



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

The peer review meeting took place on **28.07.2020** 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	✓	Dr. Dana Abdulla Tahir Arieann Ali Hamid Dr. Barzan Hadi Hama Karim Mr. Aram Muhammed Qadir Ms. Sazan Salah Saber Ms. Bayan Osman Muhemmed Mr. Karwan Moamin Ali Muhammad MR. Zhyar Hassan Abdullah Dr. Nian Kamil Mr. Omer Fouad Ghafor
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
CM	✓	Dr. Carlos Machado as External Quality Expert of TIGIRS joined during the peer review meeting.

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>Unfortunately, technical issues were prevalent during most of the meeting impeding on the reporting with one key participant only joining later during the meeting. Nevertheless, partners were able to implement the peer review as planned, while the technical issues abated towards the end of the meeting.</i></p> <p><i>Generally, European partners found that an institutional setup conducive to the internationalisation of the university and the implementation of the international strategy has been achieved with the International Relations Office set up and other structural units important for internationalisation identified and involved in the process. Partners also reported that colleges were involved in drafting the international strategy, while students' representatives reportedly were consulted as well. However, the mode or extent of the student involvement could not be established during the meeting.</i></p> <p><i>For monitoring, UOH formed a dedicated board for the implementation of the intl. strategy consisting of representatives of both the central structures and the colleges and chaired by the Vice President for Scientific Affairs, which will follow up the strategy's implementation, in this reporting to the University Council and university leadership. While found to be a suitable setup, UOH is now tasked with operationalising monitoring properly.</i></p> <p><i>Despite shown to a certain extent for the past development process with the involvement of college and students' representatives, European partners perceived an inclusive approach for the continued development of the international strategy and related policies (as portrayed in the reporting) not yet fully realised and consolidated for the future. Furthermore, while arrangements for collaboration with the colleges exist, reportedly mostly by employing the deans and dean's offices, reinforcing and proper operationalising those arrangement appear to be of further necessity.</i></p> <p><i>An institutional framework of the recognition of studies abroad (for periods of study) is not found to be in place at UOH, which will need addressing in the future. European partners also perceived that although partners at UOH are aware of the general concept and issue of recognition, it is not yet fully and firmly grasped. Here, UOH will need to invest considerable</i></p>				

	<p><i>effort building both the comprehensive understanding of and institutional framework for the recognition of studies abroad in order for it to become a standard element of student mobility. To achieve the former, UOH is encouraged to revisit the respective training conducted at the University of Göttingen in March 2020. Note: Since the recognition of degrees is in place via the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Item #7 is still rated as 'in part', despite the evident lack in institutional recognition procedures at UOH.</i></p> <p><i>An institutional process for implementing the Bologna Process and related reform elements has started with relevant committees being formed (e.g. High Committee) and a switch to a semester-based academic calendar implemented. However, European partners recognise the yet early implementation stage, which is in line with other KRG HEIs and the Kurdistan Region as a whole. In this regard, European partners encourage UOH to apply the knowledge gained, e.g. through the TIGRIS training by the Tuning Academy, and, as part of this, form a better and more comprehensive understanding of the Bologna Process, its elements and implementation. Here, it will be important to ensure a proper understanding by all relevant stakeholders at UOH, not only a smaller group of experts. The stated plan to conduct further trainings is therefore highly encouraged by European Partners. Involving international experts in the future is also advised.</i></p>
	<p>Recommendations:</p>
	<p><i>Consolidate the institutional setup and arrangements developed, especially in regard to ensuring an inclusive process for further developing internationalisation and collaboration with the colleges and other decentral units. For this, UOH should monitor the internationalisation process closely in order to establish if the achieved setup and arrangements are working and produce desirable results in bringing about the internationalisation of UOH. In the future and with increasing levels of internationalisation, having dedicated staff at the colleges managing internationalisation should be considered.</i></p> <p><i>Develop both a comprehensive understanding of and an institutional framework for the recognition of studies abroad. As part of the latter, develop formal procedures for the recognition of studies abroad at UOH in order to render it a standard element of student mobility.</i></p> <p><i>European partners encourage UOH to reinforce its efforts to implement the Bologna Process and related reforms. For this, UOH needs to disseminate and apply gained knowledge throughout the institution, while partners should also look for ways to include international expertise and advice in the process. If found difficult to attain, the latter could be achieved by launching a joint initiative with other KRG HEIs through the newly formed Network of Kurdish Internationalisation Practitioners providing the benefits of wider impact and reduction of costs.</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 for the current state of internationalisation. Furthermore, the IRO and its premises are found to be suitable for their purpose and sufficiently equipped with equipment purchased with TIGRIS funds marked accordingly.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of personnel resources, generally they are found to be appropriate for the current state of internationalisation. However, with two staff members currently on leave personnel capacities face temporary limitations. That being said, due to experienced key staff present this seems not to impede on the IRO ability to conduct its business. However, UOH should prevent staff numbers from dropping even further and generally should ensure that appropriate personnel resources are available at the IRO.</i></p> <p><i>Staff with English language proficiency is found to be available at the IRO. Nevertheless, European partners would agree with UOH's own assessment that further language training for staff would be conducive in increase the overall English language proficiency.</i></p> <p><i>As a side note, during the meeting European partners were informed that a new head of the IRO is to be appointed, who also participated in the peer review meeting. European partners were pleased to see the future head also having been involved in the past internationalisation process at UOH and his inclusion in the board for the implementation of the intl. strategy.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<p><i>Although temporary limitations can occur, UOH should see to it that appropriate personnel resources are available at the IRO at all times and should not let the number of active staff members drop further. For the future and with progression of internationalisation, UOH should be ready to allocate additional personnel resources to the IRO in order to accommodate for the additional administrative workload that comes with increased internationalisation. Planning ahead accordingly is required.</i></p> <p><i>EU partner encourage UOH to invest in continued staff development. Implementing English language training for IRO staff should be a first step in this regard. Also, looking for further training opportunities is highly encouraged, of which some are available internationally, e.g. through participation in international staff weeks.</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>).	<i>Not 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 local International Relations Office. Especially the management of mobility (mainly outgoing) as well as services provided for incoming researchers were portrayed in more detail and generally were found appropriate. However, despite the reports on having previously used Learning Agreements as part of student mobility, due to a lacking institutional framework, the recognition of studies and related procedures still need development and implementation as a routine element of academic mobility.</i></p> <p><i>Generally, European partners would like to note that the two IRO staff members participating in the meeting showed to be both well experienced and capable and seem to carry a lot of responsibility at the IRO and its operations. Retaining and further developing said is considered highly advisable by European partners.</i></p> <p><i>European partners could establish that international marketing aimed at recruiting international students and staff is currently not a priority at UOH, which is reasonable when looking at the current state of internationalisation at UOH. Despite that, European partners found promotion in English targeting an international audience to be conducted via the university webpage and related social media channels. Here, IRO staff is playing a key role. Nevertheless, developing dedicated capacities for intl. marketing should be part of the future development plans at UOH.</i></p> <p><i>European partners are very pleased to find UOH making active use of international experiences made by their students and staff e.g. in form of IaH activities and other formats.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<p><i>Although neither a priority nor mandatory requirement at the current stage of development, for the future UOH should consider how to develop capacities for engaging in international marketing and the pro-active recruitment of international students and staff.</i></p> <p><i>Developing recognition procedures and implementing recognition of studies abroad for returning students as a standard feature of student mobility is a future must for UOH.</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		tick as appropriate (✓)		
#	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 report to be well informed about the university's internationalisation activities and opportunities to engage in them. Relevant Information is confirmed to be disseminated both via the university's website and social media channels as well as by official notification through the colleges and departments.</i></p> <p><i>Both students and staff report on having received comprehensive support by the International Relations Office and its staff and are satisfied with services and support offered. Where applicable, they also confirm the open and competitive nature of the selection process in place at UOH.</i></p> <p><i>The reports also confirm the active use of international experiences made by students and staff both in terms of IaH activities as well as for institutional learning (the latter applying to training and capacity building activities taken abroad). Participating in such exploitation activities is shown to be mandatory for students and staff having participated in international mobility.</i></p> <p><i>Both students and staff are aware of internationalisation, its importance and benefits. Both groups express the wish for increased internationalisation of their university, especially an increase in exchange opportunities. By building partnerships, UOH should look to satisfy this demand.</i></p> <p><i>During the meeting, staff also mentioned the general need for further training and staff development due to UOH being a younger institutions only founded in 2011. They see this as a key precondition for successfully engaging in internationalisation in the future.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of recognition, only the activity of one student (internship at CERN) is applicable for assessment. According to the student's report, upon completion and submitting documentation the internship was included in the diploma. If true, this means that despite the fact that an institutional framework for the recognition of studies abroad is not in place, recognition (at least to some degree) can still happen in individual cases at UOH.</i></p>				
Recommendations:				
<p><i>In the future, UOH should focus its efforts on building relations and partnerships with foreign institutions in order to satisfy the demand for more internationalisation activities, especially in regard to international exchange. As long as the current COVID-19 pandemic is impeding on</i></p>				

international mobility, virtual exchange formats could be explored. Recognising that establishing partnerships can be challenging, focusing on regional partners could be a suitable approach. That being said, supporting relations and partnerships with institutions from a wide range of countries and regions should be the ultimate goal.

European partners encourage UOH to continuously invest in staff development and training. Having good qualified staff will certainly amplify the internationalisation process of the university. In turn, some resources for training (both in terms of knowledge and funding) might be available internationally, rendering internationalisation itself to be one instrument to address this demand.



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