

Accreditation Report

Social Science

University of Iceland

Expert Committee Report

January 2008

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## **1. Introduction**

### ***1.1 The Expert Committee***

- Dr. Christian Thune, Past Executive Director of the Danish Evaluation Institute, Denmark (chair).
- Prof. Dr. Jürgen Kohler, Universität Greifswald, Germany.
- Dr. Frank Quinault, Director of Learning and Teaching Quality, University of St. Andrews, Scotland.
  
- Dr. Eiríkur Smári Sigurðarson, Advisor, Head of Division for Science and Innovation, The Icelandic Centre for Research – RANNIS, Reykjavik, Iceland (Liaison Officer).

### ***1.2 Terms of Reference***

The Accreditation Committee was appointed to carry out a review of the social science at five different universities in Iceland: Iceland University of Education, University of Akureyri, University of Bifröst, University of Iceland and Reykjavik University respectively. The review was carried out according to Article 3 of Higher Education Institution Act (HEI), no. 63/2006. Rules no. 1067/2006 give the following instructions to the committee:

“The committee of experts shall provide the Minister of Education, Science and Culture with a report that outlines the results of the evaluation of items a to i, paragraph 3, article 2 of the Rules, based on the application and information provide by Higher Education Institutions in Iceland (HEIs) in accordance with article 2, in addition to evaluation of the following factors:

1. Academic knowledge and competence of HEI within the relevant field of study and subdivisions thereof, pertaining to the quality of teaching and research, academic facilities, dissemination of knowledge and connection to community.
2. The support structure of the HEI for; the academic community, teachers and experts in the relevant field of study and the education and training of students.
3. Special attention shall be paid to the strengths of the fields of study and the subdivisions thereof, with reference to course plans, particularly in relevance to links to undergraduate and graduate studies and towards other appropriate fields of study.

4. Academic standard of the field of study and subdivision thereof, in national and international context. Regard shall be taken of i.e. national and international cooperation between HEI and other institutions.

Should the conclusions of the committee be not to recommend accreditation then it shall provide a detailed report of any failure on the part of the HEI to fulfil the regulations according to article 2 or any recommendations for reparations that the HEIs must undertake before accreditation for that particular field of study can be awarded. In receipt of such report, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture will afford the HEI a specific extension to make any amendments needed. The amendments will be evaluated by the expert committee in question, who will provide the Minister of Education, Science and Culture with a report detailing the aptness of the amendments. Final decision regarding accreditation will be announced to the HEI.”

### ***1.3 Working Method and the process***

This assessment is based on the application documents provided by the University of Iceland and the discussions held at the University of Iceland on Oct 2nd and 4th, 2007, pertaining to social sciences (i.e. in the case of the University of Iceland, social sciences in the narrow sense of the term), law, economics and business administration. The assessment is undertaken with regard to the criteria set out as accreditation requirements in Art. 3 of the Universities Act no. 63/2006 and the subsequent regulation no. 1067/2006 on the accreditation of universities. It follows the itemisation laid out in the aforementioned act.

The discussions the team had during the visits to the university were open, collegial, and informative. The team thanks the university and its faculty for giving the team insight into its operations and deliberations, which serve as an essential input to the findings outlined hereafter.

After circulating drafts by email the panel agreed on a final draft in December 2007. Chapters 2 to 10 were sent to the Reykjavik University for corrections of factual mistakes and misinterpretations on Wednesday 12 December 2007. The university replied on 21 December making some specific comments which have been taken into account and corrections have been made accordingly.

### ***1.4 Evaluation of the work process***

## **2. Role and objectives**

### ***2.1 Role and objectives at university level***

The role of the University of Iceland is basically described in article 1 of the University of Iceland Act no. 41/1999, further elaborated in rule no. 458/2000 for the University of Iceland. According to these legal instruments, the University of Iceland is expected to be a scientific institution for research and instruction that provides its students with an education which enables them to pursue independent scientific projects and to serve in various capacities in Icelandic society. In addition, it is required to provide continuing education for those who have completed a university degree, disseminate knowledge to the public and serve the nation through the strength of the knowledge it possesses. These essentials are also reflected and specified in greater detail in laws and other rules which pertain to the university, such as the “University of Iceland Research and Education Policy” approved by the University General Forum on April 6th, 2001. with amendments of May 23rd, 2003, and in particular also in the document “University of Iceland Policy 2006 – 2011”.

### ***2.2 Roles and objectives at faculty level:***

Within these rules, faculties have defined their own views and their mission and standing. This matches art 9 of the University of Iceland Act, according to which faculties are considered to be the basic units of the university. These are responsible for carrying out instruction, research, and administration. Based on this legal concept, the faculties considered here describe their respective roles as follows:

#### ***a) Faculty of Social Sciences***

The Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland, established in 1976, is the largest institution of its kind in Iceland with approx. 2500 students. In 2006, 434 students graduated from the Faculty, which is the largest number of graduates in a single year in the history of the Faculty. Its Faculty Forum has passed a policy paper for 2006 – 2011, which provides a basic outline of its policies, core values, and developmental perspectives. The faculty sees itself in the lead role as far as educating

managers and experts in the field of social sciences and research in these fields in Iceland is concerned.

Based on this interpretation of its role, the faculty undertakes to increase and impart exemplary and internationally recognized knowledge in the field of social sciences through scientific research, teaching and services to the Icelandic labour market. The Faculty of Social Sciences has established active and effective relations both with the Icelandic key societal organisations and the labour market as well as with the international academic community. The Faculty maintains formal cooperation agreements on education and research within specific academic fields. These agreements contain clauses ensuring instructors' academic freedom. Five assistant professorships are now funded by external parties.

The faculty sees its overarching relevance and task against the background of the following projection: “The Faculty of Social Sciences endeavours to reflect Icelandic society's needs for information and knowledge, while remaining at the vanguard of teaching and research. A large percentage of a society's activities in relation to great variety of services and public spending is relevant to the field of social science, as is the actual organisation of the market itself. A great increase in research into the organisation, functioning and development is the precondition for the judicious usage of finances and effective and dynamic action for the public good. A university education in the field of social sciences is also the most appropriate preparation for a great variety of jobs within the knowledge economy. ...”

Against that background, the faculty states that it endeavours to “offer programmes of study that are both ambitious and diversified, recognised for their solid theoretical grounding, creative ideas, disciplined working methods, and a very good understanding of the tasks and challenges faced by businesses. We seek to help each individual to develop and to gain new knowledge both for his/her personal benefit and for the benefit of the Community as a whole.”

*b) Faculty of Law*

The Faculty of Law understands its role as being a comprehensive and vigorous university faculty in the field of law, providing education in all the main areas for law

and conducting extensive research. It has agreed upon a mission statement for 2006 – 2011, which outlines its position vis-à-vis future challenges and its own objectives. The Faculty of Law takes pride in offering programmes of study that are recognised for quality and are in step with the best that is offered elsewhere in the world. The Faculty of Law seeks to reflect in its activities the needs of the Icelandic community at any given time. The increased specialisation now offered by the Faculty is a logical result of the increasing complexity and variety of work and the increasing demand for specialised knowledge of law. The number of registered students has climbed steadily in recent years; in the academic year 2000-2001, the number of registered students was 475 and by 2006-2007 that number had increased to 641, 206 of whom are first-year students. The Faculty of Law is closely linked with the commercial and industrial sectors of Icelandic society.

With regard to its present-day standing, the faculty formulates a vision of its aspiration and future undertakings – based on a formal address of the dean on a mission statement of the faculty for 2006 to 2011 - as follows: “The Faculty of Law will continue to hold a leading position in the research and dialogue of law. At the Faculty a powerful research institute will be a leader in legal research and the publication of legal research results. A minimum of two doctoral defences shall take place each year. Instruction will increasingly take the form of interactive discussions on real issues, and the students will have easy access to resources at the extensive law library. The faculty shall conduct internal quality assessments on a regular basis on course content, teaching quality, and examination results. Regular external quality assessments will be conducted by independent assessors and/or professional lawyers' associations on the same factors. The ratio of tenured teachers to students at the Faculty of Law will be 1 to 17. The Faculty of Law will offer specialised courses for professional lawyers, and thus create a source of revenue for the faculty. Excellent students will be enrolled at the faculty as before, and its outstanding teachers shall receive competitive compensation. The faculty aims to further enhance the cooperation with law schools abroad, both in teaching and research. The Faculty of Law will maintain its position as a leader in research and education.”

*c) Faculty of Economics and Business Administration*



The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at the University of Iceland has formulated its objectives and subsequent activities for the period from 2006 to 2011 in a strategy paper, based on a description of its present-day characteristics and maintaining its position as the biggest and leading faculty in the country. The role of the faculty is to educate and create new knowledge that is outstanding and internationally recognised in the area of business administration and economics in the fields of research, teaching, and service to Icelandic business and economy. The activities of the faculty strive to reflect the up-to-date needs of the Icelandic community, and of the economy in particular. The faculty undertakes to fulfil the needs of the business community for increased human resources, while particularly addressing the development of the master's and doctoral programmes as an important element in that effort and while ensuring that the increased specialisation in learning reflects the increasing complexity and diversity of modern work, which requires more professional knowledge.

The faculty envisages that it will maintain its leadership role in the field. It continues to aim at being respected as an institution which fully meets international standards for the quality of teaching and research. The faculty will continue to attract outstanding students and excellent staff and meet their expectations. In line with its positioning and mission, the faculty also enjoys an active and successful relationship with Icelandic business life and the international academic community. These overarching objectives are best summarized in the following statements of the faculty:

“Our standards for individual achievement are high, we work together, and we provide good service. All of our work is highly ambitious. The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration aims to keep its position of leadership. Our vision is that the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration will enjoy outstanding facilities, that we will be on equal footing with excellent faculties in the countries around us, and that we will be the leader in our field in Iceland. ... The Faculty offers programmes of study that are both ambitious and diversified, recognised for their solid theoretical grounding, creative ideas, disciplined working methods, and a very good understanding of the tasks and challenges faced by businesses. We seek to help each individual to develop and to gain new knowledge both for his/her personal benefit and for the benefit of the community as a whole. ... The activities of the

Faculty of Economics and Business Administration always reflect the current needs of the Icelandic Community, and economy in particular. ... the development of the master's and doctoral programmes is an important element in that effort.”

### ***2.3 Overarching definition of mission and vision***

Systematic and extensive policy-making activity has been conducted within the university. In particular, evidence of this achievement is the statement on “Research and Education Policy” on 6 April 2001, amended 23 May 2003. In addition, the documentation on “The University of Iceland Policy 2006 – 2011”, approved by the General Forum and the University Council in May 2006, provides a more detailed five-year development plan of the faculties of the university and by the university as a whole, defining clear goals based on identification of essential basic values. It sets the university in a context of growth, with the aspiration to serve society at large and thus accept public responsibility, and states essential values such as academic freedom, autonomy and responsibility, diversity, equality and democracy, integrity and respect, prosperity and welfare. Based on these aspects, the document provides extensive and detailed statements on issues such as fostering outstanding research, tuition, administration and support services. Further concrete evidence of the university’s understanding of its quality objectives is provided in the items indicated in the context of future objectives in enhancing quality assurance (cf. the documentation pertaining to criterion 7).

Some of the aforementioned objectives have been shaped within the context of the University General Forum by issuing regulations on matters such as a personnel policy, a policy on international communications, a policy on the development of graduate education, a quality assurance policy, an equal rights policy, an environmental policy, a language policy, a policy on issues affecting disabled persons, an anti-discrimination policy, ethical regulations, a policy regarding the quality of doctoral education, international relations. The policies of the individual faculties are based on the global policy and constitute a base for further elaboration within the various disciplines.

The same observations can, by and large, be made at faculty level. The formulation of, e.g., the Faculty of Law provides specific evidence of this fact. The objectives formulated are valid and achievable.

The panel was informed at its meeting with the rector and the deans concerned here that the aforementioned document is understood to be the essential definition and key orientation of future strategic development of the university and its faculties. The panel is also satisfied that the aforementioned policy document of the university has been incorporated into the contract of 2007 between the National Ministry of Education and the University of Iceland for education and research for the next five years. The university views this contract as a turning point in that it advances the realization of the strategy with solid financial support. From the viewpoint of accreditation, signing this contract adds legally binding effect to the aforementioned policy statements.

#### ***2.4 The institution and the individual***

The university and its staff endorse the principle of individual freedom of teaching and research. In consequence, there is an individualized approach to the university operations. Quality is expected to be shown through success in academic publications and is, by and large, not perceived as being a result of strategic planning. While this concept bears values and produces positive effects, e.g. by fostering motivation and opportunities for creativity, it limits opportunities for the establishment of a more focussed institution which develops specific profiles.

De facto, the individualist bottom-up approach is to some extent balanced by the call for critical mass needed to apply successfully for external research funding, by affiliation to centres of excellence, in part by the establishment of university centres, and by collaborative practices due to former work experience in foreign institutions and contacts established there. In effect, certain collaborative structures have emerged, e.g. concerning natural resource law, Icelandic culture, etc.

The accreditation team was informed that there is no visible, express strategic discussion on the choice, or rather the blending, of individualized and focussed institutional approach to research policies. The Science Committee is seen as being in

a position to serve as a forum for such a discussion. In some cases, faculty committees also serve as a forum for such discussions.

### ***2.5 Public perception of university positioning***

In the eyes of students, the university is a place of preference. It is seen as prestigious, as being a place of top researchers of high repute, and as offering the greatest variety of courses. With its more traditional approach to studying and its long existence, the university is seen as being a more reliable and more predictable choice. Since the university does not charge fees, it is seen as the cheaper place of learning. However, students see it as a drawback that the university does not provide sufficient numbers of staff and facilities, and that it does not provide a more rigorous academic atmosphere, i.e. excel in a more collaborative atmosphere.

### ***Conclusion: Accreditation (Compliance) and Recommendations***

The document “The University of Iceland Policy 2006 – 2011”, which was preceded by the document “Research and Education Policy” of 2001/2003 and is to be seen in conjunction with the legislative framework on the University of Iceland, meets the requirements of a mission statement, providing vision on further development and stating basic values and principles of its activity. This document is underpinned by subsequent documents passed by the relevant faculty bodies which define the missions and developmental objectives of the faculties considered here. In terms of accreditation, the requirements of criterion a) of art. 3 of the HEI Act are met.

However, the panel strongly recommends addressing the following, while stating that the following items do not justify a qualified limitation in terms of (full) accreditation vis-à-vis the requirements of art. 3 criterion a) of the relevant HEI Act:

- The university is aware of the fact that there is a need to turn the aforementioned goals and aspirations into an executive plan, i.e. to formulate sufficiently concrete action plans, for the policy as a whole and within individual faculties. While the panel realizes that this has been accomplished in some respect, e.g. concerning the establishment of a Centre for Graduate

Studies and the introduction of rules on the hiring of staff, there is still considerable work to be done as regards the devising of concrete action plans to underpin the goals and targets set. The panel was informed that these plans are in preparation. The panel sees no reason to doubt this statement. It encourages the university and its faculties to address the development of such plans in concrete terms as soon yet as diligently as possible.

- The university may consider more closely into which context the university should be placed both within Iceland and internationally. While there are areas of cooperation on a personal level and in publications and also at an institutional level in particular among the public universities, e.g. with the University of Akureyri and evidently as far as the merger with the University of Education is concerned, the team suggests that there is a call to address collaborative structures to bring about synergies and critical mass. Such policy should be considered despite notions of competition emerging within the Icelandic system.
- The university may consider the balance between a more strategic and focussed approach to profiling the institution while cherishing the values and usefulness of freedom of teaching and research.

### **3. Administration and Organization**

#### ***3.1 Administrative Structure***

The administrative structure and organization of the University of Iceland are established by means of the University of Iceland Act no. 41/1999. Its structure and organization are elaborated more specifically by rules which the University Council has established on this statutory basis, cf. rules no. 458/2000 for the University of Iceland.

Administratively, the University of Iceland is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. As a state institution, the University is subject to

those requirements in laws and regulations which pertain to the activities of the public sector, such as administrative procedural laws, laws regarding personnel management, laws regarding information, laws regarding equal rights, etc. Within its legal framework, it enjoys full autonomy in its activities and has self-determination in internal affairs. The autonomy of the University and its self-determination in internal affairs are based on a few basic principles which are internationally recognized and which are universally followed in European higher education institutions. In particular, these principles encompass university autonomy and the principle of subsidiarity in university activity.

### ***3.2 Organization***

At central level of the university, the administration of the University is entrusted to the University Council and to the Rector. The University Council further specifies the organization of the central administration of the University and the administration of faculties and institutes; these requirements are found in rules no. 458/2000 for the University of Iceland. In connection with the administration of the university, the University General Forum convenes as an advisory and consultative body; its organisation and roles are specified in the law and further elaborated in the rules of the university and in rules regarding the organization of the University General Forum which the Forum establishes for itself.

Furthermore, university faculties operate at a decentralised level. These constitute the basic units of the university. The University Council determines whether to establish or disband faculties; before faculties are eliminated, new ones founded or other changes made to the arrangement of faculties a statement shall be sought from the University General Forum. At present there are eleven faculties at the university, of which there are three of relevance for this accreditation process, i.e. the faculties of Law, of Economics and Business Administration, and of Social Sciences. The faculties enjoy autonomy in their own affairs within the limits set by the central rules of the university; regular assessment of their activity shall take place in accordance with the relevant requirements in laws and regulations. They are governed by faculty forums and deans.

Instruction, research and administration take place within faculties. Each faculty composes its own course catalogue, which is expected to describe, inter alia, the organization of studies within the faculty, progress toward degrees, maximum duration of studies, degrees, types of degrees and degree requirements, courses which are offered and their credit weighting, forms of instruction, internships, the division into semesters. Faculties also regulate their administration and their division into departments, and issues of student life. A course catalogue for the University as a whole shall be published annually.

According to article 27 of rules no. 458/2000, university faculties may also operate research institutes and research centres in accordance with rules which the University Council establishes. University faculties and institutes are permitted to conduct public service research and to be responsible for continuing education and public dissemination of knowledge. Each faculty or research institute shall make special agreements regarding such public service research and instruction, which the University Council shall ratify.

In addition to institutes within the faculties, subject to article 26 of rules no. 458/2000 the university operates service institutes under the jurisdiction of the University Council. In a few cases such institutes were established under supervision of the University Council where there is research in an interdisciplinary field covering more than one university faculty. In all rules regarding university institutes, irrespective of whether the institute in question is under the jurisdiction of a university faculty or of the University Council, there are rules which specify conditions on commissioned Services on the part of the institute which are provided in competition with private parties. In all cases, this activity shall be financially separate from other operations of the institute, and care shall be taken to ensure that its operation is not subsidized with other income, in accordance with the requirements of competition laws.

In addition to operating its own institutes, the University engages in extensive collaboration with numerous institutions and parties outside the university, thus ensuring that the University can fulfil its role as well as possible.

The aforementioned outline of the university and faculty organisation breaks down into the following administrative specification:

### ***3.3 Administration of the university***

#### *The Rector*

The Rector of the University is the head of the University administration and its highest representative with respect to persons and institutions within and outside the university. The Rector is the head of the University of Iceland in the sense, inter alia, of laws regarding the rights and duties of employees of the state and, through the force of this position, wields authority in all the university's personnel matters, appointments to academic positions and other issues of a similar nature. He or she assumes initiative in the University General Forum's definition of a global policy in university affairs. Between meetings of the University Council, the Rector is endowed as its proxy with the power to make decisions in all university affairs.

The Minister of Education, Science and Culture appoints the Rector for a five-year term according to the recommendation of the University Council, following a general election within the University.

#### *The University Council*

The University Council is the highest decision-making body within the University. It is entitled to determine the affairs of the university and of its institutions. It is charged with general supervision of university activities. The University Council is guided by the university policy on science and education shaped by the University General Forum. The University Council has ultimate supervisory authority; in particular, it supervises individual university institutes, corporations, funds and other university property. Internal review is directly responsible to the University Council.

The Rector chairs the University Council. In addition to him or her, seats are occupied by four representatives of faculties, chosen from among the tenured instructors according to specific rules. Furthermore, there are two representatives of student



organizations, one representative of the association of university instructors and two external representatives appointed by the Minister of Culture, Science and Education.

#### *The University General Forum*

The University General Forum is a forum for consultation among the university faculties and university institutes; it does not wield direct executive power or power of determination in administrative affairs. The University General Forum works to develop and enhance the University of Iceland and shapes and presents a central policy on science and education for the University.

Positions in the University General Forum are occupied by the Rector, the Deans of the university faculties and special representatives of the faculties, selected according to specific rules, and representatives of some institutes of the University, in addition to representatives of administrative personnel, students and those who are appointed by the Minister of Culture and Education to seats on the University Council.

#### *Central Offices/Support Structures*

Central administration creates the necessary conditions for faculties, Institutes and employees of the University to conduct their work in accordance with laws and regulations. The Rector appoints administrators and other employees of the central administration who function as proxies for the Rector and the University Council. There are the following divisions of central administration: Operations and Resources, Finance, Human Resources, Academic Affairs, Science and Research, and Marketing and Public Relations. The Rector is directly responsible for issues of quality assurance and development. As noted before, internal review is directly responsible to the University Council Office managers.

### ***3.4 Administration of Faculties***

Faculties are administered by the Dean, the Faculty Forum, and the Faculty Council.

a) The Dean is the chief executive officer. The Faculty Forum elects the dean and assistant dean for three years at a time. Among other tasks, the dean assumes initiative in forming a global policy for the faculty; supervises the operation and administration

of the faculty; hires employees for its administration and is accountable to the University Council and Rector for the faculty's financial affairs.

b) The Faculty Forum has decision-making power in the affairs of each faculty; positions in the Faculty Forum are held by all instructors within the faculty, the heads of Institutes under the jurisdiction of the faculty, and student representatives, in accordance with specific rules.

c) Faculties are permitted to form an administrative committee, the Faculty Council, staffed by the dean and assistant dean, by the department chairs and two student representatives. Faculty Forums may entrust their decision-making power on specific issues or classes of issues to the Faculty Council. The University Council establishes further rules (rules no. 458/2000) regarding the activity of faculties, their administration, faculty councils, the division of faculties into departments, the working conditions and role of deans, faculty forums and departmental forums. A statement from the University General Forum shall be obtained before such rules are established or changed.

d) A faculty may be substructured into departments according to fields of study which lead to degrees. Further requirements regarding the division of faculties into departments are found in the relevant sections of the university rules. Positions in the departmental forums are held by employees within the fields of study in the department who have the right to hold positions in the Faculty Forum, in addition to student representatives. Heads of department are elected by affiliate members. Each department is entrusted by the Faculty Forum with responsibility for issues pertaining to its fields of study: it determines the content of instruction and the arrangement of instruction and examinations, determines the division of instruction among the individual instructors in the department and makes proposals to the dean regarding the appointment of sessional instructors, as well as on necessary financial appropriations and new positions. The head of the department supervises the disposition of funds within the department. He or she monitors the activities of committees on instruction, the arrangement of instruction and other issues which relate to instruction and administration within the department.

The accreditation team discussed the roles of departments with Heads of Departments. These view departments as the essential level for organising study programmes, also responsible for solving basic problems that may affect the learning process. Operational duties of the position are not formally described, the position is usually filled by rotation. There is no formal line of reporting of Heads of Department to Dean or Rector, but this is not seen as detrimental due to numerous informal contacts in the system. Heads of department emphasize that there is a need to strengthen the university's support system; the information tool Ugla is viewed positively.

e) At Faculty level, specific faculty administration attends to the administration and operation of faculty offices, acting as proxy for the Dean. Faculties are entitled to establish departments which assume specific responsibilities of the faculty in the realm of teaching and learning in particular.

f) In addition to regular faculty structures, research institutes may be established. The accreditation team was informed by members of research institutes that these serve different purposes, such as to (1) provide an addressee to the market with regard to specific research projects, (2) establish cooperation with external partners, nationally and internationally, (3) facilitate interdisciplinary research and support interdisciplinary teaching in study programmes, (4) support faculty in identifying possible research projects and their funding, (5) raise awareness for specific academic and political fields, e.g. by organising conferences and networking, (6) provide a platform for publications.

The key driver in establishing research institutes is seen as the low level of research funding, with external funding leaning too heavily towards small applied, contract based research. Institutes are supposed to help in this situation. In this context, institutes serve as a means to delegate funding and managerial responsibilities. The establishment of institutes needs to be approved by the relevant university bodies, but de facto the key issue is funding them. Institutes are often self-financing units, partly they are financed by the faculty, e.g. in the case of the law faculty. Some have their own full or part-time staff; also faculty members are affiliated to the institutes.

The accreditation team voiced a number of possible areas for concern while recognizing the value of research institutes. Firstly, there is a possible negative impact on overall governance due to the establishment of de facto independent sub-organisations, and secondly, drain on teaching capacity; the interviewees did not view these issues as a problem in their case. Thirdly, there is a positive issue to use institutes for establishing collaborative interinstitutional arrangements; in that respect the interviewees felt that there is little time, funding incentive and institutionalised initiative to foster this approach, though this is seen as useful.

g) The general rules and organisational principles outlined above translate into the following features as regards the substructures of the three faculties to be dealt with here:

*aa) Faculty of Social Science:*

The administration of the Faculty is led by the Dean, the Faculty Council, the department chairs, department meetings and Faculty Forum. The Faculty Council is composed of the Dean of the Faculty, the Vice Dean, the department chairs and two Student Representatives, the Faculty's Head of Administration attends the Faculty Forum and Faculty Council's meetings and prepares them. These faculty bodies and their operations are supported by the Faculty Office, which comprises, in addition to the Head of Administration, project managers and secretarial staff, 9 persons in 7.6 positions. All staff members possess diverse and extended work experience; five of them are university graduates. They take care of the Faculty's current operations and planning along with attending to specific assignments for departments, Faculty Committees, the Faculty Council in addition to general Provision of information and services to students and instructors.

The Faculty Forum determines the division of subjects between departments. At present there are seven departments: Library and information science; sociology; social work; social anthropology and folkloristics; psychology; political science; education. Each department, on the authority of the Faculty Council and Faculty Forum, handles matters concerning its academic subjects, i.e. in particular, it sets the programme of study, arranges teaching and exams, delegates teaching to instructors and forwards proposals concerning the hiring of adjunct faculty to the Dean and the

Faculty Council, as well as proposing the delegation of funds and the creation of new posts. The administration of the departments is in the hands of department chairs and department meetings. All tenured instructors attend department meetings alongside a number of student representatives and a Faculty Office staff member, who prepares the meetings and assists the department chair with the resolution of all tasks relating to the department. In order to strengthen support for research and tuition through efficient and transparent administration, the faculty has undertaken to establish adequate support services and an effective quality-assurance system.

The faculty, apart from being a member of the Centre for Women's and Gender Studies and the Institute of International Affairs (as well as the Centre for Small State Studies), operates two research institutes:

*Social Science Research Institute (since 1986).*

Its main objective is to enhance links with the labour market and to strengthen academic research in social sciences. To that end, the Institute is a forum for the research of instructors in the Faculty of Social Sciences, aiming at strengthening social sciences in Iceland through scholarly and practical research. The following institutions operate in relation with the Social Science Research Institute: The Institute of Anthropology at the University of Iceland, Centre for Child and Family Protection, Centre for Disability Studies, Centre for Media and Communication, Centre for the Study of Lifestyles of Children and Adolescents, Centre on Teaching and School Development, Centre on Occupational Health, Centre for Criminological Research, Centre for Taxation and Welfare, Centre on Educational Systems, and Centre for National Affairs.

Also within its mission, the Institute has, for example, overseen the organization of the University's social sciences' conference held annually by the Faculties of Law, Business Administration and Economics, and Social Sciences. The objective of the conference is to present the main topics in social scientific research in Iceland and many leading lecturers participate. The conference proceedings comprise a compendium of all the presentations and are published in an edited volume.

The board of the Social Science Research Institute is composed of representatives of the Faculty of Social Sciences' departments, in addition to the Dean of the Faculty and a staff representative. The Director is chosen from among board members. In 2007, the Institute had 13 staff members, working full- and part-time. The Social Science Research Institute funds its operations solely through research grants or practical service projects.

*Institute of Public Management and Politics (since 2002, supervised by the Department of Political Sciences):*

Its main objective is to serve as a research, educational, and service institution serving as a forum for cooperation with public parties to strengthen studies and research into the management of public agencies at the level of state and municipalities, and as a forum for discussion of politics and public administration.

Based on this mission, the institute focuses on the development of public administration as a scholarly and professional field in Icelandic society, in collaboration with as many interested parties outside of the University of Iceland. The Institute has worked on the restructuring and publication of the master's programme in public administration in such a way that the number of students has significantly increased. It has also participated in, and obtained grants for, research and development projects in collaboration with domestic and foreign partners and holds a number of popular open events in the field of public administration, politics, and international relations. In December 2005 the Institute started the publication of an internet-based Journal on Politics and Public Administration, ([www.stjornmalogstjornsysla.is](http://www.stjornmalogstjornsysla.is)).

*bb) Faculty of Law*

The faculty has not explicitly communicated specifics on its internal administrative set-up in the documentation provided, which makes the panel assume that the general provisions for its operations as outlined above apply. In the course of meetings with faculty members the panel was informed that there are no departments as subunits of the faculty.

The faculty operates two research institutes:

*Institute of Law:*

The Institute of Law is a research institute of law operated by the Faculty of Law. It supports the faculty's aspiration to keep increasing research and to maintain its leadership position in legal research in Iceland. The goal is to produce research of the quality and quantity equal to law faculties at the Nordic Universities. The activities of the Institute of Law have been greatly enhanced recently, and the Institute has become a centre for research at the Faculty.

To meet its mission, the institute organises seminars, colloquia, and conferences that can increase the knowledge of the law in Iceland and the training of scientific staff and researchers. In 2005 a series of publications of peer-reviewed research articles on legal issues started.

The Institute is currently overseeing a comprehensive research project, the construction of an Icelandic Dictionary of Law to be published in 2008, supported, inter alia, by the Ministry of Education and the Althing. The project involves all professors of the faculty. It is supported by a full-time specialist and four law students working full-time in summer and part-time for two winter terms.

In 2006 the Institute hired two full-time legal research specialists in the area of Natural Resource Law. These positions are fully sponsored by external parties and are for a three-year term. One of the research initiatives focuses on the rules of the System of fisheries control and the parties' legal Status in such Systems, and the other focuses on energy research. A third position was created by the Institute in June 2007 for a period of eighteen months to carry out research in the area of natural resources law.

At the Institute of Law four research units are currently operated, each set up for a fixed period of time and to carry out specific research efforts. These research units are the following centres: a Collection of Judgements in Criminal Law - Sexual Crimes, Research in Real Estate Law Part II, Research in European Law and the Kyoto Protocol. These research units employ up to ten master's students of law, both part-time along with their studies and full-time during their summer break.

The Faculty of Law and the Institute of Law cooperate on various research projects with the country's largest law firms, organizations, and companies, such as LOGOS Legal Services, LEX Law Offices, the Internal Revenue Directorate, the Social Insurance Administration, Samorka, the Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners, Glitnir, AP Arnason, etc.

*Institute of Human Rights:*

The Institute of Human Rights is a non-profit making organisation operating on third-party funding. It was founded by the University of Iceland, the Icelandic Bar Association and the Icelandic Judges' Association in 1994. Its primary role is to conduct research into the legal aspects of human rights, to publicise the research results, and to support education in the area. The institute organises seminars and conferences on human rights issues and sponsors the studies and research of students, teachers, lawyers, judges, and others. The institute issues publications on human rights issues. In 2005 the Institute launched a free half-yearly journal publication of summaries of the Judgements of the European Court of Human Rights in Icelandic; to do so, it employs 6-10 law students a year. In 2005 the institute published a 700-page book on the European Convention on Human Rights, in cooperation with Reykjavik University. Currently the Institute is working on a publication of the major human rights covenants developed under the United Nations since the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

*cc) Faculty of Economics and Business Administration*

The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration is divided into two departments, i.e. the Department of Business Administration and the Department of Economics. Teaching is organised by these, according to decision by faculty meeting based on definition of subject areas. Each department makes decisions by mandate from faculty meetings regarding its programmes of study, teaching materials, teaching plans and examinations, teaching assignments of individual teachers, and submits proposals to the faculty dean regarding the hiring of part-time lecturers, on the necessary financial allocations and new positions.



The Faculty's administration is in the hands of the Faculty Dean and Faculty Meeting, Department Heads and Department Meeting. Department meetings are attended by all tenured professors of the department concerned, the faculty office manager, and student representatives.

The faculty operates two research institutes:

*Institute of Economic Studies (since 1989):*

The Institute of Economic Studies is a faculty research institute which serves as a forum for research and development in economics and related fields. Its staff regularly address economic issues and lecture on economic issues. Its research has recently focused on economic policy, natural resource economics and regional development. It also serves in a consulting function for government and private organisations. The Institute organises conferences and seminars on economics and economic issues. The institute publishes research reports and contractual research reports, in addition to a working paper series in economics. Most of these research programmes are conducted in cooperation with research institutes and scholars from abroad and their results are published in Iceland and abroad.

*Institute of Business Research*

The Institute of Business Research is a centre for research and development in Business Studies and related fields. Its activities include basic research, contractual research, and research and publishing. The institute aims to coordinate research and development initiatives in business and related fields and to create knowledge and skills in applying new methods to tackle the challenges faced by businesses and organisations in Iceland. Furthermore, the institute aims to enhance the facilities and support services for research and practical assignments in business teaching. It provides consulting services and applies its expert knowledge to resolving issues, it organises workshops, lectures, and conferences, publishes materials aimed at adding to the knowledge on business and operations in Iceland, and trains scholars and staff in scientific research. The institute runs eight thematic research programmes, each comprising separate operations and staff: Finance, creative industries, financial statements, employee relations, management and strategy, information systems, marketing and service, and internationalisation of Icelandic companies.

*dd) Transversal Structures:*

The accreditation team received differing messages as to whether collaborative structures can be established with sufficient ease across faculty borders. Some feel that while there are no problems as regards the individuals concerned, at the institutional level faculties are hesitant in contributing to specific research funding in these cases. Other interviewees, however, felt that these obstacles can be overcome within present university structures.

***Conclusion: Accreditation (Compliance) and Recommendations***

The university and the faculties here considered meet the requirements set out in art 15 and 16 of the HEI Act and the specific provisions of the University of Iceland Act, in particular as outlined in chapters I to III of that act. Due to this fact, full accreditation on this count is to be granted.

At the concrete operational level the panel made the following observations, partly leading to recommendations for reconsidering rules and practices:

- a) The university is presently considering changes in its set-up and administrative practices.
- The projected merger with the Iceland University of Education in 2008 will need to be reflected in its internal structures, pertaining to faculties of the university as far as identity of academic operations is concerned.
- In addition, reorganising the composition of the University Council is under consideration, aiming at an increase in the number of outside representatives. The university should consider the pros and cons of this change carefully, including the issues concerning the selection of such representatives, the future authority of the University Council especially in view of a proper balance of rights and duties of the other governance and managerial bodies of the university.

- The university is considering the establishment of – probably - 5 schools, operating across different faculties which are to be maintained as structural units. These schools are expected to reduce quantitative differences between faculties and the academic fields which these represent, to increase critical mass, and to improve support, e.g. with regard to secretarial staff and student services. Such a change will require specific consideration of the purpose and value added to any such schools. These may be found in enhancing more interdisciplinary activities and better organisational focus on “products” in teaching and research. However, any such move will require close consideration of the roles of faculties vis-à-vis such schools, in particular as far as rights to determine teaching and research activities including quality assurance, selecting staff, and funding issues are concerned; in general, it is imperative to ensure that there is no undue increase in management stratification and interface complications, both of which may lead to conflict and inefficiency subject to more managerial activity without adequate tangible return. Moreover, as far as the university expects advantages in improving support, the university should consider that these effects may not come into being by mere reorganisation without added investment in support.
  
  - The university may consider whether there is a need to foster interinstitutional opportunities for research.
- b) The university, in conjunction with its faculties, should consider the balance between activities at central level – which, according to statements by university and faculty representatives, is responsible for “general rules” - and the element of devolution, i.e. the role of subsidiarity, employed in favour of faculty rights and activities, which basically concern “academic affairs”. The panel feels that the role-sharing between levels, i.e. the stratification of roles, could be optimised in both directions; e.g:
- Dual regulation could be avoided to alleviate administrative inefficiency, for example concerning rules which exist both at university and at faculty levels such as in the case of codes of ethics;

an overarching rule on certain standards might be preferable. The same may apply to certain managerial items, such as management of assessment documentation and standardisation of normative formalities of the examination process. While the panel views the concept of “framework” regulations at central level to be detailed at faculty level favourably in principle, the university should consider with care from case to case whether a complete and unified solution at university level is to be preferred in order to simplify university regulation, to make it more transparent and manageable, and to reduce unnecessary work at faculty or department level.

- By contrast, there is detailed regulation of matters pertaining to curricular structures which should be removed from overarching university regulations and left to individual regulation at faculty level. There is a striking example in art. 92 of the Rules for the University of Iceland; it provides specific rules on the content of the first year of the university B.A. law programme, which is not the fitting place for regulation due to the fact that regulatory flexibility of the faculty is required on issues of that kind in order to ensure swift adaptability of the programme to findings of quality assurance to the benefit of curricular improvement. The university and its faculties should make sure that responsibility is clearly accepted by the body of the university concerned, especially if there is a practice to accept proposals of faculties without querying them thoroughly when passing legislation on them at central university level.
- c) The rights and responsibilities as outlined in the rules of the university do not provide any normative indication as to the right of the central university authorities to determine and execute strategic decisions in terms of new strategic objectives, e.g. and in particular in profiling the institution as a whole in specific fields of research and learning. This pertains mainly to two concrete issues:

- The university may want to consider whether the central level should be strengthened by establishing vice-rectors, or specific rectoral committees endorsed by the University Council, with particular responsibilities concerning overarching research and teaching policies.
  - Any such policy may need to be accompanied by adequate powers in determining staff policies of common, i.e. university interest, as well as setting aside centrally managed funding devices. In legal terms, this aspect pertains to reconsidering the extent to which the statement in art. 13 of the Rules on the University of Iceland is to be balanced more concretely vis-à-vis central university policy making and its implementation while upholding the principle of subsidiarity, which derives its value from motivating university members and ensuring “grass root” ownership of activities.
- d) There seems to be a need to specify explicitly who takes on responsibility in lieu of the rector or dean in case the holder of office cannot perform his or her duties temporarily.

## **4. Organisation of Teaching and Research**

### ***4.1 Provisions at University Level***

In line with the University of Iceland Act and the Rules of the University of Iceland teaching and research activities are primarily carried out under the authority of faculties. However, the university as a whole has established a number of rules and practices concerning teaching and learning. These can be summarized as follows:

- a) The university respects the key role of faculties in determining matters of teaching and learning. These decide on the structure of studies and their division into courses; they grant a university degree upon completion of studies, with the degree being confirmed by the dean. University instructors are appointed to university faculties; as

proxies to the faculty, they are responsible for the choice of instructional materials and for instruction and assessment.

According to the rules of the University of Iceland, faculties should establish their own regulations concerning the content and form of instruction. Such regulations should take into account lectures, projects, homework, exercises, discussion groups, problem sets, practical training, examinations, class sizes and assessment and other relevant areas. Upholding individual faculties' responsibilities is intended to safeguard the specific characteristics of individual fields and programmes, which are to be brought out in the organization of instruction; furthermore, diverse pedagogical methods to be employed are to be accommodated.

b) There is a general understanding of course objectives and learning expectations. The main goal of instruction is to train students to pursue scientific projects independently and to serve in various capacities in Icelandic society. This entails that instruction take into account both the needs of the nation and the essential requirements of each academic field. The main goal of studies at the University of Iceland is for students to acquire knowledge, maturity and methodological discipline; and for them to be able to apply this knowledge in an independent, creative and critical way with a view to the creation of new knowledge. The demands for scientific methods required in university studies and instruction shall be maintained without exception. Continuous assessment of instruction and courses takes place by means of instructional surveys, annual review of the course catalogue, discussion in faculties and departments and evaluations of individual fields or faculties. All these aims and operations are legally supported by a relevant Code of Ethics of the university which is designed to accomplish these objectives.

Research and instruction are expected to be integrated on all levels of study, insofar as this is possible. The goal of strengthening research-based studies is, on the one hand, to communicate to students the knowledge which is created through the instructors' research and, on the other, for students to influence this research, for instance, through critical discussion. In this way, a natural connection between undergraduate, master's and doctoral study is also created. Research conducted by graduate students under the guidance of instructors enhances research activity but also employability, since

students in research-based studies receive training in undertaking scholarly and scientific work and thereby receive good preparation for those positions in working life and society in which discipline in scientific methods is useful.

Efforts are being made to increase collaboration among disciplines through interdisciplinary research and programmes of study and thereby to increase the diversity of the research which is conducted at the university.

c) The university states that teaching methods employed are diverse but for the most part traditional. Instruction takes place in the form of lectures, discussion groups, problem-solving sessions and practical exercises, to varying extents depending on the nature and content of the courses. It is fairly common for students to be required to make brief presentations based on reading materials or on their own essays. Efforts are made to stimulate discussion, and scholarly criticism is encouraged. In certain cases a part of students' studies may consist of internships; their work contribution is thus assessed for credits in the same way as in other components of their studies; criteria have been established for evaluating students' performance in internships. All classrooms are now equipped with computers and screen projectors, which most instructors make use of in teaching. However, the university feels that more attempts should be made in particular to renew and develop instruction, and that diverse forms of assessment should be encouraged.

d) There is a general understanding of course formats. This pertains both to the workload concept as it is known in the ECTS and to the stratification of programmes leading to degrees.

As for the former, according to article 52 of the rules of the University of Iceland, as a rule full-time study for one academic year shall be assessed as 30 credits (60 ECTS). The assignment of credits is based on the fixed basic number of 30 credits: i.e., that the total number of credits for all courses taken in one academic year shall be 30. It is irrelevant whether the number of weeks of instruction per year is 26, 30 or more. Courses are assigned credits in proportion to their relative weight, and the sum of the credits in all courses for one academic year is 30, or 15 for each semester, according to the national credit system (double the value of ECTS credits). Credits should reflect

all of a student's study efforts, based on all of the student's work in lectures, seminars, exercises, practical and/or field work and examinations and on the number and extent of projects and reading materials.

As for formatting programmes, which is largely defined in art. 54 of the Rules for the University of Iceland, the university operates the following scheme of programmes which are divided into individual courses which together form a cohesive whole:

- eighteen month programmes for a diploma at the basic university level,
- three to four year programmes for a bachelor's degree,
- one to two semesters of study upon completion of the bachelor's degree for a diploma at the master's level,
- five to six year programmes for the candidate's degree,
- one-and-a-half to two year programmes for the master's degree and
- three to five year programmes for the doctoral degree, to be carried out in accordance with the requirement of section VI of the rules of the University of Iceland, usually requiring a master's degree. However, in certain faculties students can commence doctoral studies directly following the bachelor degree if they have completed this degree with a certain minimal degree of success; in those cases the doctoral programme extends to four years. Faculties may also grant a doctoral title following the defence of a specific doctoral thesis if the candidate has not attended a formal doctoral programme.

e) There is a practice of recognition of studies outside the University of Iceland. According to articles 52 and 63 of the Rules of the University of Iceland, studies completed either outside of the faculty or at other universities both in Iceland or abroad may be assessed and appraised as part of a degree. The university has also made formal agreements with several Icelandic universities regarding reciprocal recognition of studies. The University Council has recently approved special procedures on submitting grades.

f) The Course Catalogue for the University of Iceland serves as a transparency tool by describing the activity of the university, its organization, faculties, programmes of



instruction, instruction and studies, instructors, research institutes, services, etc. It is accessible through the internet.

g) Within these compounds, there is understanding and safeguarding of academic freedom while securing staff quality both in matters of teaching and of research. University instructors and research specialists are entrusted with directing teaching and research in their fields of specialization while enjoying a large degree of autonomy in their research and teaching methods. This entails that they themselves choose objects of study within their fields, but also that they shoulder responsibility and carry out certain duties. The instructors and research specialists at the University of Iceland teach scientific methods and the quest for knowledge and they train students in critical assessment of old and new knowledge.

In order to ensure and safeguard staff quality in hiring and promotion, instructors and research specialists must have demonstrated through their work that they are competent and active scholars. They are required to publish the results of their research in a scientific forum that enforces stringent academic standards, and at the same time they should strive to make them amenable to the general public. Their annual reports on their research are necessary in order to make it possible to assess their work and to communicate to the government the university's research accomplishments.

Published works are evaluated and awarded research points according to the University of Iceland System for Evaluation of Research. All scholarly writings and intellectual works by members of the university community are evaluated for points in this manner. In this connection, the publication forum bears considerable weight and will depend entirely on the degree of stringency of scholarly standards enforced by any given refereed journal or publisher. The results of the research assessment then affect the salaries and academic promotion of instructors and research specialists; at the same time, they also affect the allocations of funds which the University as a whole and the individual faculties receive for research.

In supporting research performance, the university applies a specific workload policy. Research takes place within the faculties and institutes of the university. Each

instructor is allotted approximately 40% research duties; research specialists who are hired according to a judgement of competence have between 40% and 100% research duties. There is some variation in whether academics attend to their research duties in the form of faculties or institutes. 48 research institutes and 12 service institutes operate at the University or in conjunction with it; these can be classified into four principal categories: research institutes under the jurisdiction of faculties; interdisciplinary research institutes under the jurisdiction of the University Council; financially independent research institutes in a legal relationship with the university; and research institutes which are founded on the basis of a contract with a collaborative party.

h) Apart from staff matters as mentioned above, there is a quality aspiration and a subsequent policy in place as far as teaching is concerned. The university aims at benchmarking the quality of its performance, especially against similar programmes at foreign universities. For more detail, see item VII. below.

Developmental effort of the university is presently particularly focussed on doctoral programmes. The University aims to increase the annual number of candidates awarded the doctoral degree by a factor of five before the year 2011, to around 65. It is estimated that approximately one-third of doctoral students at the university will be foreign students. The university has already undertaken, and will continue to undertake in the coming years, diverse measures in order to bring this plan to fruition. The framework for graduate studies is established in articles 68 and 69 of the rules of the University of Iceland and in "Standards and Requirements for Quality of Doctoral Programmes at the University of Iceland", as approved by the University General Forum on May 21st, 2004. The external structure of doctoral studies, such as the processing of applications, conditions for admission, the organization of the doctoral programmes and their connection with undergraduate programmes, requirements for supervisors, examiners and master's and doctoral committees, assessment of studies and educational titles are clearly laid out.

The guidelines and requirements for the quality of doctoral studies, which are a framework that refers to internationally recognized requirements for the quality of doctoral studies, contain a detailed discussion of the organization of doctoral studies

at the university and standards of quality. A distinction is made between general, academic (professional) and (material) concrete guidelines and requirements. The general guidelines include minimal standards for education. The academic (professional) guidelines establish minimum standards concerning the education, supervisory experience and research performance of instructors and researchers involved in doctoral programmes. Material (concrete) guidelines include minimum standards for the conditions that supervisors, programmes, departments and faculties create for doctoral students. These relate to work facilities, resources for participation in research, conferences and participation in foreign collaboration. It is assumed that quality assessment of doctoral studies at the university will take place regularly.

The university is about to complete preparations for the establishment of the Graduate School. According to the current proposal, this institution is intended to ensure quality and supervise master's and doctoral studies at the university. Among other things, it is intended to define minimal requirements for the admission of students, to judge individual applications, to keep track of individual students' progress in their studies, to supervise joint degrees and to recognize supervisors (graduate faculty).

j) In replying to the accreditation team's enquiry into cooperative structures, members of the faculties particularly engaged in postgraduate programmes stated that these exist between faculties of the University of Iceland and with relevant domestic external partners, e.g. business companies, government departments, and hospitals (e.g. in case of psychology), and also with foreign partners through teaching, joint research, and conferences. Students are normally expected to study abroad for a time. However, inter-institutional cooperation within Iceland beyond personal level is not seen as particularly developed; there are no joint programmes with domestic or foreign institutions.

The latter is also reflected in admissions policies, particularly in postgraduate studies in law. Bachelor courses of other Icelandic universities are seen as being inferior, their graduates as often not being fit for the programme, grading as not being fully reliable. The accreditation team cannot judge the accuracy of this perception but notes that

there are no regular structural attempts in place to offer bridging facilities to these students.

k) On the basis of the rules of the University and the aforementioned guidelines for the quality of doctoral studies, faculties should establish their own rules for graduate studies, which the University Council will then ratify. The rules of the faculties are a further elaboration of the framework which the university outlines for master's and doctoral studies. The University Council shall ensure that these are consistent with the requirements which are generally established.

#### ***4.2 Provisions at Faculty Level***

In accordance with the aforementioned general principles, the faculties have formulated the following policies and implemented the following practices:

##### *a) Faculty of Social Sciences*

The Faculty is divided by academic subjects into the seven departments mentioned above (Library and Information Science, Sociology, Social Work, Social Anthropology and Folkloristics, Psychology, Political Science and Education.). These all offer bachelor, master, and doctorate programmes. In general as a trend, staff members mentioned in their interview with the accreditation team that they were aware of the increase in the number of new programmes with a shift towards graduate programmes, offering more seminars and use of web teaching, while their teaching load is growing.

##### *Bachelor Programmes:*

BA degrees are conferred in eight major subjects and eleven minors. There is a long tradition of undergraduate programmes. Initially the faculty offered only a three-year undergraduate program of study, culminating in a BA-degree, together with a one year additional course of study towards the teaching certificate and then social work. In 1990, one year (30 credits, 60 ECTS) programmes in school counselling and applied communications/media studies began. The diversity of programmes at the BA level increased with the introduction of several minors (30 credits, 60 ECTS) which provided opportunities for specialization. These included labour market studies, city studies, media studies, gender studies, and museum studies.

*Master and Doctoral Programmes:*

In the last decade, the faculty developed diverse post-graduate programmes. Organized research oriented post-graduate courses of study are relatively new in the faculty, with several hundred master's students and currently 50 doctoral students attending. Vocational post-graduate programmes have a longer history in the Faculty, but in recent years efforts have been made to bring all such programmes into the structure dominant in European universities, especially with regard to the Bologna process.

The master's programmes have developed rapidly. The faculty currently offers 23 programmes of study divided between all seven departments; a number of programmes are offered within some departments. Furthermore, in cooperation with other faculties at the university the faculty offers cross-disciplinary master programmes in Environmental Studies and Natural Resource Management, Public Health, and Information Technology in the Health Services. The faculty has also developed postgraduate distance education in the past decades, with the support of the University Centre for Teaching and Learning. This mode of teaching is currently available to postgraduate students in five different departments, in the programmes of Educational and Career Counselling, Public Administration, Gerontology, Practical Gender Studies, and Practical Folkloristics. Students may also complete a certificate programme through distance learning. Students may pursue their studies part-time (e.g. while employed), but such arrangements must be noted in their application.

The general formatting of masters' programmes, including admission, programme composition, supervision, and matters concerning the master project work, are regulated in a specific, normative set of rules. As a rule, programmes include a sufficient number of taught courses. Emphasis is laid upon methodology. Experience gathered at foreign universities is expected. There is a master's thesis of 40 to 60 ECTS credits. Students may also choose shorter programmes, a post-graduate certificate (15 or 30 credits, 30 or 60 ECTS) in many of the abovementioned subjects. The certificates can be transferred into an MA-programme upon admission. Some

subjects also have programmes leading to licensing in particular fields, such as Library and Information Science, Social Work, Education, and Psychology.

Admission requirements in many post-graduate subjects are flexible, as the entering students are not necessarily required to have completed a prior degree within the same subject field. Generally, the entrance requirements are set at the 7.25 mark (out of 10) This translates as a first class degree in Icelandic terminology (and an upper second in British terminology), but there may be other requirements depending on the applicant's background. In some programmes there are quotas (upper limits) suggested by the individual departments on the basis of places available for workplace training ) which must be verified by both the Faculty and the University Councils. Special admission committees operate in each programme. The committees propose the handling of applications to departments and the Faculty Council; the former makes a decision on the acceptance or rejection of individual applications, which must then be corroborated by the Council. The accreditation team was informed that there is a tendency to be generous in accepting applicants if they appear fit, subject to their previous grades and experience.

Proposals for new post-graduate study programmes must be scrutinised and accepted by the Scientific Committee, which then makes its recommendations to the Faculty Council. A staff member at the Faculty office (director of graduate studies) handles matters relating to master's studies and works with the Scientific Committee.

*Doctoral Programmes:*

Doctoral studies may also be pursued in all departments. Their specifications, in particular concerning admission, basic programme structure, role of advisor, requirements and assessment of doctoral theses, are normatively outlined in specific Rules on Doctoral Studies at the University of Iceland Faculty of Science.

Programmes tend to be tailor-made to fit the need of the individual; staff members informed the accreditation team that there were common courses for students especially with a view towards general methodological matters. The faculty has emphasized the strengthening of doctoral studies in all departments in recent years. Around 50 students are currently pursuing doctoral degrees at the faculty, four have already graduated.

As the doctoral programme is rather new, the faculty has asked the Scientific Committee to both develop and oversee all the formal aspects related to the programme. Furthermore the faculty has appointed one of its professors as the director of doctoral studies. He is in charge of the academic part of the programme and works very closely with the Scientific Committee which still retains the formal powers, with many of the formal, final decisions still taken by the Faculty Council.

The Faculty recently completely renewed its rules for doctoral studies. The entrance process was reorganised, the formal relationship between the student, the supervisor and the doctoral committee clarified, and the study time-frame set. Admission to the doctoral programme generally depends upon the MA degree having been awarded with the average mark of 7.25. Students are required to submit a 90-credit thesis and complete 15 credits of coursework. Students may also be required to complete 30 credits of individualized reading courses. The faculty also organizes a special seminar for its doctoral students which is a forum for general, shared discussion on doctoral projects, theories and research methods. It shall also be a forum for discussions and presentations on various issues affecting doctoral students, thus serving both significant academic and social purposes. The programme does not contain specifically taught elements. Students who have completed all previous studies at the University of Iceland shall do part of their studies abroad.

*b) Faculty of Law*

The study programmes in law have a long tradition, yet they have gone through considerable development and changes in the past decade. Staff particularly mentioned in their interview with the accreditation team that these largely pertained to the introduction of the Bologna model and the advent of master's and doctorate programmes. The faculty has strived to develop courses that meet the needs of new subject areas in view of demands of the community and business.

*Bachelor Programmes:*

The study programmes have gone through major changes in recent years. They are now divided into a three-year B.A. programme and a two-year master's programme (Mag. Juris).

At undergraduate level, the faculty offers a traditional programme of law designed to prepare students for the judiciary and legal practice, positions at financial institutions, in administration, and many other areas that students may specialise in during their master's studies. The three-year B.A. programme of law with 15 credit units per semester offers education in the core areas of law, providing foundation of interrelated subjects for further specialisation. Students may only enrol in B.A. courses other than those taught in the first year of the programme after passing the examinations in legal theory and introduction to the Icelandic legal system. All students must complete 17 required courses and write a B.A. thesis. The B.A. programme is viewed as providing coverage of the core courses that constitute what is necessary knowledge for all lawyers, regardless of their field of specialisation.

The faculty states that a variety of new teaching methods have been adopted both in the B.A. and master's programmes, thus enhancing the ability of the faculty to provide students with the practical skills needed for solving legal issues. Emphasis is placed on, in addition to lectures, dividing students up into smaller discussion groups and project teams, led by master's students. In terms of personnel, the faculty credibly states that quality is ensured by the fact that the B.A. programme is taught by the country's leading experts in the core areas of law and the authors of the key textbooks in the relevant fields.

The minimum grade required in each course in both the B.A. programme and in the master's programme is 6.0, which is a higher minimum grade than generally adopted by other faculties at the University of Iceland and by other Icelandic universities. These strict standards reflect the faculty's desire that graduates from the faculty be able to successfully compete with lawyers from other universities, especially lawyers from respected universities abroad. Following these standards, 23 students graduated with a B.A. degree in 2005 and 64 graduated with a B.A. in 2006. In addition, 11 students with a diploma degree passed in the past three years.

*Master Programmes:*

The faculty offers basically two master's programmes. A special emphasis has been placed on enhancing the research based studies at the faculty.



This has been done in particular through the specialised LL.M. programme in international environmental law and natural resources law taught in English, which is closely linked to specific research interests of faculty members. Master's programmes – namely the specialised LL.M. programme in international environmental law and natural resources law, which carries 90 ECTS credits -, and obviously also the doctoral programme, are viewed as a means to enhance the research based studies at the faculty. Twelve students from the Nordic countries and Europe will pursue these studies, along with a number of Icelandic students, starting this autumn. The education offered in these areas is accompanied by comprehensive research programmes.

As for the basic master's programme, the faculty introduced a course structure which allows students to opt for a pre-determined set of courses in one of ten areas of specialisation, or to choose a general master's degree without specialisation aiming at those students with general legal interest. The opportunity to specialise in the master's programme provides students with an opportunity to specialise further and in a more systematic way than before, thus meeting the call and the needs of the Icelandic community to address the increasing complexity and variety of work and the increasing demand for specialised knowledge of law. The course requires students to present a master's thesis of 30 ECTS credits.

Students may also choose to take courses from other faculties at the University of Iceland, the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration and the Faculty of Social Sciences, or to complete part of the master's programme at the law faculties of universities abroad. All of this affords the students at the faculty a useful array of choices.

The general master's programme attracts nearly all of the faculty's bachelor graduates. This is seen by the faculty as being the result of the view of Icelandic society that a proper law degree fit for the labour market cannot be accomplished within three years.

The faculty launched an international master's programme (LL.M.) for Icelandic and foreign lawyers in 2003, taught in English, which now specialises in natural resources law and international environmental law. With this international master's programme,

the faculty has taken a step towards the internationalisation of legal education in Iceland. Cooperation with faculties of law and organisations abroad in relation to the LL.M. programme is now at the planning stage, and the Icelandic faculty is seeking international experts to teach courses in their areas of specialisation. The faculty has secured outside funding to bring in international experts to teach and to develop teaching materials.

*Doctoral Programme:*

A doctoral programme (Ph.D.) was launched by the faculty, with the first enrolments at the beginning of 2005. It is the only programme offered by a faculty of law in Iceland at the level of a research-based postgraduate programme. Four doctoral students are now enrolled at the faculty and the first doctoral defence is planned for the beginning of 2008. The programme comprises 90 credits and applicants must have a first-class GPA (grade point average). It does not foresee specific taught elements; it offers tailor-made solutions. The faculty is cooperating with Danish Universities (Dansk Juridisk Forskerskole). Students who have completed all of their previous studies at the University of Iceland can then complete part of their doctoral studies abroad.

*c) Faculty of Economics and Business Administration*

The faculty points out that it seeks to provide outstanding and diversified education. To that end, inter alia, teaching methods have been evolving towards increasing student participation in the learning process. No courses are exclusively based on lectures; they are always combined with team-work on projects, and classes include project presentations and case discussions. Strong emphasis is placed on training students in team-work and both oral and written communication. Staff mentioned in their interview with the accreditation team that the emphasis was on a strong and broadly based bachelor's programme geared towards market needs, while there are strong efforts to make students take up graduate programmes with specialisations.

*Bachelor Programmes:*

The faculty considers the undergraduate programme with its solid theoretical approach to be its traditional strength. The economic success of Iceland in recent decades bears good witness to the quality of the programmes of study since this success was due to

the activities of faculty graduates. Having started in 1988 with a B.S. programme in economics, the faculty now offers B.S. and B.A. programmes of study in economics, a B.S. programme in business administration offering four tracks: finance, marketing and international business, accounting, management and leadership. Close operation with other faculties of the university adds further options. Students frequently take courses at other faculties and a considerable number takes part in foreign-exchange programmes each year.

*Master Programmes:*

An ever growing number of students pursue post-graduate studies at the faculty. The master's programme is seen by the faculty as one of its hallmarks. In 1991, a first master's programme was launched. In past years the master's programmes have been the growth area of the faculty with approx. 40 per cent of the entire number of faculty students, originating both from the faculty undergraduate programme and from other universities in Iceland. In addition to the research-based M.S. and M.A. programmes in the key areas of business administration and economics, the faculty now also offers an M.B.A. programme for executives and an M.Acc. programme in accounting and auditing. Furthermore, there is an interdisciplinary master's programme in environmental and natural resources studies. Masters' programmes include, apart from traditional forms of teaching, writing articles in cooperation with an instructor, case studies, and conference presentations. Examination is based on traditional means, but there is a strong element of assessing papers written by students.

*Doctoral Programme:*

The faculty offers facilities for doctoral study and places emphasis on further developing that programme. Doctoral studies at the faculty are organised as a three-year full-time programme of study for students with a good foundation. As a general rule, part of the studies is completed at a renowned university abroad. The doctoral programme admits students who have completed a second-cycle degree in economics or related fields with high marks. Currently six doctoral students are enrolled at the Faculty; one has graduated. The faculty aims to triple the number of doctoral students in the coming years and to considerably increase the financial support that they are offered.

### ***4.3 Special Focus: Matching International Standards***

Faculties rightly point out the international educational background of their staff, which indicates that these match international practices and standards. Across faculties concerned, a very high percentage of the current teaching staff completed their post-graduate training in the USA, Canada, the UK or the in the Nordic countries. The standards of these environments have therefore for long been reflected in the faculties concerned. In addition, the faculties' academics publish in international journals, have extensive and close connections internationally, and participate in joint international research projects and international conferences, both domestically and abroad. Therefore the faculties' horizons have always been international and broad in scope.

International relations and international cooperation of faculties have been further enhanced through the development of doctoral programmes. The faculties concerned have successfully made efforts to appoint international scholars from among the leaders of the respective fields to doctoral committees, and as external examiners at doctoral disputations. These give open lectures or conduct seminars when visiting faculties.

Faculties have signed a great number of formal agreements of cooperation with international universities and institutions. A considerable number of students participate in exchange study programmes for one or two terms. The graduates of the faculties concerned have also been well received abroad. A considerable number of international students visit the faculties. Courses offered by faculties in English attract foreign students. These facts are another indicator showing that international standards are met. Faculties convincingly point out that their graduates meet international requirements since they have successfully pursued post-graduate studies at prestigious foreign universities. A number of the graduates have pursued successful careers abroad, many are in leading positions in Iceland.

Quality assessment by a foreign team appointed by the Ministry of Education took place in the faculty of law in 2003-2004. As the faculty of law states, the report points out that the LL.M. programme has a very positive impact on the faculty, providing added academic strength and internationalisation through the adoption of the Bologna model, providing a three-year B.A. programme and two-year postgraduate

programmes. The fact was highlighted that a great number of the academic texts used in instruction at the faculty are written by faculty members and are based on their research. The faculty and individual members were also praised for vital basic research.

***Conclusion: Accreditation (Compliance) and Recommendations***

In view of the legal requirements set out as regards the organization of teaching and research, the three faculties meet expectations. They have all adopted the Bologna model of studies, including the implementation of a workload concept equivalent to ECTS, while respecting the limits of choice which art 7 of the HEI Act sets. Their approach to organizing the programmes is in line with their statements on their roles and aspirations as set out in part 1. The essential rules regarding admission, course structure, supervision and mentoring, assignments to obtain master's and doctor's degrees in particular, have been outlined and made publicly available. In consequence, accreditation can be granted on these counts.

As for research, faculties have identified specific fields of research, in particular in as far as these are embedded in corresponding research institutes. There are mechanisms in place which indicate that effective research can be conducted.

There is undoubtedly sufficient indication that teaching and research matches international standards. The international educational background of many teachers and researchers, close cooperation with renowned international higher education and research institutions and success of students and graduates in international environments support this assumption.

The panel would nevertheless comment as follows and add some recommendations while being aware that a final judgment requires further investigation into the details of the programmes and the resources available:

- There seems to be an abundance of master's programmes in some cases. For instance, the Faculty of Social Sciences offers 23 master's programmes, the Faculty of Law offers a master programme with ten differentiations. This may lead to absence of sufficient critical mass, and subsequent shortcomings in

making the course sufficiently relevant and substantial as regards its research context.

- Putting teaching/learning and research in context, the panel encourages faculties to identify more explicitly how focussed research activities are turned into tangible learning experience in master's and doctoral programmes.
- As for law, with almost all bachelor graduates entering a master's programme, the faculty should consider the aptness of qualitative admission criteria, and whether the requirement of the Bologna process is met that a bachelor programme should lead to a meaningful first degree with relevance for the labour market; this may require adjustment of the design of valid learning outcomes at bachelor level.
- In general (while the team was informed that this issue may be transitory due to change to the Bologna programme model), the university may consider whether the complexity of its overall course structure is over-complex with regard to offering diploma and candidates programmes in addition to the "Bologna model programmes", and whether simplification may set valuable resources free.
- In order to foster critical mass, the team suggests that cooperative structures, both domestically and internationally, be fostered also at institutional level.
- The team draws attention to the risk that the increase in postgraduate studies in Iceland, while being of considerable value, may lead to a disadvantageous loss of international experience of students.
- Admission policy needs to be reviewed in order to enhance transfer opportunities between universities in Iceland, which may require full endorsement of the learning outcome concept also for the definition of entrance requirements at postgraduate level, ensuring more reliability in the

grading system across Icelandic universities, and the establishment of bridging courses where necessary.

## **5. Personnel Qualifications Requirements**

### *5.1 University Framework and Policy*

#### *a) Legal Framework*

The hiring process for academic employees of the university and its faculties has evolved in particular with the ratification of a thorough revision of hiring issues by the University Council in February 2007. The revision is based, inter alia and while taking into account existing legal requirements, on the University policy for 2006-2011; this policy emphasizes increasing efficiency and improving the procedure through standardization of the hiring process without diminishing professional assessment of applicants for positions or promotions. Therefore the purpose of this revision was to simplify the procedure as far as possible within the existing legal framework.

The university has established a general framework for decision-making in hiring and promoting staff. To that end, various rules apply to academic employees who are hired on grounds of assessment of competence. The framework for required qualifications for employees, new appointments, promotion, duties, hiring procedures, and the procedure for assessment of applicants for positions and promotions is found in section 3 paragraphs 28-45 of the Rules for the University of Iceland. These further elaborate articles 11 and 12 of the University of Iceland Act no. 41/1999, according to which the University Council shall establish further rules regarding new appointments, advertisement of positions, applications and their processing, the appointment of hiring committees and their tasks, promotion of academics, research specialists and research scholars and transfer of employees.

Section 3 of the aforementioned Rules for the University of Iceland deals with job titles at the university (article 28), hiring and duties (articles 29 – 33), job definitions,

advertising and applications (articles 34 – 37) and promotion in employment and transfer between job titles (articles 38 – 40). In addition, section 3 discusses assessment of applicants' work, including evaluation committees, evaluation committee opinions and the completion of the hiring process (articles 41 – 45).

*b) Substantive Requirements*

The substantive qualification requirements for academic employees of the university are specified in detail in article 41 of the aforementioned rules. Qualification requirements relate to research, instruction, administration, and service.

In assessment of research, the primary emphasis is placed on the scientific value of the work and its originality and independence in relation to other research and writings. Emphasis is placed on applicants' knowledge of the status of research in the relevant field, use of sources and scientific methods, and the novelty of the results and their usefulness when applicable. Emphasis is placed on productivity in writing, especially publications in forums which maintain stringent standards for innovation and scientific methods. This refers especially to recognized international scientific journals, recognized Icelandic journals, books and other scholarly publications.

In assessment of instruction, emphasis is placed on the instructor's teaching materials and supervision and on diversity and innovation in teaching methods. In addition, initiative in developing and improving the organization of instruction and the instructor's efforts to encourage students to work independently and to employ scholarly methods are also assessed.

Administrative experience both within and outside the university is also assessed, especially with respect to how it can be utilized in traditional administrative tasks within the University.

*c) In particular: Points System*

Furthermore, hiring and promotion for positions must be in accordance with the requirements of article 4 of the rules of the University of Iceland regarding promotion (No. 863/2001). These describe the minimum number of points for each rank of



academic and research specialist. Guidelines are established for the minimum number of points according to the credit assessment system for each rank.

The points system applied is based on the credit assessment system of the University of Iceland, which is a system of quality assessment for research, instruction, administration and service, which is referred to by the “Rules on Promotion of Instructors, Specialists and Scholars at the University of Iceland” of October 31st, 2001. The research portion of the assessment involves assessment of writings and intellectual output; the publication forum is the most important factor in that respect. The basis for the assessment is a research report which all academic employees submit annually; this report generally contains a list of published writings and work contributions during the previous academic year.

The results of the assessment influence salaries, annual salary increases and academic promotions. In fact, the assessment also affects the distribution of allocations of funds among faculties and departments. In this way, the credit assessment system is central to the incentive system of the University of Iceland; it has yielded significant results in the university's activities in recent years - particularly in the form of a great increase in research productivity on the part of university employees.

The university has a policy to increase the professional demands which are made in hiring and promotion. Proposals for increased requirements are currently being prepared. The educational requirements have already been altered in such a way that the doctoral degree is now a prerequisite for hiring. Roughly 75% of the academic employees of the University hold a doctoral degree. In the field of the social sciences, this proportion is 73%. Roughly 96% have received their doctoral education abroad.

*d) Process of Selecting Staff*

The University Council has recently approved a thorough revision of the hiring process for academic employees. The major innovations concern the creation of four standing evaluation committees and a selection committee within each faculty which makes recommendations to the Rector on the person to hire. In these proposals it is assumed that employees will generally be hired on a temporary basis for four years

with the possibility of permanent employment following an assessment of their work during that period.

Following this revision and according to the framework regulation, section 3 of the Rules of the University of Iceland (art. 35-37 and 40 – 45) discusses in particular how to process hiring for advertised positions; i.e.: Advertising and processing of applications for available positions; the tasks of the evaluation committee in assessing applicants with respect to the minimum requirements for the position in question; and the tasks of the selection committee in choosing among those applicants who are being considered and in making recommendations to the Rector on granting the position.

*e) Specific Processes*

Besides these requirements in section 3, there are special rules regarding promotions, duties and transfer between instruction and research. These are specified in art 38 and 39 of the Rules of the University of Iceland. In particular, positions need not be advertised. In effect, there is a system of in-house career track in place, covering all positions including those of full professors.

The faculties are also allowed, on behalf of the Rector, to offer visiting instructors (adjunct positions) to highly qualified individuals according to special procedures approved by the University Council. These are expected to meet the standards for hiring professionals engaged in full-time capacity. No more than 20 per cent of the total number of tenured instructors in the faculty concerned may be adjunct positions.

It is also expected that a precise procedure for major decisions concerning personnel matters will be explicitly formulated; this applies particularly to decisions which are made regarding the extension of the employment contracts of academic employees.

*f) In focus: Staffing practice of regular staff*

The accreditation team discussed the aforementioned regulations with tenured staff in order to understand their perspectives on career opportunities and their perception of the institutional needs to secure quality; this issue was later cross-referenced in the team's interview with the deans. Staff pointed out the practice of providing

promotion within the university system on grounds of collecting performance-linked points. They viewed this system as clear-cut, yet complicated in detail and leaning too much towards research performance. Hiring outsiders through advertisement is seen as not being done very often at the level of senior positions; if so, it is seen as leaning predominantly towards teaching requirements.

In effect, staffing is understood to depend largely on internal processes driven by the points system, although legally there is no automatism in advancement since there is an individual assessment of each case. Reasons for this are considered to be the fact that there is only a small domestic market, and that there is no language policy either for teaching in English or for allowing a specific time to gain competence in teaching in Icelandic. Subsequent risk of lacking international dimension is not seen as essential since most staff have spent time abroad in their formative years, though there is concern that this may change as a result of more domestic postgraduate studies. Resulting from the hiring practice, profiling the institution along desired research activities is difficult and appears to be hampered by funding in case there is too much demand on resources due to the internal advancement process. Encouraging early retirement is seen as a means to alleviate the problem.

*g) In focus: Sessional (part-time) staff*

As a rule, sessional teaching staff consists of either in-house personnel, such as young researchers, or external professionals; some do not have any other job. In the latter case, there can be value added by introducing practical experience and establishing contact with business, services, and administration. Sessional staff are hired partly via advertisements, more often through personal contact. Specific policies to ensure quality in hiring process is not visible; however, sessional staff are also subject to the questionnaire survey applied to teaching of full-time staff.

The accreditation team was told by sessional staff – and found this largely verified in a subsequent discussion with deans - that sessional staff are not systematically included in teaching trainings. As a rule, induction to their function is not provided, with exceptions in that some faculties provide information on grading practice and hold annual social meetings. Although sessional staff feel that the lack of regular availability to students can be balanced by email and telephone contact and by the

Ugla information system, sessional staff advocate that the university should make provision for office space to meet students. Support should also be provided with regard to supply of teaching material. Sessional staff also emphasized that the pay level should be raised, which would be a means to support motivation.

## ***5.2 Faculty Level***

Faculties have translated the aforementioned substantive and procedural rules into specific practice.

### *a) The Faculty of Social Sciences*

At the end of 2006 the faculty employed 50 tenured tutors, with an almost equal gender ratio. The faculty also employs 13 adjuncts, all of whom were hired according to a long established form used by the faculty. These are in all cases part-time academic staff all of whom are hired on a short time basis and with no research duties. In addition to the tenured academic staff, a large number of part-time (ad hoc) tutors teach at the faculty, most of whom only teach one course a year or a part of a course; around 700-800 such contracts are made every year. Most of these part-time academics hold posts on the basis of their speciality within institutions or firms and thus provide invaluable contacts with the world of work. The faculty requires an M.A. degree as a minimum for any independent teaching duties.

The faculty's academics are all expected to teach, research and administer. Almost 95% of these have completed their Ph.D.s, many from highly prominent foreign universities. Academic staff have been productive in research and publication in recent years. The research findings have appeared in numerous books, in Icelandic and international scholarly journals and anthologies. The faculty will continue to expect high performance and has agreed upon new specific procedures and criteria for the hiring and promoting academic staff. The rules have been approved by the University Council. They are meant to encourage staff members to be active and effective in their teaching, research and administrative roles and to enhance the quality of both teaching and research at the faculty.

### *a) Faculty of Law*

The Faculty of Law employs nineteen tenured professors, nine full-time professors, one full-time and two part-time associate professors, and three full-time and four part-time assistant professors. Nine adjunct professors are employed, in addition to around 50 lecturers at each time. The faculty of Law prides itself on having an outstanding team of scholars. In recent years the research activities of the faculty members have been among the highest ever. The faculty seeks to provide high quality and diverse education. Its teachers are seen as being ambitious and enthusiastic, having expert knowledge of their subject areas, applying innovative teaching methods that promote critical thinking, and encouraging student participation in discussions and class activities. The fact that the faculty's teachers come from diverse academic backgrounds providing diverse experience ensures a great advantage when teaching and researching the core areas of law. The majority of all law textbooks are authored by faculty members.

*c) Faculty of Economics and Business Administration*

The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration employs thirty-three tenured professors, i.e. 14 professors, 6 associate professors, 9 assistant professors, and 4 adjunct professors subject to present-day regulations. In addition the faculty employs 7 adjuncts according to the older system and around 40 lecturers are involved in teaching each year. The backgrounds of the faculty members of the faculty are very diverse. Very many of them have extensive experience gathered in universities in Northern and Western Europe and North America. This affords the faculty a considerable advantage when it comes to teaching and research in the foundations of economics and business administration.

***Conclusion: Accreditation (Compliance) and Recommendations***

University regulations, subsequent faculty regulations and their implementation meet the requirements of art. 17 and 18 of the Higher Education Institution Act. Regulations are extensive and, by and large, precise and fit for purpose as regards ensuring qualitative selection of staff within the compound of general practice in Iceland. There is no indication that the rules are not applied. On this account the faculties are to be accredited.

The accreditation team would nevertheless draw attention to scope for further consideration as follows:

- Providing choice between advertising positions and in-house promotion may limit the opportunity to attract and select staff on a broader quantitative and qualitative base. In effect, this can be detrimental and disadvantageous both to the university and to individuals particularly since there are no clear criteria in which case which mode of selection is applied.
- The right to define the job features is left to faculties, with the Rector being asked to consent only with regard to availability of funding (art. 34 of the Rules for the University of Iceland). This model leaves little scope for strategic reformulation of staff positions in view of central strategic options for entering into new fields and/or attracting people with non-traditional subject backgrounds.
- It is not entirely clear how selection criteria are being operationalized, particularly in the case of assessing teaching performance; inviting external candidates to give a lecture may be insufficient (cf. art. 41 no 2 and art. 44 of the Rules for the University of Iceland).
- Sessional staff should be integrated more closely, in particular by giving them more targeted induction.

## **6. Admission Requirements and Student Rights and Obligations**

### *a) Admission Requirements*

Admission criteria are outlined in article 46 of the “Rules for the University of Iceland”, based on paragraphs 1 and 2 of article 13 of the University of Iceland Act. The decision-making procedure described is considered to be in accordance with administrative procedural law; paragraph 6 of article 46 specifically emphasizes the speed with which cases should be addressed. Decisions denying admission to a

programme must always be justified; the right of referring the rejection to the University Council for review is mentioned.

Admission basically requires matriculation examination or another comparable school certificate from a foreign institution. The university and its faculties assess whether the matriculation examination or comparable certificate testifies the presence of the knowledge and competence necessary to undertake university studies. In order to do so in a transparent and coherent way, the University Council - following recommendations from the faculties - has established further rules for admission of students to individual programmes of undergraduate and graduate study. These are laid down in the “Regulations Concerning Admission Requirements at the University of Iceland, (No. 573/2005)”. These rules stipulate that the rules of individual faculties shall specify what type of matriculation examination, from one or more tracks, is considered to be satisfactory as preparation for studies within that faculty. If a general matriculation examination from a given track does not suffice as preparation for studies within the faculty, it shall be specified precisely what the additional requirements are. Individual faculties may also specify a special admission examination or a competitive examination at the end of the first semester. In addition, the faculties of the University have specified what may be regarded as desirable preparation for studies in the relevant faculty. However, in the field of the social sciences, no further preparation is required than that entailed by the general matriculation examination.

The university is permitted to grant individuals who have not completed a matriculation examination or similar degree the right to commence studies if they, in the assessment of the relevant faculty, possess maturity and knowledge analogous to that which the matriculation examination is intended to provide. It is expected that applicants will have, through study and work, acquired preparation which is considered to be comparable to that which is entailed by the matriculation examination, in addition to further preparatory requirements according to the rules of the faculty, if applicable. It is permitted to assess work experience as equivalent to as much as one year of study in upper secondary school in these instances: i.e., such an exemption can only be considered if the person in question has completed the equivalent of three years of studies at secondary school. This possibility of granting

exemptions has not been utilized in the past three years, but will once again be used in the academic year 2007-2008.

The university keeps track of admission requirements in comparable institutions abroad, for instance through participation in "Ekvivaleringsgruppen," which operates under the auspices of NUAS, and through various types of collaboration through the ENIC-NARIC offices; the Division of Academic Affairs at the University of Iceland serves as the ENIC-NARIC information office for Iceland according to The Lisbon Recognition Convention (Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region), according to a special agreement with the Ministry of Culture, Science and Education.

According to the rules of the university, faculties shall establish rules regarding necessary degrees which are required as prerequisites for master's and doctoral study. In addition they shall specify a minimal grade point average in these previous studies if applicable. If an exemption is granted from the degree prerequisites, then other prerequisites shall be specified, and if further requirements are set for admission, for instance, an entrance examination for doctoral study, these requirements shall be specified.

All faculties of the university require a bachelor's degree or equivalent degree for admission to the master's degree programme; eight of these faculties require a specific minimal grade point average in the bachelor's degree. Applications for graduate study are processed by a special committee within the faculty, the committee on research-based studies. In the Faculty of Social Sciences there are admission committees in every subject. The proposals of the committees are dealt with by the Faculty Board.

According to the policy of the University, the students who should be encouraged to undertake doctoral studies are those who are most likely to take initiative in research. The selection of doctoral students shall be based on competition which takes place on a basis of equality and fairness. According to article 67 of the rules of the University of Iceland, doctoral students should in general have completed a candidate's degree, master's degree or professional certification; however, each faculty shall determine the prerequisites, necessary degrees which are required for admission to doctoral



studies, and the minimum average grade if applicable. These requirements are stated in the specific rules of the faculties regarding master's and doctoral studies.

Four faculties are permitted to admit students with bachelor's degrees directly to studies toward the doctoral degree due to special circumstances, but a higher minimum average grade is then required than for those who undertake studies toward the master's degree. Five faculties require a master's degree with a specific minimum average grade for admission to doctoral studies; two faculties require master's degrees without a specific minimum average grade.

In their debate with faculties the team raised the question as to whether all faculties concerned here practise sufficient generosity in their admissions policy both nationally and internationally, while endorsing the interest of faculties to maintain their standards. The team believes that the opportunity for students to make use of flexible learning paths is a high priority in the Bologna Process. Facilitating this by making clear statements of accomplished knowledge and competences at the end of the previous learning phase as expected entrance knowledge and competences and, where necessary, offering bridging courses may be helpful (cf. also item VII. below).

*b) Other Rights and Duties of Students*

The university believes that despite being subject to the law as a state institution, the legal position of students is determined predominantly by the basic attitude that the university engages in a service activity rendered to the public. The university strives to make the administration of instruction both efficient and appropriate. Serving that end, instructors are encouraged to follow the guidelines stated in "Good Practices in Teaching and Examinations at the University of Iceland", which are published on the university web site. However, decisions regarding the rights and duties of students are subject to administrative procedural laws. In this matter, the received definition of the concept of a government resolution is followed; those points are observed which specifically require a careful procedure.

The major areas of rights and duties - apart from admission to study programmes (cf. above) - are the following, which are dealt with in the Rules for the University of Iceland (No. 458/2000) and the guidelines on "Good Practice" mentioned above:

1. Decisions to penalize students for violations of regulations:

The procedure is subject to article 50 of the UI rules, based on article 17 of the University of Iceland Act. It is considered to be in accordance with administrative procedural law; in particular, a student's right to argue against the decision is specified, as well as the right of making a complaint to the the appeals committee in student affairs. The moderation rule of the administrative procedural laws is closely observed.

2. The review of decisions regarding instruction, examinations and assessment:

This activity is subject to article 49 in the rules, based on article 3 of the University of Iceland Act with respect to the arbitration powers of the University Council. A demand on the part of a student for a review of formal decisions which affect instruction, examinations and assessment is dealt with in line with administrative procedural laws; with the substance of the decision affecting the specific mode of dealing with it. There are the following types of cases:

In the case of a review of professional assessment of studies, the procedure is determined by articles 59 and 60 of the University rules, which contain specifications regarding the appointment of review examiners and students' right to receive an explanation for a grade. The university states that according to item 2, paragraph 2, article 21 of the administrative procedures act there is no obligation to justify grades which are granted for performance on examinations; therefore the requirements in the rules for the University of Iceland regarding explanations for a grade are more comprehensive than the general requirement in the administrative procedures act. In the case of a complaint an external examiner is asked to review the assessment. However, in accordance with article 15 of the University of Iceland Act this does not apply to a student who has passed an examination but expects his grade to be reviewed; this right is denied because such a decision is seen as not having as extensive consequences as when a failing grade is granted for an examination. In cases when a review examiner has reviewed the instructor's professional assessment of studies, the conclusion is final and can neither be referred to the faculty nor to the University Council, nor to the appeals committee for university student complaints,

cf. paragraph 3, article 20 of Universities Act no. 63/2006 and paragraph 2, article 1 of rules no. 1152/2006.

If a student demands a review of a decision because proper procedures have not been observed or the equal rights of students have not been respected, the matter is taken before the University Council. The procedural regulations of the administrative procedural laws are followed in all such cases.

Students' complaints about the implementation of instruction/examinations or the service provided which do not refer to a request for review of a specific decision usually indicate the need for a change in policies and practices. The treatment of such complaints is not covered by the regulations of the administrative procedural laws. Such issues of quality in fact are frequently taken before the University Council eventually (cf item 30 in "Good Practices in Teaching and Examinations", following article 15 of the University of Iceland Act).

3. Decisions on assessment of studies in other countries (or universities):

Article 63 of the rules, now supported by article 10 of Universities Act no. 63/2006, governs the validation of courses attended at other universities. Each university faculty assesses whether and to what extent it recognizes degrees which a student has completed abroad. This assessment shall be in accordance with the international obligations to which Iceland is subject; in particular, the Lisbon Recognition Convention is to be applied. A rejection of assessment may be referred to the University Council. The procedural regulations in the administrative procedural laws apply to the referral, but for the same reasons as stated above (in item 3), the University Council does not review the faculty's formal assessment of specific courses.

4. Decisions to deny a student's request for an exemption:

Even though faculties are the basic units of the university and enjoy autonomy in instructional affairs, their formal decisions are always based on laws regarding the university and on rules which the University Council has established on the basis of these laws. Exemptions from such rules and rejection of exemptions in particular can

be referred to the university Council for a decision. Such grievances are addressed according to administrative procedural law.

In addition to the rights which have been described here, it must be noted that students can participate in the administration of the university at all levels in the university and faculty bodies as outlined in the Rules for the University of Iceland.

*c) Code of Ethics*

The university and faculties have passed a code of ethics. This is a comprehensive document which regulates, predominantly though not exclusively, responsibilities and rights concerning relations between students and the university. Among these are items such as providing professional diligence, equality, confidentiality, reliability, objectivity, competence, accuracy and integrity, honesty, freedom of research and protection in terms of recognition of other person's contributions to research findings. Students are expected to be polite, considerate, and honest, following the university's directions on good work practice.

*d) Right to having grades filed on time*

Conscientious and professional work is seen as including, for instance, filing of grades on time. Accordingly, the university passed rules on reliability of on-time grading of assignments on June 7th, 2007. These rules involve monitoring and follow-up on the performance of individual teachers by the faculty office and the dean; they require that every effort is made to intervene if an instructor does not fulfil his/her legal duty to file grades on time.

***Conclusion: Accreditation (Compliance) and Recommendations***

The university has outlined the admission regulations as well as the rights and duties of students and staff in accordance with the specifications of the law. There is no indication that there is deviation from these rules in practice. Therefore the university is to be accredited in this respect.

The panel would like to comment on the following matters, which should be viewed as a recommendation:

- Facilitating access to postgraduate programmes by making clear statements of accomplished knowledge and competences at the end of the previous learning phase as expected entrance requirements and, where necessary, offering bridging courses (cf. also item VII. below);
- In the complaints process, according to Art. 59 of the Rules for the University of Iceland a review is denied if a student has passed but disagrees with the grade. Although this practice appears to be in line with the provision on complaints in the University of Iceland Act, it can be viewed as unfair and unjustified in terms of equal treatment, in particular since the grade as such counts significantly to a student's job prospects.

## **7. Working conditions for teachers and students as well as their support services (teacher and student facilities)**

The university offers a number of facilities in terms of accommodation, information, recording, counselling, and other services.

In general, central administration provides a variety of services for all faculties of the university, for instance, in relation to publicity, course catalogues, timetables, examination schedules, finances, student affairs, personnel management, the rights and duties of students and academics, contracts, the university archive, etc. In addition to university functions, the offices of the university faculties provide many kinds of office services, such as administration of the faculty's finances; they manage the work contributions of tenured academics and sessional instructors and payment schedules for salaries and supervise students' progress in their studies in collaboration with the Student Registration Office. Students and academics have direct access to employees at the faculty offices to make inquiries and receive assistance and service. The employees of faculty offices thus provide general advice, counselling and information for students, both through interviews and at meetings, in addition to assisting academics.

However, both the university and faculty leaders as well as staff members believe that there is a need to strengthen support services, e.g. as regards technical and office staff. This objective is, inter alia, one of the reasons for introducing the system of schools.

As for detail of facilities and support services available, see annex 4.

***Conclusion: Accreditation (Compliance) and Recommendations***

Facilities and services as described and practised by the university and faculties are both comprehensive and sufficient, largely both in terms of quantity and quality. Some of these services are not standard, thus particularly laudable, as is the case with in-house service of the ENIC/NARIC in matters of recognition. This statement also pertains to the Equal Rights Officer as a specific institution. The student/teacher information system Ugla may prove to be particularly useful.

As a consequence, the university is to be accredited on account of these features. The accreditation team acknowledges that the university has identified strengthening its support services as a priority and encourages the institution to make sure that there is a proper balance between support staff and academic staff.

## **8. Internal Quality Management System**

### ***8.1 Basic features (rules and policies) of the internal quality assurance system of the university.***

The university's quality assurance system applies to all academic fields. The internal quality assurance system of the university and its academic fields is based on the following essential elements, which further specify the Universities Act (no. 63/2006):

Art. 9 of the University of Iceland Act (no. 41/1999) stipulates that regular assessment shall be made of the faculties' activities in accordance with the provisions of the applicable acts and rules. Art. 13 and 24 of the Rules of the University of Iceland (no.

458/2000) state a requirement for regular assessment and supervision of the faculties' activities. This pertains to an annual review of the course catalogue and an overall assessment of the faculties' activities every 5 to 10 years in accordance with the formal quality assurance system. A student survey of instruction and courses every semester and the processing of the results of these surveys, statements from instructors on their own teaching and class objectives at the end of each school year, and the faculty's formal response feed into these reviews.

The rules also define requirements for various prerequisites and standard practices relating to the quality of university activities. These pertain to, inter alia, admission prerequisites, courses of study and academic achievement, grading, academic qualifications for recruitment and promotion. For detail, cf. the chapter on the organisation of teaching and research (criterion c) above).

The single most important element underlying the university's internal quality assurance system is the "Policy of the University of Iceland for 2006-2011". Each of the faculties has used the university's overall policy as a basis to form its own policies, which consist in more specific renditions of the overall policy. The role of the university's internal quality assurance system includes ensuring that the strategy of the university and its faculties can be put into practice.

The university puts its quality policy into the context of the Bologna Process and policies formulated by the European University Association. Due to the Bologna Process, and also due to other factors like a standardized system of grading, academic degrees, and diploma supplements in addition to determining a formal framework for higher education and academic degrees, there has been a growing emphasis on quality assurance in the work of higher education institutions. In 2005 an important step was made with the acceptance of the so-called "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area". The university takes note of these developments and actively participates in this process.

## ***8.2 The internal quality assurance system of the university in terms of substance and process***

The university has formally and explicitly, namely through the “University of Iceland Quality Assurance Programme”, stated its quality policies and approaches. The university's internal quality assurance system applies to the university as a whole, though individual elements can be elaborated further under the auspices of the faculties, institutions, and central administration.

Responsibility for the university's quality assurance system is vested in the Rector. However, a specially appointed quality manager serves on behalf of the Rector in these matters. The deans, directors, department chairmen, and other members who administer individual operational units are responsible for quality assurance in their respective areas.

The quality assurance system formulated at university level is intended to

- meet obligations of the university, in particular to set goals and develop metrics, enhance instructors' qualifications, hold seminars in teaching techniques, systematically assess instructors' work with the aim of improving the quality of teaching, assess activity and success of teaching, carry out self-evaluation within each faculty in relation to external assessment, and develop the university's information and disclosure system in order to improve transparency of operations;
- serve the needs of students, staff, business, the government, and the international scientific community;
- guarantee quality and promote improvement;
- do so with respect to all areas of operation, namely (1) general aspects, (2) teaching, (3) research, (4) students, (5) faculties in educational and scientific fields, (6) administration and services;
- be effective, precise, not too time-consuming, predictable in terms of the way evaluation findings are to be used, and of relevance to promotion and salaries of tutors.

In addition to these items formulated in the application for accreditation, the university representatives stated in the meeting with the panel that the university intends to



- match standards applied throughout the advanced academic world,
- endorse principles of the Bologna Process (as indicated, inter alia, by being an ECTS pilot institution),
- make a clear shift to a learning outcome orientation,
- shift more strongly to research-based master and doctoral programmes.

The quality assurance system is seen as being a matter for constant development. In view of this approach, the aforementioned members of the university meet regularly to discuss matters including individual elements of the quality assurance system. A special Quality Assurance Committee, operating under the auspices of the University Council, has the role of ensuring that the quality assurance system is observed, initiating development efforts and the implementation of innovations in the area of quality assurance, and in this way furthering the culture of quality assurance within the university. The quality manager is also the official promoter for the Bologna Process in matters of quality assurance for Iceland.

### ***8.3 In detail: Concrete elements of the quality system concerning teaching***

The quality assurance system applies to basic elements of operation, as outlined, and break down into the following aspects:

#### *a) Programme and teaching improvement tools:*

##### (1) Admissions, Prerequisites for Study, and Academic Environment:

The university and its faculties state that serving students' needs is seen as a priority. Staff and also facilities must be sufficient to attract students to the university. However, also student intake must be sufficiently good. That is why admission to basic studies requires to fulfil certain minimum requirements for formal training, though faculties may set additional prerequisites. As a rule, students may not enrol in graduate studies unless they have achieved a very good grade in the final examination of the previous level of study, as well as presenting a detailed course of study; faculties may introduce additional requirements.

##### (2) Student course evaluations:

The university considers student surveys on instruction in the courses given to be one of the most important formal measures for assuring educational quality. These surveys have provided considerable feedback, as they have been in use since 1987. This is done online at the end of each course. Since the survey was placed on the internet several years ago and adapted to the university's intranet, the results are available much more quickly and participation has increased. The web-based format also includes the option of creating reports so the staff can see the results of the academic survey and can view comparisons by faculty, department, and instructor.

The university states that though some contest the reliability of such surveys, both instructors and students support them. The university values them highly. Student comments are seen by the university as especially important factors in facilitating instructors' organization, improvement, and development of their teaching.

However, the accreditation team detected that there is some doubt as to whether the questionnaires used are designed and made use of aptly. In interviews with staff and students the team came across differing views as to the real effect of the evaluations as far as the individual instructor's attitude towards drawing conclusions is concerned. While some pay heed to the findings, others seem to disregard them.

As for their design, it was stated that while the surveys address issues of matching student expectations and individual instructor's performance in various facets of teaching, they seem to fall short on exploring reality of workload concepts, on covering matters of assessment, on addressing holistic aspects of proper course compilation within the overall structure of a programme, on certain contextual conditions of the class experience, and on matters concerning the specific attitudes and standards of the students attending; there should be mid-term evaluations to provide for improvements to the benefit of the current course. The panel was informed that the university has realized these shortcomings and has undergone a revision of its survey practices, but changes have not been introduced yet. Some of these shortcomings may be due to the fact that students appear not to be involved in developing the layout of questionnaires in all cases.

In the perception of students interviewed, the evaluation results are seen as being secretive; only one student representative has access to the findings. Evaluation results are seen as not necessarily and automatically being taken up by the rectorate or deans, although there are cases where they seem to have been instrumental in even removing an instructor from a course. While some staff members viewed the questionnaire results as being very important for them and that the results influence the opportunity to obtain permanent employment, some of the faculty staff stated in their interview with the accreditation team that they were not fully aware of how to use the findings of the questionnaires systematically, and that issues were left at a more informal level. The panel was informed that the university was aware of these deficiencies and intends to improve on student participation and follow-up practices, stating that delay on improvement on these counts was due to the intention of the university not to destabilize the imminent merger with the University of Education.

However, since deans, department chairpersons, and supervising instructors can view results for instructors under their supervision, the student evaluation is among the items under consideration when an instructor requests promotion, apart from a review of his teaching experience and teaching material. Furthermore, the university states that the conclusions of the academic survey are discussed in an annual review between the dean of the relevant faculty and the instructor, where improvements are addressed if needed.

Apart from questionnaire-based quality surveys, students have formal and informal modes of expressing opinion on the quality of teaching. In general, teachers can be approached personally. Moreover, there are student representatives who can take up issues concerning teaching, either in individual cases or in committees concerned with quality issues, in particular with structural problems.

(3) Survey on job performance of graduates:

The accomplishments of graduates in further studies or subsequent employment is seen as an important indicator of quality of programmes. However, staff members indicated in their interview with the accreditation team that there was scope for intensifying this quality assurance approach, and that canvassing job performance of graduates was not done regularly. In its written documentation the university states

that it has placed emphasis on surveying new student's expectations of studies on the one hand, and on the other an evaluation among graduates on the quality of instruction and services at the university in order to collect information. Over the last four years there has been a survey conducted on new students' attitudes toward the university, and later a follow-up survey among the same students to collect information on whether their expectations have been met. In 2004 there was a detailed survey on two entire graduating classes regarding the value and usefulness of studies at the university. The survey was to collect information on students' preparation for university studies, their actual studies at the University of Iceland, the transition from studies to working, and how the studies served the students in their life and careers; this survey was based on graduates of 1993 and 2001. The university feels that the survey indicated that graduates have generally performed well in getting into graduate programs at the best schools abroad, and most find positions that suit their skills, and that student satisfaction has increased between the graduating classes. Such surveys are to be continued as a regular quality assurance tool.

(4) External evaluations:

In recent years faculties have performed various external evaluations of their programmes. The team understands that these are viewed as helpful. However, these evaluations are not carried out regularly and in all fields.

*b) Staff-related activities:*

(a) General items:

In general, the university safeguards a careful recruitment process, providing seminars for employees, granting travel support for research, allowing research semesters, introducing a remuneration and promotion system which offers incentives for research as being important factors to foster quality.

(b) In Particular: Recruitment, Promotion, and Monitoring of Academics:

Academic positions at the University of Iceland are advertised. The university's academics are subject to strict requirements of professional ability, activity and achievement in their work. To ensure that they meet these requirements, a strict and formal recruitment process is in place, as well as a performance-based system of

promotion and remuneration. However, there is also a scheme of in-house advancement in place. The latter can potentially hamper the quality of selecting staff for more senior position (cf. critically part d) above on staff matters). This risk may be mitigated by the care which the university and faculties invest in steering this process, among others by paying heed to the results of the student surveys.

There is a scheme of annual staff interviews in place. The deans of the faculties hold a formal annual review for all academics. This includes a performance review with regard to instruction, research, administration and other aspects of their responsibilities. The outcome of the review is kept on record to ensure consistency and to facilitate any follow-up. The Rector and deans also hold an annual review where the performance of the deans is discussed, and the deans' reports on the outcome of the annual reviews within their faculties.

(c) In Particular: Teaching Centre and Student Counselling Centre; other support devices

The Teaching Centre serves faculties, departments and individual instructors by providing professional advice and information about pedagogical developments and teaching methods. The same applies to the Student Counselling Centre with regard to students in as much as it provides guidance to students requiring specific advice and support, either academically or personally.

However, the team was informed in their interview with staff members – deans confirmed this fact - that participation of staff in activities of the teaching centre, namely in helping with the enhancement of teaching quality, was voluntary. The team noted that there was a university policy in place that at least new instructors were expected to take part, and it would help to avoid singling individuals out if participation was obligatory for everyone.

Some faculties provide teacher's handbooks to inform their staff of essentials of the teaching process.

c) Identification of further means to enhance programme quality in the future  
Based on the Strategy of the University of Iceland for 2006-2011 various measures are being prepared to further enhance the quality of learning. The following items

which specifically target students' needs have been listed, which the team views positively while noting that more stringency in devising suitable action plans is desirable:

- Strengthening ties systematically with schools in an effort to stimulate their work and lay the foundation for well-prepared university students in the future.
- Attracting talented students: there are efforts to establish a strong scholarship system for students of above-average ability
- Paying special attention to providing new students with a good reception and foreign students with strong support.
- Improving of classrooms and technological equipment, facilities for study, facilities for student life, and access to electronic publications and databases. The new faculties' buildings will contribute significantly to this end.
- Enhancing academic access to information technology with continued development on the information and academic management system, Uglu. There have been efforts to improve access to information on course offerings and individualize counselling for systematic course selection.
- Improving student services by increasing the ratio of permanent instructors to students from 1:21 to 1:17 by 2011. This will increase emphasis on teaching methods, which reinforces the quality of studies and targets student needs and the unique position of different subjects.
- Increasing academic control and performance by setting more stringent prerequisites and placing stricter requirements on academic achievement. Work is underway on an action plan to increase students' accountability in order to bolster retention.

- Efforts to revise how the academic survey is conducted and any follow-up in order to improve the survey, increase student participation, and take better advantage of the conclusions.

In addition, the university indicates that there are improvement plans which primarily address staff matters, such as:

- Undertakings to increase support services for academics, to advertise teaching positions on an international level, to simplify the recruitment process for academics while increasing professional requirements, to recruit new instructors on a temporary basis, to increase personal flexibility in the division of responsibilities between research, instruction, and administration, and to require new instructors to attend courses in pedagogical methods and techniques at the Instructor Resource Centre.
- Establishing guidelines on instruction which relate, for instance, to the reception of new instructors and students, training and continuing education for instructors, development of teaching methods and academic evaluations, support services, class sizes, and establishing roles for graduate students and part-time instructors in the domain of teaching.
- Efforts to develop a special system for quality evaluation to assess the quality of studies and instruction and to encourage good teaching methods and developmental projects.

#### ***8.4 In Particular: Research and Graduate Studies***

##### *a) Research: Incentives and quality assurance system*

All academic staff submit an annual statement of their research and published works, which is evaluated by specialists in accordance with special rules based on internationally recognized standards. These are understood to be as follows: written work is evaluated for research points, the value of which is mainly determined by the

place of publication. The higher the academic demands placed on the work, for instance in innovation in knowledge, the more points the work is awarded.

The active research efforts and the research quality of individual academic staff members bear direct effect on their fixed basic salary, yearly bonus, and promotion. Tenured academics that fulfil certain criteria for active research efforts have the right to a semester long sabbatical, typically every three years. These measures are expected to provide a constant incentive for instructors to excel in research.

Moreover, the combined research efforts of instructors in each faculty have a direct effect on the faculty's research funding. The university maintains a special competitive Research Fund, which is intended to enable academic staff members to hire research assistants, especially masters and doctoral students.

Based on the “Strategy of the University of Iceland for 2006-2011”, there are currently efforts to revise the system of research evaluation in order to increase active research efforts and research quality with increasing publication in reputable, highly regarded, scientific journals and books from reputable, international publishers, as well as greater emphasis on pursuing competitive research awards and motivation to increase collaboration with the business sector and leading universities in the world.

#### *b) Graduate Studies*

There have been substantial increases in graduate studies in recent years, which is a part of the advancement of research efforts that fulfil international standards. To ensure academic quality the university has identified comprehensive quality standards and requirements for doctoral studies along the lines of general standards for quality of doctoral studies, of academic requirements for doctoral supervisors and doctoral committees, for material requirements for the field, department or faculty for doctoral programmes, and on the responsibility for and monitoring of quality of postgraduate study (cf. “Standards and requirements for Quality of doctoral programmes at the University of Iceland”, approved by the General Forum on 21 May 2004).

Comparable quality standards are currently under preparation for master's studies. A Centre for Graduate Studies, which will oversee quality assurance in graduate studies, has been established.



To improve the development and quality of doctoral studies, there are efforts to greatly strengthen the grant system, enlarge the University's Research Fund, and establish rules about employing doctoral students as teaching assistants. There are currently efforts to greatly improve research facilities, update equipment, and improve access to electronic journals and databases. To further these efforts the Science Complex of the University of Iceland and the Biology Unit at the National Hospital/University Hospital will begin operations, creating a forum for collaborative efforts between the university and start-up companies, entrepreneurial enterprises, and hi-tech companies, laboratories and other related parties.

The university has set as a target to increase the number of doctoral students at the university, especially foreign doctoral students and joint degree programs with foreign universities; foreigners should represent 30% of doctoral students by 2011.

### ***8.5 Governance and Services***

The university believes that its system of governance must be fit to reach its objectives, which are determined by the need to excel in competition with other international universities. To that end there have been several comprehensive external evaluations of the system of governance. Their conclusions helped to formulate the university's strategy for 2006-2011. The findings concluded that the system of governance be restructured, that the authority and responsibility of the administrators be better defined, and that decision-making process be made more efficient and reliable. Moreover, the university concluded that it should promote the culture of quality and to strengthen ties with Icelandic society as well as improve means for self-funding.

The primary means for increasing the quality of governance at the University of Iceland include:

- **Organizational Review of University Faculties and Departments:** Since autumn 2006 there have been efforts to review the division of the university's faculties and departments in order to strengthen its operational units. The university is expected to be divided into 5-7 schools, each of which will operate in separate faculties.

- **Merger of the University of Iceland and the University of Education:** A merger of the University of Iceland and the Icelandic University of Education by mid 2008 in accordance with a decision issued by the Icelandic parliament is to occur and will take place in the context of the organizational review mentioned above.
- **Strengthening the System of Governance:** A comprehensive organizational review of the university is underway in order to reinforce its system of governance in a number of ways, including focusing the role and tasks assigned to the University Council and the University General Forum, increasing the outside representatives on the University Council, and increasing the responsibility of the Rector and the deans. Considerable improvement is also planned in the support services, both in relation to faculty administration and central administration, including enabling academics to devote more time to instruction and research. Finally, there are efforts to establish a forum to handle comments and suggestions for improving the university's governance and support services.
- **The Quality Assurance System and the Culture of Quality:** As mentioned above, systematic efforts are being made to improve the university's quality assurance system and its quality culture. A Quality Assurance Committee has been appointed under the University Council and regular internal and external quality evaluations are expected for the university as a whole and its individual faculties. The University of Iceland also supports the proposal that universities in Iceland should establish a common forum for developing and promoting quality in university work.
- **Equal Rights and the Welfare of Personnel:** The Committee for Equal Rights will oversee regular evaluations of the status of equal rights. The Division of Human Resources will regularly conduct a survey on job satisfaction and associated factors.

- **Management Training:** Every year a management course is held for deans, vice deans, department chairmen, directors of institutions, and division heads. Deans are also offered individual management training with specialists in the field.
- **Administration:** Systematic efforts are undertaken to strengthen services, improve efficiency and increase flexibility in the university's central administration. The organization of the administration was recently reviewed, dividing it into six divisions, each of which reports to a division head, who in turn reports to the Rector. Procedural policy has recently been put in place for a number of individual elements of these activities. There are annual reviews of staff members in administration, using a standardized performance review based on a system of evaluation analogous to the system used to evaluate academic staff members. There are also efforts to implement an organized system of training and continued education for administrative staff members. In recent years there have been several external evaluations of the administration, and the comments and suggestions from these evaluation agencies have been taken into consideration.
- **Collection and Analysis of Data:** The university operates a number of information systems in various divisions of its activities to ensure reliable information as a base for quality assurance and quality improvement. These are to be used in an integral manner to serve as monitoring instruments for controlling purposes.

***8.6 Internal quality assurance systems at faculty levels and their articulation with the general quality assurance system of the university***

While the quality system of the university applies to all faculties and all academic fields at the university, individual faculties have established their own procedures and norms regarding certain aspects of their operations. However, in their interview with the accreditation team staff members indicated that they experience quality assurance policy to be a matter for the university rather than each faculty individually.

*a) Faculty of Social Sciences*

The Faculty of Social Sciences places great emphasis on adhering to the university's quality system. In that line, the faculty has set guidelines for students on work behind each credit, attendance and academic integrity; rules have also been set on students' access to the results of teaching evaluations. There are new rules for doctoral studies. Furthermore, the faculty has defined new rules for hiring and promoting academic staff, and it has set ethical guidelines for research.

In terms of organising responsibilities and processes, the faculty has established a Teaching Committee to take a lead in policymaking and to make proposals for quality priorities along with revising the status of teaching and exams in order to provide outstanding instruction. In order to achieve this objective, the teaching committee is to assess the status of teaching, to advise on new priorities and new criteria for good teaching practice, and to suggest policy for implementing the changes agreed upon with regard to teaching. Seven permanent representatives, one from each department, serve on the committee, along with one student representative; the committee is supported by a faculty office staff member.

The faculty's most important objective is to perform vigorous research that meets international quality standards and also benefits Icelandic society. The faculty intends to further strengthen the contribution of Icelandic social scientific research to international scholarship, not least by conducting first rate research on Icelandic society, for which it bears special responsibility and where it can be expected to produce better results than any other organization. In order to accomplish this, the research environment and facilities of Icelandic social sciences must be greatly improved; this improvement is given high priority within the faculty. To that end, a Scientific Committee has been established to support the development of doctoral studies and other research-oriented programs, the strengthening of research, and facilities for research. Seven permanent instructors serve on the committee, one from each department, along with one student representative. A faculty office staff member works with the committee.

For the past few years, the faculty has paid for specialized services to assist academics with applications to domestic research funds and international projects. Furthermore it

is planned to assist instructors with applications to international research funds. The faculty has also allocated research funds to instructors (21.000.000 ISK annually). These funds are generally expected to pay for the daily operations of research. The faculty makes considerable effort to ensure that the computer equipment and facilities available to the faculty are of top quality and in excellent condition. The faculty has also made particular efforts to ensure that academics have access to journals and can order books for the national and university library. To this end, the faculty pays 10.000.000 ISK to the library each year which has, in recent years, been by far the highest contribution among the university faculties.

In 2006, the faculty set ethical guidelines for research; these have been approved by the University Forum. The objectives of the guidelines are to provide an ethical frame of reference for the research of instructors, students, and academics in the faculty, in addition to maintaining confidence in the legality of research and the integrity of those conducting it. An Ethics Committee operates under the auspices of the faculty and a faculty office staff member works with the committee, on which five permanent faculty instructors serve with one external member.

Faculty instructors are active participants in public debate on their research subjects; seminars and scholarly conferences are held to present research of students and instructors alike. Many of the country's leading experts in important areas of Icelandic subjects work within the faculty and their opinion is frequently sought, especially by the media and by the public authorities on a great variety of topics.

The faculty has, in cooperation with the Institute of Social Sciences, obtained a grant from the University's Committee of Instructional Affairs to do an appraisal of course requirements at the faculty and make proposals for improvements. This shall be completed during autumn 2007. Furthermore, one academic on the faculty has obtained a grant to start an ambitious study of the pedagogy of university instruction within the setting of the Faculty of Social Sciences. In particular, the Department of Social Work has received quality assurance certification for 2007-2010 by ENQASP (European Network for Quality Assurance in Study Programs in Social Professions). ENQASP is a quality assurance certification centre for European university

programmes in social work. The University of Iceland is the first university in Scandinavia to receive this certification in social work.

*b) Faculty of Law*

The faculty has defined rules intended to regulate their programmes, thus defining admission, basic content, assignments, grading. The faculty has not communicated specific quality assurance regulations. It is understood that it applies the general practices defined at university level (see above).

*c) Faculty of Economics and Business Administration*

The faculty points out in particular that, in addition to following the quality assurance mechanisms established at university level, there is personal opportunity to address matters of quality, in particular in master's programmes. Master's students nominate two students from each programme who are in regular contact with the programme supervisor. Three weeks after the start of the programme supervisors call a meeting with the student representatives to discuss the matters concerning the courses. The Committee on Master's Studies reviews the reports from all of the supervisors and takes any necessary actions. At the end of each course the student representatives discuss the results of the course evaluations with the supervisors. The results are also discussed by the Committee on Master's Studies who decides whether changes are required when the course concerned will next be offered. If any problems arise, the teacher shall be contacted and the administration of the programme shall take necessary actions. These may include changes in the curriculum or course structure, or even a replacement of the teacher when the course is taught next. A similar process is in place in the MBA programme. A comparable system is planned for the undergraduate programmes.

***Conclusion: Accreditation (Compliance) and Recommendations***

The faculties concerned have met the core criteria of a quality assurance system, hence they are to be accredited on this count.

However, the team recommends that the university undertake further steps to improve the system, which should not be delayed because of the merger process with the University of Education, such as:

- Developing a holistic approach to programme quality, which covers more aspects than basically individual courses and teacher performance, including matters such as entire programme structure, choice of learning outcomes, fitness of programme structure, content, and teaching methods to meet these objectives, assessment practices.
- Including specific monitoring devices beyond student questionnaires more systematically, e.g. addressing prospective employers, monitoring graduates over time.
- Ensuring that there is systematic follow-up to evaluation findings.
- Making regular provision for enhancing teaching capabilities of staff in general, including sessional staff in particular.
- Conceiving of a systematic way of assessing research performance, linked to perspectives on incentives, such as funding.

## **9. Description of study according to learning outcomes**

The faculties have provided study programme descriptions of their programmes which state (1) the name of the course and total number of ECTS credits; (2) the definition of the programme, giving a general outline of its basic orientation; (3) programme descriptions at the overall level of the programme, as a rule by making statements which cover expectations of outcomes in terms of knowledge and understanding, intellectual skills, practical skills, communication skills and information literacy, and learning skills. These items are further specified by detailed interpretation of what these items cover in view of the nature and objective of the programme under consideration.

Staff members indicated in their interview with the accreditation team that moving towards learning outcomes was work in progress. Staff emphasized that there were

regular discussions among them to improve on outcomes orientation while there was still scope for improvement. There was, however, little exchange on the generic issues of the switch from input to the learning outcome approach across faculty lines.

The team notes that the university has realized that the aspects mentioned above need to be worked on, and that work is currently in progress with considerable enthusiasm. According to student opinion, improvement should also be achieved in assessment practices since these should be designed more stringently to address testing of relevant defined learning outcomes in terms of acquired competences. The team supports the university in that a valid balance must be found between concreteness and detail of statements of expected knowledge and competence on the one hand and the necessity to maintain sufficient flexibility in view of required adaptation to individuality of instructors and continuous integration of recent research into teaching. The team appreciates that considerable achievements have been made when considering that the National Qualifications Framework only came into being in February 2007.

The team also appreciates that the faculties are tentatively considering the need to go beyond mere naming of learning outcomes and proceed to validating their choices of expected learning outcomes. In doing so, faculty representatives mentioned in their meeting with the team that the following aspects of validating learning outcomes may be considered along the line of what is of value for whom, such as: (1) Meeting demands of the labour market; (2) income levels attained by graduates; (3) success in being accepted by other universities for postgraduate programmes; (4) benchmarking against competing leading institutions, mainly in the Nordic countries (no institutional preference for or against European or American system); (5) generally accepted standards of researchers; (6) developing generic and methodological competences while balancing this with specific knowledge and competence of particular academic fields (7) developing an independent mind.

***Conclusion: Accreditation (Compliance) and Recommendations***

Faculties have met the prerequisite of the standards in as far as these state that universities are expected to present an outline of expected learning outcomes of each programme offered at the end of the programme along the lines of characteristics



suggested by the National Qualifications Framework of February 8th, 2007. In consequence, the faculties and their programmes are to be accredited in view of this prerequisite.

The panel would nevertheless make recommendations to further address quality assurance issues. It views this as essential due to a relatively high dropout rate, though it recognizes that there are a number of reasons for this effect outside the reach of the university, especially since there is an open access policy in place.

In particular, the accreditation team recommends refinement of the development and description, the substantive validation and the programmatic consequences of the learning outcome approach of programmes further by

- specifying the learning outcomes more concretely and more independently from the wording used in the descriptors of the National Qualifications Framework;
- breaking learning outcome descriptors down even further into operational and measurable concrete learning experiences and correlated development of knowledge and abilities;
- adding more specificity and concreteness at the level of modules, i.e. courses, while ensuring a holistic approach (each module contributing to the overall learning outcomes of the programme) and the concept of progression;
- linking the learning outcome concept to an assessment approach which is fit to test specified learning outcomes of the courses concerned and ensures measuring the accomplishment of stated expected learning outcomes as reliably as possible.

Furthermore, any definition and specification of desired learning outcomes should be reflected upon by validating these learning outcomes in terms of their fitness to address overarching objectives of the learning process, such as – with view to the

London Communiqué 2007 in the Bologna Process - academic value (shaping academic, i.e. methodologic and systematic, inquisitive thinking), value for society (namely in terms of employability), aptness for developing an individual's personality, and contributing to the development of democratic citizenship.

In this context, faculties should reflect in more detail and specificity on

- the choice of type of master's programmes which the National Qualifications Framework makes provision for, i.e. vocational degree (level 3) and master's degree (level 4);
- enhancing mobility and institutional permeability nationally and internationally (cf. item V. above) by facilitating a more open policy of admission to postgraduate programmes, in particular by clearly defining expected knowledge and competences at the time of admission and by offering bridging opportunities to those who do not meet these specifications.

The team encourages faculties to address approaches and methods related to these matters through a joint learning process at university level since most of them contain a considerable core of overarching issues.

## **10. Finances**

The university made the following statement on its funding status and distribution mechanisms:

### ***10.1 University operations for 2006***

Expenditure totalled ISK 8,158.2 million. The operational surplus totalled ISK 200.7 million. Total expenditure increased by ISK 996.9 million or 13.9% between years. This increase breaks down into operational expenses which rose by ISK 447.8 million or 6.6% between years and construction projects which rose by ISK 489.2 million.

The increase in construction projects reflects the construction of the university square, which began during the year. Man-years increased slightly to 998, compared with 985 the previous year. The cost of wages and salaries grew by 5.8% up from ISK 4,883.6 million to ISK 5,164.5 million. The increase in employees, the cost of wages and salaries, and other operational costs in recent years is far less than the increase in students and price increases. Service revenue reached ISK 3,204.1 million compared with ISK 2,430.1 million the previous year, a YoY increase of 31.8%. Foreign revenue reached ISK 546.0 million, an increase of 22.8% from last year. Total spending authorizations reached ISK 5,025.0 million, increasing by 6.8% from last year. Total operational income reached ISK 8,229.1 million, compared with ISK 7,136.9 million the previous year, increasing by 15.3%.

Over the last 6 years the university has presented 35,815 active students; during that period the cost of instruction has exceeded the amount assumed in the national budget by ISK 906 million. In the 2005-2006 academic year there were 8,939 students enrolled at the university. The portion of active students remained unchanged at 2/3 (66.7%), with 5,887 active students considered in the academic report. The number of active students rose by 166 (2.0%) between years. The national budget allowed for 5,665 active students. No funds were received for 223 students, who, according to the model, would have provided the university with ISK 148.6 million in additional funding. Enrolment has increased rapidly with 9,471 students for the 2006-2007 academic year. At the same time the number of permanent academics has not increased and research costs have dropped substantially. Service revenue has grown in line with the increasing number of students and increased funding, reaching ISK 3,204.1 million in 2006, or 38.9% of total income and 63.8% of appropriations. Despite this, the university's faculties have accrued a deficit in recent years.

### ***10.2 Financial outlook for 2007-2011***

The new contract on teaching and research between the university and the ministry for the period 2006-2011 provides the university with an additional sum of ISK 640 million for the year 2008, and an additional sum of ISK 640 million each year for the contract period. Thus, the additional sum for the year 2011 will be ISK 2,560 million. These sums shall be indexed in the state budget according to price changes. Each year

the university will inform the ministry on how individual targets are accomplished. The common goal of both parties is to strengthen the university in the race to become highly recognized amongst leading universities in the world, e.g. by increasing the number of post-graduate students and by improving the facilities and environment for teaching and research. The university holds substantial assets in housing (60,000 sq.m.) and land, which the city of Reykjavik gave the school on its 50th anniversary in 1961. A conservative estimate values these assets at up to ISK 20 billion.

The university states that the financial fundamentals for steady operations seem to be good for the next five years. However, in discussions the team was told that the university needed more funding, especially in view of introducing more postgraduate programmes and in order to improve the student-teacher ratio in line with demands of the Bologna Process. Further growth of student numbers would depend on increased funding since even today's number of students was underfunded. In any case, the university feels treated in an unfair manner since private competitors in the higher education sector of Iceland can raise extra revenue through fees.

### ***10.3 Research income in the field of social sciences***

In 2004, the research income generated by the social sciences from competitive research funds and research contracts was 21 million ISK from Icelandic sources, 45 million ISK from foreign sources plus an additional 85 million ISK from other sources, coming to a total of 151 million ISK. Comparable figures for 2005 were 39 million ISK from Icelandic sources, 18 million ISK from foreign sources and 92 million ISK from other sources, a total of 149 million ISK.

### ***10.4 Funds***

The university maintains various research-related funds; some of these are traditional competitive funds, while other funds provide remuneration according to success in research. The work assessment fund and the royalty and research fund are examples of funds which encourage productivity and success in research. The Research Fund of the University of Iceland is a competitive fund which provides grants for well-defined research projects. The fund also provides grants in connection with doctoral study and for scholars who have recently completed doctoral degrees. The largest portion of the fund goes, through one channel or another, to research projects which are connected

to research-based studies at the university - master's and doctoral study. In addition, the university operates a fund for equipment purchases and a fund which makes it possible for instructors to hire students as assistants. Both of these funds are competitive.

#### 10.5 Distribution model for research

Allocations of funds for research are distributed among faculties according to a special distribution model for research. Those funds which are distributed to faculties according to the model are used exclusively to pay the labour costs which research duties entail.

The distribution model consists of two main parts: the salary portion and the portion tied to achievement. The salary portion entails that a certain portion of the allocated funds is distributed among faculties according to the cost of salaries for the minimum number of tenured academics according to the distribution model. This is done in order to enable faculties to fulfil their duties to pay salaries. The achievement portion is distributed among faculties according to the following criteria: (1) The number of students completing the master's degree, with ISK 500,000 being the standard grant to a faculty for each master's degree graduate; (2) the number of students completing the doctoral degree, with ISK 2,500,000 being the standard grant for each doctoral student and ISK 1,000,000 for each person who completes a doctoral degree according to the older doctoral system in which there is no formal doctoral study; (3) research points, with each research point accumulated by the employees of a faculty providing a return to the faculty of approx. ISK 25,000; (4) matching contributions for grants and special income, with the matching contribution for grants from recognized Icelandic research funds being 40%; the matching contribution for grants from recognized foreign research funds 60%, and 5% in the case of special income for research from corporations or institutes.

#### ***Conclusion: Accreditation (Compliance) and Recommendations***

The statements of the university concerning its funding status and mechanisms of distribution of funding appear plausible and sufficient to maintain its obligations vis-à-vis students and other partners. The operations of the university and of the faculties considered here can therefore, to the best knowledge of the panel while taking into

consideration that the panel has little insight into the funding of the university and its faculties, be accredited with regard to this criterion.

## **11. Summary of findings and recommendations**

In addition to the assessment criteria outlined above, the panel was also asked to judge the higher education institutions from additional four aspects listed hereafter. This judgment can, in the case of the University of Iceland, be summarized as follows when drawing conclusions from the fact-finding and assessment results outlined above; for detail, reference is made to the relevant parts of the report in items 2 to 10:

a. Academic knowledge and competence of HEI within the relevant field of study and subdivisions thereof, pertaining to the quality of teaching and research, academic facilities, dissemination of knowledge and connection to community:

UI as an institution and, speaking in general in as much as there is evidence within the layout of the evaluation process, its staff as individuals show the expertise in terms of knowledge and competence required for teaching and for research in the academic fields scrutinized by the panel. Teaching and research are internationally competitive. UI facilities are adequate, at least after completion of the current extension programme. UI undertakes to maintain close links to society in terms both of disseminating research-based expertise of integrating societal developments. For detail, cf. items 4 and 5 above.

b. The support structure of the HEI for; the academic community, teachers and experts in the relevant field of study and the education and training of students.

Support structures and services provided by UI for students, academics, and staff in general are sufficient with regard to meeting the necessary standards and adequate in as much as the funding capacity of UI allows the university to make provisions for services. For detail, cf. item 7 above.

c. Special attention shall be paid to the strengths of the fields of study and the subdivisions thereof, with reference to course plans, particularly in relevance to links to undergraduate and graduate studies and towards other appropriate fields of study.

While the extensive number of study programmes offered by UI does not allow the panel to assess each of these deeply the panel is confident that, due to internal institutional mechanisms in planning and decision-making and due to the quality of its staff, UI and its subunits are in a position to provide study programmes within the compounds of national legislation and “Bologna Process” parameters which identify valid learning objectives and relevant learning outcomes, translate these into fitting concepts which are adequately implemented, and which are adjusted from time to time subject to quality assessments. There is some scope for further investigation into opportunities to optimize even further to what extent the learning outcome approach and quality assurance instruments could be implemented, but there is no doubt that UI matches, and in most cases surpasses, current practice in a vast number of higher education institutions in the Bologna Process countries. For detail, cf. items 8 and 9 above.

d. Academic standard of the field of study and subdivision thereof, in national and international context. Regard shall be taken of i.e. national and international cooperation between HEI and other institutions.

UI is, not only but also by virtue of its tradition, size, and qualitative and quantitative staff capacity, in a position to set national standards in the academic fields considered here. Moreover, academic cooperation and the strong element of academics with educational background in leading higher education institutions in Europe and North America indicate that UI meets academic standards at the level of international expectations. Cooperative links with a number of institutions inside and outside of Iceland have been established which show considerable networking, although there is scope for enhancing cooperation with institutions in Iceland, in particular with regard to optimising job sharing and provision of interface between bachelor programmes on the one hand and masters and doctoral programmes on the other. For detail, cf. item 4 above.



**Signatures of the Accreditation Committee for Higher Education  
Institutions in the field of Social Science in Iceland 2007**

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Dr. Christian Thune

*Past Executive Director of the Danish Evaluation Institute, Denmark (chair)*

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Prof. Dr. Jürgen Kohler

*Universität Greifswald, Germany*

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Dr. Frank Quinault

*Director of Learning and Teaching Quality, University of St. Andrews, Scotland*

## **Appendix 1: Visit to the University of Iceland**

### **Visit to the University of Iceland**

**Tuesday 2nd October**

#### **9:00 Visit to the Rector of the University of Iceland**

Main University Building

**Present:**

Kristín Ingólfssdóttir, Rector of the University of Iceland

Þórður Kristinsson, head of Division for Academic Affairs

Ólafur Þ. Harðarson, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences

Ingjaldur Hannibalsson, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business

Administration

Róbert R Spanó, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Law

#### **9:30 Meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Dean of the Faculty of Law and the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration.**

The Deans walk the committee through the university area.

#### **10:00 Introduction to the application, learning criteria and university education**

Main University Building

**Present:**

Þórður Kristinsson

Ólafur Þ. Harðarson

Róbert R. Spanó

Ingjaldur Hannibalsson

Sigurður J. Grétarsson, Professor of psychology and Chair of the Committee for Academic

Affairs at the University of Iceland

Sigurbjörg Aðalsteinsdóttir, Head of Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences

#### **11:30 Introduction to the university intranet, 'Ugla'**

Main University Building

**Present:**

Hreinn Pálsson, Head of Examinations

Terry Gunnell, Associate Professor of Folkloristics

Sigurbjörg Aðalsteinsdóttir.

#### **12:15 Lunch at National and University Library of Iceland**

#### **13:15 National and University Library of Iceland**

Áslaug Agnarsdóttir, Director of Services

#### **14:00 University Student Counselling Centre**

Centre of Icelandic Student Services

**Present:**

Arnfríður Ólafsdóttir, Director  
María Dóra Björnsdóttir, Counsellor

**14:45 Meeting with students**

Centre of Icelandic Student Services

**Present:**

Vera Knútsdóttir, 3rd year BA student in Political Science  
Kolbrún Þ. Pálsdóttir, PhD student in Education  
Kristinn Már Ársælsson, MA student in Sociology  
Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir, 3rd year student in Psychology  
Hrund Þórarinsdóttir, MA student in Education  
Óskar Þór Þráinsson 2nd year student in Library and Information Science  
Hilmar Jón Stefánsson 1st year BA student in Social Work  
Vilhjálmur Vilhjálmsson, 3rd year BA student in Law  
Ólafur Freyr Frímansson, 4th year student in Law  
Kristín Benediktsdóttir, PhD student in Law  
Gunnar Gunnarsson, MA student in Economics  
Ingólfur Birgir Sigurgeirsson, student in Business Administration  
Sesselja G. Vilhjálmisdóttir, student in Economy  
Ólafur Stefánsson, student in Economy, Sigurður Rúnar Ólafsson, student in Economy

**15:30 Coffee Break**

**16:00 Introduction to teaching Social Sciences at the University of Iceland**

Meeting room, Oddi

**Present:**

Sif Einarsdóttir, associate professor in Educational and Vocational Counseling and chair of the Board of Instructional affairs at the Faculty of Social Sciences  
Guðrún Geirsdóttir, chair board of the University Teaching center, and assistant professor in Education  
Svanur Kristjánsson, professor of Political Science  
Daníel Þór Ólason, assistant professor of Psychology  
Anni G. Haugen, assistant professor in Social Work  
Elva Ellertsdóttir, secretary of the Board of Instructional affairs at the Faculty of Social Sciences  
Jóhanna Gunnlaugsdóttir, associate professor of Library and Information Science  
Viðar Már Matthíasson, professor of Law  
Páll Sigurðsson, professor of Law  
Pétur Dam Leifsson, assistant professor of Law  
Bjarni Frímánn Karlsson, assistant professor of Business Administration  
Kristján Jóhannsson, assistant professor of Business Administration  
Gylfi Zoega, professor of Economics

**Visit to the University of Iceland**

**Thursday 4th October**

**9:00 Doctoral studies and post graduate studies in the field of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland**

Meeting room, Oddi

**Present:**

Jón Torfi Jónasson, professor of Education  
Kolbrún Eggertsdóttir, coordinator of Graduate Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences  
Ragnar Árnason, professor of Economics  
Aðalheiður Jóhannsdóttir, Associate professor of Law  
Róbert Spanó, Vice Dean, Faculty of Law,  
Gylfi Dalmann Aðalsteinsson, associate professor of Business Administration.

**9:45 Introduction to social science research at the University of Iceland**

Meeting room, Oddi

**Present:**

Stefán Már Stefánsson, professor of Law  
María Thejll, director of The Institute of Law  
Árni Kristjánsson, assisociate professor of Psychology  
Ágústa Pálsdóttir, assisociate professor of Library and Information  
Þorbjörn Broddason, professor of Sociology  
Rannveig Traustadóttir, professor of Education and Vice Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences  
Práinn Eggertsson professor of Economics

**10:30 Coffee Break**

**11:00 Research Institutes in Social Sciences. Meeting with directors and chairs of boards**

Meeting room, Oddi

The Social Science Research Institute (Friðrik H. Jónsson)  
The Institute of Business Research (Gylfi Dalmann Aðalsteinsson)  
The Institute of Economic Studies (Gunnar Ól. Haraldsson)  
The Institute of Public Management and Politics (Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson and Margrét S. Björnsdóttir)  
The Institute of International Affairs (Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir)  
The Institute of Law (María Thejll)

**12:00 Lunch at Skróður, Hótel Saga**

**13:00 Meeting with representatives of tenured academic staff**

Meeting room, Oddi

**Present:**

Sigurveig H. Sigurðardóttir, assistant professor, Social Work  
Gylfi Magnússon, associate professor, Business Administration  
Einar Guðbjartsson, associate professor, Accounting, Guðný B. Eydal, associate professor, Social Work  
Jörgen Pind, professor, Psychology  
Jón Gunnar Bernburg, associate professor, Sociology  
Kristín Loftsdóttir, associate professor, Social Anthropology  
Eyvindur G. Gunnarsson, assistant professor, Law  
Brynhildur G. Flóvenz, assistant professor, Law

**13:45 Meeting with heads of departments**

Meeting room, Oddi

**Present:**

Árni Kristjánsson, Psychology  
Ágústa Pálsdóttir, Library and Information Science  
Jón Torfi Jónasson, Education  
Steinunn Hrafnisdóttir, Social Work  
Terry Gunnel, Folkloristics and Social Anthropology  
Ómar H. Kristmundsson, Political Science  
Jón Gunnar Bernburg, Sociology  
Gylfi Zoega, Economics  
Runólfur Smári Steinþórsson, Business Administration.

**14:30 Meeting with representatives of sessional teachers**

Meeting room, Oddi

**Present:**

Svandís Nína Jónsdóttir, Political Science  
Jón Þór Ólason, Law  
Ragnar Tómas Árnason, Law  
Bolli Héðinsson, Business Administration  
Helga Þ Björnsdóttir, Social Anthropology/Education  
Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson, Social Anthropology  
Rannveig Þórisdóttir, Sociology  
Fanney Þórsdóttir, Psychology  
Þórður Óskarsson, Business Administration

**15:15 Coffee break**

**15:45 Meeting with deans**

Meeting room, Oddi

**Present:**

Ólafur Þ. Harðarson  
Róbert R. Spanó  
Gylfi Zoega

**17:00 Close**

## **Appendix 2: Documents Received**

1. Higher Education Act 63/2006 (draft translation).
2. Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions according to Article 3 of Higher Education Institution Act, No. 63/2006 (draft translation).
3. National Qualification Framework Iceland (draft translation).
4. Checklist on structure and approach on Expert Committee report and recommendations.
  
5. Appendix 1: The University of Iceland Act No. 41, 22 March 1999.
6. Appendix 2: Rules for the University of Iceland No. 458/2000. Entry into force: 28 June 2000 with subsequent amendments.
7. Appendix 3: University of Iceland Research and Education Policy approved by the University General Forum April 6th 2001 with amendments approved May 23rd 2003, November 2004.
8. Appendix 4: Summary of Policies approved by the University General Forum
9. Appendix 5: The University of Iceland Policy 2006-2011.
10. Appendix 6: Agreement between the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the University of Iceland concerning teaching and research.
11. Appendix 7: Legal Framework of Public Universities.
12. Appendix 8: Rules on the composition and procedures of the University General Forum.
13. Appendix 9: University of Iceland Regional Research Centres.
14. Appendix 10: Standards and requirements for quality of doctoral programmes at the University of Iceland.
15. Appendix 11: Overview of Research Institutes.
16. Appendix 12: Rules for Evaluation.
17. Appendix 13: Regulations concerning admission requirements at the University of Iceland, No. 573/2005.
18. Appendix 14: On good Practice in Teaching and Examinations.
19. Appendix 15: Lisbon Convention.
20. Appendix 16: University of Iceland Quality Assurance Programme.
21. Appendix 17: Financial statement 2006.
22. Appendix 18: University of Iceland Code of Ethics.
23. Appendix 19: Overview of External Evaluations.
24. Appendix 20: Rules for Institute for Research Centres.
25. Appendix 21: Rules on Promotion of Instructors, Specialists and Scholars.
26. Appendix 22: Rules on Academic Staff Duties.
27. Appendix 23: Rules on age-related and performance-based duties.
28. Appendix 25: Procedures on submitting grades.
29. Appendix FA: University of Iceland Faculty of Social Sciences Policy 2006-2011.
30. Appendix FB: Research, management, grants.
31. Appendix FC: Division of tasks, Dean, Faculty, Council.
32. Appendix FD: Rules on the Social Science Institute.
33. Appendix FE: Rules on the Institute of Public Affairs and Politics.
34. Appendix FF: Rules on promotion.

35. Appendix FG: Masters Rules, Faculty of Social Science.
36. Appendix FH: Doctoral Rules, Faculty of Social Science
37. Appendix FI: Code of Ethics Research in Social Sciences.
38. Appendix FJ: Faculty of Social Sciences, Rules on the allocation of research funds.
39. Appendix FK: Faculty of Social Sciences, Rules on the allocation of funds.
40. Appendix FL: Role of Science Committee.
41. Appendix FM: The role of the Tuition Committee of Faculty of Social Sciences.
42. Appendix FN: Role of department chairs.
43. Appendix FO: Rules on work behind credit.
44. Appendix FP: Access to teaching evaluation.
45. Appendix FQ: Graduations 1986-2006 Faculty of Social Sciences.
46. Appendix FR: ENQASP Quality Label Self Evaluation Report.
47. Appendix FS: Rules of the Institute of International Affairs.
48. Appendix LA: Mission Statement of the Faculty of Law 2006-2011.
49. Appendix LB: Teaching staff experts.
50. Appendix LC: Courses BA degree.
51. Appendix LD: Rules BA degree.
52. Appendix LE: Rules BA thesis.
53. Appendix LF: Rules for elective courses.
54. Appendix LG: Rules specialization.
55. Appendix LH: Rules Masters thesis.
56. Appendix LI: Rules on studies at other faculties.
57. Appendix LJ: Rules PhD.
58. Appendix LK: Assessment PhD.
59. Appendix LL: Rules LL.M.
60. Appendix LM: Rules minor focus.
61. Appendix LN: Rules transfer Candidates studies.
62. Appendix LO: Rules oral exams.
63. Appendix LP: Rules required assignments.
64. Appendix LQ: Rules Institute of Law.
65. Appendix LR: Institute Human Rights.
66. Appendix VA: Strategy of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at the University of Iceland Objectives and Actions 2006-2011.
67. Appendix VB: Rules on the Institute of Economic Studies of the University of Iceland no. 738/2001.
68. Appendix VC: Rules on the Institute of Business Research of the University of Iceland no. 824/2001.
69. Appendix VD: Rules for postgraduate studies 595/2006.

**In addition the application referred to the following websites and files:**

70. University of Iceland Learning Outcomes in Social Sciences.
71. Social Sciences CV-Websites.
72. Table A.
73. Table B.
74. Tables 1 and 2.
75. Tables 3 and 4.
76. Organization chart University of Iceland, August 2007.

77. The University of Iceland Policy on Issues Related to People with a Disability (not translated).
78. The University of Iceland Policy on International Relations (not translated).
79. Equal Rights Programme for the University of Iceland 2005-2009  
<http://www.jafnretti.hi.is/page/equalrightsprogramme>.
80. The University of Iceland Language Policy (not translated).
81. The University of Iceland Policy against Discrimination  
<http://www.jafnretti.hi.is/solofile/1007549>.
82. The University of Iceland Bibliography, listing works by nearly all instructors, see, <http://www.hi.is/page/arbokogritaskra>.
83. The Course Catalogue for the University of Iceland, <http://kennsluskra.hi.is> and <https://ugla.hi.is/kennsluskra>.
84. Web pages for the academic staff, including CVs:  
<http://www.felags.hi.is/id/1000551> (Faculty of Social Sciences)  
[http://www.lagadeild.hi.is/page/lagad\\_starfsfolk](http://www.lagadeild.hi.is/page/lagad_starfsfolk) (Faculty of Law)  
<http://www.vidskipti.hi.is/id/1000070> (Faculty of Economics and Business Administration)