



Cluster report N°2: Preliminary findings and recommendations

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| Sample: 18 of the 30 universities | | | |
|--|---|--------|-------|
| | | Sample | Total |
| Location | A representative distribution | 8 | 11 |
| Size | < 5 000 students | 10 | 17 |
| | 5 000 to 10 000 students | 4 | 6 |
| | > 10 000 students | 4 | 7 |
| Type | Artistic/creative institutions | 5 | 7 |
| | Agriculture/veterinary sciences | 3 | 3 |
| | Medicine and allied health | 2 | 3 |
| | Academies: police/military/intelligence | 2 | 7 |
| | Other specialised | 2 | 3 |
| | Multidisciplinary | 4 | 7 |



Structure of the cluster report

- Introduction, including a presentation of the thirty institutions
- Governance, including quality assurance
- Teaching & learning
- Doctoral education and research
- Service to society
- Internationalisation
- Concluding remarks





National and institutional context

- National context:
 - An ever changing legal framework
 - The compounded results of the economic crisis: some institutions in survival mode
- Institutional:
 - New rectors in most institutions
 - Close links among institutions within same specialism





Governance:

(1) Decision-making structures and processes

- Senate, Administrative Council and rector
- Senate commissions and vice rectors

Recommendations:

- Review the current legal framework that regulates the relationship between the Senate, the rector and the Administrative Council in order to ensure that the Administrative Council is able to take decisions in a timely manner, after a reasonable period of consultation.
- Focus the remit of the Senate to core academic issues of integrity and standards.
- Review the size and composition of the Senate to ensure that it is not too big and that various constituencies are represented.





Governance:

(2) Faculties and departments

(3) Students and administrative staff

(4) Human resources

- Staff shortage
- Heavy teaching workloads
- Academic inbreeding
- Weak administrative skills





Governance

(5) Financial resources

- Level of public and private funding is low
- Demographic trends are declining
- Evidence of efforts to do better with less resources
- Lack internal allocation models that support institutional strategy

(6) Mission/vision and strategy

- More experience is needed in this area to strengthen content and process

(7) Streamlining the universities

- Too much duplication leads to red tape





Governance:

(8) QA

1) Lots of developments in this area: vice rector for quality, students' involvement, questionnaires (course evaluations, exit questionnaires, employers and alumni surveys), etc.

1) But:

- A sense that QA culture is bureaucratic and compliant
- Ethical issues: fairness of examination; scientific misconduct

2) Recommendations:

- Workshops to understand better what internal QA is about
- Deal with ethical issues at national and institutional level
- Change external QA to a trust-based, improvement approach





Teaching and learning

1) Evidence of strong commitment to T&L and lots of good initiatives

1) Future efforts should focus on:

- Learning outcomes and aligning the exams to this approach
- More active and autonomous learning and a better balance between theoretical/practical courses => Student/staff workloads
- Interdisciplinarity and flexibility (optional courses) via cooperation across faculties
- Identifying and supporting at-risk, first-year students, **thus avoiding a high ratio of dropouts**
- Pastoral care and student engagement
- Tracking students whilst at university and after
- Developing e- and b-learning
- Academic staff development





Doctoral education and research

- Momentum toward building research capacity has been curtailed by lack of funding
- Specific challenges of artistic universities and the academies

1) Doctoral education

- Clarify and enlarge the role and function of doctoral schools
- Consider carefully the number of doctoral schools and whether each faculty needs one
- Create an annual event for all doctoral students
- Enlarge the number of supervisors and review their workload
- Give to the doctoral school the responsibility for the admission's process, which needs to be rethought and related to the available number of supervisors and of funded spaces .
- Strengthen quality through European co-tutelles, the use of external co-referees and evaluators; publication of PhD results in internationally refereed journals; and support to attend international conferences





2) Research capacity: A challenging issue given funding scarcity

Recommendations:

- Develop a research strategy based on strengths
- Ensure good oversight (vice-rector is key)
- Ensure appropriate structures: the optimal number of research centres; establishing a research support office
- Secure funding: institutional seed money fund, applied research and philanthropy
- Grow a research culture: showcase success, focus on young researchers,
- Promote inter-faculty, inter-institutional regional/national cooperation
- Increase international visibility and cooperation
- Evaluate





Service to society

- 1) Lots of good practices and many institutions that consider service/links to society as strategic – but variation according to institutional type + location
- 1) Recommendations to universities, e.g.: focus on explaining the benefits of engagement to the external stakeholders and the internal constituencies
- 1) Recommendations to national authorities, e.g.:
 - Provide appropriate scope of institutional autonomy particularly regarding funding and budget management.
 - Review intellectual property rights to allow co-sharing of royalties with the funding agency, the university and the researchers.
 - Provide resources for regional clustering initiatives that would include sharing technology centres, incubators, administrative support services, etc.
 - Ensure that any legal obstacle to partnerships between society and the university is removed.





Internationalisation

- 1) Internationalisation is an important strategic objective for many institutions
- 1) Some good developments: international office, language courses, sections in FR/EN, networking and benchmarking, institutional agreements, etc.
- 1) Recommendations for institutions:
 - Strengthen institutional strategies by identifying: the goals, the rationales, the geographical targets, staff skills, the measurement tools, etc.
 - Review international agreements and focus on quality rather than quantity
 - Develop staff expertise, including language skills
- 2) Recommendations for national authorities:
 - Develop a national strategy that would support institutional strategies





Conclusions: 5 recommendations to universities

1. Engage the academic and administrative staff as well as students in a discussion of university wide strategic goals and priorities.
2. Engage a wide variety of external stakeholders in a dialogue about their expectations of higher education and research.
3. Develop a coherent internationalisation strategy.
4. Develop an information strategy to support e-learning, e-research and the management of the university.
5. Create good conditions for research and teaching through a range of actions: e.g. streamlining structures, offering staff development and student support services, etc.





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Conclusions: 5 recommendations to the national authorities

1. Support research capacity in order to sustain good teaching. As a first step promote applied research.
2. Improve conditions to encourage public and private organisations to engage with university research.
3. Consider staffing issues in the context of massive retirements by focusing on young academics and ensuring quality work conditions.
4. Reframe academic staffing policies by allowing universities to provide individualised and evolving contracts to academic staff members as each of them progress in his/her career.
5. Address such constraints as financial management requirements, detailed organisational structures, etc.



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Thank you for your attention



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