



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

The peer review meeting took place on **19.08.2020** 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	✓	Prof. Dr. Polla Khanaqa (<i>Prevented from participation due to an emergency.</i>) Bryar Hassan Dr. Zana Kareem Aram Ahmed Shoxan Ibrahim Dr. Ali Salih Dr. Fraidoon Rashid Shkar Rzgar Kwekha Rostam Rozhan Hassan
UOS		
SPU		
UOR		
UOH		
CHU		
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, EU 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>In their reporting, partners from KISSR elaborated on the strategy development process as well as its inclusive nature employing a dedicated institutional committee and involving relevant stakeholders incl. students' representatives. Reportedly, this approach will also be deployed in the future, but refined and enhanced based on the experiences made during past development of the strategy as well as its implementation. Here, KRG partners already presented concrete ideas for refining future strategy development.</i></p> <p><i>Monitoring of the internationalisation process and strategy is found to be in place with data collection and reporting (by responsible "implementation bodies") established and the process supervised by the head of the IRO, in turn reporting at the institutional level.</i></p> <p><i>In their reporting, KRG partners could make evident the existing collaboration arrangements in place both with the research centres and other structural units of the institution to implement internationalisation, employing both the deans and dean's offices or joint committees. Currently, no dedicated staff for internationalisation exists at the research centres. However, given both the size of the research centres and of KISSR as a whole, this is considered appropriate for the current level of internationalisation.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of recognition, KRG partners report to be recognising studies taken abroad but refer to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research being responsible for and conducting the actual recognition, which KISSR bases its recognition on. No dedicated institutional recognition procedures are reported to be in place at KISSR itself. In response to a post-meeting inquiry, it was later clarified to UGOE by KISSR's head that this is due to KISSR being a mainly research-focused institution. However, reportedly recognition procedures at KISSR are now in the process of being set up, but are not in place yet. Since recognition is a key element in student mobility and joint international education, KISSR is now tasked with setting up formal</i></p>				

	<p><i>recognition procedures, especially in regard to the recognition of periods of study. (Note: Since recognition, mainly in regard to recognition of degrees, is available via the ministry, Item #7 is still rated as 'in part'.</i></p> <p><i>An institutional process for the implementation of Bologna Process has been started and relevant committees have been formed both at the institutional and departmental level. 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>In the near future, KISSR needs to invest considerable effort in setting up formal and standardised institutional procedures for the recognition of studies taken abroad, especially in regard to the recognition of periods of study. For this, KISSR needs to build both a comprehensive understanding of and in-house expertise on the recognition of studies and build transparent institutional procedures on that. As part of this, KISSR is encouraged to revisit the respective training conducted at the University of Göttingen in March 2020. Additionally, open questions on applicable regulation should be clarified with the relevant ministry.</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 amply equipped with equipment purchased both with TIGRIS as well as own funds showing substantial co-financing by KRG partners. Equipment purchased with TIGRIS funds is found to be marked accordingly.</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>In terms of staff, appropriate personnel resources are available at the IRO for the current level of internationalisation with the majority of staff being permanent employees. However, it is to note that not all positions are full-time resulting in about 5 FTE available. Although the IRO in its work is reportedly supported by staff from other central units or the research centres, KISSR should look to retain the current level of FTEs available. If found to be required due to increased levels of internationalisation and related workload, KISSR should be ready to increase resources in the future.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of the IRO's organisational structure, European partners found the overall organisation structure (Marketing and Outreach, Grant and Fundraising, Mobility, Projects and Coordination) reasonable and appropriate for KISSR, yet perceive the structure not yet fully in line with the staff composition and their responsibilities indicated. From the trainings in Göttingen in March 2020 it is known that the given organisational structure was developed recently, which might explain the discrepancy. European partners encourage KISSR to clarify the issues bringing in line both structure and personnel allocation.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<p><i>KISSR should strive to retain current FTEs available at IRO and closely monitor if further staff is needed.</i></p> <p><i>KISSR should ensure the availability of staff with English language proficiency at the IRO and improve existing proficiency levels by training and via setting language requirements for future staff.</i></p> <p><i>European partners encourage KISSR to review the organisational structure of the IRO and see through the organisational transformation started thereby addressing any shortcomings identified.</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 KISSR, both central and decentral. Here, European partners perceived the collaborative, partly decentralised approach in providing respective services at KISSR very positive, which the size and nature of KISSR very well allows for. In this regard, however, partners from KISSR should make sure that responsibilities are clearly defined and that students and staff are clearly aware of who to approach with their requests and concerns.</i></p> <p><i>During the meeting, especially the management of mobility 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>However, European partners noticed that many core responsibilities are currently with senior management staff or involve them to a higher degree. For the future and with increasing levels of internationalisation, KISSR will be required to come to a wider distribution of responsibilities with staff executing their duties in a more self-depended manner.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<p><i>KISSR should look to it that clear responsibilities and points of contact are clearly available for both students and staff as well as external partners.</i></p> <p><i>Although appropriate for the current stage, KISSR should through increased training and recruitment build up a core of well-trained and self-dependent IRO staff thereby achieving a higher functional differentiation while lessen the workload of higher management.</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>Note: For the interview, KISSR nominated two PhD students: One PhD student enrolled directly at KISSR, while the second student is enrolled at University of Sulaimani, but who was serviced by a special structure at KISSR, supported by the MHESR, which offers consultation and support services for researcher & academics from the whole region when it comes to collaboration with the University of Göttingen.</i></p> <p><i>Both PhD student interviewed reported to be well-informed on matters of internationalisation they considered important. Both students reported on having received comprehensive support by the IRO and to be highly satisfied with the support received so far.</i></p> <p><i>In the reporting, both students highlighted the problems restrictive visa-regimes can impose on international educational projects for academics coming from Iraq. In this regard, however, the students again emphasised the comprehensive support received by KISSR and its IRO.</i></p> <p><i>Recognition of studies abroad (item 4) was not applicable in this case, due to the PhD projects being in early stages.</i></p> <p><i>Staff members interviewed also reported to be well informed on international activities and opportunities at KISSR, highlighting distribution channels such as the institutional webpage as well as direct information received from the IRO. However, both see potential for improvement when it comes to the dissemination of related information. Despite that, both staff member reported on comprehensive support received (e.g. in their mobility in KA107) and are satisfied with the services provided by the IRO and its staff.</i></p> <p><i>For the future, however, both staff members express the desire for more opportunities to engage in internationalisation that should be accessible for and benefit all scientific departments. In this regard, KISSR will be tasked to increase its efforts in providing such opportunities as well as needs to ensure that an open, transparent and competitive selection process is in place.</i></p> <p><i>Finally, according to their assessment the IRO could benefit from more, yet better trained and internationally experienced personnel further improving the services offered.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<p><i>KISSR should check whether the current dissemination channels as well as information offered are appropriate in ensuring its students and staff have all relevant information. Surveying the</i></p>				

satisfaction of students and staff serviced is key in this area and could point to potential shortcomings.

With the demand for internationalisation clearly visible, KISSR should now invest in building partnerships and joining networks that allow for more opportunities to engage in international activities (e.g. mobility, training, research etc.). In addition, KISSR needs to ensure an open, transparent and competitive selection process for engaging in international activities is in place that provides equal opportunity and benefits a wide range of people.

European partners encourage KISSR 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.



The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use, which may be made of the information contained therein.