

## IEP Preparatory workshop for institutions:

# Short introduction to SWOT analysis A tool to be used in your self-evaluation process

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## Key, preliminary considerations

- Your **mission** is central to all the activities that you will pursue
- Your **organisation** consists of a culture and the individuals and groups that have a direct stake in the success of your organisation's mission. These stakeholders include the management, staff, students, Board/Council members and funders
- Your **environment** consists of the external forces and external agents that affect the business. These are circumstances outside of your control that will influence planning or operations



## What is a **SWOT**?

- **SWOT** = acronym for **Strengths**, **Weaknesses**, **Opportunities**, **Threats**
- A planning tool used to understand the strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats of the university.
- It involves specifying the objective of the organisation and identifying the internal and external factors that are supportive or unfavourable to achieving that objective.



## What is **SWOT** for?

- It reveals your institution's advantages (e.g., compared to comparable institutions)
- It analyses your prospects for further development
- It prepares your organisation for potential threats or changes in the environment
- It allows for the development of contingency plans

**SWOT** is often used as part of a strategic planning process



## SWOT's Success factors

- Be realistic about the strengths and weaknesses of your university
- Be specific and avoid grey areas
- Always analyse in relation to your competition i.e. better than or worse than your competition
  - Try to identify opportunities (O) that are NOT available to competitors
  - Try to identify strengths (S) that are NOT shared by competitors
- A team effort: To be effective, it cannot be done by just one person



## SWOT's Success factors (2)

Due to the collaborative nature of this tool, certain qualities are essential:

- Diversity – The team conducting the SWOT analysis should be representative of the entire organisation
- Trust – The questions that **SWOT** will bring up, particularly in the Weaknesses and Threats categories may be uncomfortable. The group must be able to face weaknesses and potential threats openly and objectively
- Ability and willingness to implement change



## Strengths

- **Definition:** Positive, tangible and intangible attributes, internal to an organisation that are **within** the university's **control**.
- **Examples of questions:**
  - What does my institution do well?
  - Is there anything that my institution does better than most?
  - Better than anyone else?
- **Examples** of categories to look at:
  - Research
  - Teaching
  - Service to society
  - People
  - Finance
  - Others

## Weaknesses

- **Definition:** Factors that are **within** a university's **control** that detract from its ability to attain the desired goal. Not to be confused with constraints that cannot be changed.
- **Examples of questions:**
  - What does my institution do poorly (compared to our goals/mission)?
  - What should my institution avoid, based on past mistakes?
  - Which aspects might the institution improve?
  - Which activities should be improved?
- **Examples of categories to look at:**
  - Research
  - Teaching
  - Service to society
  - People
  - Finance
  - Others



# Opportunities

- **Definition:** External factors that represent the reason for a university to exist and develop.
  
- **Examples of questions:**
  - What opportunities exist in the environment, which will propel my institution?
  - What are some major trends in the sector? e.g., demographic, political, or financial demands for certain types of services
  - Who are our competitors? What are their comparative strengths? Where can my institution find, or create, a competitive advantage?



## Threats

- **Definition:** External factors, **beyond** a university's **control**, which could place the organisation's mission or operation **at risk**.
- **Questions:**
  - Are there environmental factors that threatened my institution's current position(e.g., demographic, cultural, political, or financial pressures)?
  - What are our competitors doing that may result in a loss (of strategic position, critical mass...)?
  - Can you classify the threats by their "seriousness" and "probability of occurrence"?
  - Can you think of a contingency plans to address them should they occur?

... And remember that:

- The IEP evaluation team is based on peer-review principle and is a critical friend.
- Being honest, self-analytic and self-critical is the best way to get the best from the IEP process!

