



Report with findings of the Peer Review Meeting (WP4.3)

The peer review meeting took place on **19.08.2020** from **11 am to 1 pm (CEST) / 12 noon to 2 pm (AST)**.

Reviewed Institution		
<i>KRG Partners</i>	<i>tick as appropriate (✓)</i>	<i>Represented in person of</i>
KISSR		
UOS		
SPU		
UOR		
UOH		
CHU	✓	Dr. Salah Saeed Dr. Pshtiwan Faraj Dr. Omed Amin Mrs. Kanar Salar Dr. Lajan Othman Dr. Kazi Saleh Shagul Ibrahim Sabir Lavin Salar Omer
DPU		
EPU		
SU		

Peer Reviewers		
<i>EU Partners</i>	<i>tick as appropriate (✓)</i>	<i>Represented in person of</i>
UGOE	✓	Dr. Uwe Muuss, Jakob Hedderich
KUL	✓	Jef Schrooten
MU		Violeta Osouchová
RUG	✓	Maaïke Wagenaar

I. General institutional setup for the internationalisation of the Higher Education Institution (HEI)		<i>tick as appropriate (✓)</i>		
#	Item	Assessment		
		Yes	In part	No
1	An institutional setup conducive to the internationalisation of the university and implementation of the international strategy has been achieved.	✓		
2	The International Relations Office has been set up properly within the institutional framework of the HEI with reporting lines established.	✓		
3	Apart from the International Relations Office, other structural units of the university important for internationalisation have been identified and are included in the internationalisation process.	✓		
4	An appropriate (inclusive) process for the continued development of the international strategy and related policies is in place.	✓		
5	Monitoring of the internationalisation process and implementation of the international strategy is established.		✓	
6	Institutional arrangements for collaboration with the colleges (faculties) on internationalisation are in place.		✓	
7	A framework for the recognition of studies abroad is in place.		✓	
8	An institutional process for implementing Bologna Process reform elements (e.g. student-centred learning, ECTS, learning outcomes etc.) has been initiated.	✓		
Written assessment / Comments:				
<p><i>Generally, European partners found that an institutional setup conducive to the internationalisation of the university and implementation of the international strategy has been achieved with the International Relations Office properly set up and other structural units important for internationalisation identified and involved in the process.</i></p> <p><i>During their reporting, partners from CHU elaborated on the process of strategy development in place at CHU and showed its inclusive nature including major institutional stakeholders. However, European partners found that for the future the element of student participation should be strengthened. The idea to include external evaluation and advice for future development is generally supported by European partners.</i></p> <p><i>In regard to monitoring, CHU reported to be still in the process of setting up a comprehensive monitoring mechanism of internationalisation and the implementation of the strategy developed. However, partners showed to be aware of the issue and could outline basic monitoring and evaluation procedures in place, including the Directorate for Quality Assurance besides others. Nevertheless, setting up institutional monitoring is a <i>conditio sine qua non</i> for any future development at CHU and needs to be addressed. Reporting to the University Council as the university's main deliberation and decision making body should be considered by KRG partners.</i></p> <p><i>European partners found procedures for collaboration with the colleges are established employing mostly the deans and their offices or the heads of department. Although clearly working in practice and appropriate for the current level of internationalisation, European partners perceived the cooperation arrangements in place to be more informal, ad hoc and less procedure-based. For the future with increased level of internationalisation and complexity, formal and routine-based procedures will be required. However, KRG partners seemed aware of this fact. The stated idea to create dedicated personnel at the colleges responsible for internationalisation is a right step to address this matter and therefore is supported by European partners.</i></p>				

	<p><i>In the meeting, KRG partners confirmed recognition of studies abroad to be established at CHU both for recognition of degrees and for periods of study, which reportedly were developed with and greatly facilitated by the implementation of the Bologna Process and the switch to a semester- and ECTS-based system. During the meeting, KRG partners also elaborated on the need of reinforcing reforms for recognition on the systemic (national) level and related issues caused by the federally organised system of Iraq. The identified need for a National Qualifications Framework is seconded by European partners. However, during the meeting European partners were not able to verify the details of the institutional procedures in place with some open questions remaining. Therefore, European partners would once again like to highlight the importance of the recognition, especially in regard to periods of study, and encourage KRG partners to make sure that formal procedures are properly set up rendering recognition a standard at CHU.</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, EU partners found an institutional process for the implementation of Bologna Process has been started with implementation reportedly going on for the last three years. From the project, European partners are aware of the important role CHU has played in the Kurdistan Region as one of the pioneers in implementing the Bologna Process and ECTS. European partners encourage CHU to proceed with the reform process and ensuring a sound implementation throughout the university.</i></p>
	<p>Recommendations:</p>
	<p><i>Students are both main target group and stakeholder in internationalisation. Therefore, enhancing student participation and consultation in future developments should be considered by CHU.</i></p> <p><i>In order to control and assess the implementation of the international strategy and internationalisation as a whole, CHU will be required to set up institutional monitoring as well as formal and regular reporting procedures. Reporting should not only be addressed to the institutional leadership but all stakeholders. Employing the University Council in the regard seems an advisable first step.</i></p> <p><i>Although recognition of studies taken abroad is reportedly established, EU partners encourage CHU to check once again if formal procedures and standards for recognition are in place and properly implemented. As part of this, CHU is invited revisit the respective training conducted during the workshop held in March 2020 at the University of Göttingen.</i></p> <p><i>Although currently working, for the future CHU should reinforce and formalise its collaboration arrangement with the colleges. Having personnel responsible for internationalisation in place at the colleges could greatly facilitate this.</i></p> <p><i>For the long term, European partners encourage CHU together with other KRG HEI partners, e.g. through the newly established Network of Kurdish Internationalisation Practitioners, to launch an initiative lobbying for national action to develop a National Qualifications Framework.</i></p>

II. The organisation of and resources available at your International Relations Office		<i>tick as appropriate (✓)</i>		
#	Item	Assessment		
		Yes	In part	No
1	The organisational structure of the International Relations Office is appropriate/functional and clear responsibilities are established.	✓		
2	Appropriate personnel resources are available at the International Relations Office.	✓		
3	Staff with English language proficiency is available at the International Relations Office.	✓		
4	Based on photo evidence, the International Relations Office and its premises are found to be suitable for the purpose and sufficiently equipped.	✓		
5	Equipment purchased with funds of the Erasmus+ TIGRIS Project is installed properly and marked according to Erasmus+ requirements.	✓		
Written assessment / Comments:				
<p><i>Generally, European partners find the IRO and its premises to be suitable for their purpose and equipped with equipment purchased with TIGRIS funds. The equipment is also found to be marked accordingly. Partners from UGOE and MU could also verify this in situ during their visit in February 2019.</i></p> <p><i>Staff with English language proficiency is found to be available at the IRO. However, European partners see potential for improvement of English proficiency levels, which could be achieved by training courses for existing staff and setting respective language requirements for any new staff to be recruited.</i></p> <p><i>Generally, appropriate personnel resources are found to be available at the IRO for the current level of internationalisation amounting to 4,5 FTEs with all staff being permanent employees. However, with one staff member currently on leave personnel capacities are temporarily reduced. Here, KRG partners need to ensure that sufficient staff is available at the IRO and is requested to not let the number of staff decrease further. For the future and for increased level of internationalisation, CHU should be ready to allocate more staff to the IRO in order to accommodate for the increased complexity and workload.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of organisational structure, CHU portrayed a flat hierarchy in place at the IRO emphasizing team work in conducting its daily business. Due to size, the IRO does not delimitate dedicated units but functional differential is in place with clear responsibilities established. Being appropriate for the current office size and level of internationalisation, in the future CHU will be required to review and revise its organisational structure.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<p><i>Retaining sufficient personnel resources at the IRO is a clear requirement at CHU. CHU should also be ready to allocate more resources in order to accommodation for increased workload and complexity of tasks that go along with higher levels of internationalisation.</i></p> <p><i>European partners encourage CHU to invest in continuous staff development and as part of this also enhancing the language proficiency levels of IRO staff. For newly recruited staff, language requirements should be set.</i></p>				

III. The scope and mode of operation of the International Relations Office		tick as appropriate (✓)		
#	Item	Assessment		
		Yes	In part	No
1	Core services and tasks ¹ of an International Relations Office are offered/performed by the local International Relation Office.	✓		
2	Core services and tasks not offered/performed by the local International Relations Office are offered/performed by another unit of the university (<i>only if applicable</i>).	✓		
3	The mode of operation of the International Relation Office as portrayed in the meeting is found to be appropriate for the related task(s).	✓		
Written assessment / Comments:				
<p><i>European partners found core services and tasks offered by the IRO or in collaboration with other units of CHU.</i></p> <p><i>During the meeting, especially the management of mobility, MoUs as well as services for grant applications & project support (consultation, funding advice, proposal writing) were portrayed in more detail and generally were found appropriate for the current stage of internationalisation.</i></p> <p><i>As part of their reporting, KRG partners portrayed the selection and nomination procedures in place. Here, European partners would like to note that although a more guided selection/nomination process has its place, especially if conforming to special requirements by the funding organisation or when building up new relations with partners, in the future CHU should strive for a process build around openness, transparency and competitiveness.</i></p> <p><i>As part of post-preparation for students and staff returning from abroad, CHU should consider refining its procedures to include evaluation of services provided by the IRO as well as to collect returnees' experience thereby making this valuable source of information available for consultation services.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<p><i>Although a more guided selection process has its place, this should not be the norm. In the future, CHU should ensure an open, transparent and competitive selection process for engaging in international activities.</i></p> <p><i>Refine post-preparation procedures to evaluate and improve services provided and to render accessible valuable information and experience from returning students and staff.</i></p>				

¹ For this purpose, core services & tasks are defined as (1) coordination and management of **international relations** (with foreign university, networks, partnerships, etc.), (2) coordination and management of **international mobility** of students and staff, (3) conducting **intl. marketing/promotion** incl. recruitment of intl. students and staff, (4) offering **project support** (consultation incl. funding advice), (5) offering **support for incoming students and staff**.

IV. Experience of students and staff with internationalisation at the university and services offered by the International Relations Office		<i>tick as appropriate (✓)</i>		
#	Item	Assessment		
		Yes	In part	No
1	Students report to be well informed on internationalisation activities and opportunities offered by the university.	✓		
2	Students report on having received appropriate support before, during and after their international experience.	✓		
3	Students report to be satisfied with support received.	✓		
4	Students report that their studies abroad have been recognised by the home institution (<i>only if applicable</i>).	Not applicable		
5	Staff members report to be well informed on internationalisation activities and opportunities offered by the university.	✓		
6	Staff members report on having received appropriate support before, during and after their international experience.	✓		
7	Staff members report to be satisfied with support received.	✓		
Written assessment / Comments:				
<p><i>Both students and staff interviewed considered themselves to be well informed on international activities at their HEI as well as opportunities to engage in them (webpage, IRO, official notifications). Both students and staff show to be very well aware of internationalisation and its benefits clearly expressing its desire for increased opportunities. Both students and staff report to have received comprehensive support and are satisfied with the service received from the IRO and its staff. However, despite being satisfied staff members see that the IRO could benefit from more, yet better trained and internationally experienced personnel further improving the services offered.</i></p> <p><i>Students reported on engaging in IaH activities upon their return, sharing their experience with other student as well as motivating peers to engage in similar activities. However, the selection process and nomination process both students reported on - best be described as "on short notice" or "ad hoc". This reinforces the previously identified need to review the selection and nomination process at CHU which in the future should give way to a more streamlined process build around openness, transparency and competitiveness.</i></p> <p><i>Recognition of studies abroad (item 4) was not applicable in this case, since in mobility, in which the two students participated, no credits were awarded.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<p><i>With the demand for internationalisation clearly visible, CHU should now invest in building partnerships and joining networks that allow for more opportunities to engage in international activities and provide equal opportunity to participate in these.</i></p> <p><i>European partners encourage CHU to invest in continuous staff development at its IRO, for which some resources are available international, e.g. via participation of IRO staff in international staff weeks. Such participation should be coupled with proper post-exploitation sharing information and knowledge gained with other staff members allowing for institutional learning.</i></p>				



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