KANSALLINEN KOULUTUKSEN ARVIOINTIKESKUS
NATIONELLA CENTRET FÖR UTBILDNINGSUTVÄRDERING
FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

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Publikationsår **2024**, NCU:s publikation **3:2024**
Språk **Engelska**
ISBN **978-952-206-835-4 pdf**

1.1 The planning of education

- Högskolans självvärdering

Accreditation of new study programmes

UL's strategic goals in the educational field are the provision of a broad and diverse range of study programmes based on the development of disciplines and the modernisation of key competences, knowledge and skills in accordance with the requirements of a sustainable future and Society 5.0. The fundamental principles of education are based on the values of social responsibility, ethics, cooperation and the strengthening of critical thinking. UL is autonomous in its decisions on proposed new study programmes, for which SQAA awards accreditation for an indefinite period and carries out sample and extraordinary evaluations. Students participate in the competent bodies at UL Members and the UL. External experts act as peer-reviewers in the process of accreditation of new study programmes at the UL and at SQAA.

Development and modification of study programmes

Under existing legislation, the university is responsible for developing and modifying accredited study programmes so as to take into account the suggestions and needs of providers, students or external stakeholders. Students and external stakeholders are included in regular self-evaluations of study programmes. They can also communicate suggestions via student surveys and other formal and informal meetings and conversations with supervisors, study programme directors or vice-deans.

Procedures for the accreditation and modification of study programmes (Ba-Ma, and PhD) are set out in the Instructions for the management of degree study programmes of the UL (available in the intranet).

For the purpose of managing data on study programmes as laid down by the Higher Education Act (ZViS) and in order to support the process of their modification, UL has developed the Electronic Register of Study Programmes – EŠP (for more, see 1.4).

As required by the ZViS envisaged learning outcomes are a compulsory component of a study programme. They are divided into general competences and subject-specific competences. In terms of levels, they follow the level descriptors contained in the ZViS and the Slovenian Qualifications Framework, while in terms of recommendations they follow Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives.

Learning methods, testing methods and the learning environment support the achievement of learning objectives, which is verified in two cycles:

- in the process of accreditation via peer-reviewers (external experts) – peer learning activity,
- in the process of maintaining and improving quality via student surveys and self-evaluations of study programmes.

Course providers are encouraged to evaluate course syllabuses every year and verify the connection of methods of work with learning objectives. UL Members are responsible for approving syllabus contents.

Pilot projects as part of ULTRA (a project from the Recovery and Resilience Plan 2022–2025) are focused on renewal of the curricula of all 29 professional higher education study programmes at UL. These projects are inter- and multidisciplinary. The key objectives of curriculum renewal are the introduction of twin (green and digital) competences and the development of a system of micro-credentials. The renewal is being tested in two evaluation cycles; the final report will contain guidelines from the competent ministry for the development of a national strategy for LLL and education with micro-credentials.

Connections of study programmes with the working environment

Professional bachelor study programmes are legally required to include work experience (placements, internships). The same applies to academic bachelor study programmes in the fields of education, healthcare, medicine and the arts and those leading to qualifications for occupations that are regulated at the European level. An increasing amount of practical training or practical course elements are also being incorporated into study programmes via projects, in order to introduce problem-based learning and student-focused learning. Study programmes for the most part include compulsory or elective practical experience in the working environment, along with applied assignments/seminars and tutorials, while doctoral programmes also include research in the context of research projects connected to real challenges of the environment/society.

External experts as mentors participate in the provision of individual course contents.

Study programmes for continuing education are additionally connected to the working

environment and needs for specialised knowledge. In the context of LLL, a prototype of cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce is being prepared, which will serve as a basis for designing an educational offer involving micro-credentials. Other forms of LLL in the form of summer schools, courses, seminars, training sessions or conferences are offered to various interest groups (for more, see 2.).

Internationalisation in education

Internationalisation is available to students (exchanges) and graduates (practical training abroad). UL also takes part in bilateral cooperation for double degree programmes and accredits joint study programmes in which student mobility is compulsory. Agreements on joint implementation of research and co-supervision of UL students' doctoral theses in cooperation with a foreign university or research institution (co-tutelle) represent a special form of cooperation (for more, see 4).

All UL Members offer groups of courses in English for the needs of international students participating in mobility programmes. UL Members provide some study programmes in English because many foreign students enrol in them. Foreign students are offered the opportunity to learn Slovene in the one-year Year Plus programme (for more, see 1.4).

Incorporation of research and innovation/artistic activities into learning and teaching

Responsibility for education is held by higher education teachers with habilitation and references in the fields they teach. In order to obtain and maintain or be appointed to a more senior rank, they must demonstrate research or artistic achievements in this field. They regularly transfer their research activities into the study programme as part of the teaching process or supervision. UL encourages international teacher exchanges since these lead to new cooperation or enhance existing cooperation both in research and in educational activities, in this way making an important contribution to the pedagogical and professional development of teachers and to their development as researchers. A large number of domestic, international and EU projects contribute to competences of graduates, the international mobility of students and teachers and visiting lectureships by foreign lecturers. Diversified and in-depth research cooperation with a range of prestigious universities and institutes in other countries creates a favourable environment for students and their subsequent integration in academic and economic spheres.

Student workload is measured via student surveys, individual interviews with students and conversations of students and coordinators of individual academic fields, supervisors/co-supervisors, lecturers and course providers, and student representatives on bodies of UL Members and the university.

Student surveys allow us to assess the actual workload estimates, expressed in ECTS credit points and actual student workload and differences between the individual course units making up a study programme. Reports are prepared at the UL Members and programmes level and at the UL level. Five-year trends are monitored at all levels (for more, see 1.3).

Strengths	Enhancement areas
Transparency of procedures for the planning and development of study programmes.	Introduce new methods for quality assurance of new content, especially for micro-credits.
The Electronic Study Programmes Register (EŠP) ensures the transparency of procedures, data and development of study programmes.	Clear communication of new content development and public visibility of the UL's commitment to the goals of a sustainable society.
The long and high-quality tradition of Life Long Learning (LLL).	Conversion of old LLL models to new environments by issuing e-certificates, tokens, etc.
Well-developed alumni relations and a high-quality career counselling system.	Develop tools for communicating with society to identify any needs for new knowledge.
Good cooperation with foreign universities and institutions, resulting in internationally comparable and competitive UL study programmes.	Develop interdisciplinary study programmes and coordinate the development of interdisciplinary courses by multiple UL Members to achieve greater integration, considering a bottom-up approach.

1.1 The planning of education

- Auditeringsgruppens bedömning

Rigorous processes for the planning of education

The University of Ljubljana (UL) employs a robust process of curriculum development and periodic reviews to ensure that the educational provision aligns with the university's strategy and national frameworks. The academic planning is guided by national and international quality assurance standards to guarantee that the UL's programmes meet standards at different qualification levels. There are multiple levels of involvement in the process, and various groups such as students, administrative and teaching staff as well as external stakeholders are engaged. For example, there are monthly meetings between the vice rector for study and student affairs and vice deans of education. According to the audit visit, 20% of the members of the University Senate are students. The student council is regularly invited to discuss matters with the rectorate.

Each new programme undergoes internal scrutiny and must receive approval from the university's senate. Furthermore, study programmes are accredited by the national quality assurance agency. These processes offer ample opportunities to ensure that suitable teaching methods and assessment techniques are used in courses, enhancing the students' ability to achieve their learning objectives.

All programmes follow the Slovenian qualifications framework. According to the self-assessment report, intended learning outcomes are identified in a participatory approach and they follow Bloom's taxonomy. The constructive alignment of studies is ensured through accreditation processes, student feedback and self-assessments. Intended learning outcomes are mainly derived from strategic objectives on the faculty level but would benefit from further integration with the broader institutional strategy on a university level.

According to the self-assessment, the student workload is assessed through student feedback, student interviews and discussions. The staff also assess the workload of students. The actual workload is assessed through student surveys and expressed in ECTS credits. Although the university has a credit transfer system (ECTS), which allows students to transfer credits from one institution to another, the recognition of studies undertaken in other faculties or universities depends on the faculty.

The University of Ljubljana is internationally oriented

The university wants to establish itself as an institution with extensive international cooperation. Students have excellent opportunities to pursue parts of their studies abroad through partnerships with other universities. The internationalisation abroad is at a good level and many academic staff and students mentioned the encouragement and good opportunities in place for international mobility and cooperation. The key challenge recognised by management, academic staff, students, and external stakeholders was the internationalisation of the university at home. This relates both to the educational provision in English and attracting international degree students and staff.

The university has challenges attracting international degree students and teachers, although in some faculties around 20% of doctoral students are from outside Slovenia. The instruction at the UL is primarily conducted in Slovene, even at advanced levels, such as master's and PhD programmes. Knowledge of Slovenian is required to actively participate in the university. During the audit visit students mentioned that international students tend to avoid lectures and other instructor-led sessions, opting to tackle courses independently. Several interviewees recognised that more programmes in English are needed to attract international students. Currently, national laws require that the university curriculum in English is also provided in Slovene, requiring additional resources. According to the audit visit, the law is motivated by the need to protect the Slovenian language and the need to keep academics in Slovenia. Several interviewees considered that the current legal framework does not support internationalisation. Based on the visit, there is also reason to review the information provided to incoming international students and staff. Incoming international students and staff require assistance navigating administrative issues.

Education is research based

The UL has introduced measures to encourage academic staff to strengthen the linkage between education and research or artistic pursuits. According to the audit visit, teachers engage students in their own research, but there is variation between the faculties. During the audit visit, teachers were concerned about how to get more students to be involved in research. The students also

wished that they could be more involved in research projects.

Research-integrated teaching is a fundamental component of the University of Ljubljana's educational provision, particularly at master's and PhD levels. However, it may be worth considering how research integration can be further strengthened, even at the bachelor's level. Such integration could hold the potential to mitigate dropout rates, as the students would be likely to feel a stronger connection to their educational and research context.

The university fosters new initiatives and a commitment to being at the forefront

The UL has a strong tradition of collaboration with the surrounding community and labour market in terms of shaping the educational provision and ensuring that the UL maintains a relevant and up-to-date curriculum. Partners are included in the planning of education. According to the audit visit, the study programmes are not only geared towards today's labour market, but also towards the jobs of the future and what the world may be like in 20 to 30 years' time. Some teaching staff stressed that it is also important to teach students generic skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and good research skills.

An example of this are micro-credentials, which are educational modules developed in partnership with other societal actors and intended to be implemented at the UL as soon as possible. Initially, these modules will be offered to those already in the labour market seeking to enhance their professional skills. A successful pilot programme will potentially lead to the next step, where micro-credentials become a part of the regular educational provision. The micro-credentials represent a promising agile new form of education which can swiftly answer to the needs of external stakeholders. The university's focus on societal engagement is also evident through the numerous student placements it offers. According to the audit visit, many study programmes include practical training or seminars.

Discussions are currently underway on how the UL can progress to provide a greater number of transdisciplinary courses and study programmes with sustainability and social impact serving as guiding principles. Based on the audit visit, it is evident that trans- and interdisciplinary approaches are already integrated into doctoral studies. Sustainable development is an area that could receive more emphasis in the university's developmental efforts to signal a stronger commitment to climate change and equality, diversity and inclusion issues.