



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

The peer review meeting took place on **17.08.2020** from **1 pm to 3 pm (CEST) / 2 pm to 4 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		
DPU		
EPU	✓	Asst. Prof. Dr. Kawa Abdulkareem Rasoul Dr. Nageb Toma Rassam Asst. Prof. Dr. Ranj Sirwan Abdullah Dr. Selar Othman Ali Dr. Abdullah Omar Yassen Asst. Prof. Dr. Ahmed Muhammed Adham MSc. Mr. Ali Abdullah Salih Mrs. Hala Nihad Mr. Ramyar Ali Abdalla
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 the reporting, KRG partners could demonstrate the inclusive process in place for continued development of the international strategy and related policies involving relevant stakeholders. Partners reported to have consulted with student representatives during the development of the international strategy. European partners encourage EPU to strengthen this participatory element in the future.</i></p> <p><i>During the meeting, partners from EPU elaborated on the monitoring in place which are found to be solid and having the IRO reporting to both university leadership and University Council as the university's main deliberation and decision making body.</i></p> <p><i>Arrangements for collaboration with the colleges are found to be in place, mostly employing the deans and dean's offices or head of departments. Currently, no dedicated staff for internationalisation is available at the college level. However, partners report on plans to allocate dedicated staff in the future, which is encouraged by European partners.</i></p> <p><i>In regard to recognition of studies abroad, KRG partners reported that due to incompatibility of the previous annual teaching system with the semester-based system and the lack of ECTS recognition of studies for students returning from a stay abroad was not possible or practiced at EPU. However, the switch to a semester-based system and introduction of ECTS now render recognition of studies taken abroad possible. During the meeting, however, EU partners were not able to verify the recognition procedures in place in greater detail resulting in some open questions remaining. Therefore, European partners would once again like to highlight the importance of recognition of studies, in this case especially in regard to periods of study, and encourage KRG partners to make sure that formal procedures are properly set up and implemented rendering recognition a standard at EPU.</i></p>				

	<p><i>An institutional process for the implementation of Bologna Process has been started with relevant committees established at the institutional, college and departmental level and ECTS currently being implemented in the first year of study. Here, KRG partners were able to portray the reform process in more detail highlighting capacity building activities involving international experts and partner institutions. However, EU partners recognise the yet early implementation stage, which is in line with other KRG HEIs and the Kurdistan Region as a whole.</i></p>
	<p>Recommendations:</p>
	<p><i>Despite not an immediately necessity, appointing staff responsible for internationalisation at the college level might yet increase EPU's capacity to engage in and implement internationalisation throughout the university, hence such step is generally supported by European partners.</i></p> <p><i>European partners encourage EPU to strengthen the participatory element and inclusion of students in matters of internationalisation, since they represent both the main target group and stakeholders.</i></p> <p><i>Although recognition of studies taken abroad is reportedly established, EU partners encourage EPU to check once again if formal procedures and standards for recognition are in place and properly implemented throughout the university. As part of this, EPU is invited to revisit the respective training conducted during the workshop held in March 2020 at the University of Göttingen.</i></p> <p><i>Continue with the implementation of the Bologna process and related reforms thereby ensuring a proper implementation throughout the university, its colleges and departments. European partners encourage EPU to continue with the involvement of international experts.</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>The organisational structure of the International Relations Office is found to be appropriate, functional as well as easily accessible also for third parties with a high degree of functional differentiation clearly visible.</i></p> <p><i>In regard to the organisational chart, however, European partners would like to point out that for international partners the designation of the unit "Cultural Relations" (which as informed earlier stems from a direct translation) can be misleading. In the eyes of European partners, the term "International Relations" would be more fitting in this context.</i></p> <p><i>As presented via the photo evidence, European partners find the IRO and its premises to be suitable for their purpose and well equipped with equipment purchased with TIGRIS funds marked accordingly. Partners from UGOE could also verify this in situ during their visit in February 2019.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of staff, appropriate personnel resources are available at the IRO with staff proficient in English being readily available.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<p><i>European partners would encourage EPU to consider renaming the unit "Cultural Relations" in order to make the structure more relatable and accessible for third parties, especially potential international partners.</i></p>				

III. The scope and mode of operation of the International Relations Office		<i>tick as appropriate (✓)</i>		
#	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>Core services and tasks were found to be offered/performed by the International Relations Office. Especially the management of mobility, services provided for incoming researchers as well as projects and fundraising were portrayed in more detail and generally were found appropriate.</i></p> <p><i>In line with other KRG HEIs, European partners found that international marketing is currently not a priority at EPU. In the future, however, EPU should consider increasing its efforts by engaging in both physical and virtual marketing. Despite that, European partners found promotion in English language targeting an international audience to be conducted e.g. via the university webpage and related social media channels in collaboration with a dedicated Media Department of the university.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<p><i>Although neither a priority nor mandatory requirement at the current stage of development, for the future EPU should consider how to develop capacities for engaging in international marketing exploring both physical and virtual means.</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>).	✓		
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 reported to be well informed on internationalisation activities and opportunities to engage in them, mainly pointing out the university website, the IRO, and official notifications as source of information.</i></p> <p><i>Both students and staff report to have received comprehensive support and are satisfied with the service received from the IRO and its staff. Especially staff members highlighted the great progress made in the past three years describing the project results in regard to the IRO and internationalisation at EPU as “a quantum leap” and “incomparable to the past”.</i></p> <p><i>European partners were happy to find that students at EPU share their experience made abroad with peers upon their return in an IaH format.</i></p> <p><i>Both students and staff show to be clearly aware of internationalisation and its benefits and voice their clear desire for more opportunities to participate in (e.g. such as mobility, exchange, joint education) - a need EPU is now tasked to address. In developing such opportunities, European partners are delighted to see the cooperative approach implemented at EPU with the IRO developing mobility and exchange programmes together with the colleges and departments.</i></p> <p><i>Recognition of studies abroad (item 4) was not applicable in one case, since as part of the mobility (China) no credits were awarded. However, one of the students wrote his B.A. thesis co-supervised at a German partner university, which shows that joint international education incl. elements of the recognition of studies abroad is practiced at EPU.</i></p> <p><i>Both students reported to have been nominated due to academic merits achieved during their studies. Although it is understandable to send out your best and brightest students, in the future and with increasing opportunities to go abroad European partners encourage EPU to develop a selection process that is based on openness, transparency and competitiveness in order to guarantee equal opportunity to students and staff to participate in these activities.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<i>In the future, EPU should put a selection process in place that is based on the principles of openness, transparency and competitiveness.</i>				



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