and research, as detailed in the respective chapters. However, clearly defined performance indicators which would allow USEK to assess its results and adjust its activities if necessary are strongly advised. Moreover, the process of strategic development which is strongly focussed on the university central level and especially on the leadership of the Rector is analysed as an advantage in matter of efficiency and institutional dynamics but may lead to a negligence of stakeholder inclusion.

Recommendations

The expert group recommends using quantitative and qualitative performance indicators to assess the achievement of its objectives and to contribute to the management of the university. USEK could rely on its information system to systematically collect appropriate information on its operations. The data gathered could be used on the university and on the faculty level to assist strategic and operational management of the institution and to show evidence of the quality of its services to Lebanese society.

3.2. Governance

The criterion “governance” focuses on internal governance and decision making processes of the institution. The experts check whether the governance structure is adequate to achieve its objectives and how decision making processes are organised. Furthermore, the experts check how stakeholder groups and core academic functions are included in the governance of the institution and whether this assures academic freedom.

Current situation

USEK is a private university which is owned by the Lebanese Maronite Order. As a private university, it is autonomous from the Lebanese state and does not benefit from state funding.

The OLM guarantees the sustainability of the university but nevertheless, seems not to interfere in university autonomy and leaves academic matters to the organs of the university. Strategic decisions such as investments in property, changing the university bylaws or changing academic units need the approval of the OLM.

University governance

The governance structure of the university is regulated in the university bylaws that were last amended in 2010. The central role in the governance of the university is carried out by the Rector. The Rector is elected by the General Council of the OLM from among the monks of the order who hold a Ph.D. and have the rank of an Associate Professor. The term of the Rector is three years and can be renewed twice for a total of nine years. Once elected, he cannot be dismissed.

The Rector is responsible for the strategic planning and the overall management of USEK and chairs the university bodies. He also appoints academic and administrative personnel of the university. He reports annually to the General Council of the OLM.

The vice-Rectors and the secretary general are appointed by the university Chancellor – a representative position which is held by the Superior General of the OLM – on proposal of the Rector to assist him in his work. Additionally, the Rector can appoint assistants to support him.

The main academic body of USEK is the University Council which is responsible for academic matters of the university. It is composed of the members of the Rectorate, the heads of the academic units (faculties and institutes), the financial administrator, the main librarian and of faculty members proposed by the Rector. The heads of the administrative offices and the Rector meet regularly in the Management Board.

Additionally, a number of committees for different purposes are set up on demand, such as the Commission of Programmes, Admission Committee, the Peer Committee for the evaluation of faculty’s performance or “ad hoc” committees for search and tenure procedures.

The Strategic Council as the main body for the discussion of the strategic development is still under designation. It will be chaired by the University Chancellor and has as members the Rector and (external) stakeholders appointed by the General Council of the OLM on proposal of the Rector.

Faculties and institutes

USEK consists of 15 academic units, among them eleven faculties and four institutes. The difference between faculties and institutes is merely related to their size, i.e. the number of full-time staff members and study programmes offered. The academic units are led by heads – Deans of faculties and Directors of institutes – who are appointed by the Chancellor on proposal of the Rector for a three year term which can be renewed twice.

The governance body of an academic unit is the Council of the academic unit which is composed of the head of the unit, the head of the doctoral commission, the academic secretary, the heads of departments, a faculty member elected by the unit's faculty members and one faculty member appointed by the head. The Council is responsible for the academic matters of the unit, especially the development and implementation of study programmes and research projects. Additionally, USEK has three regional centres which are managed by a director who is appointed by the Chancellor on proposal of the Rector.

Students

There is no general student representation at USEK. As student elections tend to be greatly politicized in Lebanon and sometimes culminate in physical clashes between students, USEK opted for an entirely non-political campus and banned all political groups and parties from campus. In this respect, USEK is unique in Lebanon. The non-political and therefore more peaceful campus environment is generally much appreciated by students. As a consequence, students are not formally represented in university bodies. However, the university informally involves students in academic matters, i.e. by inviting selected students to Council and committee meetings. Students are also involved in committees of the administration to develop student services.

Assessment

University governance

According to the expert team, the governance structures of USEK are by and large clear and transparently documented. The responsibilities of the main university bodies are described in the bylaws of the institution. The status and exact functions of some of the committees, however, are not always clearly described.

The expert team assesses the governance structure of USEK as centralised and strongly focused on the Rector who enjoys great influence on the university policy and strategies. A large majority of the political and administrative leaders or representative members at the university bodies are appointed by or on proposal of the Rector. Additionally, the Rector is assisted by a strong and professional administration. This leads, on the one hand, to an efficient and effective decision-making process in the university.

On the other hand, the prominent position of the Rector leads to a very fragile balance between efficient decision-making and academic freedom. Depending on the personality of the Rector, this position could lead to abuse by interfering too strongly in academic matters and avoiding integrating the views of the internal stakeholders appropriately. Moreover, this situation may also lead to a lesser participation in other fields as well and affect the dynamics of the institution. Participation of the entire university community should be strengthened and encouraged.

During the site visit it became nevertheless obvious to the expert team that the current Rector tries to involve internal stakeholders in decision-making processes and leaves the academic units their autonomy within the strategy of the university which is appreciated by the members of the university. Therefore, in the current situation the expert team observed that university members enjoy academic freedom.

Faculties and institutes

The experts notice, that compared to its size, USEK has with its 15 faculties and institutes which all represent different academic fields and its three regional centres, a high number of academic units. This leads to relatively small units with between one and 47 full-time faculty members and an average of 14 faculty members. The university emphasized during the site visit that small faculties are easier to manage than larger faculties. As a drawback, the expert team sees the lack of communication between the academic fields of the university.

The governance structure of USEK relies strongly on vertical communication lines. There are, however, practically no formal horizontal communication structures that could allow faculties to communicate between each other in order to exchange good practices or to develop joint projects.

While operating within the strategic priorities of the university and implementing a largely common study framework across the entire university, the faculties met by the experts during the site visit enjoy a certain degree of autonomy which allows them to preserve and live their specificities and express their own profile.

However, interdisciplinarity requires mutual knowledge and cooperation, e.g. for common curricula or modules. The expert team encourages USEK to foster further informal and formal transdisciplinary cooperation platforms like joint centres.

Students

Given the volatile political situation in Lebanon, the decision of USEK to maintain a non-political campus seems reasonable. Nevertheless, formal student representation remains a necessity for a modern and pluralistic university. Therefore, the expert team sees the need to establish appropriate ways of ensuring student participation in academic matters, quality issues and campus culture in general.

Independence

The OLM as the owner of USEK, who nominates the Rector and approves the strategic plan and the budget, has potentially a large influence on the university. Moreover, academic members of the order serve as professors, often with leading positions in faculties: currently, eight of the 15 deans of faculties and institutes are monks of the OLM.

In its interviews with university members and external stakeholders, the expert team got the impression that the OLM restrains its influence on the current affairs of the university and assures the autonomy of the university in academic affairs. All groups consistently reported that there is no direct interference of the order in campus life. The representative of the OLM explained the role of the order as preserving the general mission of the university and ensuring academic freedom as its utmost priority. While the OLM does not support USEK financially, the order would be prepared to assure university operation in difficult times.

Overall assessment

Overall, USEK enjoys an efficient governance model that gives the leadership great influence on the university. The OLM as owner of the university would be able to exert its influence on the university. Currently, the academic freedom of USEK seems to be assured as the Rector leaves academic matters largely to faculties and academics, opts for a consensual leadership and tries to integrate the stakeholders' views. The numerous academic units and the lack of formal horizontal communication lines lead to fragmentation in terms of academic development and hinder interdisciplinary cooperation between academic units.

Recommendations

The expert team recommends USEK to further institutionalise participation and communication within the university.

The experts invite the university to consider further institutionalising the participation of academics in the self-governance of the university and allow more room for representatives which are elected among the academics. The experts propose thus to complete the bylaws, to include and to ensure in a more formal way participation procedures, checks and balances, thereby formalizing the excellent governance approach of the present Rector.

Similarly, the experts suggest involving students in a more formal way in decisions relating to academic matters in teaching and learning. Possibilities to participate besides student elections should be discussed as well.

In order to strengthen horizontal communication between faculties the expert team invites the university to think about appropriate ways to institutionalise such communication lines. A possibility could be regular meetings between heads of academic units to exchange good practices in the strategic development and management and to discuss interdisciplinary projects and programme offers between academic units.

3.3. Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is one of the main activities of higher education institutions. The experts check whether the study programme offer and the educational concept of the university fit its mission and strategy and comply with national standards. The experts also check whether the institution has processes that ensure the academic standards of study programmes, an appropriate academically oriented process of creating programmes, the implementation of programmes, the organisation of the student life cycle and the resource deployment for teaching and learning for all study programmes – being delivered full-time, part-time, on-campus or by distant education.

Current status

Teaching and learning process

The core activity of USEK is to provide teaching and learning of high quality. Therefore, the university offers for its 7792 students a total of 329 undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate programmes in its 15 faculties and institutes, covering a broad range of subjects in humanities, fine arts, theology, social sciences, sciences, engineering and medicine. The study programmes are offered as full-time programmes delivered

on-campus. USEK offers only few programmes in continuing education. Due to its trilingual language policy, for several programmes students can choose between French, English or Arabic. The programmes are offered in several specialisations. This explains the high number of programmes offered. The most popular undergraduate programmes are also offered at the three regional centres of the university. Although the university has its origins in a Francophone university rooted in the French education system, USEK adopted the North American credit system in 1997.

The university offers a variety of teaching and learning methods which use theoretical and practical elements, lectures, seminars and internships. Master programmes are usually research-oriented and the university allows excellent master theses to be published by the university press after an internal review process involving the faculty council, the research council and reviews of internal and external experts.

The study process is documented in a student guide, which is available on-line. Students report their general satisfaction with the organisation of the study process and the workload of the programmes.

Currently, the university is in the process of introducing e-learning technologies which are used by lecturers to support the teaching and learning process. This strategy is supported by e-learning training workshops for lecturers in cooperation with George Mason University, US. USEK also supports the development of more student-centred teaching and learning methods with a postgraduate certificate programme in teaching and learning in cooperation with University of Chester, UK.

Development of new and further development of existing study programmes are the main responsibility of the academic unit offering the programme. There is a defined process how the Academic Unit Council discusses and elaborates new programme proposals and submits them for comments and approval to the university Programme Commission, which is responsible for checking the compliance of the programme with the university programme framework. Then, a new programme has to be discussed and approved by the University Council before the university asks for an official approval by the Ministry of Education. The contents of the courses are at the responsibility of the lecturers. The university usually seeks contact with their students and with international partner universities when developing new programmes.

In order to strengthen the humanistic education of its students, all programmes of USEK have a general studies part in which students have to choose courses worth 12 to 21 credits from other faculties. In its master programmes, the university tries to involve interested students into current research projects.

USEK has a unified admission procedure for all its programmes. Admission criteria include the previous degree, and depending on the programme, admission tests or letters of recommendation. For undergraduate students, language tests in accordance with the university's language policy are required.

Grading is performed on a common basis with a numerical grading system over 100 points. The course grades usually combine several assessments such as participation, homework and projects, midterm and final exams. Drop-out rates are about 10 - 12% in bachelor programmes and 3 - 5% in master programmes. The university offers specific counselling for students in order to avoid and reduce drop-out.

USEK offers a wide range of professional student services that cover the entire student life cycle from initial information of prospective students over support during studies at USEK to support in finding jobs after graduation. The majority of the on-campus services is combined in the Student Affairs Office, which is also the main contact for any study related problems. USEK also offers student social services which provide finan-

cial support based on open accessible criteria. The Social Service Office also advises and supports students facing personal, family or medical difficulties.

Resource allocation

USEK has about 205 full-time and 650 part-time teaching staff members. In terms of education, the majority (ca. 73%) of the full-time teaching staff members hold a Ph.D. and USEK offers a variety of staff training programmes to upgrade and develop the teaching capacity of lecturers. The average student-academic staff ratio at USEK is about 40 with differences between the faculties.

The campus offers enough space for the implementation of USEK's study programme offer. The university is also about to expand its campus to provide more space for the growing student population. The library has an emphasis on French academic literature but offers also on-line access to international databases of academic journals. As an example, the laboratories in the field of chemistry visited during the site visit are modern and equipped with up-to date equipment for science-based education of bachelor and master students.

The student fees at USEK are with an average of \$6.000 per year significantly lower than at the most expensive universities. The financial support offered by the university allows a large number of students to pursue higher education who would not be able to afford it otherwise. The university receives about 1500 - 2000 requests for financial support per year and is usually able to grant about 90% of the applicants at least a partial fee waiver.

Assessment

Teaching and learning process

According to USEK's mission and vision, teaching and learning is considered the main activity of the university. The experts agree that the university is largely oriented towards the provision of education for its students. According to its mission to serve Lebanese society, USEK strives to adjust its study programmes to the needs of society. Therefore, the university has introduced study programmes in new academic fields such as sciences and engineering that have been built up and strengthened during the last years in order to reflect the demands of the Lebanese labour market. Presently, new programmes i.e. in the field of pharmacy are planned. In line with the mission of the university the regional centres of USEK offer programmes, which are limited to the undergraduate programmes most in demand and to few masters in the field of fine and applied arts, in order to provide higher education to Christian rural areas.

The expert team views positively this consistent implementation of the university strategy in the field of teaching and learning. Nevertheless, it results in an extremely high number of programmes which are offered by a large number of academic units and lead to a fragmentation of the educational offer that is merely controlled by a common programme framework which is used within the entire university.

The expert group supports the general studies concept of the university that both allows and forces students to choose courses in academic fields other than their own study programme. This concept strongly supports the humanistic educational mission of the university and contributes to a more holistic education of the graduates.

During the site visit, it became apparent to the experts that USEK is in a process of developing from a university that was previously focussed on humanities to a much more science and business oriented profile which is mainly driven by shifting demands

of students. The shift strongly affects the humanities field which suffers from a drop in student numbers. This tendency applies to Lebanon in general. Being aware of the problem, the humanities try to find strategies to make their offer more attractive. A possibility that is also supported by the experts is to develop new interdisciplinary study programmes that offer graduates attractive opportunities on the labour market.

The expert group assesses the academic standards of the study programmes as met. The university has appropriate procedures for the development of study programmes that leave the responsibility of the programme content to academics while ensuring compliance with university and national regulations and ensures appropriate study organisation. USEK seems to assure appropriate workload of its study programmes. The master programmes are suitably linked to the research activities of the university.

The experts appreciate the efforts of the university to enhance the learning experience of their students. Notable in this respect is the introduction of e-learning at the university. During the site visit it was confirmed that the e-learning platform is widely used by the professors. The experts also note very positively the variety of training programmes offered for lecturers and the use of tutors to support students. Students expressed their satisfaction with the study environment at USEK. They especially appreciated the human environment that the university manages to uphold.

A large asset of the university is its professional student services which are offered by a service-oriented and competent administration. The students also appreciate the services offered by the university and report a well organised study process. Especially appreciated is the non-political and peaceful campus. With 'Banner', the university utilises a powerful campus management software which seems to work smoothly.

Resource allocation

The expert team notes that the university allocates appropriate resources to teaching and learning. The staff met during the site visit was very dynamic and motivated and expressed a high commitment to USEK. In general, the experts deem the student-staff ratio appropriate, the university may however consider employing new lecturers in faculties with very high ratios. The reported ratio of 60 seems to be high for an engineering faculty.

The campus and the facilities are deemed appropriate for quality study programmes at bachelor and master levels. The experts commend USEK for its emphasis on social support for its students and the amount of resources allocated to financial support, which is very much in line with its priorities.

Overall assessment

The site visit confirms to the expert team that teaching and learning is the main activity of USEK. The university devotes energy and resources to providing a wide range of study programmes at high academic quality. The growing number of academic fields has led, however, to a very large and somehow fragmented study programme offer. Teaching is carried out by dynamic and motivated lecturers and supported by a very professionalised Student Affairs Office. Financial and social support for students in need is obviously a high priority of USEK.

Recommendations

As the university has to manage a large number of study programmes the experts recommend considering to reduce the high number of specialised programmes to a lower number of more general programmes that may nevertheless offer students the opportunity to specialize, for example by using electives or specialised tracks.

The experts invite the university to take more advantage of its broad range of academic fields by introducing new interdisciplinary programmes. The university should especially consider programmes that transcend the borders of academic fields. This may as well add to the attractiveness of the traditional strength of the university in the humanities.

The experts recommend improving the student-academic staff ratios in those fields where they are particularly high, especially in engineering.

The experts invite the university to further build on the potential of e-learning as a competitive advantage and a source of synergies for the development of teaching and learning in the university. E-learning could be used to enhance and widen the programme offer of USEK in the regional centres.

3.4. Research

The criterion “research” focuses on how an institution manages its research activities. The experts check the research strategy of an institution and how it fits into its mission and its overall strategy. Moreover, the academic standards of the research activity, its organisation, evaluation and the endowment with resources are assessed. Furthermore, the recruiting processes of researchers and the promotion of young researchers are important aspects of the research field.

Current status

The research strategy of USEK relates to the mission of the university and is mainly focussed on applied research serving Lebanese society. Research is organised along two principles. On the one hand, in research centres devoted to research on specific topics, on the other hand, within the faculties which encourage and support research of their faculty members.

USEK has four research centres: the Phoenix Centre for Lebanese Studies (PCLS), that carries out bibliographic research on Lebanese culture, the Latin American Studies and Cultures Centre (LASCC), a cooperation centre between USEK and the Lebanese community in Latin America, the Latin Studies Centre, which supports research on the language of Latin, and the CIRAME, a centre for research in business studies.

At the central level, the Higher Centre for Research (CSR) was created in 2006 at USEK to better involve faculty members in the research strategy and fund research projects proposed by university members with university funds based on a competitive selection process. The majority of the funds are allocated to projects focussing on the research priorities of the university, mainly environment, sustainability and a carbon-free university, but projects on other subjects are funded as well. Each year the CSR launches a call for proposals which are preselected by its scientific committee. Then, the proposals are evaluated by an “ad hoc” committee of experts. The research projects usually run between one and two years and are carried out by a lead researcher often in cooperation with master and PhD students.

At the same time, research projects are carried out in the faculties, often together with international partner universities, mainly in France sometimes in associated research units supported by the National Council for Scientific Research (NCSR) or within AUF projects, especially in science (chemistry, biology, agronomy systems engineering), in management, business and commercial sciences. Researchers also participate in academic conferences or organise conferences at USEK. Finally, USEK is the most successful Lebanese university in achieving research grants of the National Council for Scientific Research (NCSR) funded by the Lebanese state.

USEK invests, mainly through the CSR, approximately \$500.000 per year in its research projects, which is about 1% of its total budget. Sabbaticals for research do not exist.

The faculties report on research in their annual activity reports. The main performance indicator used is the number of publications. From 2009 to 2012 USEK counts a total of 600 publications, 200 in the humanities and 400 in sciences.

Additionally, the university has a doctoral college that coordinates the doctoral schools of the faculties. Doctoral schools exist in all fields except in sciences and engineering, as so far only the public Lebanese University has the right to grant PhD degrees in sciences and engineering. In these two fields, USEK cooperates with foreign universities. USEK has granted about 200 PhD degrees so far, about 20 per year.

Assessment

The general research strategy of the university to provide applied research for Lebanese society is, according to the expert team, well founded in the university mission. The research profile of USEK remains, however, fuzzy and not strongly founded in the academic fields of the university. Research, however, needs a certain “critical mass”. So, USEK might think of identifying strategic research areas in order to streamline its resources.

The overall research output of the university is rather low. This is, by and large, in line with the mission of a teaching university. It also reflects the Lebanese tradition which values education much more than research. The budget allocation supports this view as, on the one hand, the state only supports research in a very modest way, and, on the other hand, the university itself only spends 1% of its budget for research purposes.

According to the expert panel, research at USEK meets academic standards. The university gives its researchers the freedom to pursue their projects freely and gives them – within the limits of the budget allocation – support to carry out research. Support for research in the CSR follows a defined process, which should, however, be made more transparent.

Recruiting procedures for academic staff members follow, by and large, internationally accepted standards. Yet, in order to be able to recruit the best candidates, the experts find it very important to advertise job openings systematically. With its regular evaluations of internal projects and faculty activity reports, USEK carries out basic monitoring and evaluation of its research activities. The experts miss, however, clearly defined and more diverse performance indicators that help the university to assess its research performance.

The structure of the doctoral college and the regulations for the doctoral education seem to be appropriate to the expert team. The regulations of the Thesis Charter of USEK are particularly strict in terms of duration of doctoral studies.

Overall, research is not the main priority of USEK. Research activities of university members are encouraged but only funded in a limited way and, due to their teaching loads and administrative tasks, researchers lack time for pursuing their research. Therefore, the research output is low and largely focussed on applied research related to the needs of Lebanese society, which is in line with the university mission. However, USEK is lacking a clear research profile based on its best academic fields and an effective monitoring of its research performance to show evidence of this profile.

Recommendations

If the university wishes to strengthen its research activities, the expert team sees it indispensable to invest more resources in research activities.

The experts recommend a deep strategic reflection on this issue as they recognize the challenge to substantially increase support for research while the university generates its income relying mainly on tuition fees from students. To raise additional research funds from industry or foundations remains certainly an important, but difficult task in the Lebanese environment.

The experts suggest that the university consider the introduction of sabbaticals in order to support and enhance the research output of its academic staff.

3.5. Services to society

The criterion “services to society” looks at how a higher education institution plays a role in its local, regional and national environment as a societal actor. The experts assess the strategy regarding services to society, the activities with which the institution connects to society, whether these activities are appropriately implemented and whether the activities fit the strategy.

Current status

The main objective of USEK is to serve Lebanese society as marked in its mission. From this mission, the university derives strategies in all its fields of activity as already stressed above.

The main objective is teaching and learning where the university strives to provide high quality education. Consequently, the university adjusts its study programmes regularly and offers programmes in new academic fields to meet the demand of the Lebanese labour market.

With its three regional centres in Christian rural areas, where USEK mainly offers Bachelor programmes in the most demanded fields, the university intends to contribute to the development of these areas by providing education. The regional centres have only few academic staff members but are served by the lecturers of the main campus. At the regional centres between 140 and 350 students are enrolled which add to 800, about 10% of USEK’s students.

The university intends to provide a humanistic education and to convey human values in its education which should contribute to an open and pluralistic society. Therefore, USEK implements general studies in all of its study programmes and maintains a campus, on which activities of political parties are banned. In addition, the university has a student-centred service-oriented administration that supports student well-being on campus and offers its financial and social support.

In the research field, which is of lesser importance to USEK, the university carries out applied research serving the needs of Lebanese society.

Another priority with regard to society is the function of USEK to preserve Maronite heritage. In this respect, the university conducts research on Maronite history and maintains the central library and archive for Maronite documents and the first world-wide edition of the New Testament in Syriac. In order to preserve these historic documents, the university library maintains modern equipped restoration and digitalisation facilities.

Assessment

According to the expert group, USEK fulfils in an exemplary way its services to society. The university has a clear vision on how it wants to serve society and implements it consistently within the range of its activities. These activities are by and large geared towards serving society and are closely linked to the university strategy.

The experts appreciate USEK's commitment to providing education to rural areas with its regional centres, but they note that each of the centres is rather small while still providing between six to twelve different study programmes.

The internal and external groups the experts met during the site visit knew and appreciated the societal mission of the university. The university seems to be in regular contact with external stakeholders in order to detect the needs of its environment and adjusts its activities accordingly.

Recommendations

The experts encourage the university to build up a formal relation with its alumni in order to link them closer to the university and to build on their experience in further developing the university. Therefore, the expert team supports the plan of the university to build up an alumni service for the university.

Non-academic courses in the regional centres could, as a suggestion of the expert team, be evaluated with a follow-up survey on how useful the contents were for entrepreneurs or private persons. As well, integration into the labour market should be monitored.

3.6. Internationalisation

The criterion "internationalisation" assesses the international activities of a higher education institution and how they are connected with the overall institutional strategy. Therefore, the experts check how internationalisation fits into this strategy and whether the international strategy is consistent with its institutional strategy as a whole. Then, the experts assess which activities are implemented in different institutional core functions and whether these activities fit the strategy.

Current status

USEK maintains a variety of international activities. Objective of the international strategy of USEK is to increase diversity of the university.

Therefore, the university fosters exchange programmes for incoming and outgoing students and staff members. Currently, the university has about 120 incoming students (1,5% of its registered students) and about 25 outgoing students. In terms of staff members, about 100 staff members covered different kinds of functions abroad, whereas 40 academics have been visiting USEK to engage in teaching or research activities within the last year. USEK is also partner in two joint programmes with well-known institutions in Canada and Italy (HEC Montreal; La Sapienza). Additionally, the university has cooperation agreements with 127 foreign institutions.

All these activities are supported by the International Office of the university which gives incoming and outgoing students and staff members support during their stay at USEK or in planning their stays abroad.

A great asset of USEK as a university open to international exchange is its trilingual language policy. While the majority of study programmes is offered in French, some programmes are additionally offered in English (mainly music and business faculties) and Arabic (mainly theological and music faculties). This eases international exchange as the university is attractive for students and academics from different language backgrounds. As the university developed from a traditionally francophone university, English language skills of staff members are strengthened by offering language courses.

In this context, USEK aims for accreditations following European as well as American criteria, which opens possibilities for cooperation and underlines the search for high and international standards.

Apart from the activities supported by the International Office, the university is involved in a good number of international benchmarking activities. Within the last years the university systematically identified international partners in order to upgrade and improve the quality and performance of its administrative offices and teaching methods. Currently, for example, the university offers a one year postgraduate certificate programme in teaching and learning with University of Chester, UK to upgrade the teaching competences of its academics and it offers a workshop training on how to utilize online teaching strategies in cooperation with George Mason University, US. Also the faculties look closely on international universities as international benchmarking is used systematically across most faculties to review and update their study programmes.

Assessment

The expert team notices that USEK is in general very open to the international environment. However, its international strategy only covers the areas of student and staff exchange, joint programmes, cooperation with international universities and the language policy of the university – mainly the activities which are supported by the International Office of the university.

Nevertheless, the level of internationalisation, especially regarding incoming mobility, remains at a comparatively low level. To a large extent, this may be explained by the political situation in Lebanon, which is still perceived as unstable and thus, may deter foreign students and academics from choosing USEK as their university. The number of outgoing students is especially low.

In general, the expert team acknowledges the low level of international activities as the main objective of USEK's mission is the service to the local community. Thus, internationalisation is not a priority for the university. This fact is also reflected in the low level of funding for outgoing students, whereas the university is willing to support students to study at USEK. So, the international activities of USEK do reflect, according to the expert team, the overall strategy of the institution.

Although this was not presented as part of USEK's international strategy, the expert team considers as a rather strong part of the internationalisation of USEK its will and ability to systematically learn from international institutions in order to improve and develop the institution: USEK is to be commended for its open and systematic use of international benchmarking activities.

Altogether, USEK presents itself as a university open to the international environment. This is especially well established in the international benchmarking activities of the university. In terms of student and staff exchange and despite the fact that USEK offers professional support services, the level of exchange remains rather low. By and large, this is consistent with USEK's strategy to serve the regional community.

Recommendations

The expert team recommends the university to broaden its international strategy and to integrate all its international activities. Furthermore, the university should consider defining clearer internationalisation targets that allow monitoring of the progress made.

The team encourages international mobility of students at USEK. As university funding for outgoing students is very low the experts recommend the university to actively seek external funding to support interested students in studying abroad. The International Office could seek contact to foreign exchange organisations such as i.e. Campus France or the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), in order to tap different funding possibilities.

3.7. Quality assurance

The criterion "quality assurance" focuses on the internal and external mechanisms used by the institution to monitor and improve its quality. The experts check whether the institution has in place closed quality loops that allow the university systematically to monitor and improve its activities. Therefore, the experts check the quality assurance concept of the university, which indicators are used to monitor the progress in achieving its objectives, which tools and processes are used to monitor and support quality and how the university uses these tools for improvement.

Current status

Quality assurance as a continuous improvement of the activities of the university is seen as a strategic priority of USEK. The university intends to meet European and American academic standards and, thus, is engaged in external quality assurance procedures on the programme and institutional level with European and American quality assurance agencies.

Internally, the university builds up a quality management system in order to develop the quality of the study programmes, including the activities of the teaching staff and the administrative procedures, and to provide information for the management of the university. Therefore a common framework is being established that should take into account the particularities of the different faculties and define the objectives, criteria and measurements. The quality assurance office coordinates and supports the quality assurance activities at the central level of the institution.

Currently, the university is in the process of establishing an internal review process of its study programmes that should evaluate each programme every three years. The evaluation is carried out by the Academic Unit Council in cooperation with faculty members and external stakeholders (mostly part-time teaching staff). The faculties also build on international benchmarking to update the contents of their study programmes.

On the one hand, the evaluation will use – once fully established – predefined performance indicators such as student numbers, drop-out rates and student evaluation results. On the other hand, the university carries out systematic student course evaluations, which are coordinated by the Quality Assurance Office. Since 2012, participation in the on-line evaluation is obligatory for students as their final grades for the semester will only be released once they finalised the course evaluation. The results of the evaluation are communicated to the individual teachers and the heads of departments but are, for reasons of data protection, not publically displayed or discussed with the students. The results are also used in the regular teacher's evaluation.

Additionally, the office carries out a yearly survey on the wellbeing of students on campus. The survey is used to evaluate and improve the student support services of USEK.

USEK also carries out yearly performance evaluations of its academic staff. The evaluations are used by the Peer Committee to decide on contract renewals or promotions of staff members. The evaluation is carried out by the deans on the basis of a performance report of the academic regarding its performance in teaching and research, the student evaluation results and exam results.

The introduction of new teaching and learning methodologies is an important pillar of institutional quality assurance. Therefore, the university offers extensive staff trainings on teaching methodologies and is introducing its e-learning platform which is as well flanked by staff trainings. Moreover, a programme for mutual teacher's evaluation aiming for improved teaching methods was created.

The university is also in the process of introducing a university-wide information system that should provide easy access to data which can be used for decision-making.

The Quality Assurance Office also conducts process analyses in order to optimise administrative processes and workflows.

Assessment

The expert team appreciates the high priority the university devotes to quality assurance and the very active personnel of the Quality Assurance Office. According to the mission of the university, the quality assurance activities focus mostly on teaching and learning and administrative processes related to the wellbeing of students. Consequently, the students express high satisfaction with the education and student services at USEK.

The quality assurance concept used by USEK seems to be appropriate to assure and improve the quality of teaching and learning at the university. Moreover, the tools which are currently in place seem to be accepted and implemented throughout the institution and used for improvement.

Nevertheless, the experts noticed a lack of clearly defined quality indicators throughout the university. The performance indicators elaborated at the central level are not always consistent with those at the faculty level and the experts found evidence for clearly defined performance indicators only in selected faculties which develop their own internal quality assurance and collect necessary data independently.

Furthermore, it seems that USEK has not yet a central data reporting which provides shared data on university or faculty activities to the Rectorate and to the faculties. It is to be hoped that the information system – once established – will provide such data.

Overall, quality assurance is a high priority for USEK and supported by a highly professional Quality Assurance Office. The quality concept relates mostly to teaching and learning but has the potential – once fully implemented – to systematically monitor and develop the quality of the university. The instruments already implemented seem to be carried out systematically and used for improvement. The university still lacks a set of clearly defined and shared performance indicators which can be used to monitor the performance throughout the institution.

Recommendations

The experts recommend the university to define clear performance indicators – being them quantitative or qualitative – in order to be able to monitor the achievement of their objectives on the university and the faculty level on comparable basis.

The experts recommend giving a feedback of course evaluations to the students. The experts understand that the university refrains from publishing individual teacher results for reasons of data protection but invites the university to seek ways to discuss the feedback with the students in order to give students a clear signal that their opinions are taken into consideration seriously.

The experts support the plan of USEK to establish an information system to fit the numbers in a common framework and provide data to the Rectorate as well as to academic units to support their decision-making.

3.8. Resources

Central to the criterion “resources” is whether the institution has appropriate resource endowment and deployment to sustain its core activities. The experts check, whether the institution has sustainable funding at its disposal and deploys its resources in accordance with institutional priorities to achieve its objectives. The experts also check whether the procedures for hiring and developing staff are appropriate to meet academic standards and whether the facilities and the equipment are adequate for the core activities of the institution.

Current status

Financial resources

As a private university, USEK is completely responsible for the provision of resources to fulfil its mission. The total budget of the university in the academic year 2011/12 amounts to approximately \$47 Mio. The main source of income of the university is student tuitions and fees which amount to about 95% of the total net income. Student numbers have been growing constantly within the last years from about 7100 in the academic year 2009/2010 to nearly 7800 students in 2012. In the last years, the university was able to fund its operations while at the same time investing in the upgrading of its campus with plans to further enlarge it in the coming years.

The distribution of funds between the faculties is based on a solidarity principle. Each year, each faculty proposes its yearly budget which is usually based on the number of students within the last year. The Rector proposes the overall budget of the institution, which is discussed in the University Council and approved by the Board of the OLM.

Staff

The staff of the university consists of 205 full-time and approximately 650 part-time academic staff members and 285 administrative staff members. The teaching load of academics is between nine and 15 teaching hours per week; teaching staff has to be present for 30 to 35 hours per week, depending on the rank. USEK offers a range of staff development measures, both for its academic and administrative staff such as teaching development, on-line teaching, language trainings, teamwork and communication skills, etc. which are coordinated by the offices for academic and for administrative staff.

Search and tenure processes follow a defined procedure, but open positions at USEK are not advertised. The dean of the faculty where the open position is located defines the profile of the position. Then, the Rector nominates on proposal of the faculty an "ad hoc" selection committee with representatives of several faculties that evaluates and interviews the candidates. The selection criteria are based on the teaching and research competences of the candidate. Then, the Peer Committee evaluates the candidate and assigns a rank for the position. The procedure is formalised, yet not regulated in the bylaws of USEK. In order to become a full-time faculty member, a candidate is first employed as a part-time lecturer.

Facilities

The premises of USEK are well-maintained and are constantly being enlarged and upgraded. The university maintains modern laboratories equipped for teaching and applied research, a well-stocked library with growing electronic media and some special facilities such as the Dealing Room of the Business faculty which allows students to train stock-exchange dealing in a realistic environment. In addition, the university has modern IT technologies to support the teaching and research process (i.e. e-learning) and the campus management. The property and buildings of the main campus are owned by USEK.

Assessment

Financial resources

The university relies for its funding almost exclusively on its tuitions. Students pay an average of approximately \$6.000 per year in tuition fees with variations between the programmes. In the last years, this allowed the university to sustain its operations, to spend a significant amount on student financial aid while, at the same time, investing in its campus.

The faculties enjoy a certain budget autonomy which gives them some leeway in pursuing their projects. In general, the experts had the impression that desired projects do not fail for funding reasons. Although the experts assess the current funding of USEK as sustainable, they see the dependence of the university on student fees as a danger. Other income streams, such as third-party funding for research, fundraising or income from the valorisation of research are rather negligible at the moment.

The deployment of resources is according to the expert team consistent with the mission of a student-centred institution. USEK spends more than 40% of its resources on its staff, especially on its administrative staff to provide the student services, which account for one third of total staff costs, while staff training expenses account for about 4% of the budget. On the one hand, the university devotes 15% of the total tuition income to student financial aid and the funding of the regional centres. On the other hand, 1% of the budget is provided for research and, as discussed above, this is consistent with the profile and the main mission of the university. However, the budget presented to the expert team lacks details to clearly reflect the current strategic priorities of the university such as e-learning, quality of student services or support for specific faculties.

Staff

The staff of the university is, according to the expert team, appropriate to provide high quality education to its students and to develop research as 73% of the 205 full-time academics hold a Ph.D. The administrative staff is very professional. Altogether, the experts were impressed by the dynamic and motivated staff members, both academic and administrative, which are a big asset of USEK. The experts appreciate as well the extensive staff training opportunities the university provides.

The search and tenure procedures of the university seem to the expert team to fulfil by and large academic standards and ensure the selection of academics based on an academic decision. In order to ensure appropriate participation of academics in the selection process the expert team invites the university to formalise the search and tenure procedure. The procedure should also include advertising open positions at the university in order to ensure a variety of applications and to increase the probability to find candidates that fit the desired profile of the position.

Facilities

The facilities of the university are appropriate for sustaining the teaching and, in certain proportions, research activities of the university. USEK has modern equipment and a library that provides access to relevant literature and journals. The technical equipment which the experts saw during the site visit allow a high quality of teaching, especially research based teaching at the master level. This kind of equipment is also appropriate to carry out applied research projects and to deliver services to partners within Lebanese society. However, for many applications, more specialised equipment would be

required. The IT infrastructure of the university is up to date and equipped with modern and functional software which was also affirmed by different stakeholder groups during the site visit.

Overall assessment

Altogether, USEK disposes of enough resources to sustain its operation at the desired quality level. Funding is sustainable but strongly dependent on student tuitions. The budget distribution follows largely the mission and strategy of the university. USEK has very committed and dynamic staff. The search and tenure procedures comply – with the exception of the lack of advertising open positions – academic standards. USEK has a well maintained campus with modern facilities.

Recommendations

The experts recommend strengthening alternative income sources to provide a balance for potential drops in income from student tuitions. Therefore, the university should consider raising income from donations or funds, from cooperative research projects with societal partners and from the valorisation of research.

To generate new income streams, the university could further consider developing its continuing education. This could as well contribute to the enhancing its services to Lebanese society by offering new and diverse education offers.

If the university wished to upgrade its research capacities, the experts recommend deploying more resources to the research field. The resources should be used to providing researchers the time necessary to pursue their projects i.e. by funding sabbaticals, to provide the appropriate equipment necessary for research, and to provide funding to carry out research projects.

4. Overall assessment

USEK presented itself as a modern and dynamic university moving forward at great speed. The university has an exceptionally clear mission and vision that indeed influences the activities and the everyday life at the university. USEK's mission to provide high quality education and to serve Lebanese society is underlying all activities of the university and is implemented consistently. The dedication of the university to its mission and to the well-being of its students exceeds the usual commitment of a university. The experts were also impressed by the dynamism of the professors and administrative staff and their identification with the university and its mission.

Therefore, the expert team sees the mission of USEK and the way the university lives this mission as the greatest asset of the university. While having a clear focus on teaching and learning as its main activity, USEK provides a wide range of study programmes at high academic quality and adapts its programme offer constantly to the demands of Lebanese society. The professional student services which contribute to the productive study atmosphere and the high commitment of students to the university are exceptional. Although USEK is focussed on its regional and local community, it is open to new ideas and the international environment while at the same time preserving its traditions. The university and its employees develop their quality by using internal quality assurance processes and benchmarking activities with international partners.

As well as its strengths, the weaknesses of USEK are rooted in its mission. As its mission is mostly focused on teaching and learning and services to Lebanese society, research activities are not yet a large priority of USEK. As research funding of the university is low, as is research funding in general in Lebanon, the research output of USEK is rather modest. Similarly, international activities remain – despite a high number of cooperations and a good administrative support of exchanges – at a relatively low level.

In terms of governance, USEK is at the same time centralised and fragmented. On the one hand, the central level occupies a strong position in university governance. This, together with the lack of institutionalised representation of elected academic staff and students in the university bodies, may endanger academic freedom at USEK, which, however, has not been detected by the expert team in the current situation. On the other hand, the university is divided into a high number of relatively small academic units, which each offer a high number of study programmes. Due to this high fragmentation and the lack of cooperation and exchange platforms between the faculties, USEK does not fully use its potential for interdisciplinarity.

Therefore, the expert team recommends USEK to further expand and improve its research activities and provide its researchers with appropriate possibilities to pursue their research. Furthermore, the experts recommend establishing more formalised ways of participation for academic staff and students and to initiate and foster interdisciplinary thinking within the university.

Altogether, the expert team sees USEK on its way to good progress and encourages the university to pursue its planned development path.

Results of the assessment

Assessment grades

| No | Assessment criteria | Assessment |
|----|------------------------------------|------------|
| 1 | Institutional profile and strategy | 1 |
| 2 | Governance | 2 |
| 3 | Teaching and learning | 1 |
| 4 | Research | 3 |
| 5 | Services to society | 1 |
| 6 | Internationalisation | 3 |
| 7 | Quality assurance | 2 |
| 8 | Resources | 2 |

Assessment levels

| Level | Assessment | Description |
|-------|----------------|--|
| 1 | Advanced | The institution fulfils or exceeds all criteria. All activities are in line with the institutional profile and strategy and provided at high academic standards. |
| 2 | Well developed | The institution fulfils most criteria. Most of its activities are in line with the institutional profile and strategy and the core activities are provided at high academic standards. |
| 3 | Basic | The institution fulfils the most important criteria. Some activities are in line with the institutional profile and strategy and the core activities are provided at basic academic standards. |

For a successful accreditation, each criterion needs to be assessed at least as “basic”.

Accreditation recommendation

According to the expert team, Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik (USEK) meets **evalag**'s criteria for institutional accreditation. Therefore, the team recommends USEK for accreditation and recommends awarding the **evalag** label for institutional accreditation.

The team recommends USEK to consider and implement the recommendations in this report to further improve the university.

5. Decision of the evalag Foundation Board

The **evalag** Foundation Board accredited Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik and awarded the **evalag** label for institutional accreditation. The accreditation is valid from October 2012 until September 2017 and requires that the university publishes the assessment report and assures that the conditions for the compliance with the accreditation criteria are maintained during the validity period of the label.

To further improve the university, the Board affirms the recommendations given by the expert group.

Annex

Annex 1: Accreditation criteria

The accreditation criteria used by the **evalag** institutional accreditation are formulated on the basis of the criteria for institutional accreditation of the German Council of Science and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat).

1. Institutional profile and strategy

The university has a mission and vision that defines the institutional profile and strategy. It is consistent and complies with internationally accepted academic standards. The mission and vision has been adopted by academic bodies and is publicly available.

The institution has realistic strategies to reach its objectives.

The institution monitors the achievement of its objectives regularly with adequate tools for quality assurance.

The institution allocates adequate resources to its strategic planning and quality assurance processes.

If internationalisation is an objective of the institution, this is reflected in appropriate international activities and offers.

The institution aims at equal opportunities and implements appropriate policies.

2. Governance

Decision making competences and processes are clearly defined and incorporated in the statutes.

Organisation and management structures are adequate for the institution's objectives and assure freedom of research and teaching. This includes:

- Adequate participation of academics in academic decisions of the institution.
- The main responsibility for research and teaching lies with academics.
- Adequate relation between academics and the funding body of the institution.
- Transparent and science-based search and tenure procedures for academics which are documented in statutes.

3. Teaching and learning

Study programmes comply with national regulations and fit in institutional strategy.

Study programmes are of adequate academic standard and adequate workload.

The institution provides an adequate staff/student ratio.

The institution provides professional student services.

If distant education, e-learning and part-time programmes are offers of the institution, they benefit of the same academic standards and study resources as regular study programmes.

4. Research

The institution provides structures and general conditions that support research activities adequately:

- Teaching assignment of academics need to allow enough room for research.
- Recruitment of academics should correspond to research activities of the institution. The researchers should participate in the formulation of the institutional research strategies.

Research activities and necessary general conditions meet in quantitative and qualitative terms nationally and internationally accepted standards in the disciplines concerned and fit the research profile and strategy of the institution.

Criteria and indicators for the productivity and impact of scientific research are – with differences on the basis of the discipline: publications, citations, PhD dissertations, third-party funds, research cooperations, visiting researchers, patents, presentations on scientific conferences, organisation of scientific conferences, activities as peer reviewers, offers of a professorship, research prizes, research grants, activities in scientific associations, editing scientific journals.

Institutions which educate young researchers provide adequate instruments to support doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers.

5. Services to society

If serving as social actor and providing services to the national and regional society are objectives of the institution, then:

- The institution has cooperations with different types of partners such as higher education institutions, research institutes, professional associations or other organisations nationally and internationally.
- The institution cooperates with relevant professional, economic and social actors.
- The institution supports entrepreneurship of their students and researchers and offers an appropriate support structure.
- The institution supports technology transfer and offers an appropriate support structure.
- The institution analyses the educational and scientific needs of its region and develops appropriate offers (e.g. study programmes, continuing education, research programmes).

6. Internationalisation

If internationalisation is an objective of the institution, then it has a strategy for internationalisation with corresponding activities.

The internationalisation strategy includes:

- Incoming and outgoing students.
- International dimension in study programmes.
- Incoming and outgoing researchers and teachers.
- International recruiting of researchers and teachers.
- Research projects and cooperations.
- Support structure for international students and staff.

7. Quality assurance

The institution maintains adequate internal and external quality assurance procedures, especially for teaching and learning as well as research and administration.

The procedures are used for continuous monitoring and enhancement of internal processes and verification of the achievement of the institutional objectives.

The institution has adequate mechanisms that assure that results of quality assurance instruments and procedures are used for enhancement.

8. Resources

Financial resources

The institution has a solid student development. Planning of future student numbers is plausible and takes into account general market conditions as well as the position of the institution among its competitors.

The institution has a solid development and plausible planning of expected third-party funds and income from sponsors in case these funds are necessary for the financing of the institution.

The institution plans its financial resources in research as well as in teaching and learning sustainably.

The financial management of the institution is professional.

The institution has solid results and liquidity.

The financial model of the institution is adequate and sustainable.

The institution has a conservative financial planning and takes into account possible fluctuations in earnings and expenditures.

The origin of income and its conditions are transparent and do not restrict the institution in fulfilling its tasks.

Human resources

The institution maintains adequate human resources. Qualifications, amount and performance of the academic personnel correspond to the institutional profile and strategic plan.

The majority of the teaching staff is full-time staff of the institution.

Search and tenure follows clearly defined procedures. The selection criteria for scientific personnel are clearly defined.

Staffing and distribution of tasks is transparent and comprehensible. Part-time lecturers are adequately integrated in the organisation of teaching and learning as well as the quality assurance procedures.

Facilities and equipment

The institution has adequate infrastructure and equipment to achieve its goals regarding its mission and strategic plan.

The equipment and media are state of the art.

The institution has access to quantitative and qualitative adequate information and literature.

In case the institution uses external resources (e.g. seminar rooms, information technology, library) access needs to be assured on a contractual basis.

Assessment levels

Very well developed

The institution fulfils or exceeds all criteria. All activities are in line with the institutional profile and strategy and provided at high academic standards.

Well developed

The institution fulfils most criteria. Most of its activities are in line with the institutional profile and strategy and provided at high academic standards.

Basic

The institution fulfils not all but the most important criteria. Its activities are not always in line with the institutional profile and strategy, but the core activities are performed at basic academic standards.

For a successful accreditation, each criterion needs to be assessed at least as “basic”.

Annex 2: Requirements for experts

The expert panel will consist of four members who are unbiased. The majority of the panel members will have substantial expertise in the management of higher education institutions. Experience with international higher education systems is also a necessary requirement. Three experts will be from higher education institutions with leadership experience. One student will also be member of the panel. Upon request of the university the size of the expert panel may be increased.

In order to make unbiased assessments, peer reviewers need to be, and need to be seen to be, free from conflicts of interest. This requires all professional and private relations with the evaluated institution to be disclosed in order to remove any doubts about the reviewer's assessment of the institution. Possible conflicts of interest are:

- employment as professor, teacher, researcher or guest scholar at USEK within the last five years;
- doctoral or post doctoral studies at USEK within the last five years;
- family ties, personal connections or conflicts with staff members at USEK;
- current common research or other intensive contacts with USEK;
- direct academic competition with reviewers own projects;
- student/teacher relationship with staff members at USEK, dating back less than five years;
- professional dependency, within the last three years;
- participation in mutual review procedures within the last five years²;
- current application procedures or appointment negotiations with USEK;
- membership in commissions, councils or boards of USEK;
- individual or common economic interests.

² Participation in mutual review procedures does not necessarily lead to a conflict of interest. This needs to be checked on a case to case basis.

Annex 3: Site visit schedule

| Sunday, 10 th June | |
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| Arrival of expert team at Beirut Airport | |
| Monday, 11 June | |
| 9.00 – 10.30 | Internal meeting of expert team |
| 10.45 – 12.15 | Meeting with rectorate |
| 12.30 – 13.30 | Meeting with self-evaluation team |
| 13.30 – 14.30 | Lunch |
| 14.30 – 15.30 | Meeting with University Council |
| 15.45 – 16.45 | Meeting with administration |
| 17:00 – 18:15 | Visit of facilities: dealing room, internet lab, library |
| 18.15 – 19.00 | Internal meeting of expert team |
| Tuesday, 12 th June | |
| 9.00 – 10.00 | Meeting with deans |
| 10.15 – 11.15 | Meeting with students |
| 11.30 – 12.30 | Meeting with professors |
| 12.30 – 13.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 – 14.15 | Visit of facilities: chemistry labs |
| 14.15 – 15.15 | Focus meeting Internationalisation |
| 15.30 – 17.00 | Focus meeting Teaching and Learning / Quality assurance |
| 17.15 – 18.15 | Focus meeting external stakeholders / Services to Society |
| 18.15 – 19.00 | Internal meeting of expert team |
| Wednesday, 13 th June | |
| 9.00 – 10.30 | Meeting with Faculties |
| 10.45 – 11.45 | Focus meeting Research |
| 12.00 – 12.30 | Focus meeting Resources / Quality Assurance |
| 12.30 – 14.30 | Lunch with rector |
| 14.30 – 16.00 | Meeting with Faculties |
| 16.15 – 17.15 | Meeting with OLM Board |
| 17.15 – 18.30 | Internal meeting of expert team |

Thursday, 14th June

9.00 – 12.00 Internal meeting of expert team

12.00 – 12.30 Feedback meeting for rectorate

12.30 – 14.30 Lunch

Departure

Annex 4: Questionnaire for self-evaluation report

1. Institutional profile and strategy

The university describes its profile, its objectives and strategy to reach these objectives. The university explains, how objectives and strategy are internally defined, and explains the role of the central university and the faculties in this process. The university demonstrates that the defined objectives and the strategy are realistic and feasible for the institution in its specific national and regional environment.

What is the institutional profile of the university? How does this profile differentiate the university from other universities in the region? How does the profile fit to the national and regional context of the university?

Which objectives does the university intend to achieve? How do they relate to the institutional profile? Which are the objectives in the areas of teaching and learning, research, institutional governance, internationalisation, services to society, equal opportunity and diversity? What are the target groups for the services of the university?

On which levels are objectives defined, on the institutional, on the faculty level?

What is the process to define objectives on the institutional and the faculty level?

What is the strategy of the university to reach the objectives? Does this strategy relate to the institutional profile and mission?

How does the university assure that the strategy is realistic and that it is able to implement it? How does the university assure that its strategy takes into account socially and politically desired objectives?

How does the university evaluate the success of its strategy and the achievement of its objectives?

How are strategies defined on the institutional and on the faculty level?

How does the university deal with potential conflicts in objectives or strategies between institutional and faculty level?

What was the development of the university within the last years? What are the present priorities, what are the development plans for the future?

How does the university assure equal opportunities and diversity?

2. Governance

The university describes its internal governance structures and explains how decisions are taken and executed. It explains how the different stakeholder groups are integrated into the decision making process.

What is the legal status of the university? Which rights and duties does this status involve? How independently acts the university regarding its funding body? Is there equilibrium between the interests of the funding body and the academic freedom of the university? How is this organised?

What are the decision-making structures and bodies of the university and its faculties? How are decision-making powers and competences divided between different levels (institutional level, faculty level, individual professor)? Which opportunities for participation have professors, scientists, employees and students?

How are funds distributed within the institution (performance-based, encumbrance-based)? Does the distribution of funds provide governance incentives?

How is the interconnection between the different university functions (teaching and learning, research, services to society) organised?

How are search and tenure procedures organised? How are they aligned with the university strategy?

3. Teaching and learning

The university describes how it organises the teaching and learning process, starting from the introduction of new study programmes and the definition of learning outcomes to the process how it assures that the learning outcomes are achieved.

Does the university or the individual faculties have a common concept for teaching and learning? How was this developed?

How do the study programmes reflect the profile of the university and its strategy?

How are new study programmes developed? Who takes decisions about the introduction of new study programmes?

What are the general learning objectives of the study programmes? How are they defined and adapted? How are they reflected in the study programmes?

Which general skills and competences are the students expected to acquire? How is this assured? How are they reflected in the study programmes?

How does the university assure that the content of the study programmes meets the current academic standards?

What are the relevant national standards and regulations for study programmes? How does the university assure that study programmes adhere to national regulations?

How does the university define and implement an adequate balance between theory and praxis in its study programmes?

How does the university organise the student life cycle?

- Definition of desired student profile
- Information of future students
- Admission procedures and selection of students
- Organisation of the study process
- Learning and teaching methods
- Student workload
- (Competence based) assessment procedures
- Drop-out

- Student support services
- Transition from first to second degree
- Transition to work life

What is the national and social composition of the student body? Are there differences between study programmes? Are there changes within time?

What is the development of student numbers? How are the student numbers expected to develop in the future? Why? Are there differences between study programmes? How does the university react to these developments?

Which new study programmes did the university develop within the last years? Why were these programmes chosen?

On the basis of what kind of information does the university plan the demand for its study programmes?

Which are the competitors of the university? How does the university differentiate its offer from those of its competitors?

What are the tuition fees of the university? How does it differ from the fees of its competitors?

How does the university evaluate the competitiveness of the education market in its region / country?

What offers does the university have in the field of continuing education? How are these offers connected to its main education offers and its research?

4. Research

The university describes its research strategy and how the research is organised and supported.

How are the research activities of the university integrated into the organisational structure?

What are the current research topics of the university? How are these research topics connected with the profile and the strategy of the university?

How does the university develop and adjust its research concept? How does the university involve the academics into this process?

How does the university intend to further develop its research activities?

What is the research output of the university? Which criteria does the university use to evaluate the research output? What are the external criteria of the research output? How is the research output evaluated externally? How did the research output develop within the last years?

How does the staff recruiting strategy and procedures fit into the research profile and strategy of the university?

How are the researchers integrated in their respective national and international scientific communities?

How is research integrated into study programmes? How are study programmes (especially Master level) integrated into research?

With which concepts and instruments does the university support the qualification of young researchers?

What kind of research cooperations does the university maintain with other higher education institutions, research institutes, companies, and other organisations? Is the university part of national and international research associations?

Which internal instruments and incentives do exist in order to support research?

What is the annual budget for research? From which sources does the university obtain these funds?

What kind of third party funding does the university acquire? How did the amount develop within the recent years?

5. Resources

The university demonstrates that it is able to achieve its objectives with appropriate financial resources, personnel, facilities and equipment.

Financial resources

What are the main funding sources of the university? How sustainable are these sources?

What is the development of earnings and expenses in the last years? Are there any exceptional occurrences? How are the earnings and expenses expected to develop?

How are financial decisions made at the university?

How is financial controlling organised? With which personal resources? Are the annual accounts checked by a financial auditor?

Who owns the facilities the university is using?

Which investments does the university plan?

Personal resources

What different types and numbers of personnel for teaching, research and administration does the university have? How are the different functions of teaching, research, administration and other tasks distributed in terms of the personnel?

What are the recruiting procedures for academic staff? How do they take into account the research profile and teaching qualifications? Which academic requirements are considered for academic staff?

What is the ratio between permanent and temporary staff?

How does the university assure the academic qualifications of temporary staff?

What percentage of the teaching load is done by permanent academic staff?

What is the student-staff ratio? How did it develop within the last years?

Facilities and equipment

Which facilities does the university dispose of? How do these facilities develop?

What library and media equipment does the university dispose of? How are these organised in terms of stocks of books, journals, online journals and media, availability, lending, working space for students, technical equipment, personnel, cooperations with other libraries? What are the plans to develop the library/media?

Which labs and equipment does the university dispose of?

6. Quality assurance

The university demonstrates that it systematically and regularly evaluates the success of its activities and draws appropriate consequences for its enhancement.

What is the quality concept of the university? What are the quality goals of the university and how are they linked to the institutional profile and strategy?

Which functional areas (teaching and learning, research, services to society, administration) are covered by the internal quality assurance system?

Which instruments and processes does the university use in quality assurance? How are they interlinked?

How are these instruments and the information gathered used for the governance of the university?

How does the university assure that quality feedback loops are closed and results of quality assurance are used for enhancement?

What are the responsibilities of institutional leadership, teachers, researchers, students, administrative staff and external stakeholders in internal quality assurance?

Does the university use regular and systematic evaluations of its study programmes and research programmes? Does the university acquire regular and systematic feedback from its students and graduates regarding the quality of the teaching and learning process, the study programmes and the success in the job market?

What are the consequences the university draws from the results of its quality assurance instruments?

7. Internationalisation

The university explains, how it connects to the international academic community and uses these connections to enhance its own activities.

What is the internationalisation strategy of the university? How is it linked to the institutional profile and strategy?

What is the internationalisation rate among students? Are there differences between faculties? How did it develop within the last years? How is it expected to develop in the future? What measures does the university take for its development?

What is the number of incoming and outgoing students? What is the status of these students (exchange, regular students)? Which services does the university offer to incoming and outgoing students?

How does the university implement an international dimension in its study programmes? Is this done systematically or mainly due to individual initiatives?

What is the internationalisation rate among academic staff? How did it develop within the last years? How is it expected to develop in the future? Does the university actively recruit international academic staff? What measures does the university take for its development?

What is the number of incoming and outgoing academic staff? Which services does the university offer to incoming and outgoing academic staff?

What kind of cooperations does the university maintain with foreign universities, research institutions, etc.? Are these cooperations institutionalised or mainly maintained by the engagement of individuals? How does the university plan to maintain and strengthen international cooperations?

8. Services to society

The university explains how it connects to its national and regional environment and how it contributes to the regional cultural, economic and social development.

What is the strategy of the university with regards to services to society? How does the strategy fit into the institutional profile and strategy?

What cooperations does the university have with societal actors? How are these cooperations connected with other university activities?

What is the amount of technology transfer from the university? How does the university support technology transfer and entrepreneurship of its students and academics? Is it successful? How is success determined?

With which services does the university react to the societal needs of the region?

9. Self-assessment of the university

The university assesses its strengths and weaknesses.

Where does the university see its main strengths? Why?

How does the university plan to build on its strengths?

Where does the university see its weaknesses? Why?

How does the university plan to improve its weak points?

Annex 5: Profiles of expert group members

Prof. Dr. Annie Cheminat



1977 Ph.D. in Chemistry at Louis Pasteur Université de Strasbourg. Here also Professor for Chemistry as well as Vice Rector for Teaching and Learning from 1992 to 1999 and Vice Rector for Quality and Evaluation since 2009. Between 1999 and 2002 Rector (chief education officer) of the Academy Pays de la Loire in Nantes. From 2003 to 2011 Manager of the Observatoire Régional de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de l'Insertion Professionnelle des Etudiants (ORESIPÉ) in Strasbourg. Awarded the French distinctions Commander of the Order of Academic Palms, Officer of the National Order of Merit and Officer of the Legion of Honour. Multiple functions in evaluation procedures for AERES (Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur) in 2010 and 2011: president or expert of different evaluation panels and committees; in 2008 Member of the evaluation panel for the Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth.

Veronika Kölle



Student of Business Consulting (M.A.) and Lecturer for the B.A. study programme Services Management at the University of Applied Sciences Harz. 2010 B.A. in Media Management and B.Eng. in Media Technology at the University of Applied Sciences Mittweida as well as Exchange Student in Music and Media Management at JAMK in Jyväskylä, Finland. Experiences in the field of quality assurance by participating in the reaccreditation of the study programme Media Management/Media Technology at Hochschule Mittweida and as Student Expert at the Quality Audits University of Applied Sciences Offenburg and Nürtingen-Geislingen University as well as at two cluster accreditations at Vilnius College of Technologies and Design (VTDK) in Lithuania.

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dieter Leonhard



1986 Dipl.-Ing., 1991 Dr.-Ing. in Civil Engineering at the University of Karlsruhe. At the University of Applied Sciences in Frankfurt am Main from 1995 to 2011 Professor of Sanitary Engineering and Hydraulics and from 2001 to 2004 founding Dean and later Dean of Academic Affairs of the Department "Architecture. Civil Engineering. Surveying". At the Franco-German University in Saarbrücken Vice President between 2004 and 2005 and President from 2006 to 2008; in this period, from 2005 to 2008, also expert for French and German quality assurance structures. Since 2008 President of Mannheim University of Applied Sciences as well as Professor of Environmental Engineering at this university since 2011. For many years Guest lecturer at the International Institute

for Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering in Delft, Netherlands as well as in France and Spain (Institut Supérieur d'Aquitaine des Bâtiments et Travaux Public in Anglet and Universidad Politécnica in Madrid). The appointment to Knight of the French Legion of Honour followed in 2010. In 2012 Board member of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) as well as of the University Council at the Franco-German University in Saarbrücken. Chairman of the North-Baden Palatine local chapter of the Association of German Engineers (VDI) in 2010 and of the University Federation SouthWest in 2012. Member of the German EU-Bologna Expert Group between 2004 and 2009.

Prof. Dr. Birgit Schäbler



1987 M.A. in History, Islamic Studies and Political Science, 1994 Ph.D. in History at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. In 1997 Visiting Professor at Duke University. From 1997 to 1999 Visiting Scholar at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES), Harvard University. Assistant Professor at Georgia College State University between 1999 and 2001. Since 2002 Professor of History, Chair of History of West Asia, University of Erfurt. Past President of the Committee for Non-Western History and the Syrian Studies Association as well as past Chairperson of the Advisory Boards of the Orient Institute

Beirut/Istanbul and the Center for Oriental Studies, University of Halle. Member of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) and the American Historical Association (AHA) as well as Board member of the Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft Vorderer Orient (DAVO). 2011 expert for M.A. study programme accreditations at Philipps-Universität Marburg (ACQUIN).