ASIIN Institutional Accreditation report for

University of Ostrava

Version: 09.01.2023

Status: Final Report

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A. About the Institutional Accreditation Process

Certification Subject	University of Ostrava, Czech Republic	
Experts	Prof. Roger Erb (University of Frankfurt, Germany) Prof. Tomas Knoz (University of Brunn, Czech Republic) Dominik Kubon (RWTH Aachen, Germany - student representative) Prof. Günter Hertel (TU Dresden, Germany) – could not participate in the on-site visit due to illness Dr. Alexander Zink (TU München, Germany) – could not participate in the on-site visit due to illness.	
Representative/s of ASIIN Headquarter	Dr. Iring Wasser, Managing Director ASIIN	
Timeline	**Date**	**Milestone**
	07. December 2021	Conclusion of Accreditation Contract with the University of Ostrava
	17th of July 2022	Submission of Final Self-Assessment Report by University of Ostrava
	24th September 2022	Provision of additional material/answers to around 100 questions of the ASIIN experts by the University of Ostrava
	25-27th September 2022	On-site visit of the ASIIN expert team in Ostrava
	8-9 December 2022	Decision by the ASIIN Accreditation Commission

Relevant criteria and sources	Criteria for the ASIIN System Seal / Institutional Accreditation / Institutional Assessment: Requirements for Good Teaching and Successful Learning (20/06/2016) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)

Description and depiction of ASIIN´s institutional accreditation approach

ASIIN considers institutional accreditation as an instrument for organizational development triggered by a two-staged process of an internal evaluation followed by an audit of external experts. In the first stage, members of the evaluated organization will conduct an internal self-reflection process regarding the functionality and effectiveness of its internal quality assurance system. In the course of this exercise, all relevant stakeholders participate. Subsequently, a self-evaluation report (SER) is edited on the part of the reviewed institution containing a shared internal understanding on strengths and weaknesses of the evaluated subject. After receipt of the SER, ASIIN then assembles an independent team of experts representing the required different stakeholder groups (representatives of academia, professional practice, students) and disposing of suitable expertise concerning the evaluated subject. This team reviews the SER and conducts a site visit at the institution, where the SER is validated in discussions with the relevant stakeholders. The findings are compiled in an institutional accreditation report analysing strengths and weaknesses of the internal QA from an external point of view and summarizing recommendations towards its enhancement.

The structure of the SAR as well as the accreditation report are based on the *Criteria for the ASIIN System Seal / Institutional Accreditation / Institutional Assessment.* [1] This set of criteria is designed for quality development in teaching and learning. It refers to (I) the definition of quality and its management, (II) their application on the educational provisions the Higher Education Institution (HEI) is offering, (III) the management of its resources and (IV) quality related transparency and documentation. Each aspect is considered in an *institutional*, *procedural* and *cultural* perspective or dimension. The approach is furthermore is based on a system of so-called maturity levels. This makes for a comprehensive description of the development stage at which the quality management system of the institution presently is. A simplified version of the maturity levels is presented as follows:

0 = non-existent
1 = defined
2 = implemented
3 = established and controlled
4 = predictive and proactive

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[1] Criteria for the ASIIN System Seal / Institutional Accreditation / Institutional Assessment: Requirements for Good Teaching and Successful Learning (20/06/2016). These criteria are in line with the European Standards and Guidelines 2015.

Further information regarding this classification can be found in the above mentioned ASIIN Criteria. The ensuing ASIIN institutional accreditation report is structured as follows:

Four chapters are presented for each of the four evaluation criteria. At the beginning of each chapter, the guiding questions are listed, followed by an analysis and findings of the peers as well as the respective maturity level of the organization's structures, processes and their interaction with cultural characteristics observed by the peers regarding single criteria. Every chapter concludes with requirements and recommendations for further enhancement of quality and organizational maturity.

Special Framework condition for the review of the University of Ostrava

The institutional review of the University of Ostrava by ASIIN is the first example of this kind in the Czech Republic. It is also worth noting that this exercise has been commissioned by the University on a voluntary basis. The University of Ostrava already disposes of a valid Czech national institutional accreditation, which however runs out next year.

Responding to the queries of the ASIIN expert team, the University representatives put on record, that they consider the international review as a suitable way for self-improvement and as an additional preparation for the upcoming national institutional renewal. The funds for financing this review are provided by a European Structural Fund project.

The following report summarizes the findings of the ASIIN expert team.

B.   Characteristics of the University of Ostrava

The University of Ostrava today is the third largest public Higher Education Institution in the Czech Republic, currently enrolling almost 10000 students and offering around 140 study programs on the Bachelor, 120 on the Master and 115 on the doctoral level.

The history of the institution dates back to 1953, when fundamental economic and demographic changes in the Ostrava region in the context of national development required the establishment of the Higher School of Education. In 1964. in became as a Pedagogical Institute, which in 1991 was transformed into a University with a clear mission to "develop the humanities, medical sciences, natural sciences and the arts in the Moravian-Silesian region that has traditionally been associated with industry and technology". In many aspects the region of Ostrava can be compared to other post-industrial areas, often being the traditional "heart of steel", the centre of heavy industry in the past and facing the challenge of transformation from heavy industry dominated into a modern service-oriented region.

Originally, the University of Ostrava started out with three Faculties – Arts, Science and Education. In 2008, the Faculty of Social Studies and the Faculty of Fine Arts were created and in 2010, the Faculty of Medicine became the last entity to be added to the curricular portfolio of the Institution. The University sees itself as a game changer for the city and the region, proposing solutions for the pressing transformation processes in society, environment, medicine and many other areas. It provides new learning options for formally disadvantaged groups and a considerable proportion of its student intake are first-timers, which as first members of their families are enrolling in tertiary education. To adequately deal with these new constituency constitutes a challenge to the University and its support and learning resources.

The University of Ostrava is an institution, in which the individual faculties assume a very strong position and in which the central administration accordingly has to find innovative ways to institutionalize a common governance, communication and quality assurance system. Many of the university wide approaches have to be introduced bottom up as a defining feature of the Czech higher education system is a general reluctance for central administration governance schemes.

In terms of resources, the University heavily relies on State funding, which however has been "frozen" back in 2016 by the Czech Government, so that alternative sources of income have to be generated by the University of Ostrava to stay financially viable. Concerning its Human Resources the University can rely on more than 1400 employees of which 63 are full, 170 associate and close to 400 assistant professors.

The University does not dispose of a central campus, but currently owns 26 buildings spread throughout the city ("Ostrava is our Campus"). The University managed to secure important investment funds also from support programs by the European Commission and currently modern facilities are constructed, considerably upgrading the physical infrastructure of the institution.

It is interesting to note that the city of Ostrava disposes of altogether three higher education institutions, a private university and next to the University of Ostrava the Technical University of Ostrava as a second important public university. More than a decade ago, there were attempts to merge these two public universities into one bigger entity, which however remained unsuccessful. This failed merger impacts in many ways on the current set up of the reviewed institutions and on areas such as cooperation, inter-disciplinarity and research.

The University of Ostrava is governed by a well-structured Strategic Plan and currently strives to establish a "student centred"-approach to teaching and learning with corresponding outcome-based examination systems. It also aspires to offer a more internationally oriented learning and research environment, though currently mobility of its students is very low with only around 300 incoming and around 170 outgoing students at this stage of its development.

In 2021, the UO ranked among the **top 1000-1200 universities in the world** according to the QS Ranking and top 300-350 among the "Young University Ranking".

C. Analysis and Findings of Peers

I. Definition of quality

Criterion I.1: Objectives

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which quality objectives of the institution have an influence on the quality of teaching and learning? Which of these quality objectives have a high priority, which have a lower priority? Which of the quality objectives reflect existing strengths of the institution? Which of the quality objectives are oriented towards institutional development and are future-oriented?   What are the biggest challenges to maintain the achievement of the quality objectives?

Procedural dimension: Which of the objectives related to the quality of teaching and learning have last been *amended*? What were the reasons for amendment? What are the processes to define, to implement, and to review these objectives on a regular basis?

Cultural dimension: Which values and behavioural patterns have the biggest influence on the quality objectives of the institution? Which objectives are of particular importance for the internal stakeholders? Which groups within the institution particularly relate to which of the objectives? Which objectives are rejected by some stakeholders within the institution? Which possibilities exist to discuss among the internal stakeholders different opinions about the quality objectives of the institution?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The University of Ostrava (UO) presents a well-articulated "Vision, Mission and Values Statement" (VMV). The institution accordingly sees its mission in "developing the humanities, medical sciences, natural sciences and the arts in a region that has traditionally been associated with industry and technology".

The leadership of the University refers to the special position of the university and its role in the regional transformation process. It equally points out that the notion of a "regional university" is accurate though deliberately not used in public communication, as in the Czech republic there are a number of negative connotations associated with this term (such as a disadvantaged social infrastructure, a low research output and limited number of educational offerings/faculties).

The developmental goals and the quality aspirations of the UO are laid down in successive Strategic Plans (SP) and corresponding Annual Implementation Plans. They include the objectives of the institution for a period of 5 years each and are linked to the national developmental goals of the Czech Ministry for Higher Education. The SPs are elaborated with the participation of internal as well as external stakeholders according to the information provided during the interviews. The overall responsibility for overseeing the document rests with the Rector with individual working groups contributing to the elaboration of specific subsections. These working groups are regularly made up of representatives from the university leadership, faculty management, students and external stakeholders. On completion, the draft is then discussed in the UO´s Academic Council and submitted for approval to the Academic Senate and the Board of Trustees. In addition, the International Board of the University will comment on the document.

Progress in achieving the strategic goals and the associated Key Performance Indicators are checked and evaluated on an annual basis; the results are discussed in the Academic Senate of the UO, the Rector´s Collegium and the Board of Trustees.

At this point in time, the UO is governed by the Strategic Plan 2021-2025. It contains six strategic priorities and quality aspirations. The responsibilities for each of the strategic goals are assigned to specific members of the University leadership. Currently it is the revision of the current degree programs, the introduction of modern, student-centred forms of teaching and outcome based assessment in the examination system, an intensified participation of stakeholders in university-wide decision making processes as well as a stronger cooperation of UO´s individual guarantors of degree programs with the Centre of Internal Evaluation, which are on the top of the UA´s agenda. In the institution´s own critical self-analysis, one of the central challenges to reach these goals will be the development of more functional and regular communication channels between the various institutional units of the UO. This is of critical importance, as the structure of the University is characterized by widely autonomous and strong faculties and a university leadership with limited possibilities for university-wide regulations and monitoring.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion, the ASIIIN experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts acknowledge the existence of a convincing Vision and Mission Statement describing the identity of the UO and its role and functions for the Czech educational system, the city and region. The quality management goals of the institution are clearly defined and prioritized. Instruments in place are key documents such as the Strategic Plan as well as various Annual Reports (the report of the UO, for the Economic and Financial Operations and the Evaluation report processed by the Centre for Internal Quality Assurance). The definition of quality has been developed together with the institution´s internal and external stakeholders. On the institutional level, the experts support the findings of the universities own SWOT analysis, pointing to the need of innovative communication channels improving the cooperation between the faculty and central university management level.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that reliable procedures and QA systems are in place to monitor the achievement of the UO´s institutional quality aspirations. They take note of the fact that

the long-term Strategic Plan is adequately underpinned by supporting Annual Implementation Plans, Key Performance Indicators and a Risk Analysis while making use of various data sources for the strategic management of the organisations. This data is provided by the QA department and the Council of Internal Evaluation. Responsibilities for the Attainment of quality goals within the organization are clearly defined.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts observe a high degree of understanding of quality assurance measures among UO´s stakeholders with some lag between central and of implementation between the level of the central administration, the faculty and departmental level. The experts commend the University of Ostrava for its impressive capacity for critical self-reflection and forward looking management. This is evidenced by a well-written Self-Assessment Report, a convincing SWOT analysis and very constructive and solution oriented discussion culture witnessed during the onsite visit.

Criterion I.2: (Quality-) Management System/Governance

Questions

Institutional dimension: What works well with regard to the organisational settings (responsibilities), structures, physical and human resources of the quality-management of the institution? Who is involved, who is responsible, and who is informed? Which changes are planned for the near future with regard to the set-up, structure and resources for quality management – and why? How is the collaboration between the different organizational units (teaching, research, administration) assessed by the different departments, faculties, etc., and by the central management? Which facets of the collaboration are considered useful, which are considered obstructive?

Procedural dimension: Which procedures (processes) for the implementation of the quality-related policy work well? Which processes for the implementation of quality policies need to be improved by the responsible actors? Are further changes in the processes planned? If yes, why?

Cultural dimension: Which typical values and behavioural patterns of the internal stakeholders have a positive effect on the quality management for teaching and learning? Which stakeholder groups particularly support the quality management for teaching and learning? Which groups are less involved? What are the reasons for higher or lower levels of involvement? What are typical situations leading to changes in the structures and procedures of the quality management system? Who is involved in such changes?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The development of the UO´s quality assurance organisational settings is closely related to changes in the country's quality assurance arrangements for Higher Education in general. An important turning point proved to be the amendment of the Czech Higher Education Act back in 2016, which resulted in the creation of the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education as supreme accreditation authority on the national level. It equally obliged all Czech HEIs including the UO to establish and maintain a Quality Management System as well as a Council for Internal Evaluation.

Since then, the University of Ostrava has come a long way in establishing a comprehensive quality management system that has been markedly upgraded especially in recent years. Relevant policies, procedures, criteria and the assignment of responsibilities are clearly defined, the University meanwhile has been successful in being authorized as a self-accrediting institution by the Czech National Bureau for Accreditation.

The Council for Internal Evaluation (CIE), established in spring of 2017, has become the central body in charge of all quality assurance activities. It is chaired by the rector and composed of 15 members, including student representatives. The main responsibilities of the CIE include the approval of all degree programs under the institutional self-accrediting scheme (see below), the continuous monitoring of the quality of their provision and the preparation of internal evaluation reports.

The UO in its Self-Assessment Report and during the discussions on-site presents moreover a comprehensive set of internal regulations and governing acts, which define and regulate the rights and responsibilities of all official bodies of the institution. Among them figure the Academic Senate, the Academic Council, the Council for Internal Evaluation, the Board of Trustees as well as the positions of Rector and Bursar.

In its institutional set up, there are a number of additional advisory boards and working groups enriching the governance structure of the UO. The most important of these is the so-called Rector´s Collegium. Members of the rectorate, the Head of the Rector´s Office, the Bursar, the Director of Institutes and University units, the Chairperson of the Academic Senate and the Council for Internal Evaluation as well as student leaders are meeting once a month. In addition, the UO twice a year organizes extended strategic discussion meetings within this Collegium by inviting the leadership of all other faculties, administrative departments and external guests. A new Committee for the Development of Doctoral Studies has been also institutionalized as of last year.

In terms of the UO´s governance structures, the experts witness a strong position of the faculties vis a vis the central leadership. The faculties enjoy a large degree of autonomy in the management of their teaching and research activities. Institutional change frequently

happens bottom up with the university leadership in many instances assuming the role of a facilitator/mediator. Subsequent chapters of this report contain multiple examples for this imbalance of power and the fact, that institutional change is frequently implemented bottom up. Examples in case are recent and ongoing attempts to establish a university wide new teaching philosophy or an outcome based assessment on the university level. Similarly, the current decentralized process of creating new study programs is not consistently linked to an overarching strategy for the development of distinct trademark disciplinary profiles at the UO.

On the institutional level, the University of Ostrava leadership has declared the improvement of communication ties as a top strategic priority and mechanism to deal with the collateral impact of this governance structure. The challenge in the expert´s eyes is however not restricted to fostering productive communication between these various lines of command but simultaneously strengthening communication channels among university units on the same level. As will be further elaborated, such a step could for example be instrumental in stimulating more fruitful cooperation among the various faculties of the UO and in making use of more synergies in the advancement of research and teaching. Another example in case is the overarching organization of student representation at the University of Ostrava across all faculties. The experts were surprised to learn that there is very little communication and contact between the student representatives of the various faculties; they see value in organizing greater student involvement on the pan-university level.

A strong point of in the UO´s set up and communication is its embeddedness in the region and its excellent contacts to external stakeholders in the city and region. The presence and availability of the major of the city of Ostrava has to be cited as a very positive example in this context. Representatives of the employer side during the interviews were predominantly satisfied with the work of the university and the role, the university is playing. Its graduates are widely welcomed and appreciated. As the experts learn, there are a range of opportunities for the partners to contact representatives of the university, and to provide advice e.g. for program development.

As regards the monitoring of the UO`s study programs, the quality standards for these programs are laid down in the HE Act as well as in the national Standards for Accreditation. On the internal operational level, so-called guarantors are appointed for looking after the quality of each degree program with the Council for Internal Evaluation exercising an oversight function on the level of the central administration. In their discussions with the faculty representatives and teaching staff, it becomes clear that the guarantors are currently not optimally prepared to perform the tasks expected of them. They frequently are overloaded with their various responsibilities in teaching, research and program administration and have not enough space for the program development. In addition, there is a lack of sufficient mentoring before and after the appointment as well as a need for

further training to prepare them in the best way for their functions. Finally, the communication between the guarantors and the central Council for Internal Evaluation has been identified as another area for optimization.

Another impediment for the further development of study programs currently are deficiencies in the execution of the important mechanism for (anonymized) student feedback on academic provision at the UO. These questionnaires currently do not enjoy a high response rate as only around 25% of students participate in this exercise. In their discussions with student representatives, the ASIIN experts learn that students do not see an immediate benefit in participation. Given this widespread indifference, alternative forms of seeking student feedback need to be institutionalized in the expert´s opinion. An option could be to reserve some time during a lesson to fill in the questionnaires or to make more use of qualitative rather than/in addition to quantitative forms of student feedback.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion, the ASIIIN experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts see multiple evidence of a very committed university leadership and a management culture that is proactive and geared to the further development of the institution. They are comprehensive quality management systems in place, which are regularly monitoring the success of the UO´s operations on many levels.

The experts are aware of the fact that the UO´s governance system is characterized by a vast autonomy of the individual faculties and limited powers of intervention on the part of the central university leadership. They equally note that the introduction of new reforms are on frequent occasions introduced in a bottom up approach which at times impedes the rapid implementation of university wide reforms. The ASIIN experts recognise the serious current efforts of the university management in developing new intersections of communication between and within the various governance level. Whereas the communication with external stakeholders is well established, the communication in the university itself could be enhanced in their view, not only between the different levels (rectorate, central units and faculties, departments), but also on the same level (support for the organization of communication between deans, staff and students of the six faculties).

Procedural level of maturity observed: 2

The experts note that comprehensive procedures and systems are in place to monitor the success of the UO as an institutions as well as the individual success of its staff, students and graduates.

The experts nevertheless see room for improvement in a number of areas:

They strongly recommend preparing the guarantors for all study programs at UO better, as they are decisive actor in the QA management system regarding the quality of education. The experts see value in organization formal training sessions for this group and learning from best practice by successful pears. There also should be more support and relief measures, to reduce the considerable administrative burden connected to this position.

There also remains a challenge for the current quality management system in providing an active learning environment for its students and its efforts to implement a student-centred teaching and learning philosophy transforming students into active rather than passive participants in the learning process. Providing an international learning environment and more stimuli for exchange students is another issue. These points are however dealt with in more detail in subsequent chapters of this report

While the experts commend the UO on its efforts to collect extensive data on the success of the institution and its students/graduates, they see still room for improvement in this area. One example is the current use of student's surveys, which suffer from a low response rate (only 25% of students reply as they do not see a direct impact for them). Conducting these surveys during classes in order to increase the participation rate or switching alternatively to structured student focus discussion groups are among the many options available.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts laud the University of Ostrava´s for its participatory approach regarding quality assurance matter. They commend the institutions for the fact that it is open minded to external quality assurance, accreditation as well as benchmarking as a tool for further improvement. The ASIIN experts during their discussions with the university leadership and different stakeholder groups get that the UO is an ambitious institution with strong objectives. These are well and clearly verbalised in the strategic plan. In all discussion rounds the experts have met representatives of the UO with a high commitment and interest in the advancement of the institution, who are self-reflected and open-minded.

II.   Educational Programmes / Courses / Trainings

Criterion II.1: Creation and development of programmes / courses / trainings

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which aspects in terms of organisational settings (responsibilities), structures, physical and human resources have an impact on the effectiveness of creation or further developing programmes? Who normally initiates the further development of programmes? What challenges exist with regard to the further development of the full portfolio of programmes? Which educational offers are considered fit for the future and why?

Procedural dimension: Are the processes to create and further develop educational offers considered effective and efficient? What works well and what should be improved? Where does the incorporation of external requirements (legal, social, professional) work well; where could it be improved? What are the reasons? Which processes exist in order to systematically collect stimuli for the further development of programmes?

Cultural dimension: What is expected from the stakeholder groups involved in the design and further development of educational offers? Who is expected to participate? Does the involvement take place as expected? What happens if conflicts between involved stakeholders occur? To which extent are the relevant stakeholders willing to participate and what is their level of information?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The University of Ostrava can look back on a long history of diversifying and increasing the portfolio of study programs offered in its various faculties and departments. At the time of its creation in 1990, it started with educational offerings in the fields of science, arts and pedagogy, later the faculty of social studies was added followed by the creation of the faculty of medicine. This is considered a big success as only three other universities in the country have a medical faculty and the demand for medical personnel in the city, country and region is big.

On first sight, the University of Ostrava offers a very substantial number of educational programs. Students can choose among almost 400 different educational offerings on the Bachelor, Master and Ph.D. level. The impulse for establishing new educational offerings is typically bottom-up. Any academic staff or external stakeholder can initiate a new study program, each faculty/department at the University of Ostrava decides for itself which programs it opens and closes; the central management/administration has very little influence in this matter.

On the faculty level, all proposals are being discussed and reviewed in a four-stage process, in which the respective Head of the Department, the Dean´s Collegium as well as the Academic Senate and Council of the Faculty are involved.

Once the proposal for the introduction of a new educational offering is accepted, the respective dean appoints a degree program guarantor and the members of the corresponding program board. These boards are regularly composed of the Head of the Department, the guarantor as well as a student representative. Subsequently, this board then prepares the proposal for the (internal) accreditation, which has to be endorsed by the Academic Senate (AS) of the Faculty. After the approval of the AS, it is the responsibility of the guarantor to prepare the corresponding final Self-Assessment-Report. This SAR will contain a thorough evaluation of the institutional environment, the financial, material and HR input needed for the implementation, a review of the graduate profile and the underlying educational and creative activities etc. This document is then approved by the Academic Council of the Faculty and forwarded through the Rector to the Council for Internal Evaluation (CIE).

The CIE subsequently convenes a working group including two expert evaluators (one external), a rapporteur and the guarantor. After the evaluation is finished, the results are presented to the CIE by the rapporteur and internally accredited taking into consideration the national Standards for Accreditation in Higher Education. This decision is then conveyed to the Czech National Accreditation Bureau. In case of study programs in a regulated profession, the expectations of the relevant authorising body are integrated into this procedure.

In their first appraisal/assessment of this criterion, the ASIIN experts question the existence of this sizeable number of different programs and the lack of central governance in driving the overall program development strategy across all faculties. As regards their first objection, they however learn that the high number of study programs is currently distorted. According to the University leadership, this is mainly due to two reasons: firstly, the inflationary number is said to be foremost related to the many combination possibilities in the area of teacher education. Secondly, the initial accreditation of a considerable number of programs will not be renewed, programs thus will cease to exist and the numbers will correspondingly shrink.

As regards the process of introducing new programs and modernizing existing programs, they commend the University of Ostrava for following the above described multi-layered approval process while following the guidelines of the internal quality assurance system of the University of Ostrava. The experts take also note of the fact that the University of Ostrava disposes of a self-accreditation status, as is successfully underwent an institutional accreditation by the National Accreditation Bureau, the state accreditation agency of the

Czech Republic, in the year 2018. It thus has internalized the corresponding QA processes while at the same time including to a certain degree external experts and students in the review procedure.

A bottleneck in the system is the role of the guarantor, who next to his/her teaching responsibilities has to prepare all relevant documents for the internal Self-Assessment Report. In its critical self-analysis, the University of Ostrava points to the need of further training for theses guarantors and the need for improved direct communication between the Council for Internal Evaluation and the guarantor as has already been mentioned in prior parts of this report.

The experts positively note that the University of Ostrava has implemented the first steps to digitalize the process of the degree program evaluation and has connected the internal monitoring system to its strategic planning and to a limited degree to the distribution of financial funds (see more in subsequent chapters of this report).

A challenge nevertheless remains adequately organizing the overall educational planning process across all faculties, as the proposition for the introduction of new programs remains entirely with the individual faculties. The central university management has limited authority to coordinate and streamline these initiatives from an overall strategic planning perspective for the institution as a whole.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion, the ASIIIN experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that the University of Ostrava has a reliable system for programme development for its manifold study programs in place, where internal and external stakeholders are involved and cyclical reviews to modernize existing programmes are in place. Where necessary, the input of professional bodies is sought to integrate the expectations of the specific discipline in question. There is a fixed and published protocol in place with a multi-layered process for internal program validation with the support of external experts. From an institutional point of view, the university leadership is challenged to coordinate the overall direction of the university educational development in a system, which rests the decision-making power with the faculties.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts commend the University of Ostrava on its manifold and comprehensive planning processes, described above and geared to the further improvement of its study programs. Before the initiation of a new program, its requirements and perspectives are comprehensively discussed on practically all levels of the faculty in question. Considerable progress has been made in the process of digitalisation of the internal review processes and feeding the results of these evaluations into strategic management decisions. In the expert´s eyes, there should however be a systematic preparation of all guarantors in preparation of their responsibilities described above.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The ASIIN experts witness manifold examples of a quality assurance culture focusing on initiating new study programmes. On frequent occasions, program initiators are reaching out to various internal as well as external stakeholder groups actively seeking their input for the design of its educational offerings. External and Internal evaluators are working together in the process of modernizing educational offerings, students are participating in the process as part of the individual program boards. Communication between the guarantors and the Council for Internal Evaluation however needs to be further strengthened.

Criterion II.2: Implementation of programmes / courses / trainings

Questions

Institutional dimension: What are the strengths with regard to structures as well as to physical and human resources in the *implementation* of educational offers? What are the weaknesses with regard to the structures (e.g. organisational set-up, decision-making paths) and to the resources in the day-to-day work?

Procedural dimension: Which procedures in the implementation of programmes (i.e. the delivery of programmes, i.e. the teaching processes) work well? Which can be considered good practice? Which processes need the particular attention of those responsible? What are the reasons? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: How does the collaboration between the different units work in the day-to-day implementation of teaching? Do typical areas of conflict exist and how are they dealt with? Do all stakeholder groups involved in the implementation of teaching provide the expected input? What are the reasons if expectations are not met?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The University of Ostrava offers a broad range of programs for its approximately 10000 students. The UO identifies its strongpoints in specific disciplines such as fuzzy modelling and artificial intelligence, genome biology and biodiversity as well as environmental geography.

In its Strategic Plan, the University of Ostrava has identified a fundamental reform of its teaching philosophy as well as corresponding examination systems as top priorities. It has established a bottom up working group of committed professors to lead the transformation from a teacher-centred to a student-centred teaching style. The UO has accepted the dare to educate its students to become "active learners" and to introduce more participatory modes of instruction. The UO aspires furthermore to implement a criterion-referenced assessment scheme as another central field of future action.

As in many other areas, the UO relies on a grass-roots, bottom up process to reach these goals. In the discussion rounds, the interviewees describe the current approach. The university has convened a group of currently around 20 committed individuals, who lead by example and who aspire to spread the message and learn by examples. The ASIIN experts commend the University on this initiative but at the same time believe that a more systematic approach should be implemented in order to be successful. The same applies to the examination system, where it is currently the privilege of each faculty and each lecturer to implement its own system, which makes a system-wide shift towards an outcome based examination without thorough training difficult.

Another continuing challenge are ongoing adaptations regarding online-and blended learning models, which had to be introduced during the COVID-pandemic. In order to cope with this difficult situation, the UO has consulted partner universities in Canada and Australia, which have long-term experience with virtual formats. While students are generally satisfied with the quality of their studies, the students put to the protocol that there nevertheless exists a great variety of experiences and quality in different courses and educational units. The students e.g. identify a number of "conservative" faculties, which continue with ex-cathedra lectures and which are not as successful in implementing modern teaching styles.

Regarding outcome-based education, the experts in the course in their discussions with relevant stakeholders come across some encouraging evidence of supporting elements. In the course handbooks, the course learning outcomes have been formulated in an outcome-based manner, showing that the teaching staff at the UO has been introduced to the theoretical underpinnings of this approach (e.g. Bloom´s taxonomy). The expert team salutes and encourages these efforts. It recognizes however, that delivering high quality teaching and learning experiences is a work in progress and welcomes reinforced efforts

further stimulating active learning. It also finds that the experience of being required to teach online the Covid-19 pandemic has opened new doors to make teaching more engaging and has served as a catalyst for staff members to become more innovative in their teaching styles, exploiting the many features of the new modes of teaching and learning.

Regarding student progression, drop-out rates and the deviation from standard periods of study, student success within the University of Ostrava reportedly is monitored. The School has put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression. According to its own account, the University of Ostrava is still wrestling with a number of challenges. Among the topics addressed figure the relatively high dropout rates especially in the first year of studies as well as the relatively low level of permeability among different degree programmes and specializations.

As regards the area of internationalization, currently there is no culture of incoming and outgoing student mobility on a bigger scale even when considering the impact of the Covid pandemic. Currently, less than three percent of the University of Ostrava's student body uses the chance to study abroad. The same can be said for incoming students, though the precise numbers are difficult to pinpoint, as a considerable number of Polish and recently Ukrainian students are enrolled in the UO´s study programs but do not appear in the statistics. One of the impeding factors is the limited number of English speaking (tuition revenue creating) or bilingual study programs geared towards students from other countries than Poland and the Ukraine. In the discussions, the experts learn, that this is currently changing and the initiation of new study programs in English is high on the agenda of the UO.

In the context of internationalisation, the experts moreover could determine that the recognition of credits is in an appropriate condition at UO. They learn that it is difficult to encourage more students to use the opportunity to study abroad, not at least because of financial issues. However, the implementation of windows of mobility in each study program would be helpful.

Concerning research-based education, the experts find evidence to that regard on the level of the doctoral programs and to a lesser degree on the Master level. In the discussions with the employer's side, the representatives of industry, the public sector and NGO´s are generally satisfied with the quality of graduates from the UO, seeking employment in their companies. There is nevertheless a wide spread habit among employers to further train the graduates once they commence their employment in a company.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion, the experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that students and graduates are generally satisfied with the quality of study programmes they are enrolled in or have graduated from. The same finding cum grano salis emerges from the discussions with employers though they frequently offer graduates additional training courses when they start to work in their companies. As an institution, the UO has been dealing rather well with the difficult boundary conditions during the Pandemic in implementing its programs and providing a conducive learning environment. Teacher centred learning and a competency-, outcome-based education have been identified as top priorities for institutional development. The creation of a formal university-wide centre for teaching support is work in progress.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 2

The experts find, that within the UO two key pedagogical approaches have been vested in the Strategic Development Plan of the institution. They observe that an Outcome-based Approach to Student Learning and Criterion-Referenced Assessment are currently in the process of being implemented. They confirm that the related concepts are understood but need to be implemented in a comprehensive way on the level of the university. The experts believe that the current grass-roots approach presenting best practice on a voluntary basis needs to be supplemented by a systematic approach involving all faculties. The planned creation of a support Education Centre will be instrumental in this regard.

In terms of internationalization and research-based education, initiatives to foster these aspects are under way, the impact to be closely monitored in the near future. The establishment of formal windows of mobility in all study programs would foster the prospects of internationalization as would the introduction of more study programs in English to attract international students.

The experts also acknowledge that the UO has put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression for its various educational offerings. Student progression, dropout rates and the deviation from standard periods of study as well as student success are regularly monitored.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 2

In spite of the fact that the expert team has encountered evidence that an active, student-centred learning philosophy is becoming established the experts nevertheless suggest that the UO reinforces its support for a modern teaching philosophy ensuring that interactive, student-centred learning and teaching become the norm for all educational offerings and throughout all faculties.

While acknowledging the difficult boundary conditions during the time of the Pandemic, the experts nevertheless challenge the UO for providing a more conducive international learning environment for its students.

Criterion II.3: Cooperation

Questions

Institutional dimension: How is the cooperation with other institutions and between different internal units organized with regard to the implementation of programs (structures and regulations)? What works well in the case of internal or external collaborations, what could be improved? How do such collaborations for programs usually come into being within the institution?

Procedural dimension: Which factors are critical for the smooth organization and implementation of collaborations? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: What principles does the institution have in place for internal and external cooperation for educational offers? Are the existing rules and standards accepted by those affected by them? How are conflicts dealt with? What are the challenges with regard to collaborations?

Analysis and Findings of experts

In its Self-Assessment Report and during the discussion with all stakeholders the experts learn about the broad range of cooperation agreements, which the University of Ostrava entertains within its own ranks as well as between universities in the city, the country and internationally. Other cooperation agreements with political stakeholders and industry are equally benefitting the institutions in achieving its goals.

As regards the aspect of **inner-university cooperation**, a number of examples are cited in the area of resource sharing and cross-faculty initiatives. As an interesting piece of information, the experts learn that students at the University of Ostrava can enrol in the entire set of courses offered by all faculties they are interested in. Other examples in case are the provision of teaching courses for collaborating faculties (e.g. courses in biology by the Faculty of Science for the Faculty of Medicine and from the Faculty of Arts for courses

in languages). Further cooperation and projects (LERCO and REFERSH) on the level of individual study programs, e.g. in the area of social robotics, sports, science and technology are noted. The most promising example for interdisciplinary cooperation are the activities of the pan-university Institute for Research and Application of Fuzzy Modelling which uses advanced methods of information processing and cooperates with other faculties (and international partners) in the process. The central University of Ostrava management tries to support this cooperation between the faculties, but at the same time acknowledges, that its hands are frequently bound and that it only can make suggestions to that regard with the widely autonomous faculties deciding which cooperation they engage in.

Concerning the *inter-university cooperation* within the country and internationally, the balance is mixed. In spite of the fact that within the city of Ostrava, there are two big public universities (next to the University of Ostrava the Technical University of Ostrava), there is limited evidence for a strong partnerships between these two flagship institutions. The experts learn during the discussions that this can be widely attributed to the fact, that more than a decade ago, political attempts for a merger of these two universities failed miserably, which impeded collaborative efforts on a grander scale in the past with notable exceptions. Among the positive examples for collaboration figure the creation of Three Joint Degree Programs in the Faculty of Arts and Social Studies.

A success story on the other hand has been the participation of the University of Ostrava in the so-called **NEOLAiA consortium as part of the European University Initiative** of the European Commission, which was created back in May of 2019. Initially this consortium consisted of universities in the Czech Republic (University of Ostrava as a founding member), Spain (U of Jaen), Germany (U of Bielefeld) and Sweden (U of Örebro), later it was extended to altogether 9 institutions/countries including Cyprus (U of Nicosia), Italy (U of Salerno), France (U of Tours), Romania (U of Suceava) and Lithuania (U of Siauliai).

In spite of the fact, that this consortium did not manage to secure continued institutional funding from the EU Commission due the severe competition in the area of the European University funding initiative, it nevertheless exerted a positive influence in a number of areas such as teaching, research or international mobility.   The Alliance has thus launched proposals for double and joint degrees (ERASMUS-EDU-2021-EMJM-DESIGN "NEOTrend Inclusion – degree, competence, mobility"), cross-disciplinary and micro-credential courses, mapping of teaching resources, funding for the implementation of an Erasmus KA2 Strategic Partnerships project (KA220-HED – Cooperation partnerships in higher education "Supporting Academics to Become INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS through Professional Learning Communities") securing additional, though limited funds in the process. In the area of research, joint research actions aimed at Horizon Europe, the mapping of research

resources and complementarity of research areas were jointly implemented. Regarding the areas of Inclusion and Diversity, a Joint Project on Inclusion and Diversity in the call for proposals KA226 – Partnerships for Digital Education Readiness ("E-learn for all: Inclusive education through virtual learning environments") was launched. In addition, NEOLAiA partners have jointly competed for international calls within Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe. Projects in the field of mobility have also been developed (creation of mobility maps with specific tracks for mobility connected with the Focus Academy, Neotrends, and preparation of mobility windows for researchers and students of future double or joint plans). In 2021, a pilot project has also been launched with specific scholarships for students who will undertake international mobility in the Alliance countries, with an additional financial endowment per mobility scholarship. The international collaboration is supported internally by the Centre of International Cooperation of the University of Ostrava, which employs 8 mainly project-funded co-workers.

Regarding *external cooperation with political stakeholders*, the University of Ostrava is reportedly a regular member of the Committee for Research, Development and Innovation Entrepreneurship as well as in the Association for the Development of the Moravian-Silesian Region. As one of the outcomes of these collaborations with regional self-governments, the creation and funding of a degree program of dentistry at the Faculty of Medicine recently was secured. The UO furthermore is also a shareholder of the Moravian-Silesian Innovation Centres, which participates in developing regional enterprises in the form of consultancy services. Another area of cooperation is related to the area of commercial research with private companies and self-government organizations. This area is supported internally by the UO´s Knowledge and Technology Transfer Centre under the supervision of the Vice-rector for Strategy and Development.

The experts are impressed by the broad range of cooperation agreements in place. They nevertheless see room for improvement in a number of fields. Inner-university cooperation is not as developed as it could be, more interdisciplinary synergies could be created by a closer, more forward-looking cooperation between the faculties. Further institutes like the Institute for fuzzy computing could be institutionalized across all faculties. The original plan to create a Center of Environmental Technologies did not materialize and is an example in case. Overall, there is clearly room for further interdisciplinary cooperation, overcoming the "isolation" and "separateness" often cited in the SAR and during the discussions with stakeholders. Organized transfer of good practice is warranted. The establishment of so call focus-groups is a step in the right direction in this regard. In addition, the cooperation with

the Technical University is currently still limited. The experts positively note the existence of the International Council, the Rector´s advisory body. .

Regarding the activities of the Faculty of Medicine and Education, the UO is substantially interconnected with institutions in the segment of healthcare and education. Border cooperation seems to work, already now a considerable number of Polish and Ukrainian students study in the UO´s programs.

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

After discussion, the exports come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts commend the University of Ostrava on its successful implementation of its extensive networks. Especially valuable is the NWOLAIA as an inspirational resource of communication model with its participative formats. This cooperation in the expert´s opinion has the potential of getting acquainted with professional learning communities as effective platforms for cooperation and problem-solving. This partnership is also instrumental in introducing innovations in teaching and learning. The experts see room for improvement in the area of Inner-university cooperation as more interdisciplinary synergies could be created by a closer, forward-looking cooperation between the faculties following the example of institutes like the Institute for Research and Applications of Fuzzy Modeling.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The expert teams finds that the U of Ostrava disposes of well-established and impactful systems of cooperation. As regards the cooperation within the University, the experts recommend to explore proper procedural and institutional arrangements to increase cooperation also in the area of research.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 2

On the cultural level, the experts derive from their discussions with stakeholders, that the central challenge to be tackled by the University of Ostrava remains how to make sure the university-wide communication strategy works well and that the information flow throughout the institution is secured and maintained.

Criterion II.4: Examination systems and organisation of exams

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which rules and structural provisions have an effect on the design of exams in the programs? What works well, what should be improved?

Procedural dimension: Which procedures for the exam methodology and exam organization (including assessment criteria) work well? Which procedures do those responsible have to take particular care of? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Which principles do those responsible have to take into account when designing and organizing exams? Are these principles accepted by all involved stakeholders? What role does the institutional tradition have in the design of exams? Are new assessment methodologies taken into account? Which values and behavioural patterns have the highest influence on the exam system and organization? How do these influence the achievement of the objectives for exams? Do typical conflicts exist among those involved with regard to exam methodology and exam organization? How are such conflicts dealt with?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The University of Ostrava has published all relevant rules and procedures of its examination system in a publicly available document labelled "Regulation on Study and Examinations". The expert team finds conclusive evidence that the assessment system at the University of Ostrava rests on a broad range of different types of assessment, including oral and written examinations. The conditions for an examination are clearly stated in the course description in the electronic information system. As a grading system, the UO resorts for its Bachelor and Master courses to the A-F grading scale, for doctoral programs it is a pass and fail dichotomy. Bachelors and Masters Degree programs are completed with a state final examination and an oral defence of the corresponding thesis (an exception to this rule can be found in the medical disciplines; here the degree programmes are completed with a state examination like in Germany).

In its Self-Assessment Report and during the discussions on-site, the University representatives report that due to the Pandemic the need for conducting the examinations online emerged. Here special rules have been established in the interim to verify the identity of the examined and to ensure transparency in the conduct of the virtual exams.

Otherwise, the most pressing challenge at the moment is the introduction of a fine-tuned complex assessment scheme to more adequately assess the knowledge, abilities and

competences of students. Outcome-based assessment is not yet the standard in Czech Universities in general, the UO in particular. This change in the examination system is logically connected to a change in teaching style from a teacher-centred to a student - centred form of teaching and learning as has been discussed in prior parts of this report. The discussion about necessary adaptations within the institution has only just commenced.

In order to accompany the necessary adjustments, the elaboration of a new Teaching and Training philosophy in collaboration between a university working group and an external consulting company is currently under way., as has been described in prior parts of this report. Teacher´s pedagogical skills enhancement in the form of training will start at the end of the year. Pilot training sessions and focus group discussions show that teachers require and welcome methodological support from the University.

The ASIIN experts find that the rules and regulations of examinations are clearly defined and staff members are aware of these rules and apply them. In the discussions with students during the evaluation visit, no particular issues of concern in this area have been raised. The methods and forms of assessment as well as performance-related expectations are clearly defined and communicated transparently and timely. Students before this background also have sufficient preparation time. The results are available without great delay and do not stand in the way of student progression.

Outcome based assessment is only in the process of being introduced into the University of Ostrava. The Challenge remains to put in place assessment rubrics on a systematic level attests to the finding that the achievement of course learning outcomes is taken seriously and that the assessment system is of an advanced nature. Work in progress is still the overall assessment of achieved learning outcomes (LO) at the programme level.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

The exports come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that the rules and regulations of examinations are clearly defined and that all concerned stakeholders are aware of these rules and apply them. The methods and forms of assessment as well as performance-related expectations are also clearly defined, communicated transparently and in time. The experts acknowledge that the U of Ostrava is on its way to consistently implement an outcome-based assessment on the institutional level.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that the UO has sound, transparent and fair examination procedures in place. Students are being informed about the details in time and can adequately prepare. The results are available without great delay and do not stand in the way of student progression. The experts conclude that the students are assessed on the basis of transparent and internally checked criteria. In the future, the University of Ostrava could consider making use of external examiners to check the validity of its grading system.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The expert team finds that there is a solid examination culture regarding examinations at the University in place, students are generally satisfied with the system. The systematic introduction of outcome-based assessment and the development of corresponding assessment rubrics in recent years has been started.

Criterion II.5: Recognition of achievements

Questions

Institutional dimension: Do the rules, structures and responsibilities for the recognition of achievements obtained from other institutions or in a non-academic setting work as expected?

Procedural dimension: Do the procedures for the recognition of achievements obtained from other institutions or in a non-academic setting work as expected? Are there typical difficulties which regularly occur in the procedures? Which changes are planned for which reasons?

Cultural dimension: What are the guiding principles for the recognition of external achievements? Have the relevant members of the institution and interested students and teaching staff been informed of them and do they accept them? How are conflicts dealt with?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The University of Ostrava according to its own account has sound recognition procedures and regulations in place. Recognition accordingly happens on three levels: Firstly, recognition procedures for the purpose of entrance examination have been established. This includes verification of secondary school leaving examination records in case of application for a Bachelor level study program or the verification regarding the Bachelor degree in case of applications for the Master level or doctoral studies. Secondly, when it comes to the recognition of a course/degree from another national or international higher education institution, every incoming student at the UO may apply for recognition of the

corresponding credentials if no more than 5 years have passed since their completion. This falls into the responsibility of the Dean following an assessment of the responsible guarantor for the program in question using a comparison of the respective learning outcomes as a basis for decision. Thirdly, in the case of international mobility programs, the UO has committed itself to recognise all courses/credits in the framework of corresponding Learning Agreements. The person in charge for this process is the mobility coordinator within the respective department.

The experts take note of a corresponding Rectors Order regarding the recognition process. This order emphasizes the need to compare the learning outcomes achievement by the student and to disregard formal differences in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, signed by the Czech Republic.

In their conversations with the students, the ASIIN expert team does not learn about any concerns and problem in this area. They conclude that the current system is working well. The experts recommend the launch of a Micro-credentials scheme to offer convenient and topical short courses for credit, which can then be stackable to provide more opportunities and convenience for learners. As regards the existence and use of Diploma Supplements, the experts learn, that they are currently in use and that the University of Ostrava is providing its students and graduates with transcripts of their results at the end of a their studies.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion and after taking note of the information provided by the UO, the experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 4

The ASIIN experts find that the University of Ostrava has adequate rules and regulations in place to deal with the recognition of achievement on all levels of the academic qualification framework. In their discussions with stakeholders, they do not come across inadequacies in this domain and they are reassured by experiencing general satisfaction of students regarding this topic.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 4

The experts find that there are fair and transparent admission criteria and adequate procedures in place to provide qualification channels to students from various educational backgrounds. The Lisbon Convention constitutes the yardstick for recognition procedures and the institution makes its decision on a comparison of achieved learning outcomes in order to smoothen the articulation of its graduates to its programs. Learning Agreements are in place for recognition of credentials acquired by students at a foreign partnering

higher education institution. A Diploma Supplement is delivered to each graduate of the UO. A new challenge in the future will have to be tackled with the emergence of micro-credentials in the Czech Republic and the European Higher Education Area.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The expert team in general finds, that the UO has cultural dispositions of acting as an inclusive educational institution with fair and transparent admission and recognition criteria, striving to provide multiple qualification channels to students from various educational backgrounds. Currently there is however only a very limited degree of internationalization and student mobility to be observed.

Criterion II.6: Assistance and support

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which elements of the assistance and support services offered for students are successful? Which changes are required? What are typical challenges to be overcome? Are the physical and human resources adequate and sufficient to implement the expected assistance and support services? How is this verified?

Procedural dimension: How do the processes to provide assistance and support work? Which processes are considered to work well, which need to be improved? Do the members of the institution who are involved in the assistance and support have sufficient information and resources? Are the target groups for assistance and support reached as intended? How is this verified? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Are the offers of assistance and support available used by the intended target groups? If not, why not? How satisfied are the individual target groups with the assistance and support on offer?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The University of Ostrava has established a broad range of systems to support students before, during and after their studies at the institution.

In terms of Information support, there are a number of offers for prospective as well as enrolled students in place in both Czech and English language on the University´s website as well as on social media channels. As part of their recruitment efforts, the UO targets high school students and offers workshops. "Open Doors Days" and "student ambassadors" have

been put in place to offer guidance regarding their choice of a suitable field of study. According to the SAR, the UO also uses international promotion agencies for the recruitment of international students. Currently most foreign students are coming from neighbouring countries, especially Polish and Ukrainian students, which are however not officially counted in the international student statistics, because they often have little trouble learning Czech and therefore enroll in the national programs of the University of Ostrava, which are conducted in Czech. The experts recommend that the university find ways to make these international students visible in the statistics in order to provide more assistance to this group.

Once the students have enrolled, there are specific support measures for first semester students available. Of particular importance are the so-called adaptation courses, which assist students in having a smooth transition during the commencement of their studies and in learning about the challenges and opportunities of student life at the UO. Through its Moodle platform, students can take advantage of orientation courses such as the "guide through the study information system of student guide through the UO". Doctoral and International Students profit from one-day "Welcome ceremonies".

On the academic level, the UO and its faculties and departments have established a system of guarantors as well as a pedagogical advisor for each degree program, whom students can address in case of academic problems. Of great importance has proven to be the establishment of the Counselling and Career Centre with currently altogether 11 employers. This Centre offer a broad range of services including psychological, socio-legal counselling, coaching and career counselling as well as assistance in solving study difficulties, delays in student progression etc.. As integral part of the Centre, the so-called Pyramida Centre looks after students with special need and disabilities.

Concerning the transition into the employment sector the UO has opened its own "job teaser" portal listing internships and employment opportunities. In addition, the UO is regularly organizing job fair bringing its students and future employers into closer contact. Graduates of the UO are reported to find suitable employment quickly.

The UO has been less successful in organizing its group of alumni. Its efforts to maintain contact to its graduates by means of voluntary registration after graduation has been not very successful, the leaderships of the university cites Czech legal data protection rules as a major impediment. A special portal for graduates has however been established to foster interaction between graduates and their Alma Mater.

In its detailed and instrumental, critical self-analysis, the UO furthermore cites internal communication as being the biggest challenge of organizing the community of teachers and learners, which is currently still relying on traditional e-mail exchanges and to a certain

degree by using social networks. The UO according to its own account intends to launch a new internal communication portal by the end of this year to address these deficiencies.

The ASIIN expert team positively notes that in their discussions with students these are generally satisfied with the quality of their teaching staff, the mentoring and tutoring system as well as with the administrative support offered by the institution. As part of its quality assurance system, the University of Ostrava has instruments in place to monitor and measure student satisfaction with their academic environment and to take appropriate action where needed. The provision of the Counselling and Career Centre services is recorded and evaluated, the results are presented to the Study Committee of the UO. The experts commend the UO for its manifold support initiatives, which in their eyes is especially important before the background, that many students are the first in their families to enrol in higher education.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion, the experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that the University of Ostrava is offering a broad array of different student services on all levels. These include comprehensive assistance throughout all cycles of student life and includes assistance in the enrolment and learning process, during the transition to the labour market, assistance in personal, psychological and technical matters etc. Students in the interviews have articulated to be generally happy with the provision of these services. The UO has especially improved regarding the support services for incoming students. Work in progress is a better organization of the alumni organization.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts conclude that the University of Ostrava has adequate processes in place to provide assistance and support students in their studies. They commend the institution for continuously monitoring student satisfaction with the personal and administrative assistance provided via a number of online surveys. As regards the survey on student satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning however, the current system is not providing a representative and sufficient feedback, which in turn means, that other channels of interactions with student representatives need to be established. This already has been covered in prior sections of this report.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts observe a general culture of cooperation, assistance, and helpfulness within the University of Ostrava. Students generally are happy with the services provided. The same is true for the teaching staff, who are benefitting from a broad range of support services by their Alma Mater.

III.   Management of resources

Criterion III.1: Material and human resources

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which elements particularly support the achievement of the quality objectives in this area as defined by the institution? What are typical difficulties and how are they dealt with?

Procedural dimension: Do the processes for the allocation and administration of physical and personnel resources, specifically for teaching and learning, within the institution work according to the expectations of the different groups and units? How does the institution integrate external (legal and economic) requirements? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli? Which changes are planned or will become necessary based on such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: How can the members of the institution, e.g. teaching staff and students, participate in managing physical and human resources for teaching and learning? Do all members of the institution feel adequately informed about the management of physical and financial resources? Which values and methods are supported or expected of the people involved in terms of the use of resources? What are the guiding principles at the institution to avoid misuse or waste of resources? Are the set rules and guidelines accepted by those affected by them? How are conflicts dealt with?

Analysis and Findings of experts

As regards the quality and viability of the University of Ostrava´s **human resource potential**, the expert team takes note of the current composition of its staff. Altogether, the University currently employs more than 1450 staff, of which 64 are full professors, 170 work associate professors and 385 belonging to the category of assistant professors. Over the past couple of years, there have been additional investments in upgrading the HR capacity of the institution in the area of teaching, research as well as administration. In terms of its student-

staff ratio, the University puts on record that it amounts to 16, which is a little below the national average and approximately in line with the OECD average.

One of the central problems related to the recruiting of best talent is linked to the remuneration system in the Czech higher education system. The salary level of teaching staff at Czech universities is comparatively low and cannot compete with the private sector. In spite of this subpar, substandard remuneration, most of the interviewed teaching and administrative staff has been with the University of Ostrava for a considerable period of time. This in turn suggests, that the turn-over rate is lower than expected and that there is continuity in employment. In the discussions, the interviewees point to alternative benefits of their profession citing e.g. the high reputation of teaching at a university as one of the central motivational benefits and reason for their willingness to stay.

The ASIIN experts in the discussions also learn that in general students at the University of Ostrava are generally happy with the quality of teaching staff, though in certain departments there is seemingly a need for further investing in the pedagogical capacities of lecturers in the student´s opinion. The experts nevertheless consider the current composition and number of the UO human resources as being sufficient and adequate to offer sound educational services.

In terms of *financial resources*, the University of Ostrava heavily relies on government funding. State funding provides around 80% of the annual budget. The experts learn however that the Czech government has frozen the budgets allocations for all Czech public higher education institutions already back in 2016, which ever since then has put a considerable strain on the financial viability of the UO and increases the need to identify additional source of alternative funding to support the Universities activities.

The experts also are informed that the University has a number of internal financial regulations in place to deal responsible and strategically with the allocated funds. On the one hand, there are published "Rules for Economic and Financial Operations" and complimentary "Rector´s Orders" which oblige all employees to use allocated funds in a responsible manner. A further document labelled the "Rules for Allocation of Contributions for Educational and Creative Activities" has been elaborated which contains quantitative and qualitative indicators such as dropout rates of students, research performance or degree of internationalization and introduces to a limited degree performance-related funding between and within the faculties. On the University level, funds are earmarked for the implementation of the "Strategic Management Support Programme" to allocate funding for creative activities taking into consideration the results of prior evaluations of these activities. These measures put together represent the tools available to university management to direct the development of the faculties in a coordinated and performance related manner. Examples in case are the allocation of competitive funds for the purpose

of decreasing the "drop-out"-rates as well as the financing of adaptation courses to prepare incoming students better for the academic and personal challenges ahead.

In the discussions, the ASIIN expert team inquires about alternative sources of funding to compensate the stagnation in state funding. The University responds that it is proceeding along the following lines of actions: first, it aspires to increase the number of tuition-income generating international programs offered in English in order to tap in the financial resources of international students. This is certainly an option especially for the Faculty of Medicine, which offers attractive offers in a much needed and requested discipline in the country and beyond. A second line of action concerns the systematic application for European projects and attractive tenders from other donors. This has also been a strong recommendation of the University of Ostrava´s economic advisory committee, which emphasizes especially the importance and the potential of the financially attractive Horizon research projects funded by the European Commission.

The experts endorse the efforts to diversify and increase the financial budget of the institution. Creating new international study offers and systematically applying for international projects are potential ways forward; the experts in this context point to the possibility to liaise with private companies that have specialized in drafting project proposals for attractive tenders. The experts in addition also recommend thinking about the marketing potential of continuous (certified) education that can be offered to a broad range of stakeholders. Practically all higher education institutions in European have meanwhile recognized the economic potential in this field, taking advantage of accompanying political initiatives like the introduction of a European Framework for micro-credentials, individual study accounts etc.

As regards the quality of the *physical infrastructure*, the University of Ostrava disposes of altogether 26 buildings and locations spread throughout the city of Ostrava. The absence of a central campus and the fact that many of its historical buildings have come of age and are in need of renovations presents a considerable challenge to the institution and necessitates the explorations of new sources of funding also in this area.

Of considerable importance in this context are two big new construction projects, which to a considerable degree are financed by EU contributions. These new modern facilities will in the near future provide modern infrastructure serving as the Universities new sports and arts facilities. The new location is suitable also as a "mini campus", as a central location big enough to host central university events, as the experts can ascertain during a tour on the construction site in the heart of the city. Other new building projects in planning target the provision of new space for biomedical research on the premises of the Faculty for Medicine and financed out of the so-called National Recovery Plan.

The UO has a "general building scheme" in operation, which is used for the management of all its buildings. It contains an inventory of all physical facilities in use (and in planning), including plans for their renovation and reconstruction. In addition, there is an internal auditing system in place for inspecting the proper use of material resources and the Academic Senate of the University is exercising its monitoring functions through its Economic Committee.

During the audit, the ASIIN expert team had a chance to visit the facilities of the institutions. The experts commend the University leadership for securing European funds for upgrading the physical infrastructure of the institution. The experts also inspect an array of different teaching rooms of different sizes as well as laboratories. Progress has been made in upgrading the physical infrastructure with the Pandemic serving as a catalyst. The equipment within classrooms and laboratories in the School's learning centres has been modernized in order to facilitate the surge in online connectivity, as well as the associated training costs. With the pandemic, classes were successfully shifted to online video conferencing platforms.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion, the experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

Regarding the viability of its human resources, the experts find that the University of Ostrava can rely on a sufficient number of qualified and committed staff. Students are generally satisfied with the quality of teaching and the commitment of their lecturers.

In terms of finances and its material base, the University of Ostrava can be considered a solid and well-managed institution. The institution has to a considerable degree been successful in diversifying its financial income and tapping into alternative sources of funding.

The lack of a central campus is not ideal but the new premises in the heart of the city is in some ways a substitute and complements the other historical buildings spread throughout the town.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find the UO has appropriate processes in place for the allocation and administration of its physical, financial and human resources. It has a solid recruitment record and manages to recruit many qualified practitioners for its various study disciplines

on offer. Financial regulations have been passed in order to govern the universities spending activities. Various monitoring systems also in place to control the proper flow of money.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find clear signals for a growing "corporate spirit" among the institutions employees, most of whom stay at the University for an extended period. They commend the university leadership for its various initiatives to stimulate a close cooperation among and between the various employment groups and especially foster the collaboration between the academic and administrative co-workers.

Criterion III.2: Human resources development

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which challenges have to be mastered with regard to staff development? Do the existing concepts take these challenges adequately into account?

Procedural dimension: How does the implementation of the staff development concept work? What are typical difficulties? How are they dealt with? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Which of the concepts and offers for staff development – specifically those with a focus on subject-relevant and didactic development – are particularly well received by teaching staff?   Which are not? Why?

Analysis and Findings of experts

Regarding the measures related to the development of HR capacities within the University of Ostrava, the institutions has implemented a number of important initiatives and is preparing others geared at the further development of its human resource capacities.

One of the core elements in its HR strategy targets intensified staff training at the UO. Work in progress are various new training modules in the area of pedagogical competences (which are dealt with in more detail in prior parts of this report). In addition, the University of Ostrava has started offering online courses in the area of IT skills, language learning and soft skills via its online learning platform. The university leadership also announces the launch of adaptions courses specifically targeted for the support of new staff. Further continuous educational offerings in areas like English, working with databases, plagiarism etc. for academic as well as administrative staff are cited as examples of human resource development.

In the interviews with teaching and especially administrative staff, the ASIIN experts find only limited evidence that the interviewees use these offers on a regular basis. The same finding applies to the possibility to take advantage of sabbaticals every 6 years, the possibility to quit the university teaching for a semester to focus on the advancement of one´s research. In their interrogation, the experts find no evidence that this instrument is actively used by the professors at the University of Ostrava, due to the shortage of teaching capacity and the need to find replacement for the substitution of teaching obligations.

One of the most important features in the context of staff development has been the introduction of so-called "career plans" replacing the former monitoring system. Each staff members once a year is now sitting in an interview with the dean/department head to discuss his/her career perspectives based on their own career aspirations. By introducing this new HR management tool, the University of Ostrava hopes to improve internal communication, decrease fluctuation among staff and increase employee satisfaction. The system started out with evaluative interviews targeting the academic employees, the next step will be to extend the system also to the ranks of administrative employees. In the interviews, the ASIIN experts learn that the merit of the new instruments is not fully clear as of now to concerned stakeholders within the institution. There receive very mixed reactions regarding this new HR management tool. On the one hand, those who are conducting the interviews have to undergo further training to lead these type of discussions. A second area of concern is the fact, that there are very limited incentive systems in place to honour good teaching and learning and to advance on the career ladder. The experts experience the entire range of reactions, ranging from positive feedback to outright antagonism.

Concerning non-monetary incentive systems, the Rector´s Award recognizing outstanding academic and research contributions has been established and in 2019, a special new award category was added honouring innovation in teaching and long-term quality teaching. Other incentive systems have been introduced in various faculties of the University of Ostrava. The experts note that a special fund has been created in the Faculties of Science and Medicine to reward excellence in research and to support the arrival of new employees from abroad. The Faculty of Arts and Social Studies also has established a fund to support excellent research outcomes and to support trips of academic staff to go abroad and to support the development of quality teaching.

Regarding equal opportunities among the sexes, the UO has recently undergone a gender audit and subsequently adopted an Action Plan for Gender Equality at the UO in the period 2022-2025 responding to identified deficiencies especially in the area of on-/off-line boarding of employees following phases of maternity/parental leave. One of the most sensitive issues relates to the creation of the position of a University Ombudsman/Ombudswoman as a contact point in case of sexual harassment. In the

interviews with students, the ASIIN expert team learns, that there is a need for such a position and that the interviewed students are in favour of establishing similar contact points also on the level of the faculties. The experts positively note, that the University is taken the need for a cultural change in this respect seriously and that is will evaluate the impact of its reforms in 2025, though they consider this too late.

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

After discussion, the experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 2

The experts find that the University of Ostrava has a considerable number of offers and incentive systems in place for the professional development of its staff. They observe an instantaneous shift from a monitoring system to a more participatory approach using the "career plans" as preferred option. The experts acknowledge that there is a range of continuous education courses in areas such as pedagogy, languages, soft skills etc. on offer. So far, there is however on the institutional level no entity in place, which centrally is responsible. The University is currently planning to establish a new "Support Education Centre" for this purpose, but again this is still work in progress. So far, the number of employees, who regularly benefit from continuous education courses, is limited. Also, the important instrument of using sabbaticals to upgrade one´s teacher and research, exists thus far only on paper.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 2

The UO disposes of procedures and systems for HR development as described above. These procedures however have only been implemented recently and need to be further fine-tuned. An example in case is the new instrument of "career plans", which so far have not been fully accepted by the teaching staff (for the administrative staff the introduction of these career plans is only about to be implemented). They experts also take note of the plans for bottom-up peer mentorship on a voluntary basis regular showcasing good practice as a development tool and suggest that this should be systematized. The expert team believes that these measures will be instrumental in further developing teachers' competences, especially in the case of new teachers with little experience of teaching and for further familiarizing lecturers with new exigencies in virtual teaching during the Pandemic.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 2

The experts appreciate that in principle various support measure are available to all academic and non-academic staff. Currently, there is however no culture in place

systematically using these offers and to monitor the effect of these training measure as well as the satisfaction of the employees with these offers.

Criterion III.3: Interaction with research

Questions

Institutional dimension: Are there any challenges at the points of interaction between teaching and research? Do the existing concepts take these challenges adequately into account? What are the strengths of the existing concepts and arrangements?

Procedural dimension: How are the processes to link teaching and research designed? Who is involved, who is responsible, and who is informed? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Which values and modes of behaviour are expected from the members of the institution when it comes to combining teaching and research? How is the expected mode of behaviour supported? To which extend do the different members of the institution share and accept the expected values and behaviour?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The ASIIN expert team learns that there are a number of procedures and policies in place with regard to the further advancement of research at the institution. Of central importance is the "Guide for Good Practice in Research" which has been finalized and published in 2021. Another relevant document is the Code of Ethics for Employees and Students of the University of Ostrava. In past and present Strategic Plans of the University of Ostrava, particular tools and strategies to achieve a higher level of interconnection between research and education are described. Among the institutional measures supported by University figure special training for its staff to improve their pedagogical skills (project-based teaching, discussion, critical thinking methods, research- and inquiry-based methods, situation-, simulation- and role-play based methods, methods involving students in the teaching process, practical workshops, assessed practical placements and internships) and IT skills via a range of University-wide courses.   The development of these skills reflected in the assessment and career development of teaching staff and a focus of the teaching support centre to be established.

The experts are also informed about the fact, that a "doctoral school" has been formally launched in autumn of 2021. It offers a number of new courses to increase the knowledge

of Ph.D candidates in the methodology of science, presentation of results and working with scientific information. Another line of action has been the establishment of a summer school, in the framework of which doctoral student are given the possibility to take part in projects for junior researcher. The University is furthermore currently in the process of defining minimum standards regarding the selection of supervisors assigned to doctoral students according to field of specialisations (taking the quality of their publishing and grant activities into consideration) and to prepare a process for the systematic monitoring of junior academic and research staff. The establishment of a Council for Evaluation of Doctoral Study Quality is envisaged in the near future.

According to the Self-Assessment report, the University of Ostrava´s leadership is in addition planning to reach out to Student research clubs and promising to support them in a more systematic manner. On the level of the faculties, motivational scholarships are offered according to the Universities own account on a competitive basis for Master and Ph.D. students who are interested in publishing their research results or to participate in international conferences. On the university level, similar scholarships are being provided as of last year; some scholarships are also provided in cooperation with local government (the city of Ostrava or the government of the Moravian-Silesian region).

Another initiative, which is presented to the ASIIN experts, concerns the launch of the so-called Global Experts program so to assist guest researchers and lecturers coming from abroad. The corresponding grants are provided for a period of three years and target the establishment of excellence research team, linking the UO with foreign partners in international projects and consortia.

The University is especially proud having received the HR Excellence in Research Award of the European Commission, evaluating the compliance of UO processes with the Charters for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Researchers.

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

After discussion, the experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 2

The experts find that on the institutional level the role of research is receiving heightened attention not only in the Strategic Plan of the University of Ostrava, but also on the level of policy papers, the institutionalization of a doctoral school, the definition of minimum standards for the supervision of doctoral candidates and the other measures described above. All this is at the very moment in many areas however still work in early progress and the concrete success of these supporting measures on the research output of the University

of Ostrava needs to be critically evaluated. In their discussions with university staff, the experts hear repeatedly concerns, that due to the massive teaching load and administrative burdens (not only but especially on the level of the guarantors) the available time for engaging in research is limited. The fact that sabbaticals for engaging in new research fields on the part of professors are practically not in use underscores this concern.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 2

The experts observe that multiple new procedures and systems in relation to fostering research and the scholarship in teaching and learning have been and are currently and prospectively being implemented. They consider the various action lines envisaged by the University of Ostrava being steps in the right direction which need to be consistently followed up.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 2

As teaching in advanced higher education institutions is regularly informed by good research, there needs to be a continued focus on this important nexus. For a real culture in the Humboldtian sense of research to blossom, the room for engaging in active research should be further strengthened to avoid frustration among staff with regard to its research aspirations. While the experts acknowledge the announced action plans, in their eyes there needs to be a strengthened and continued effort to become even better in this area.

Criterion III.4: Interaction with administration

Questions

Institutional dimension: What are the guiding principles and rules for the role and function of the administration linked to teaching and learning? Which elements of support for teaching and learning by the administrative units of the institution work well? What areas can be improved? What are typical challenges for the administration in order to effectively support the quality objectives for teaching and learning? How are these challenges dealt with?

Procedural dimension: How are the administrative units involved into the design, (further) development and implementation of educational offers and their quality assurance work? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Which values and methodologies are characteristic for the role of the administration in the processes of introducing, (further) developing and implementing educational offers as well as in their quality assurance? Which attitudes and behaviour are

expected? How are they promoted? Are the set rules and guidelines accepted by those affected by them? How are conflicts dealt with?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The experts take note of important initiatives regarding the interaction between academic and non-academic staff. The impetus for the upgrading in this area has been part of the UP´s Strategic Plan ever since 2016, in which the professionalization of the institutions administration and management was identified as one of its core priorities. In its critical self-analysis, the administrative apparatus at the time was characterized as providing inadequate support for the educational and creative activities of the University. As a reaction, many decentralized administrative support services have been upgraded and centralized. In the process, a considerable number of new administrative units emerged, among them foremost the Quality Assurance Department, the Counselling and Career Centre, the Centre for Marketing and Communication, the Department of Strategy and Development as well as the knowledge and Technology Transfer Centre. A considerable number of the employees is still having fixed-term contracts and are financed through projects, but overall the interaction between the academic and the administrative branches have improved.

On the policy level, the University leadership is currently pursuing a "policy of equalization", trying to align the working conditions and salary levels between academic and administrative staff and introducing a new culture of collective respect and responsibility. Further measures to instil a greater cohesion among staff have been introduced in the form of the annual "Employee Dinner" as well as the UO´s Academic and Sports Day.

Another element in the efforts to change the cultural disposition, the University of Ostrava back in 2018 adopted a new "Code of Ethics for Employees and Students". The core message therein is a stipulation that "an employee, once in contact with other employees, students or the public, acts helpfully, obligingly, and without any prejudice".

The experts witness manifold elements of support for teaching and learning by the UO´s administration and its various department. Regarding student progression, drop-out rates and the deviation from standard periods of study, the experts observe that student success within the University of Ostrava is adequately monitored. Students in the interviews have been generally satisfied with their educational experiences and corresponding support services.

Another activity of the University management is related to fostering the efficiency of its administrative structures and foundations. In 2021, a competition was launched for the first time for the best "anti-bureaucratic" and "most ecological" proposal.

In terms of training, the University is investing in the creation of a bi-lingual working environment, as also on the level of the administration, all employees need to demonstrate a sufficient command of the English language. The experts note with interest, that all university communication is strictly done bilingually.

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

Institutional level of maturity observed: 2

The experts find that the guiding principles and rules for the roles and functions of the administration are adequately established. On the institutional level, there are homogeneous and functioning planning elements in place by which the quality objectives for teaching and learning are monitored. In spite of the creation of a considerable number of administrative departments on the institutional level, the number of administrative support personnel and their employment status (moving them to fixed contract as a measure of continuity) should to be improved and the administrative workload of the academics (especially the guarantors) reduced.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 2

The experts acknowledge that the University of Ostrava has information systems and QA procedures in place, which help to manage the institutions strategic goals. The administrative support systems generate the necessary data for the further development of the institution´s courses and programmes, for organising its learning resources and student support, for monitoring the performance and satisfaction of teacher and students alike. The fact, that the University of Ostrava produces an excellent, self-critical and concise self-assessment report is another evidence for a well working management and administration system.

There are nevertheless a certain number of areas, where additional efforts are warranted. Currently there are however no systems in place for effectively monitoring the educational and career paths of its graduates. The instrument of student surveys is currently not as efficient as it could be, due to a lack of participation on the part of the students. Communication patters between the central units and the faculty/department need to be strengthened. An example in case is the communication among the student body, which according to the evidence collected by the ASIIN expert team, does not have functioning support structures on the university level. A further strengthening establishment of new entities to further interpret and best use the abundance of data is also a challenge for the future.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 4

The experts commend the leadership of the University of Ostrava for its manifold initiatives related to an upgrade of the recruitment, the provision of service and the culture of support on the part of the administration. In the past decade, a former perceived weakness has been tackled by establishing central units, improving the salary structure, investing in the language capabilities and promotion as culture of cooperation between the academic and non-academic sector. The University of Ostrava has also announced that it aspires to introduce a general code of "friendliness" as a standard for internal and external communication, which the experts consider to be another step in the right direction and that it works on communicating its central organisational goals vis a vis its employees as a further motivating sector.

IV.   Transparency and documentation

Criterion IV.1: Rules and regulations for programs / courses / trainings

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which rules and regulations for educational offers have been defined? Whom do they address? Which units of the organisational setting are responsible? What works well?

Procedural dimension: How are the documents that define the rules for studying at the institution developed? How are they published and updated? How does the institution integrate external (e.g. legal) requirements into the processes? What are typical challenges with regard to the draft, update and dissemination of rules? How are they dealt with? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Do the members of the institution – specifically students and teaching staff – feel adequately informed about the rules and regulations for programmes that affect them? Are the rules accepted by the respective members of the institution affected by them? Are the rules transparent and understandable for all stakeholders?

Analysis and Findings of peers

Rules and Regulations for the University of Ostrava´s operations are highly regulated by Czech Higher Law. Among the most important legal documents figure the "Higher Education Act", the "Government Regulations on Fields of Education" as well as the "Government Regulations on Standards for Accreditation in Higher Education" with binding stipulations

for providing educational services, organizing the related quality management systems as well as the publication of relevant University documents.

Apart from these external legal framework documents, the University of Ostrava has also published its major internal regulations such as the Statute of the University, the Regulations on Study and Examinations, a Code of Ethics for Employees and Students etc. The University of Ostrava Internal Quality Management System (IQA) is governed by the Statute for its Council on Internal Evaluation (CIE) and a comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual.

A third source of Rules and regulations are stipulated in the so-called Rector´s order. Among the most important figure the "Nostrification Regulations", the "Rules of the Creation of Study Plans or Degree Programs" and corresponding "Quality Standards of Degree Programs at UO", "the Code for the Admission Procedures as well as the "Rules for Recognition of Foreign Secondary and Higher Education".

The experts note that these internal regulations are first thoroughly checked by the Legal Department of the institutions, before being discussed and formally approved first by the Academic Senates of the Individual Faculties and then by the Academic Senate of the University of Ostrava. They follow the "Procedure for Issuing Internal Regulations and Orders at the UO", which also clearly defines the internal stakeholder discussion process related to the creation and modification of existing rules. In line with Czech law, all international regulations are published on the Universities website. The UO also has decided to translate all regulations into English. Currently, the University management furthermore is considering to craft easy to understand summaries of legal documents as a service to assist its stakeholder groups (foremost the lecturers and students) in grasping the essence of the frequently complicated legal wording.

Regarding the multiple degree programs offered by the University, the essential information is published on the University Website. This includes relevant information regarding the conditions for admission, contacts to pedagogical advisors and links to the various course descriptions as integral part of each study programs. This information is also accessible via the UO´s portal, where students in addition can also register for examinations and have access to their grades. As a prerequisite of the Czech Higher Education Act, the final Bachelor´s and Master´s theses are also publically available on the website of the UO. The University supports distance studies and blended learning through its central university Moodle system.

After witnessing a demonstration on the part of the University administration, the ASIIN expert team confirms that the documentation available provides transparent and comprehensive information concerning the rules and regulations for educational programmes on offer at the University of Ostrava. These include information on admission

rules to the UO´s programs, the type of programmes on offer, the programme learning objectives, as well as the intended learning outcomes of the individual courses/modules together with other important pieces of information. The website gives a clear overview with all relevant information including the qualifications the University of Ostrava awards, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information. The experts note that the University of Ostrava issues adequate graduation documents (a Diploma Supplement") for each of its graduates.

The University of Ostrava disposes of a transparent and thorough set of rules and regulations pertaining to the establishment, implementation and modernization of programmes that have been analysed in prior parts of this report. All internal normative documentation is approved by designated bodies in a cooperative and transparent fashion and monitored by the relevant departments. The experts also comprehend that in the regular administrative meetings administrative teaching staff members and students are involved in the development of relevant rules and regulations.

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

Institutional level of maturity observed: 4

The experts find a strong centralised management in relation to rules and regulations pertaining to programmes. All legal external and internal documents are published and appropriately administered.

Regarding its manifold, diverse educational offering, the website and detailed course handbooks contain all relevant information. This includes the selection criteria and learning outcomes/competence profiles for the programmes they offer, the qualifications they award, the teaching content and learning outcomes as well as the assessment methods in use.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 4

The expert equally attest the existence of systematized, institutionalized procedures in relation to programme design, delivery and evaluation to be in place at the University of Ostrava. The internal (e.g. Annual Performance Reviews, and student surveys) as well as external reviews (e.g. accreditation procedures by professional bodies) serve as continuous input to upgrading the viability of programmes. These high calibre procedures and systems related to running the manifold educational offerings at the UO have been established in an inclusive, stakeholder–driven process.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts confirm that all members of the institution – specifically students and teaching staff – feel adequately informed about the rules and regulations for programmes in which they enrol/are enrolled and teach.

Criterion II.6: Assistance and support

Questions

Institutional dimension: How does the system for the documentation, document management and filing of information work? What are typical difficulties and how are they dealt with?

Procedural dimension: Do the processes with regard to the documentation and filing of information about teaching and learning / about programmes work as expected? What are typical challenges and how are they dealt with? How are the external requirements for transparency and documentation which are relevant to the institution (e.g. disclosure obligations and voluntary publication) embedded into internal processes? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Do the members of the institution – specifically students and teaching staff – feel adequately informed about the educational offers and their general conditions? Which attitudes and behaviour are expected from the members of the institution with regard to internal and external information policies, also in terms of achieved quality objectives and need for improvement? Are these expectations accepted by the different stakeholder groups within the institution?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The University of Ostrava disposes of a unified system of information management on study and degree programs. The so-called Student Agenda system (STAG) features a modular portal enabling complex management and control of study administration in its various components. Among the most important figure the process of electronic application for enrolment in a study program, the admission process, the administration of examination terms as well as grades/credits, schedule management as well as information on study plans and detailed description of individual courses, the evaluation of instruction quality, information of students and comprehensive student´s records.

The operation of STAG is under the control of UO´s Centre for Information Technology. Currently, the University management is discussing the introduction of an e-government and the increase of the system´s user-friendliness. In 2022, the development plan strives

the innovation of the electronic application to study and the creation of a new internal communisation channel for students and employees.

In their interviews, the expert group find sufficient examples of a common understanding of vital elements of the UO´s quality assurance culture among internal and external stakeholder groups. On a procedural level quality assurance measures and policies are concisely developed, implemented, monitored and revised.

The experts conclude that the University of Ostrava has a documentation system in place which manages all central documents and supports the processes of planning and implementing degree programs. The data collected by the quality management system provides the UO management with the information they need to adopt measures. The documentation and filing systems work in line with the respective legal and functional requirements.

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

Institutional level of maturity observed: 4

The experts identify a strong centralized emphasis on documentation at UO. Meetings and decisions are regularly documented. External legal requirements relevant for documentation and transparency are continuously taken into consideration in the respective processes. The documentation and filing systems work in line with the respective legal and functional requirements. The quality assurance and documentation system of the UO provides target-group specific information about the programs and maintains information about the learning process of each student for the entire life cycle.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts confirm that high calibre centralized procedures and systems relating to selection criteria and learning outcomes/competence profiles for programmes, qualifications, teaching, learning and assessment procedures, pass rates and learning opportunities as well as graduate employment information are adequately documented used for their further improvement. They encourage the university leadership to proceed with the planned innovation of the electronic study application system and the creation of a new internal communication channel for students and employees.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that there is a well-established documentary culture at UO in place. They confirm that relevant stakeholders like administration, teaching staff and students have access to relevant documents, which are consistently updated. They also note that the

members of the institution are aware of the minimum requirements as to the form and quality of documentation in their area of activity.

D. Comment of the Higher Education Institution (14.11.2022)

In response to the experts´s request, the U of Ostrava provides data regarding the average drop-out rates in its study programs. No other comments regarding this report were further received.

E.   Summary: Expert Recommendations

Areas to review		Maturity Level
I.1 Objectives	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	3
I.2 (Quality-) management systems/ governance	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	2
	c) cultural	3

II.1 Creation and development of programmes / courses / training	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	3
II.2 Implementation of programmes / courses / training	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	2
	c) cultural	2
II.3 Cooperation	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	2
II.4 Examination systems and organisation of exams	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	3

II.5 Recognition of achievements	a) institutional	4
	b) procedural	4
	c) cultural	3
II.6 Assistance and support	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	3

III.1 Material and human resources	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	3
III.2 Human resources development	a) institutional	2
	b) procedural	2
	c) cultural	2

III.3 Interaction with research	a) institutional	2
	b) procedural	2
	c) cultural	2
III.4 Interaction with administration	a) institutional	2
	b) procedural	2
	c) cultural	4

IV.1 Rules and regulations for programmes / courses / training	a) institutional	4
	b) procedural	4
	c) cultural	3
IV.2 Documentation	a) institutional	4
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	3

Overall comments

The University of Ostrava scores high across most of the four sets of criteria, the average is a good score of close to 3, equating to 'established and controlled'.

The U of Ostrava scores high on area such the definition of its quality assurance goals and the implementation of its QA system, transparency and rules and regulations.

Areas which deserve further attention are the processes related to the creation of new programs, the further development of its HR resources, the interphase between teaching and research and the further development of the latter as well as the interaction between academia and administration.

Based on the institutional accreditation report the experts recommend awarding the ASIIN Institutional Quality Seal to the University of Ostrava with the following recommendations for six years until 30 December 2029.

Recommendations:

The experts recommend that the University of Ostrava

1. improves communication channels between and within the different management levels of the University along the lines indicated in this report

2. adequately and systematically prepares and trains the guarantors for all study programs before assuming their vast responsibilities

3. supplements the current grass-roots approach for fostering a student-centred teaching philosophy and an outcome-based assessment by a systematic, university wide approach involving all faculties and accelerates the creation of a support Education Centre

4. increases its efforts to foster internationalization by establishing formal windows of mobility in all study program and introduces more study offers in English

5. find ways to make international students that enroll in the programs taught in Czech language visible within the statistics

6. reviews its current system for collecting student feedback to engage students in a better way and using the new and heightened possibilities of real time QA measure in the virtual world better

7. stimulates more inner-university cooperation as more interdisciplinary synergies could be created by a closer, forward-looking cooperation between the faculties following the example of institutes like the Institute for fuzzy computing

8. finds suitable arrangements to build a strong alumni organization as there are currently no systems in place for effectively monitoring the educational and career paths of its graduates.

9. enhances the participation of academic and administrative staff in its continuous education courses

10. regularly reviews the effectiveness of its HR development tools, e.g. the new instrument of "career plans", which so far have not been fully accepted by the employees

11. consistently monitors and critically evaluates the success of its support measures in improving the research output of the University of Ostrava, finding ways that sabbaticals are not an exception to the rule and arriving at a better balance between research, teaching and administrative burdens

12. increases the number of administrative support personnel and their employment status (moving them to fixed contract as a measure of continuity)

F.   Decision of the Accreditation Committee (08.12.2022)

The Accreditation Commission discusses the procedure intensively and follows the assessment of the peers without any changes.

The Accreditation Commission decides to award the institutional accreditation seal to the University of Ostrava without any requirement until 30 September 2029.

Appendix: Schedule

1. Day (25th September 2022)

Date / Time	Activity, location	Topics	Participants of the institution
25th September 2022	**Arrival of peers in Ostrava, Transfer to the hotel**		
25th September 2022 16:00 – 19:00	**Internal meeting of the peers Location: [...]**	Introduction round, assessment of Self-Assessment Report, Development of Questionnaire for different interview rounds	
20:00	**Dinner Location: [...]**		

2. Day (26th September 2022)

Date / Time	Activity, location	Topics	Participants of the institution
08:30 - 09:00 am	**Introductory meeting Location: U Ostrava**	Welcome note, short presentation of the institution by management, general questions	**Management of U Ostrava**
09:00 - 10:30 am	**1. Interview round Location: U Ostrava**	**Section I: Understanding of Quality** (Definition, responsibilities)	**Management, staff members from QM unit**
10:30 - 10:45 am	**Break**		
10:45 - 12:15 pm	**2. Interview round Location: U**	**Section III:** Management of **resources** (Material and human resources, Human resources development, Interaction with research, Interaction with administration)	**Management**
12:15 - 13:15 pm	**Lunch**		
13:15 - 14:15 pm	**3. Interview round Location: U Ostrava**	**Section III:** Management of **resources** (Material and human resources, Human resources development, Interaction with	**Staff members of administration**

Date / Time	Activity, location	Topics	Participants of the institution
		research, Interaction with administration)	
14:15 - 15:00 pm	**Consultation of Documents**	**Section I: Understanding of Quality** **Section II: Educational Programmes / Courses / Trainings** **Section III: Management of resources** **Section IV: Transparency and documentation**	
15:00 - 15:15 pm	**Break**		
15:15 - 16:00 pm	**4. Interview round** **Location: U Ostrava**	**Section IV: Transparency and documentation** (Rules and regulations for programmes / courses / trainings, Documentation)	**Management** **Staff members of the legal unit**
16:00 - 17:00 pm	**Tour through the facilities of the institution** **Location: U Ostrava**	**Section III: Management of resources**	**Heads of study units**
17:00 – 18:30 pm	**Internal meeting of peers** **Location: U Ostrava**	**Summary of information gathered during the day** **Section II: Educational Programmes / Courses / Trainings** **Section IV: Transparency and documentation** **Preliminary assessment of maturity levels**	
18:30	**Transfer to Hotel**		
19:30 Uhr	**Dinner** **Location: [...]**		

3. Day (27th september 2022)

Date / Time	Activity, location	Topics	Participants of the institution
08:30 - 10:00 am	**5. Interview round** **Location: U Ostrava**	**Section II: Educational Programmes / Courses / Trainings** (Cooperations, Examination systems and organisation of exams, Recognition of achievements, Assistance and support)	**Heads of study units**

Date / Time	Activity, location	Topics	Participants of the institution
10:00 – 10:15 am	**Break**		
10:15 - 12:00 am	**6. Interview round** **With students** **Location:U Ostrava**	**Section I: Understanding of Quality** **Section II: Educational Programmes / Courses / Trainings** **Section III: Management of resources** **Section IV**: Transparency and documentation	**Students**
12:00 - 13:00 pm	**Lunch**		
13:00 - 14:00 pm	**7. Interview round** **With cooperation / external partners** **Location: U Ostrava**	**Section II: Educational Programmes / Courses / Trainings** (Cooperations)	**Partners of U Ostrava (Business partners, etc)**
14:00 - 14:15 pm	**Break**		
14:15 - 15:15 pm	**8. Interview round** **With teachers/lecturers** **Location: U Ostrava**	**Section I: Understanding of Quality** **Section II: Educational Programmes / Courses / Trainings** **Section III: Management of resources** **Section IV**: Transparency and documentation	**Lecturers**
15:15 – 17:30 pm	**Internal meeting of peers** **Location: U Ostrava**	**Summary of information gathered during the day** **Section II: Educational Programmes / Courses / Trainings** **Section IV**: Transparency and documentation **Assessment of maturity levels**	
17:30 – 18:30 pm	**9. Interview round** **Final Meeting with Management** **Location: U Ostrava**	**Impressions of the peers**	**Management, interested stakeholders**
18:30 pm	**Transfer to Hotel**		
19:30 Uhr	**Dinner** **Location: [...]**		

4. Day (28th septemver 2022)

Date / Time	Activity, location	Topics	Participants of the institution
open	Departure from Ostrava		
open	Arrival at [...] / Germany		