

The background features a stylized graphic on the left side. It includes a yellow graduation cap with a white tassel, and several overlapping silhouettes of people in shades of blue and grey, suggesting a group of students or faculty members.

PASCL Report

Tijana Isoski, Aleksandar Šušnjar and Hermina Pika Radmilović

The West University of Timisoara
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1. The PASCL Project

The PASCL Project aims to assist in implementing sound Student-Centred Learning (SCL) strategies and approaches at institutional level and to foster a culture of SCL in Higher Education Institutions across Europe. The PASCL consortium is coordinated by ESU – the European Students’ Union and its other members are UNICA – Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe, FIER- the Finnish Institute for Educational Research, CEU- the Central European University, Melius s.r.l, and KIC – Knowledge Innovation Centre.

The PASCL peer assessment is based on the tradition of enhancement-led evaluation. Assessment in this context means the aim of supporting Higher Education Institutions to develop their activities in dialogue and interaction with them. The aim of the peer-assessment is to help the participating institutions recognise their best practices with regards to Student-Centred Learning and to develop their educational philosophy and practices related to teaching, learning and student participation. The aim is to help the institution concerned to analyse its own practices and to consider ways in which those can be changed, if the institution wants to become more student-centred. The peer-assessment process is based on open discussions between the peer-assessment team and the participating institution. The biggest benefit to the participating institution is its own contemplation, with the peer-assessment team working as a catalyst of this process.

The following definition of Student-Centred Learning adopted by the PASCL partners forms the basis for the PASCL peer-assessment:

Student-Centred Learning represents both a mind-set and a culture within a given Higher Education Institution and is a learning approach which is broadly related to, and supported by, constructivist theories of learning. It is characterised by innovative methods of teaching which aim to promote learning in communication with teachers and other learners and which take students seriously as active participants in their own learning, fostering transferable skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and reflective thinking. (T4SCL Toolkit 2010¹).

¹ Student-Centred Learning Toolkit for Students, Staff and Higher Education Institutions’ published as a part of the project ‘Time for a New Paradigm in Education: Student-Centred Learning’ funded with support from the European Commission

2. The PASCL evaluation process

The PASCL evaluation process comprises four steps: training, preparation of the visit, peer-assessment visit and feedback session:

- 1) The training aims to provide the peer assessment teams and the representatives of the hosting institutions with the procedures and goals of the peer assessment visits, as well as clarify the philosophy of student-centered learning and enhancement-led evaluation.
- 2) In the preparation stage, the participating institution prepares a short set of background information for the peer assessment team comprising the description of the institution's organisational structure and the teaching and learning philosophy.
- 3) During the peer assessment visit, the peer assessment team meets with various actors and stakeholders in the university, such as the institution's leadership, faculties, quality assurance actors, support services, teachers and students.
- 4) After the visit, the peer assessment team writes a short report describing the practices, of the institution concerning the elements of Student-Centred Learning and make a set of recommendations for further improvement. After the visit and writing of the report, a joint feedback session will be organised for the peer assessment team and participating institution either on Skype or in person during which they can jointly think of ways to implement the recommendations. The session also offers a possibility for the institution to give feedback on the peer assessment process.

The peer assessment visit of the West University of Timisoara (hereafter WUT) took place on February 22-23, 2016. The assessment team visited both the main campus of WUT and the Faculty of Arts and Design and the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, which was chosen, by the university. The international peer assessment team (hereafter Team) comprised of three members: Tijana Isoski from the Singidunum University Belgrade, ESU student representative, Aleksandar Šušnjar from the University of Rijeka, student representative and Hermina Pika Radmilović, Head of Quality Assurance, from the University of Maribor, as the chair of the team. As a Team, we would like to express our deep gratitude for the hospitality the West University of Timisoara showed to us during our assessment visit.

The Team interviewed the representatives of students, teachers, management representatives and administrative staff members in the main campus and had the opportunity to discuss the learning processes and visit the facilities (the two faculties) on the other side of the city. In total, the Team interviewed 28 persons, including 15 students, 17 teachers and 4 managerial staff members and 2 administrative staff. The Teams would like to thank again all the participants to the site visits who showed a great enthusiasm about their work or study at WUT. The English proficiency of all participants was excellent and the Team enjoyed the discussions with everyone very much.

This report is based on the Background report, interviews and other information (including WUT web pages) provided to us in English. It comprises of the following parts:

1. Students involvement in university governance
2. Social dimension
3. Support services for students
4. Teaching and learning
5. Staff support - Teacher development
6. ECTS
7. Assessment, feedback
8. Internationalisation and mobility
9. Quality assurance
10. Final conclusions and recommendations

In each of the above-mentioned areas, the focus was on the quality with the relation to the Student-Centred Learning as well as teaching and learning. For each of these areas, a short description of the university's practices is provided together with some recommendations. In the conclusions, the Team for the university's consideration offers a set of recommendations gathered from the overall report.

3. The West University of Timisoara in brief

The roots of Higher Education in Timisoara go back to 1944 when the Royal Decree of King Mihail I founded it as a higher institute for education and it was transformed into a university in 1962. The WUT has more than 70 years of turbulent history.

Today, the WUT has eleven faculties: arts and design; chemistry, biology and geography; law and administrative sciences; economics and business administration; physical education and sport; physics; letters, theology and history; mathematics and computation sciences; music; sociology, psychology and educational sciences; political sciences, philosophy and communication sciences. It is one of four public universities in Timisoara, from which the other three are specialised universities (polytechnics, medicine, and agriculture).

In the academic year 2015/2016, WUT has 167 study programs among those 77 bachelor and 90 master study programs and 11 doctoral schools. The total number of students is 14195 (10139 bachelor, 3504 master and 552 doctoral students). WUT currently employs 1070 people, out of which 650 are academic staff and 420 non-academic staff.

According to WUT, the university is facing several challenges like drastic decline in student numbers for enrolment due to demographic changes, school dropout rates as well as a decrease of public funding for higher education in Romania. WUT recruits most of its students from Timisoara and the surrounding region and is concerned with getting the best students from high schools. Concerning this, they organise several high school competitions (for example in Physics, Arts, etc.) to identify the best future students and later invite them individually to come to study at WUT. They send the invitations to all high school students who won prizes on national competitions and offer them scholarships in the first year (150€ per month), free accommodation, free swimming, free library access. They also strive to get back good students after their studies abroad for a possible future career as academic staff at WUT.

The Management structures at WUT are the Senate representing the academic community and is the highest forum of decision making at WUT; the Administration Council that ensures the operative management under the lead of the rector, applying strategic decisions of the university Senate. On the Faculties' level, there are the Faculties' councils and the Departments' councils. The Administration Council —, which includes the Rector, all vice-Rectors, the Director of Administration, the Head of the Doctoral Studies Council as well as the Deans of all faculties and student representatives — is defined as the main management body of the university.

During the visit, the Team felt a great internal communication flow among the different management structures, staff and students. It is the Team's impression that the decision-making at WUT is well organised, it seems effective and has a great support by the staff and students we encountered.

4. Visit to the Faculties

The visits to the two faculties was a very pleasant experience by all Team members. At the **Faculty of Arts and Design**, the Dean Prof. Vică Tilă Adorian with his colleagues showed the Team the great historical Faculty building close to the old city centre that is undergoing some renovations. Already at the backyard, the Team could observe several art sculptures made by students, graduates and teachers. The impressive artwork accompanied the Team at every step through the halls, staircases and at the attic. The Faculty cherishes very close communication with students and uses individual student approach. The feedback during the learning as well as assessment process seems in a very high level and it involves other students in the classroom for their input. The interaction between students and staff and the evaluation process plays a great role in the teaching as well as in the learning process of this study program and allows students to develop additional skills and competences to the ones required by the study programme. The Team compliments the Faculty for the strong involvement in the local, national and international environment. Looking at numerous publications, posters and exhibition materials proves of numerous events with a special emphasis on exchange of good practice and student learning.

The **Faculty of Economics and Business Administration** is very proud of its partnership with companies and international schools. The Dean prof. Ovidiu Megan proudly showed the Team the lecture halls and modern equipment acquired with project funds where an interactive, Student-Centred Learning environment can be well developed. He also stressed the strong network the Faculty has with over 30.000 alumni, among which some professionals are still closely cooperating with the faculty especially in the area of curricula development. The Dean has emphasised that the study programs and curricula must be modern, applicable, reflecting the market trends and therefore the collaboration with companies is essential. The Faculty offers also BA programs in foreign languages: in English Finance and Banking, in French Management and in German: Accounting and Business Information Systems. In addition, three MA programs are offered in English and French. The Team met few students who are members of the project group building “HUB” rooms for students in the basement of the Faculty, where they will encourage students from all other Faculties to meet, develop projects together, invite business partners and share good practice. The students explained enthusiastically about the plans and expressed a gratitude of the support they get from the Dean and Faculty in general. They seemed happy with the study conditions and the student involvement in the Faculty management. However, the Team did not meet many other teaching staff members, only one during the meetings who explained that in the area of staff development in teaching little has been done at the Faculty level. Most teachers depend on themselves and improve on the job, some learn new methodologies as they participate in Erasmus+ mobility and some have participated at trainings that WUT offered through projects. The Dean is aware of that and since the WUT management is setting up a staff development centre, the teachers of FEBA will be encouraged to actively participate for their improvement of teaching skills.

At both Faculties, the Team met a very enthusiastic, young staff who believe in their vision, are dedicated to their work and strongly believe in the prosperous university development.

5. Students involvement in university governance

Students are well involved in university governance, as they are represented in all management structures and within the related commissions by 25%. Their engagement is encouraged and their opinion is valued. Students are also very satisfied with the influence they have. Students' representatives of different organisations and associations have well established communication with the rector and his team as well as the deans, vice-deans and staff members. Representatives in these bodies do feel valued for their opinion and believe to be equal partners with other commission members.

WUT recognizes OSUT (Organizația Studenților din Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara) as the official umbrella student organisation with the only legitimate student governance representation. The Ethical code and ethical council are good case example of mechanisms that provide students with a strong sense of security in appealing process. The Commission for cheating is encouraging students' participation and opinion in the process by being consisted one third of students. Some of the students that the Team met have been a part of those commissions and have highlighted the professionalism of the body and relevance of their input in decision-making process.

Students are, however not involved in curriculum design. According to the management, they are welcomed to give their contributions, however, there is no formal consultation process in place and there is a low awareness of students about this right that is given to them. The communication opportunities are offered beyond formal representation bodies. WUT offers variety of options for establishment of formal communication for regular students and student representatives with the management. There are periodic meetings of vice deans with students that have been established as good case practice and are frequently conducted at almost all faculties.

The formal student representation organisation OSUT has some dissemination strategy for sharing the information about official university governance bodies and results of the negotiations with management, as well as collecting students' view and issues. However, they mostly use informal communication channels and social media.

The greatest issue the students face is the insufficient practical knowledge and lack of opportunities for practical exercises. Presently practical experience (even when mandatory as part of curriculum at some faculties) depends according to the information given, mostly on students' initiative and ability to ensure such for themselves. A good case example is the case of students' initiative for collaboration with Philharmonics at the Faculty of Arts. A formal support and structured procedures for offering more options in this area is needed. There is also not enough flexibility in assessment procedures, especially related to the scheduled exam times. Given the diversity of the student body and their social statuses, they are very sensitive towards strict non-negotiable exam times. The team noticed initiatives of number of professors at different faculties, but this is not coordinated at university level, nor there is any policy clearly offering this option for students.

WUT is home to variety of active student organisations and associations, in different fields, with different organisational structures and different aims and purposes. Moreover, all of them feel great support from the University, and the impression of the Team is that there is significant freedom for student organising and encouragement for establishing student organisations and associations of different kind. The support student organisations get is mainly technical, financial and support in resources, but also promotional through relevant faculty and university channels, free use of University's facilities and logistics. The organisations are further encouraged to take on projects and organise events, but are also invited for contributions and volunteering at all university organised events and conferences.

The Team saw a need for better communication of student representatives about what happened at meetings to general student body. This process needs to be formalized and more transparent to ensure better involvement of regular students and increase interest for current issues. Student governance could also be improved; ensuring students are equal partners with greater involvement of students on departmental level. Students are members of commissions when forming a new study program, however, on departmental level only teachers make decisions regarding curriculum and about the development of subjects. Similar is with the Commission for student appeals regarding exams, where final decision is dependent on teachers only. There is great opportunity for student involvement in these decisions, ensuring their role as equal partners in educational process as the core SCL principle. Students can provide fresh perspective and great inputs, but need more encouragement and space to do so in curriculum design as they do in other mentioned areas. The Team proposes having one student representative in all Senate commissions, especially for the area of teacher promotion. This will ensure that teaching and learning is taken into consideration, and the focus is taken away from research as the core criteria for decisions.

6. Social dimension

The care for social dimension and programs, which students benefit from, can be divided into those undertaken by the government and those undertaken by WUT itself. Concerning students from a lower socio-economical background, some funds are distributed to the University from the national level and the University then allocates the grants. In addition to this, WUT itself has implemented additional grants that are provided for the students. There is also a practice of waiving tuition fees for such students (a specialised Commission is in charge of this task). WUT was also awarded the title of “the most accessible institution” for students with disabilities. It currently receives between 20 and 30 students with disabilities and a specific university unit is in charge of helping them. WUT also has a Centre for Psychological Counselling and Career Orientation, whose primary focus seems to be mostly in career counselling, while not so many students use the service of psychological counselling.

During the meetings, students in general expressed their satisfaction with programmes and projects in the domain of social dimension. In addition, student representatives are members of various committees for grants and scholarships (both those financed by the government and those financed by WUT). However, students are not represented in the committee that decides about waiving tuition fees for students who are in particularly difficult situation. There is also a significant degree of flexibility and support for students who are parents or pregnant, and this is usually settled at the faculty level (flexible exam dates, special accommodation, etc.).

One particular concern expressed by the university management is a very high dropout rate (25% in the first year). They mentioned that the tutorship programme was introduced to help students with lower grades, but there seems to be a lack of systematic institutional strategy to reduce the dropout. Therefore, the Team proposes that the causes of high dropout rate at the first year is analysed in details and then active measures are taken to solve this problem. Depending on the detected causes, some examples of solutions could be: promotion of individual study programs requirements, preparatory courses, better career counselling before enrolling, etc.

As well, it would be good to identify all underrepresented and/or vulnerable groups of students and then develop a strategic document as well as an action plan for helping them and their situation.

Concerning the resources offered to students, offering systematic teaching and learning resources for students with learning difficulties and providing assistance (whether professional or with student peers) would certainly be of great importance.

7. Support services for students

At WUT, there is a variety of support services offered to students and evident effort to expand those in the future. Students are, in general, satisfied with their learning environment and with the facilities offered. The library activities are satisfactory, with special compliments to the online access that students also highlighted as a great support. The Team has witnessed a good integration of the library with the University, as the Director is a university professor. The library also has a scientific Board - where each Faculty is represented to coordinate the literature acquisition, making sure it goes along with the different student's needs, the latest developments in the area and the requirements of the curriculum.

WUT has computer rooms at several faculties, according to the students some are a bit outdated, but Wi-Fi is available everywhere. WUT has its own web page and each faculty as well, so students can follow the actual information daily. However, not much information is available in English. Available online tools for the university email system and electronic access to study resources are evidence of the efforts to approach students through means most suitable for them, using e-technology. The communication with teachers using digital technologies, such as social media, Moodle and Google groups, is still dependent on individual teachers and more common for younger teachers. Sharing these good case examples among all teaching staff (peer meetings at departments) could result in involving more teachers to use e-technology to communicate with students and much higher satisfaction level among students.

In the main University building, there is also a student canteen and students are happy to have the opportunity to get warm meals. However, at faculties that are located in the other parts of the city, the students hope to have the same opportunities.

The efforts to make facilities more accessible for disabled students (around 30 of them reported to be studying at the University) are evident. A good example is the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration that the Team visited. The Management has identified students with special needs and slowly started adjusting accessibility, with clear plans for more actions in the future.

There is still some room for improvement, according to the students' discussions in the area of lab work. Satisfaction with labs is limited, and shortcomings come in variety of issues such as outdated furniture, equipment, insufficient space for conduction of experiments in chemistry, no lockers for lab coats, no phonetics lab to practice language pronunciation. The Team proposes to WUT to consider mentioned students' concerns which may not all be related to greater investments but only to some re-organisation or involving business partners to help.

8. Teaching and learning

The WUT has a three-cycle-system applied at all levels. Although in the past years, the WUT has primarily focused on improving the results in research. It was mentioned during the interviews with some teachers that “this is the best way to make the institution recognised internationally if you are a good researcher, but the strategy for the development of quality of teaching and learning is in place”. Most teachers are aware of the importance of quality teaching and wish to have additional training in teaching methodologies. Through interviews with teachers, the Team discovered several examples of innovative teaching methods and active student involvement as well as creative ways of collecting additional feedback from students. Since these examples are mostly individual initiative, the Team proposes the development of a platform for sharing teaching experiences and examples of good practice with other teachers within the university but also with teachers from other institutions.

According to the WUT management, the necessity to develop the area of teaching and learning as part of the university system has been recognised and over the last five years, several activities in this area have been performed through several projects. The content and the activities of those projects were closely related to the teaching methodology, peer evaluations, blended learning, student feedback, transfer of knowledge, cross-curricular competencies, on line syllabus and e-inclusion for disabled students.

During the meetings with students, a great satisfaction was expressed with the methodology of teaching of some of the younger generation of teachers. It was pointed out as a great motivation to help students learn. In relation to that, all the students met by the Team shared the same positive enthusiasm about the methods of teaching and interactive communication during the teaching and learning processes, immediate feedback and willingness to help students by most of the staff members.

On the other hand, it is different with older generation of teachers. The students explained that they mostly teach ex cathedra and do not involve students during lectures. Some just read from their material and do not communicate with students about the content. In several cases, it was pointed out that the course content in different subjects is repetitive, also in comparison between BA and MA courses.

Students also expressed a great desire to have more practically oriented content in certain subjects, more group work, learning methods adapted to the needs of the students. These could be more focused on the development of soft skills and different methods of assessment especially less requirements to memorise data. Additionally, they agreed that teaching education for students who want to be teachers of their respective subjects should be developed as a separate study program with modern trends and Student-Centred Learning activities as the focus.

Students are satisfied to receive most of the study material that teachers use at lectures or seminars through e-media (mostly through Yahoo or Facebook groups, only a few mentioned Moodle).

Since 2014, WUT offers an extensive list of elective subjects (more than 200, each rewarded with 2 ECTS) that students must take in 2nd and 3rd year of their study (one per semester) from another Faculty. There must be at least 15 students enrolled for the course to take place. The content of the courses is basic so that students from other area of study can easily follow it. Students feel that this is a great opportunity to learn from other disciplines and it helps them develop transferrable skills. Teachers also support these cross-curricular activities and enjoy teaching students from other faculties and departments. This is a great practice and WUT should share it with other universities and offer it to international students as well as to the students from other Romanian universities.

Since the good quality teaching includes - besides the curricula - also the teaching methodology and the assessment technique, the Team recommends among others the following to the WUT:

- Encourage active and interactive teaching methodologies that actively involve students also in the development of assessment techniques and criteria throughout the university to the teaching staff
- Identify the overlaps in study programmes and courses
- Relate certain courses to practice
- Introduce the learning outcomes among teaching staff since the understanding of it was not clear to everyone. Useful source: Kennedy, Declan: Writing and using learning outcomes: a practical guide (<https://cora.ucc.ie/handle/10468/1613>)
- Teaching and learning activities with active student involvement should be a part of every departmental development plan

9. Staff support - Teacher development

According to the present legislative in Romania, all teachers who want to teach at University have to take didactic pedagogical training prior to their employment. During interviews, the staff explained that this training was offered during their study and the content was mainly theoretical. After that, there was no more training offered as a support to the teachers as part of the institutional system. The teachers met by the Team seemed enthusiastic about their teaching and while some were more motivated to find innovative ways to interact with students more intensively, others believed that with their research obligations they had not enough time to deepen in the area of teacher's training. However, they all have agreed that there is much room for improvement in the area of Student-Centred Learning and especially in the area of students' learning and assessment techniques.

It was also mentioned during the visit that the state policies and regulations are hindering the development of teaching and learning processes. Especially regarding the criteria for evaluation of teachers and teaching that are not formally adopted, nor are they part of the promotion system for the teachers. In relation to that, the leadership is developing a human resources strategy where special attention will be given to the excellence in teaching and professional support of teachers. As well, the Centre for academic development was established in December 2015 where the focus will be on area of teaching and learning. At the beginning, the colleagues from the Department for Educational Sciences will be included as trainers and later external experts and consultants will be invited. The Team believes that WUT has a clear understanding of the importance to develop support also for teaching staff and will follow their plans to the realisation in the near future.

At Western European universities, the Centres for teaching and learning have a long tradition and can be used as examples of good practice. Some suggestions from the Team are listed below:

- <http://www.ucc.ie/en/teachlearn/>
- <https://www.europa-uni.de/en/struktur/zsfl/Hintergrundinformation/index.html>
<http://ctl.ceu.edu/>, <http://www3.ul.ie/ctl/>
- <http://www.uq.edu.au/staffdevelopment/teaching-and-learning>

The Team also recommends to WUT to do the needs analysis to learn from the teachers what the main areas of concern are and include some students' input. On the basis of these results, a tailor-made training program can be developed that will meet the needs of the teachers.

Regarding the promotion of teachers, the team was told that WUT is very restricted by the law, as the promotional criteria for teachers is set on national level and references only to the research part. The National Law also regulates employment of teaching staff and the university has very little possibilities to manage staff according to their needs.

When teachers are promoted, they are also evaluated on the didactic part, but students do not participate. The points teachers get for teaching do not count much, merely they get points for published textbooks for students. This is the only teaching criteria assessed for

teachers' promotion. The research activity plays a far more important role in the promotion criteria (projects, citations, publications, etc.). Some teachers said they feel frustrated because they invest a lot of time to teaching and involve students in learning but this work is not formally recognised. The students' questionnaire results are also not part of the criteria for teachers' promotion. One efficient example of the teachers' promotion criteria development is "New career model for promotion of teachers" that was developed at the University of Ghent in Belgium where a staff member can choose the path to be promoted either as a teacher or as a researcher (contact prof. Koen Goethals <http://www.ugent.be/en/ghentuniv/administration/academic-administrator/overview.htm>).

According to the WUT staff, there is one gala event "Bologna teacher award" at the university, where prizes for best professors are awarded and one of the criteria is the quality of teaching. This event is organised and developed by the Student Union. The team recommends that WUT considers recognising good teachers in University events but also as a part of promotion, considering that the Dean can additionally give up to 25% of salary raise for good teaching.

The teachers will be more motivated to get involved in higher quality of teaching when teaching becomes an important priority and recognised by the university. Since May 2015, the revised version of the "The Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) were adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education. The area of Student-Centred Learning, teaching and assessment as well as Teaching staff development were set as standards and will require a lot of attention, especially in the processes of internal evaluation and external accreditation processes. Therefore, the Team strongly supports WUT in their efforts to develop an operational Centre for analysis and pedagogic development involving colleagues from the Department for Educational Sciences who showed a great enthusiasm about it during the interviews. Additionally, clear criteria for evaluating the quality of Student-Centred Learning, teaching and the role of the teachers in this process should be developed for internal quality processes.

10. ECTS

Teaching at WUT is done in accordance with the ECTS and learning outcome methodology, and the teachers are familiar with this methodology because of their mandatory pedagogical training. ECTS allocation, at least in principle, is distributed in accordance with the intended learning outcomes and realistic student workload. The teacher responsible for that course sets learning outcomes of a particular course. These learning outcomes are made available for students in advance, through course syllabi (which are presented and discussed during the first class), but students have little or no formal influence on designing them. The same principle applies to study programs learning outcomes – they are usually decided upon by the department and students are not consulted (student representatives are not members of the decision making body), though they can give their input informally.

WUT does have a developed procedure for recognition of prior (non-formal and informal) learning. The student can apply to the special university commission, which can then award ECTS points for a certain experience. However, this procedure is used in a very limited manner – mostly for students who are volunteering in one of the student organisations (there is a list of eligible organisations) and they can only get extra ECTS points besides the required 60 ECTS (though these do count for promotion to the next year). The recognition of other kinds of learning is very rare. Furthermore, the diploma supplement is not used to make a record of this informal and non-formal learning.

One particular issue that came up during the interviews was the recognition of mobility periods, as students sometimes had to take courses abroad, which were not recognized at home, even though they were, in their opinion, similar enough to those at WUT. Consequently, some students had to take additional exams and they felt that this was not correct.

Concerning ECTS allocation, although teachers listed importance and relevance of the course as primary factors in determining the number of ECTS, students mostly expressed their satisfaction with this allocation, with only some courses being unfit for the assigned number of ECTS. This is discussed informally during the courses and sometimes changed accordingly. Through these informal talks during the courses, in some cases the assessment methods and literature are discussed while teachers also expressed their willingness to include alumni in this process as well (though alumni are currently not formally included in any way). Furthermore, the students expressed that they are not very familiar with the learning outcomes of their courses and study programs and mostly do not see them as a useful tool to prepare for courses – they rather look at literature, topics, and assessment methods. Teachers also have difficulties understanding the benefits of the learning outcomes for the teaching process.

Although there is already a prior learning recognition procedure, the Team proposes to consider further development in a way that awarded ECTS points count as part of the regular 60 ECTS points for an academic year and that at least certain parts of it are automatically

recognised. To alleviate problems in recognition of mobility periods, it would probably be a good idea to develop an appeal procedure so that students could appeal in cases of no recognition of their mobility periods.

Student representatives should be included in curriculum design activities both at the level of individual courses and study programs. It would probably be useful to include all the relevant stakeholders in study programs design and revision (students, alumni, employers). The diploma supplement as a formal document should be used to document all relevant information about students, including their extracurricular activities.

Concerning ECTS allocation in examples where this is not the case, a positive development would be to measure realistic student workload and its consistency with allocated ECTS points and the procedure for acting upon it.

11. Assessment, feedback

The main tool for student feedback is definitely the student questionnaire. The questionnaire has quite a high turnout rate of 40-50 percent, and students are in general satisfied with it, though they would like to see the results and improvements related to them. In addition, the results of the questionnaires are only optional and rarely used as a criterion for academic advancement. Some of the teachers, on the other hand, expressed their distrust in the results of the students' questionnaire, claiming the results have more to do with the teacher's personality than the teaching quality and that demanding teachers get lower grades. Some of them also considered student attendance (which is only mandatory at seminars, but not at lectures) and their activity during study process as a true indicator. Alternative methods of collecting student feedback are also occasionally used at some faculties. A positive example are the teachers who use short questionnaires on specific elements during the course and results discuss immediately with students. Part of the interviewed students and teachers also noted that students sometimes give feedback informally, through discussions about the course and teachers consider it.

Teachers' feedback and communication with students is mostly traditional – exam discussions, e-mails (all students have their official university e-mail address) and talks during contact hours, but a Moodle platform has recently been implemented and more and more teachers use it to communicate with the students. Additionally, some teachers use Yahoo groups and Facebook to make this communication even more efficient.

Student assessment is mostly done by traditional methods (written and oral exams, essays...) and there is very little practical assessment or assessment through projects. Students stated that they do not have much influence on assessment methods – these are not discussed in advance or evaluated later, but are merely given to students. Students have the only opportunity to discuss this through their representatives at the faculty council meetings. Some teachers however do allow students to choose between oral and written exams. In a case that a student is not satisfied with the way he/she was graded, he/she can make an appeal and then a special commission is formed to analyse the grading. The students are not members of this commission. In serious situations, a student can make a formal request to take a subject with a different professor. However, in cases where there are doubts about student cheating at tests, a similar commission is formed but students are – in this case – members of it.

The Team believes that it is very important for students and teachers to have more confidence in student questionnaires and their effect. Therefore, it is important to promote it as a positive tool for improvement and partnership in making students' experience more positive. All parties involved should know the changes made upon the results of the questionnaires. As well the positive results from student questionnaires (and other ways of student feedback) about the quality of teaching should be recognised publicly and the possibility should be explored to include it in the academic promotion criteria. Encouraging more teachers to collect student feedback during the course would also have a positive effect.

Concerning student assessment, it would be good to discuss assessment methods and techniques in advance as well as after the course and analyse the need for possible changes. In any case, different assessment techniques and methodologies should be used.

Teacher should also be encouraged and trained to use Moodle tool to communicate with students the study content.

12. Internationalisation and mobility

Internationalisation at WUT is one of their priorities and well incorporated in the university culture. Staff and students mentioned international activities at almost every meeting the Team had as being an essential part of institutional life.

At WUT several BA and MA programs are taught in English, French and German and they organise free of charge Romanian language courses for Erasmus students. Erasmus programs of mobility run very well since this year they have 800 incoming students, 300 outgoing, 70 outgoing teachers, 150 incoming teachers and 60 international trainings.

According to the students and staff experiences, the Department for International Relations (DRI) is well organised and offers good support services for them. Six staff members at the DRI cooperate closely with Erasmus coordinators at faculty level. According to the staff and students' opinion, the integration of international staff and students runs well not only on administrative level but also assisting them during the stay with their study and exams preparation, language, and let them live together with the Romanian students. The student organisations ESN and OSUT give a great deal of support, especially organising events for them. A good language skill for staff and students before they take part on mobility is still a very important condition.

WUT would like to increase the number of outgoing students and staff but have stressed that this is also related to the financial reasons and lack of foreign language knowledge. Staff believes that the ECTS recognition from abroad is ensured, however some students had different experiences. In some cases, the recognition of credits from studies abroad was not granted and students had to take additional exams. In this respect, the Team recommends to the WUT that the students are well informed prior to their mobility about the transferability and recognition upon their return and that the signed learning agreement is respected. Students and staff expressed a wish to share their mobility experiences to others on departmental level, therefore the Team recommends to organise informal presentations and this way attract more teachers and students for Erasmus mobility experience.

13. Quality assurance

The WUT has a strong commitment to the quality development and is actively following the recommendations from its stakeholders, as well as experts from the IEP EUA and ARACIS institutional evaluations. Recently WUT has drafted the Code for Quality Assurance and adopted the QA Handbook for clearly defining their QA system. Unfortunately, only few documents and data were provided in English to be able to closely explore the quality processes, but the participants at the meetings were mostly aware of them and some have concrete responsibilities in them.

The main role to assure quality at WUT is the Department for Quality Management (DQM) that is centrally positioned and supports the whole quality management system of the university. It is subordinated to the vice-Rector for academic strategy. It coordinates the evaluation processes on institutional and faculty level. It has one Director and four employees. They cooperate closely with the Committee for Quality Management, the Commission for Quality Evaluation and Assurance and with the Commissions for quality management at each of the faculties. The members are teaching staff, students and employers.

According to the Background report and discussions with the staff and students, WUT performs on regular bases several activities related to quality. For example, there is an annual internal audit done at the level of the faculties and teaching evaluations that are performed each semester, in which students evaluate all courses. These evaluation procedures are well known to everyone involved but the use of the results and further analysis for quality enhancement does not seem to be a part of these activities. Some staff agreed that the main purpose to prepare these documents is to meet the internal or external regulations. In relation to this, the Team recommends to prepare an action plan after each annual evaluation, with deadlines, responsible individuals and indicators to be able to follow the progress. The realisation of such action plan can be monitored periodically, every four months.

The most often mentioned quality activity were the student questionnaires, where questions relate mainly to the quality of teaching staff (organisation of the course, content, methods, language, support, learning resources...), but not at all to the assessment of students or students' involvement in the learning processes. The Team recommends reviewing the current student questionnaires to make them less focused on teachers but also on course and possibly involve students in this process for their input.

The opinion about the importance of student questionnaires varied among the teaching staff and not all believe that they are "necessary". On the other side, the students almost unified expressed that filling out the questionnaires about the quality of teachers are important to them but they wish to get the results and to see some changes happen. This is a very important issue in the area of student involvement in quality processes that needs to be taken seriously. The Team recommends to WUT to make sure that the results of the student

questionnaires are discussed at least at the departmental level of each Faculty and as a reaction to the results, the future activities need to be showed to the students. Possibly the Dean can discuss some measures to be taken about the activities with 10% of the best evaluated and 10% of worst evaluated teachers, to either share their good practice with other colleagues or offer additional support/training to the weaker ones. It may be considered also to internally publish the results through the Academis system where only students with their ID can access them on their study program level. Additionally, the same system can be used to put the questionnaires online, where the student's identity is used only to enter the questionnaire but not when sending it. This way also the administrative workload of the DQM can be much reduced.

Involving students as partners, especially in the quality processes is the main higher education policy initiative across Europe that emphasises the importance of students' active engagement in their learning, and the benefits to be gained when students play an active role in shaping and enhancing their learning experiences. Student engagement has become a core aim for the sector and several institutions have developed special training programs for students and staff to make students' learning experience much positive. One of such examples is also SPARQS model developed at publicly-funded agency for Scotland's university and college sectors which aims to support student engagement in the quality of the learning experience (<http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/>).

The Team was told that some faculties practice evaluation of teaching done by colleagues, the peer evaluation. The Educational Sciences has designed a peer evaluation instrument available to all faculties and all study programmes. Some teachers have explained that they find it a very useful tool when observing the colleague during the lessons and afterwards discussing the process. The Team finds this practice very valuable and it should become a part of the internal evaluation system. It can also be further expanded to the peers outside the institution and internationally to share their experiences.

14. Final conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, the Team would like to stress again that during the visit we have experienced exceptional team spirit among staff and students, which should be pointed out as an important value for the university culture and will definitely contribute to the prosperous future development.

In summary, the following recommendations are proposed to the WUT:

1. Students involvement in university governance

- Encourage better communication of student representatives about what happened at governance meetings to general student body.
- Greater involvement of students on departmental level, ensuring students are equal partners (a core principle of SCL) in decisions that concern the students.
- Consider having one student representative in all Senate commissions, especially for teacher promotion.

2. Social dimension

- Research and analyse the causes of a high dropout rate during the first year and prepare a plan for activities to reduce the problem.
- Student representatives should be a part of all bodies/commissions that decide about social dimension and, particularly, support for students.
- Identify all underrepresented and/or vulnerable groups of students and develop a strategic document on underrepresented and/or vulnerable groups of students, as well as an action plan for helping their situation.
- Provide teaching and learning resources for students with learning difficulties and offer assistance for students with serious disabilities.

3. Support services for students

- Communication with teachers using digital technologies, such as social media and Google groups, is still dependent on individual teachers and more common for younger teachers. Highlighting these good case examples among all teaching staff could result in much higher satisfaction level among students.
- Students' satisfaction with labs is limited, and shortcomings come in variety of issues such as outdated furniture that prevents from creating movable spaces for group work simulations, to insufficient space for conduction of experiments in chemistry, no lockers for lab coats, to not having at all a phono-lab for languages.

4. Teaching and learning

- The development of a platform for sharing teaching experiences and examples of good practice with other teachers within the university but also with teachers from other institutions.
- Further explore the proposal of students to develop a separate study program with modern trends in teaching and student centered learning as the focus for students who want to be teachers of their respective subjects.

- Share a good practice of cross-curricular activities with other universities and offer it to international students as well as to the students from other Romanian universities.
- Encourage active and interactive teaching methodologies that actively involve students also in the development of assessment techniques and criteria throughout the university to the teaching staff.
- Identify the overlaps in study programmes and courses.
- Relate certain courses to practice.
- Introduce the learning outcomes among teaching staff since the understanding of it was not clear to everyone. Useful source: Kennedy, Declan: Writing and using learning outcomes: a practical guide (<https://cora.ucc.ie/handle/10468/1613>)
- Teaching and learning activities with active student involvement should be a part of every departmental development plan.

5. Staff support- teacher development

- Consider to do the needs analysis to learn from the teachers what the main areas of concern are when they teach and include some students' input. On bases of these results a tailored made training program can be developed that will meet the needs of the teachers.
- Develop a recognition system for good teachers (teachers' award) and promote it at University events.
- Teaching and learning activities should become part of the annual plan of the individual department and Faculty; as well, it should find its place at the overall institutional development strategy.
- A clear criterion for evaluating the quality of Student-Centred Learning, teaching and the role of the teachers in this process should be developed for internal quality processes.

6. ECTS

- Work on making (at least certain parts of) prior learning recognition procedure automatic and completely transparent and known to the students.
- Consider including the awarded ECTS for recognition of prior learning as part of the regular 60 ECTS points for an academic year.
- Include student representatives in curricula design both at the level of individual courses and study programs.
- Involve (as a part of the decision-making bodies) all the relevant stakeholders in study programs design and revision (staff, students, alumni, employers).
- Measure realistic student workload and its consistency with allocated ECTS points and develop the procedure for acting upon it. It should be part of the whole university system.
- Consider developing an appeal procedure for students in cases of no recognition of their mobility periods.
- Use diploma supplement to document all relevant information about students' study experience, including their extracurricular activities (special awards, performances, outstanding contribution as student representative, top athlete, artist, ...) in the section 6.1. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/doc/ds_en.pdf .

7. Assessment, feedback

- Promote students' questionnaires among teachers and students as a positive tool for improvement and partnership in making students' experience more positive. All parties involved should know the changes made upon the results of the questionnaires.
- Recognise publicly the positive results from student questionnaires (and other ways of student feedback) about the quality of teaching and explore the possibility to include it in the academic promotion criteria.
- Encourage more teachers to collect student feedback during the course work.
- Discuss with students the assessment methods and techniques in advance as well as after the course and analyse the need for possible changes.
- Different assessment techniques and methodologies should be considered to be used not only at final exams but also during the study process. As an example of different methods of assessment can serve the University of Texas, Austin: <https://learningsciences.utexas.edu/teaching/assess-learning/methods-overview> .
- Teacher should be encouraged and trained to use Moodle tool to communicate with students the study content.

8. Internationalisation and mobility

- Students should be well informed prior to their mobility about the transferability and recognition upon their return and the signed learning agreement must be respected.
- Organise informal presentations at departments, faculty level by staff and students who went on mobility and this way attract more teachers and students for Erasmus mobility experience.

9. Quality assurance

- After each annual evaluation, an action plan should be prepared, with deadlines, responsible individuals and indicators to be able to follow the progress. The realisation of such action plan could be monitored periodically, every four months.
- Review the current student questionnaires to make them less focused on teachers but also on course, assessment evaluation and possibly involve students in this process for their input.
- The results of the student questionnaires should be discussed at least at the departmental level of each Faculty and a reaction to the results, the future activities need to be shown to the students.
- As an idea what to do with the results of the questionnaires: The Dean can discuss with 10% of the best evaluated and 10% of worst evaluated teachers about the activities, measures to be taken to either share their good practice with other colleagues or offer additional support, training to the weak ones.
- Consider internally publishing the results through the Academis system where only students with their ID can access them on their study program level.
- Explore the possibility to put the questionnaires online, where the student's identity is used only to enter the questionnaire but not when sending it. This way also the administrative workload of the DQM can be much reduced.

- Promote student engagement especially among staff as an important initiative to make students' learning experience much positive. One of such examples is also SPARQS model developed at publicly-funded agency for Scotland's university and college sectors which aims to support student engagement in the quality of the learning experience (<http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/>).
- The peer evaluation instrument should become a part of the internal evaluation system and further expanded to the peers outside the institution and internationally to share their experiences.