

Sabancı University

EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of Sabancı University, Istanbul, Turkey, which took place in the IEP evaluation round 2012/2013 with two site visits in March and May 2013.

1.1 The Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. The IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management;
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a “fitness for (and of) purpose” approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 Sabancı University and the national context

Sabancı University (hereafter SU) is a foundation university established in 1999. It is a private, non-profit institution. The university is governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Sabancı Foundation for a period of four years. The Sabancı Foundation is part of the Sabancı

family holding, which is one of the leading industrial and financial conglomerates in Turkey. The university campus is located in the municipality of Tuzla (220,000 inhabitants), on the outskirts of Istanbul's Asian side: infrastructures are of high standard, although the location is somewhat isolated.

There are three faculties at the university: the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences (1 536 undergraduates and 395 graduate students), the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (406 undergraduates and 214 graduate students), and the School of Management (518 undergraduates and 148 graduate students). In addition, about 519 students are studying in a preparatory English language year (see section 3 below). The university has a total of 3 736 students, 381 academic staff members (including part-time staff) and 327 administrative staff members.

Sabancı University profiles itself as an ambitious and proud institution, with a high level of awareness of its uniqueness and commitment towards an interdisciplinary view of higher education, and the will to "make a difference" and bring change to the Turkish higher education landscape. Staff, students and external stakeholders interviewed during the visits agreed that the reputation of the university and that of individual faculties are one of the most significant strengths of the institution. Some programmes, such as the Executive MBA, were qualified as the "best" in Turkey. This strong reputation is combined with a successful branding of the Sabancı name, which is well known in Turkey and abroad. The university community, in general, expressed the feeling of being privileged to belong to SU.

In Turkey, the Higher Education Council (YÖK) is responsible for planning, coordinating, governing and supervising higher education, according to provisions set in the Turkish Constitution (art. 130 and 131), and the Higher Education Law (No. 2547). YÖK statistics show that, in the academic year 2011-2012, there were 165 higher education institutions in the country, of which 103 are state universities and 62 foundation universities. The number of institutions has significantly increased in the past decade: in 2001, there were 76 higher education institutions, among which 53 were state universities, and 23 foundation universities. Thus, there has been a significant change in the environment since the days of SU's creation.

The student population has also significantly grown during the last decade, from approximately 1.5 million in 2001 to over 3.5 million in 2010. At country level, the highest concentration of students is in the first cycle: Bachelor programmes (approx. 2.8 million students) typically enrol 17 times more than Master programmes (approx. 169,000 students), and 54 times more than doctoral programmes (approx. 52,000 students). According to SU's self-evaluation report (see section 1.3 below), approximately 6% of Bachelor students in Turkey are enrolled in foundation universities. Students graduating from secondary education and willing to start higher education undergo a central examination process, which generates performance scores after the exam and places students on degree programmes according to these scores and their preferences. A similar central exam exists at graduate level; however,

the universities at that level are able to handle their own recruitment process. Therefore, students have to apply to the programme of their choice with their central exam scores, and comply with any additional requirement set by the university. SU's self-evaluation report states that, among all Turkish higher education institutions, "SU is definitely listed in the top 5." SU is preferred by, and admits students from the top 100,000 students from the almost 1.5 million students entering [the Bachelor level central] exam [yearly]" (p. vii).

1.3 The self-evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a group led by the two Vice-Rectors of the institution, Professor Sondan Durukanoğlu Feyiz and Professor Hasan Mandal. The other members of the group were:

- Assoc. Prof. Abdurrahman Aydemir, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
- Assoc. Prof. Cem Güneri, Vice-Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences
- Assoc. Prof. Nihat Kasap, School of Management
- Prof. Zehra Sayers, Director for Foundations Development
- Dr Burak Arıkan, Director for International Relations
- Mr Salih Arıman, Director for Institutional Development
- Ms Neyyir Berktaş, Director of the Centre for Individual and Academic Development
- Ms Aysel Deniz Esenal, third-year student, Bachelor's degree in Electronic Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences

In addition, the meetings of the self-evaluation group were regularly attended by:

- Ms Jacqueline Einer, Director of the School of Languages
- Mr Umut Alihan Dikel, second-year student, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
- Ms Arzu Bolgul, Specialist, Institutional Development office
- Ms Defne Üçer, Specialist, Foundations Development office
- Ms Ebru Ocak, Specialist, Research and Graduate Policies office
- Ms Elzi Menda, Specialist, Centre for Individual and Academic Development

The self-evaluation report (hereafter the SER), together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team (hereafter the team) in February 2013. The SER and its appendices were informative and descriptive, and raised many open questions. Notably, the team would have appreciated being able to gain an analytical view on what the institution identifies as its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and a better understanding of the role and

contributions of all key university committees and boards. The team, however, was able to acquire a thorough overview of the institution during the visits, and the university provided useful additional information after the first visit, which helped prepare the second visit. All in all, the SER, the two site visits and the additional material provided allowed the team to gain a comprehensive understanding of the university's profile and its specificities.

The team is grateful for the significant effort undertaken by the members of the self-evaluation group. The team hopes that the preparation of the SER will have contributed to develop better self-knowledge through discussions of the current situation, collection of relevant data, and presenting these in order to allow the external evaluators to formulate recommendations useful to the institution.

1.4 The evaluation team

The two visits of the team to Sabancı University took place from 10 to 12 March 2013, and 28 to 31 May 2013, respectively.

The team consisted of:

- Professor Julio Pedrosa, former Rector, University of Aveiro, Portugal, team chair
- Professor Krista Varantola, former Rector, University of Tampere, Finland
- Professor Jean-Pierre Gesson, former President, University of Poitiers, France
- Mr Erazem Bohinc, graduate student, European Faculty of Law, Slovenia
- Ms Thérèse Zhang Pulkowski, Programme Manager, EUA and IEP secretariat, team coordinator

The team would like to thank the university for the hospitality shown during the two visits. In particular, the team is grateful to the Chair of the university Board of Trustees, Ms Güler Sabancı, and the Rector, Professor Nihat Berker, for their openness and attention throughout the evaluation process. The team would like to express gratitude to the Director for Institutional Development, Mr Salih Arıman, and Ms Arzu Bolgul, for having organised the visits in an efficient and pleasant manner. Finally, the team is thankful to everyone at the university who devoted their time to meetings, provided assistance, and made it possible for the team to carry out its tasks in the best conditions.

2. Governance and decision-making

Mission, values, strategic goals

The university's philosophy, mission and vision were generated by a first Search Conference that took place in 1995, and laid the ground for creating Sabancı University (SER, p. viii). Such a conference has been planned to take place every 10 years since then: the second conference took place in 2005 in order to set up strategic goals for the next decade, and the third one is scheduled to take place in 2015. These conferences decide any major strategic changes and redefinition of SU's core mission and values. In addition to internal members they are attended by external participants as well (international scholars, representatives from the industry, alumni, etc.). Internally, the process for defining SU's academic values and strategic goals is prepared by several consultation rounds within the university, following a bottom-up approach starting at faculty level.

The university mission statement shows a clear institutional commitment towards excellence in teaching and research, through the use of innovative approaches. Moreover, SU greatly emphasises individual development, understood as developing abilities for critical and independent thinking, combined with a strong sense of social responsibility.

According to the 2011-2015 strategic goals, SU aims to position itself as a "pioneering model education and research base in an international context, in continuous interaction with the society, and nourished by critical enquiry" (SER, p. App-4). The university defines its two core priority areas as interdisciplinarity and internationalisation. Most of the university members interviewed by the team were aware of, and agreed with, the prioritisation of these two areas.

Academic freedom is highly valued and guaranteed through the mission statement. The team was informed of individual cases that showed the university's commitment in this regard.

The university defines its future expansion as qualitative rather than quantitative developments. The top management does not particularly wish to increase the number of Bachelor students for two reasons: the limitations in terms of facilities, and the wish to maintain the quality of academic provision. Instead, it aims to increase the number of doctoral students and defines their recruitment as a competition to attract "good" students.

Governance and decision-making structures

The SER mentions (p. vii) that the governance structures of foundation universities in Turkey differ from those in state universities. Foundation universities are deemed to have control over their finances, and enjoy more autonomy in running the institution.

At Sabancı University, the highest decision-making body is the Board of Trustees, which is composed of nine members, including the rector and the chairperson of the Board, who leads

the Sabancı Foundation, and some industrial leaders. This Board has decision-making power for establishing, merging or closing down academic entities, approving the personnel status, approving and monitoring the budget, and appointing the university and faculty leadership, including the rector. The rector and deans, however, also need to be approved by YÖK.

In addition to the Board of Trustees, there are a number of other governance bodies:

- An Executive Board composed of the chair and two other Board of Trustees members (rector included), plus the SU's secretary general. This body is in charge of monitoring the implementation of the budget and any other development, as requested by the Board of Trustees.
- A Senate, also called Academic Council. This body is a legal requirement and is composed of nine members (rector and vice-rectors, Deans, and one faculty representative appointed by each faculty board). The Academic Council deals only with teaching and learning matters, and acts as an advisory board on issues that are ultimately covered by the Board of Trustees.
- An Administrative Board, also imposed by law, and composed of seven members (rector, deans, professors from different faculties and appointed by the Academic Council). It is in charge of disciplinary issues that require discussion at university level, and career advancement processes for academic staff.
- A Deans' Council.
- A Strategic Council which meets every five years and is composed of 22 members, with a majority of administrative staff (15). The team, however, was told by academics that academic staff could make their voice heard as well.

In addition to these bodies, specific structures exist for research. They will be detailed in section 4 below. The team noticed that there are no similar structures dedicated to teaching and learning at university level, besides the Academic Council itself.

Moreover, a number of committees are in charge of preparing discussions or following up on specific issues at university level, such as the Foundations Development Programme (first year of studies at SU), the curriculum and academic offer, recruiting staff, the student registration process, scholarships, fundraising, extra-curricular awards, etc. The university sees them as part of a "participatory management culture" (Additional report to SER, p. 11). These committees have an ad hoc organisation of their own: some of them meet regularly; others are temporary.

The team's conclusion, based on documents received and interviews during the visits, is that the governance structure at SU is clear at the top (Board of Trustee) and faculty levels, but with complex and diffuse decision-making and follow-up structures between the top, institutional level and faculties. The team was told that this situation is partly caused by the fact that Turkish law imposes some bodies such as the Academic and the Administrative

Councils, in all higher education institutions. Moreover, there seems to be an unbalance between administrative and academic structures, as well as in the representation of administrative and academic units in university level bodies. The team learned that when the university was created, the first categories of staff hired were administrators in charge of establishing the institution. This historical weight of central administration is still palpable nowadays, with strong, powerful and professional administrative structures at central level.

Such a profusion of bodies, however, leads to difficulties for fully grasping how governance structures are articulated between them, identifying key bodies for each type of decision, understanding whether membership is based on representativeness or on individual capacity, and, ultimately, identifying where and how the decision-making takes place. Whereas there is undoubtedly a good team spirit at central leadership level and the solid leadership team fully represents SU's values and core identity, the top-down influence is noticeable. The team's view is that the Academic Council should be the body driving a bottom-up approach and consolidating it towards an institutional approach that would be aligned with the university's mission and strategic goals.

The large number of discussions and decisions' fora also contributes to create a fragmented strategic planning and management structure, resulting in an accumulation of initiatives and actions at various levels (both central and faculty) without clear prioritisation of goals, or lacking concrete implementation plans. For example, topics of importance at university level are discussed in different settings: the highest level of strategic thinking for teaching and learning is the Academic Council; for research, there is the Research Council; and for internationalisation strategies, the Board of Trustees. The place where all-encompassing strategic thinking takes place remains unclear, and may lead to a lack of commitment on the part of the university community. The university needs to reflect on a governance forum where the university community could develop a sense of ownership and community cohesion for the university mission and goals, as well as for university-wide decisions. Transparency in the way all bodies operate and decisions are taken, as well as clear information on the outcomes and actions decided, would contribute to make overall strategic planning and decision-making processes clearer to all within the university. Internal communication needs to be reinforced in this regard.

The university is aware of the difficulty to engage the university community in current decision-making. Whereas communication seems fluid within faculties, there is no institutional mechanism for encouraging and systematically taking the best of a bottom-up approach at university level, although examples of bottom-up contributions to the university's goals are numerous. The team was told that there is no good process for disseminating and exchanging on good or creative initiatives across the university in a systematic way.

The team considered whether the university decision-making model allows the institution to fully take advantage of its strengths, especially when it comes to facing change in a mid- or

long-term perspective. In particular, the team formed the view that the university has grown in experience throughout its first 15 years, and is now reaching a stage where there is a need for further thinking about the future and sustainability of its model. For the time being, the team does not see any existing forum where this could be done with appropriate involvement of all university constituencies. The team therefore recommends that the university:

- simplify its central governance structures, by taking full advantage of legally mandatory bodies such as the Academic Council, and using them for serving the university's purposes;
- rethink university-level structures so that they deal with university-level issues. These structures should include a body or sub-body for educational matters and another one for research. This could be shaped as a Senate-like top body at university level, with two sub-committees;
- revise membership of university bodies in order to gain wider involvement across the university community, including students;
- improve general awareness of the university's core mission, identity and strategic goals, as well as ownership of those, through improved internal communication: meeting agendas communicated in advance; systematic keeping of minutes, which is crucial for creating institutional memory for the future; communication of key decisions, how they relate to the university mission and strategic goals, how they were taken, and subsequent action plans.

Budget and finances

The university is run as a non-profit institution. Its budget shows a structural deficit of about 17% yearly. The university management sees this feature as embedded in the institutional way of managing the budget: this deficit is covered by the Sabancı Foundation and does not hinder the university's future activities. The Sabancı Foundation, indeed, has committed to cover about 20 million TRL (8 million EUR) of the budget on an annual basis. The university management is aware that, whilst SU benefits from strong financial support from the Sabancı Foundation (and, ultimately, from the Sabancı Holding), sustainability of resources need to be addressed, and funding streams diversified to the extent possible.

About 70% of SU revenues come from student fees. The team learnt (SER, p. vii) that foundation universities in Turkey typically apply fees between 2 000 and 15,000 EUR, compared to approx. 300 EUR in a state university, where scholarships or credit opportunities are easily available for covering this amount. All foundation universities in Turkey must offer full scholarship opportunities to at least 10% of entering students, in each study programme (SER, p. vii).

The team understood through various interviews that, at the time it was created, SU used to offer more scholarships than nowadays. In the team's view, this progressive drop may have contributed, and may still contribute, to a change in the student population profile at SU. The team recommends that the university finds ways to increase the number of scholarships. This would further increase possibilities to recruit highly gifted students, especially at Masters and doctoral levels, as the university aims to do. This would also contribute to maintaining a geographical balance and social diversity among the Turkish student population at SU.

All sources of income are managed at central level. Faculties can attract funding that is related to their own activities, but they will also be managed at central level. Whenever resources are needed to start a new programme, the Board of Trustees responds, but there is a general lack of clarity in how resources are connected to broader orientations to which individuals could identify themselves, especially those not involved at top management level. Improving internal communication as regards financial decision-making would constitute a step towards transparency *vis-à-vis* the university community and in particular those generating income through their research or other projects.

The university considers fundraising, including outside Turkey, as a possibility for financing its activities, and the relations individually developed by SU staff members, namely through EU programmes, with organisations and institutions abroad, are used in this regard. The team heard that the university has good capacity for attracting external resources, thanks to its networks in the business world and in the society at large.

Another source of revenue derives from the university's participation in international research projects and programmes, such as the European Framework Programme. This aspect will be further addressed in section 4 below.

Academic structures and relations with central administration

The university chose to operate its academic activities primarily through faculty structures. The team however learned through interviews that departments within faculties are also a reality in academic life and in structuring teaching and research at SU, especially at graduate levels. In fact, academics and students identified themselves as belonging to departments, and see them as the environment in which they collaborate with their colleagues. Intra- and extra-faculty cooperation would require an evolution of the academic mindset in this regard. This question will be further addressed under section 3 below.

There are various views expressed by academic staff in faculties with regard to the central administration. On the one hand, the team heard that central services, while appreciated,

were not fit for some specific needs at faculty level, and some tasks currently taken in charge by the central services would gain from following a more decentralised model. On the other hand, it was also expressed during interviews that the university guidelines for conducting administrative work, which apply to all university staff and processes in the matter, could be improved so that they would be more helpful by better adapting to actual situations within faculties. The university may gain in engaging a dialogue between administrative staff at both levels, so that specific needs, or gaps in addressing some situations (if any), can be identified.

Academic and administrative staff

Academic staff were satisfied with the small size of the university and its faculties, which they related to less bureaucracy. Nevertheless, they are aware that the limited number of academic staff also limits student recruitment, critical mass and possibilities to further develop the academic offer, even if resources would allow the recruitment of more staff. Moreover, the low number of doctoral candidates also drives fewer, if any, possibility to organise tutorials.

When recruiting academic staff, their potential to adapt to interdisciplinarity is taken into account.

The teaching workload is perceived as heavy, especially for those voluntarily involved in the summer programme, which lasts seven weeks, and means that they teach during three trimesters per academic year instead of two. In addition, some teachers noted that fewer possibilities of obtaining research grants lead them to teach more.

Balancing teaching, research and administrative workload is an issue, especially for academic staff with governance and management responsibilities (role of academic director or coordinator for a study programme). Searching for funding opportunities and taking responsibility for administrative tasks in addition to teaching duties means that some academic staff would have little time for research. An appropriate human resource management, including training of highly qualified administrative staff to assist in administrative tasks, would help to improve the situation.

Administrative staff also see the administrative burden on academics as a challenge for the whole university organisational model, and agrees that it should be diminished. However, the difficulty from their point of view is that many tasks that are performed by administrative staff have to follow academic principles, or directly depend on them.

Student's involvement in governance

There is a Student Council, composed of five elected members. The current Student Council counts undergraduate representatives from two faculties – there is no student from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The ratio between male and female representatives is only

four to one, and is thus less balanced than in the SU student population where the ratio stands at 2/3 to 1/3. The Student Council does not consider itself as political: it concentrates on "how to improve their university". It sees itself as independent from the university central management, yet has a dialogue in place with the rector and expressed the wish of being acknowledged as an independent body attached to the rector's office. In addition to the elected Student Council, the team learned that there are student representatives in various university committees with advisory roles, and those students are chosen, or volunteer, on an individual basis, but are not elected. Their voice is also heard when the Student Council meets.

The elections for Student Council are organised by the Student Resource Office of the university, and take place every two years. The Council is totally renewed after each election. Participation rate reaches approximately 30%. The Student Council organises regular meetings in order to discuss with students; however, it is acknowledged that communication with students, as well as among students, could be improved. Through interviews held by the team, the functioning of the Student Council indeed appeared unclear to the general student population, who at times showed unawareness of the role, functioning or importance of a student representative body. The team also heard that students tend to directly go to their dean to find solutions for individual issues (with a professor, course scheduling, etc.), instead of discussing them with the Student Council.

The team's conclusion is that rules for the functioning and running of the Student Council would need to be clearly defined. Student representatives acknowledge that elections, for instance, would need to be organised with a code of conduct limiting campaigning costs (paid by the candidates), defining rules, and setting up appeal and complaint procedures in case results are contested. Students should be able to set up for themselves rules for organising their representation at the university, and be proactive in this regard. The university could play a role in supporting them to do so. Further reflection could be engaged on how to valorise the know-how of past student delegates, who are replaced by new generations at a rapid pace.

The team felt that there is room for improving student representation and involvement in university governance. Student representatives expressed the wish to be more involved in the decision-making processes, although they did not raise the question with the university management yet. The Academic, Administrative and Strategic Councils do not have student members; however, they may invite them for specific items on the agenda, and one student representative can serve as an observer in the Academic Council. Students are currently not in a position to follow up nor to monitor decisions made by the university. Enhancing student participation in governance bodies would be of particular relevance when considering the university values of learning by doing and analytical thinking in the students' curriculum, which SU aims to develop from the first year of studies onwards. The team, therefore, recommends that, when a revision of membership in university bodies will be considered, student participation in university governance should be improved.

3. Teaching and learning

Curriculum development and academic offer

One of the university's unique characteristics in teaching and learning is a common first study year for all Bachelor students, called the Foundations Development Programme (hereafter the FDP). The FDP includes all courses followed by the students during their first university year, as well as two courses during their second year of studies, and one during their third year. The objective of the FDP is threefold: allowing students to gain knowledge of what the different disciplines are; homogenising a diverse student population; and establishing a common university culture, including some notions of law and ethics, introduction to analytical thinking, and learning to learn as a preparation for their second year of studies. The strategic priority of interdisciplinarity as part of SU's identity relies on the FDP as the main channel for providing a background in various disciplines.

Although students are asked to provide a first choice of programme at entrance, they can change their initial choice and opt for continuing their studies in another faculty and programme after having completed that year. Bachelors can change their choice once.

SU chose to use English as the main teaching language in all classes. Besides common classes in a range of disciplines, language classes are offered during that first year to improve students' English skills. Students whose English language skills are not sufficient to start the FDP take a full year (the Foundation Development Year, or FDY) organised by SU's School of Languages, to improve their language skills and work on their writing skills as well. The students whom the team met generally agreed in finding the FDP interesting. Some classes were reported to be demanding, but students felt supported through services provided by the Centre for Individual and Academic Development.

Although, the FDP was initially questioned by some academics, it generally appears to be well regarded by the university community, and so is the FDY. A few academic and management staff members expressed concern that faculties may not recruit as many students as they could because of the obligation to undergo and pass that first year. However, the team learned that most of the students are satisfied to have completed the FDP, even if at entrance there are mixed feelings about spending one year in classes other than the discipline of their first choice. For the FDY, the fact that students may not wish to spend their first year of university studies in a language class was reported as a concern, although the satisfaction rate upon completion (4.3/5, with 47% students surveyed) is high.

About 44% of first-year students change the major they initially intended to pursue after the FDP, which tend to show that the FDP was useful for them to consider other options. The team would like to praise the university for having developed the FDP, in line with its focus on interdisciplinarity. It strongly recommends that the university keeps the policy of allowing students to make their final choice of studies after their second year at university.

The team was told by different groups interviewed that the university shows the ability to adapt its academic offer: new programmes can be created, and when a new programme does not attract as many students as expected or does not operate as planned, it can be closed. The capacity of the university to (re)design and improve programmes is considered by both faculty management and academic staff as a strength for addressing changing needs. The university also takes on board students' opinions, for example when accepting to look for teachers for opening new language classes, should a group of students wish a new course to be created.

Whilst the team was repeatedly told that interdisciplinarity is greatly valued and constitutes a strength and comparative advantage of the university that makes it attractive, it hardly found evidence of interdisciplinary collaborative work or structures that would allow such developments beyond the Foundations Development Programme. In the team's view and following interviews conducted during the visits, interdisciplinarity beyond the first year involves mandatory courses in other disciplines, other than those of the core curriculum. Interdisciplinarity becomes less obvious at graduate level, where most interviewees tended to define their work as being developed under disciplines within their respective faculty or department. Indeed, the team did not see strategies or actions adopted by faculties and departments to promote opportunities for interdisciplinary learning in a structured manner; yet, the team is persuaded that the university's capacity to rethink the academic offer can easily be used for promoting interdisciplinary work at inter-departmental and inter-faculty level. The team recommends the university to consolidate and develop interdisciplinarity at undergraduate, Masters and doctoral levels. Equal attention granted to all levels would reinforce interdisciplinarity as a priority for the institution as a whole, thus fostering this dimension of the university's identity. The team also recommends that the university enables and stimulates cooperation within and across faculties in order to create attractive cross-disciplinary programmes, with problem-based thematic approaches and transversal skills (learning to learn, creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, oral and written communication, cultural and social awareness, entrepreneurship, etc.). The team noted, however, that SU has good examples of frameworks for interdisciplinary work in research, like the new programmes in nanotechnology and energy. The university could further advertise them as opportunities for good practices so that they can become a source of inspiration.

The team observed throughout interviews that the university commonly uses the term "graduate" to refer to both Master and doctoral levels. In the team's view, Master programmes can serve different objectives, respond to different student needs, and thus attract a different student population compared to the doctorate – which the university is aware of, given that Master and doctoral programmes offer descriptions of specific objectives. The team recommends that the university further advertises the separate objectives for

Master and doctoral programmes and considers them as two separate groups when collecting data related to them, in order to better show how these different types of degrees can address specific student needs and profiles.

SU offers programmes designed so to allow students to have a professional life simultaneously, for example in the field of business (Executive MBA). The main issue related to this offer comes from the campus location: it is difficult for part-time students to commute after their day job to the Sabancı campus.

Pedagogical development and teaching modalities

The university average student-to-teacher ratio is 14:6 (below the targeted ratio of 15), and the team learned that students are generally satisfied with this ratio and with the availability of their teachers. Academic staff interviewed by the team noted that disparity in class sizes was a challenge to ensuring the same level of quality throughout the university's academic offer. Whereas some classes are small and can allow interaction and student-based learning, others are designed so that they will be attended by more than 600 students. These classes, while taught by professors, also engage teaching assistants, with the risk of students feeling that the sessions when they have to interact with a supervising person (e.g., recitation or discussion sections of a class) are not homogeneous.

Most courses at the university are taught in English. When asked if their graduates would not miss Turkish language skills at higher education level, staff answered that the Foundation Development Year does offer classes in Turkish, and moreover the university chose to have students learning in English like natives, in order to have a comparative advantage in mobility and internationalisation. The possibility of creating new classes for communication in Turkish is currently under study.

Students are happy with problem-based learning and projects integrated into the curriculum, and feel they can benefit from hands-on experiences. Students in the School of Management, in particular, feel encouraged to take initiatives and develop entrepreneurship skills.

The university has started developing e-learning. The team learned that, starting from the next academic term, three MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) will be available on the web. Two of them will be designed in Turkish, one in English. An application procedure will be designed for MOOC students who wish to take the exam upon completion. The university, however, does not yet envisage recognising MOOCs provided by other institutions. The team sees e-learning as an interesting complement to the existing academic offer, as it may attract

a different student population in various regions across the country (and possibly abroad), and recommends that the university develops e-learning with this in mind.

Student recruitment and support

As mentioned under section 1.2, access to higher education in Turkey is determined by the prospective students' scores in a central exam and their own choices of institution(s) and programme(s) they want to attend. The university tries to recruit students with good scores – which it finds challenging, at Masters and doctoral levels especially, as graduate students may prefer studying abroad. The university organises information events in selected high schools to introduce SU to prospective students. It also carries out perception surveys on main reasons for choosing SU: they range from SU being very innovative and transparent, to a society-oriented institution involving external stakeholders. The university monitors ratios between undergraduates and graduate students when deciding quotas for undergraduate recruitment. Besides programme-specific requirements that are defined for each degree recruitment process, there is no overarching special requirement related to recruitment of graduates. The team however learned that doctoral candidates with some other experience could be preferred.

Besides the issue of transport for those who do not live on the campus, students, including international students, showed general satisfaction with their university life. They reportedly get advice or contacts whenever needed for further developing personal or academic activities.

Student support at SU is considered good and appreciated. Several services, such as the Academic Support Programme or services offered by the Writing Centre are designed for providing assistance to students who would have difficulties. In addition to improving writing skills, students can address the Writing Centre for assessing their reading skills, as well as exercising their speaking abilities through a speakers' corner, writing job applications and CVs, or receiving individualised support for editing papers. The students interviewed by the team found these services useful and provided concrete examples of help received.

The Student Resource Office takes charge of the whole student life at the university, from admission to graduation: enrolment, tuition, scholarships, registration, examination and course scheduling, extra-curricular activities (that are organised and run by the students), awards, orientation of incoming students, etc. Student counselling is organised by the University Centre of Individual and Academic Development. It takes place at individual and group level, and continues beyond the first year of studies. As from the third year, students then have academic advisers.

Career counselling and relation with the labour market

Students receive assistance from the Career office when searching for internships during their studies. The same office organises career-related events for students. Students were confident that entering the job market will not be an issue upon graduation because Sabanci is a “top university”. Student satisfaction upon graduation is monitored: 92% are happy with their SU diploma. The placement on the job market one year after graduation reaches 90%; 21% of the alumni lives abroad. The Alumni Office and the Career Office provide assistance in finding jobs through a support system where job offers are communicated to students.

4. Research

As it appears from its strategic objectives for research and through interviews held by the team, the university aims at enhancing its research capacity, whilst retaining its reputation as a high quality research-based institution.

Research management structures and funding

There are several university-wide bodies dedicated to research management, with a small Research Strategies Committee (the rector, a representative from the Board of Trustees, the Secretary General, and the vice-rector for research as a coordinator) at the top and acting as the interface between the university research management and the Board of Trustees. In addition, there is a university Research Committee, where in addition to the vice-rector, deans, directors of other research structures and individual faculty representatives sit. There is also a committee, a council and a task force for addressing specific areas such as ethics, entrepreneurship and intellectual property rights.

The Research and Graduate Policies Directorate, which includes several offices covering all stages of a research project lifecycle, is presented as the interface between academic and administrative units with the scope of fulfilling the university's strategic objectives for research. While research is conducted within the faculties, this directorate responds to inter-faculty needs.

The team is concerned by the number of existing governance structures in research and the way they are articulated, whilst there is no overall forum to discuss strategic and interdisciplinary issues. This may contrast with European peer institutions, where such fora exist. This point is particularly important given that the university is interested in increasing its cooperation with European partners, and competing for European research funds.

The SU 2013 budget states a net income from SU research projects at approximately 10 million TRL (4 million EUR) (Additional Reports to SER - 3, p. 19). In addition, the team understood that external funds come from various sources such as national grants, externally funded projects, European research programmes, etc. The team was told that research funding relies mainly on personal abilities related to personal research interests, personal networks, and funds available.

The university promotes research through excellence and pilot initiatives. The most striking example is the SU Centre for Nanotechnologies (SUNUM), funded by Sabancı University's own funds, and now partly financed through governmental funds. SUNUM has a separate budget and is considered as a unit distinct from the university. It is staffed by 15 researchers, who see themselves as independent from the university and faculties. There is, however, coordination

with the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences. The centre also has an Advisory Board of a dozen of members, mostly from the industry, and SUNUM infrastructures are made available to the Board members' companies against an annual fee. The team was impressed by the centre's facilities and potential for attracting projects and future development. The team recommends that the university prepares a strategic discussion on SUNUM's positioning in the university organisation, including how its development should be articulated with research conducted within faculties. Such a reflection may provide a good starting point for discussing the general organisation of, and collaboration in, research at the university. It could serve as a pilot and a case study for cooperation between distinct research units, lead to adopting a new approach of the research personnel staffing scheme and possible career paths, and encouraging collaborative work. In a mid- or long-term perspective, other research entities could also be envisaged within a cross-faculty perspective.

Addressing interdisciplinarity and collaborative research

Interdisciplinary was pinpointed as one of the university's main priorities in all fields of activity. In a situation where research is mostly carried out by faculties, there seems to be no overall structure in place for encouraging and supporting interdisciplinarity in research, developing inter-faculty research, or responding to the SU strategic planning. The university highly values independence of researchers. In this perspective, researchers should not be pushed to apply any instruction or guideline coming from the upper echelons. Research and doctoral research, in particular, is very much seen as an individual journey. The team recommends that the university find ways to stimulate collaborative research while respecting researchers' autonomy and individual initiatives. This could be encouraged through pilot projects at grassroots level, organised to develop interdisciplinary research. In addition, the university should consider creating platforms where this can be practiced in collaboration with external partners. This approach would also contribute to reaching critical mass in research.

There are striking examples of successful interdisciplinary practices in research, such as the SUNUM, described above, and the Istanbul Policy Centre, which is a research-based think tank with independent research staff and external partnerships and networks, including abroad. More interaction with the Istanbul Policy Centre, in terms of both education and research, would be beneficial for fostering interdisciplinarity as well as diversifying SU's student experience in relations with the society. The team recommends that the university encourages discussion on how best to take advantage of the Istanbul Policy Centre's work.

Productivity and support

Academic staff members interviewed by the team see their institution as research-oriented, and show commitment to high quality research. They are encouraged to involve themselves

strongly in research and to publish in the best scholarly journals, while the university respects their freedom of initiative in this regard. Academic staff see the financial support provided by the Sabancı Holding through the Foundation as an asset for the university. When comparing their situation to other public universities, where there is less support for research and more non-academic tasks that take time away from research, SU academic staff sees their situation as privileged. One important university aim is that research production becomes a common activity of all academic staff members. Currently, one-third of academic staff produces two-thirds of the scientific papers and productivity within a given faculty sometimes varies as well. Any institutional mechanism for stimulating productivity should take into account the balance between encouraging and respecting individual initiatives, and encouraging collaborative research with the perspective of fostering interdisciplinary approaches.

Students reported that if they wished to be involved in research activities as undergraduates, they can volunteer and that academic staff welcome them. The university sees research and problem-based learning as part of the education, and encourages students who have to work on projects to transform their assignments into existing, "real life" research projects.

The Research and Graduate Policies (RGP) offices show an impressive level of professionalism in helping researchers to handle funding opportunities and supporting soft skills. The RGP offices try to advertise possibilities of support it offers to all researchers, including doctoral candidates. In terms of support in research, the team also noted that despite good laboratory equipment, the laboratories still needed professional technicians. In the team's view, underestimating their importance would lead to a heavier workload for doctoral candidates and academic staff.

Doctoral education

There are currently 257 doctoral candidates at SU, out of a total of 3 736 students. The university wishes to increase the number of doctoral candidates, in order to foster its research capacity. In this regard, the team wishes to draw the university's attention to the correlation between this objective and the fact that fees are not automatically waived, although doctoral candidates are granted fee waivers if they are under a scholarship scheme (which is the case for about 98% of doctoral candidates).

Doctoral education is mostly based on discipline-related courses, with some electives courses designed for all cycles, including undergraduates. Transversal skills, such as research project management skills, are not addressed in the curriculum as such. Doctoral candidates can be teaching assistants. They are currently considered as students, and the team heard requests for acquiring an employee status or getting the same treatment as in the public universities. When doctoral candidates are funded by grants (from external sources, and in majority from TÜBİTAK, the Turkish Research Council for Science and Technology), the tuition fee is waived.

Doctoral candidates showed general satisfaction with the quality of equipment and facilities offered, although they raised concerns about safety in laboratories used as offices as well as about the level of scholarships. Some concerns were also expressed in relation to the library holdings, which are seen as more appropriate to the needs of undergraduate students.

A structure where doctoral candidates from all disciplines could interact, such as a doctoral or graduate school, does not exist yet – but students would see such a structure as useful and serving interdisciplinarity. They however would see as a prerequisite that their professors and supervisors also have opportunities for such exchanges. There is no formal support for assisting professors who become supervisors, such as structured mentoring for new supervisors. The evaluation system for professors, however, takes into account their involvement in supervising doctoral students. Doctoral candidates have the possibility to present their work regularly to a thesis committee, composed of two representatives from the same department and one from another department of the university.

Doctoral candidates see possibilities of international exchanges or career paths as mainly connected to their professors' networks, and relying on inter-personal contacts. The team learned that 65% of SU PhD graduates (out of over 72% of PhD alumni for whom SU has updated career information upon graduation) are employed in academia, with about 40% of them living their academic life abroad.

The team recommends that the university improves working conditions and pays attention to career paths for researchers, including doctoral candidates. It encourages the university to see how to prepare its doctoral candidates for non-academic careers. It also recommends that the university provides training in transversal skills for all doctoral candidates, and takes advantage of the resources and experience of the RGP offices in doing so.

5. Service to society

The university values interaction with society, both as community engagement and in relation to employers and the business sector.

Community engagement

Participation in civic projects is mandatory for first-year students, who can make their choice among a variety of projects at the beginning of the year. Supervision throughout the project is provided by an adviser. There is, in general, an impressive dedication through voluntary initiatives at the university level. Projects range from local community connections to broader involvement in societal questions.

The university is actively engaged with local communities. SU is located in the Tuzla municipality that signed agreements with several higher education institutions in the area, including SU, for creating a cluster and a framework of cooperation at local level. Through the contribution of its cultural infrastructures (theatre, university museum), the university established links with the neighbouring schools and the local community at large.

SU also conducts high-impact initiatives through societal outreach. The work carried out by the Corporate Governance Forum, the Gender and Women Studies Forum and the Istanbul Policy Centre impressed the team with their societal relevance and focal themes (education at large; business ethics; gender studies, including women education and involvement in academia; relationships between Turkey, Germany and the EU; post-conflict resolution; new Turkish legislative frameworks, etc.). The impact of their projects (drafting codes of conduct for capital markets; organising seminars on female empowerment in companies; involvement in girl education programmes; analysis of the new Turkish Constitution), and the dedication of the academics involved should be recognised and considered as an asset. These initiatives were made possible by the university's support. The team noticed, however, that this work is done on a voluntary basis and based on individuals' motivation and interests in the topics addressed, while this area offers high potential for interdisciplinary work, thus meeting a university priority. Therefore, the team recommends that the university envisages ways of recognising staff workload in this field, through the staff evaluation system. This would reinforce the recommendation in section 2 to create university fora in order to encourage bottom-up, cross-fertilisation of good initiatives across faculties.

Interactions with external stakeholders

The three faculties differ in their relations to society and external environment at large. The School of Management, notably, is in a position to develop relations with external

stakeholders, and has dynamic advisory boards involving them. Some programmes, such as the Executive MBA, are particularly well connected to the business world, and include external stakeholders in the curriculum design and the implementation of business projects with companies. The university strongly encourages other faculties with less natural ties to the external world, such as the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, to also develop such projects and involve students, including in research aspects.

The university has developed structural links with industry and the business sector. It established in 2006 a technology commercialisation and for-profit seed fund company, Inovent, which is active in the field of university-industry relations. Inovent also tries to relate to students, including undergraduates, by suggesting possibilities of grants or welcoming them for traineeship opportunities.

The university counts about 6 000 alumni over its 15 years of existence. The alumni association tries to gather this community in joint events and other projects, ranging from an offer of alumni merchandise to creating an alumni-based seed fund company. The association is managed by elected members, and works with the university's Alumni Office, which sends specific information and tracks graduates. The alumni association's overall feeling is that it is supported by the university; however, alumni are not involved in the university's strategic and structural planning. Instead, they can provide informal feedback and share their views, including with the rector.

The university and external stakeholders interviewed described their relations as good and of mutual benefit, although interests may not always match. Interaction with the business and industry sectors, in particular, is ensured through various advisory bodies, for specific areas, as well as at university level (committee in charge of programmes). The university Board of Trustees itself is mainly composed of industry representatives. The team encourages the university to build up further possibilities for common projects with external partners. It recommends that the university creates fora involving external stakeholders and members of the university community in order to promote SU's collaboration with society.

6. Quality management

The university's Quality Policy states that SU is based on "a quality focused management system regarding all of its services in education, research, and societal outreach" (SER, p. App-2). This management, according to the SER, should be based on the satisfaction of all stakeholders (especially students), process-based operational management, continuous improvement based on regular reviews, and efficient use of resources. Quality assurance mechanisms, however, seem to be defined mostly as outputs and outcomes, and the team did not receive much information on quality management for processes, especially on how feedback loops are closed, and how data feed into strategic planning.

Internal quality assurance

The university carries out a full range of mechanisms related to quality management. Regulations for ethics and examination processes are in place across the university and include committees for examining individual cases. A series of students (and alumni) surveys are conducted, on course evaluation, student workload, and reputational surveys. Some of these are administered, and results compiled by an external, subcontracted company. The dean and top university management see all results; deans then share the results within their faculty; the teachers see their own results; and the students see averages obtained from all evaluations. The participation rate of students in these course evaluation surveys vary following the type of surveys, ranging from 20% at university level, to 56%.

Students generally gave a positive image of the quality cycle. They reportedly do see actions resulting from the outcomes of the surveys in which they participated, although they are not involved in the interpretation of survey results and are unaware of any decision-making leading to improvements.

In addition to formal mechanisms, students also told the team that academic staff and the university and faculty management, including the rector, are accessible. The rector has a policy of immediate response to individual student requests, with a few such cases reported per week. Students reported on the university's positive attitude towards their concerns or requests, whenever support is needed on academic issues and for extra-curricular activities. Here, the university is taking advantage of its size for ensuring an "open-door" policy with easy interpersonal contact.

The university has an evaluation system for academic staff. Teachers are dismissed only in extreme cases. Should something need to be remedied, there is firstly a discussion with the dean; if no improvement is noted, it goes to a committee composed of the rector and two other professors. Contrary to teaching assistants, professors are not offered training for improving teaching skills. Promotion of professors is based on their research profile, and the

docent examination (for gaining the title of associate professor) is organised at national level and is not directly related to the university. Therefore, management staff feel that it is difficult to address potential gaps in teaching skills or work on improvements. Better communication on the criteria for recruiting, promoting or dismissing teachers would already be a step forward. Also, as already mentioned in section 3 above, the evaluation system for academic staff does not take into account the balance between academic and administrative duties, and time devoted to the latter. Whilst academic staff are encouraged to invest time and effort in development or fundraising activities in addition to teaching and research, the team found out through several interviews that the academic staff does not understand (or know) how their teaching or community engagement duties are taken into account in their evaluation, while being told by the university that the evaluation system does take into account teaching, research, and administrative (or so-called “citizenship”) duties. The team recommends that the university devises a strategy for addressing teaching and community engagement tasks in a way that is coherent with SU’s own objectives in promoting citizenship, in the framework of the existing evaluation system. The university should also address the shared feeling within the academic community that their evaluation is mostly based on research outcomes.

Sabancı University also benchmarks itself against other universities. Half of its key performance indicators are used for comparison with competitors, including basic indicators such as the number of students and alumni and the level of fees, and indicators related to teaching and learning (e.g., the student to teacher ratio) and research outputs (e.g., the number of articles published and citations per faculty member). The university leadership define this competition as related to student recruitment. Competitors are firstly the other Turkish foundation universities and, secondly, the Turkish public universities. Collecting benchmarking data allows the university to analyse its recruitment rates and strategies compared to others. This competition for attracting students with the highest scores from the pre-university central examination is seen as contributing to the dynamism of the higher education sector, with all universities ultimately aiming to offer the best academic experience to prospective students.

The university conducts a SWOT analysis every five years. The team recommends that the university devises a strategy and an action plan in order to overcome weaknesses identified through that analysis. The existing database system should be used for this.

Relations to external quality assurance and reference points

The university also undergoes several accreditation and labelling processes. It is currently implementing ISO 9001: the university administration received its certification in 2012. The university management, however, defines the ISO process as being different for

administrative and academic entities. The School of Management also received the AACSB International Accreditation for Business Schools, and is ranked in the Financial Times ranking. The team found a general good knowledge of various international accreditation and ranking processes, but there is a lack of awareness of European developments in quality assurance and quality culture. Noticeably, there is no awareness, even at the leadership level, of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), adopted in 2005 by the Ministers of Higher Education, in the context of the Bologna Process. The team notes that Turkey belongs to the European Higher Education Area. As such, the European approaches to quality assurance and development are likely to play a role in the university's engagement with the national and European initiatives in these fields, namely when dealing with external QA frameworks or involving European partner institutions. Therefore, the team recommends that the university leadership familiarises itself with the ESG and the European framework for quality assurance and development. In this context, it is important to note that the Ministers and stakeholders in the European higher education area have acknowledged since 2003 that the primary responsibility for quality assurance lies with the institutions themselves. Therefore, the university leadership is also encouraged to raise awareness of, and reflect upon, the concept of quality culture within the university community, the use of systems designed and used in higher education, while carefully considering the role of systems that were developed for other contexts and purposes such as ISO 9001.

Data collection, indicators and strategic planning

The university has defined key performance indicators and data is being collected in this context to support the strategic planning. While the scope, extent and purpose of this data collection appears clear at central level, the team wonders whether the feedback loop includes and serves the faculty management level with the same efficiency. Faculty management may need various data included in the university information system for their own use in monitoring, strategic planning and management purposes. The team was told that there may be a lack of information and knowledge on relevant data resulting in an incomplete monitoring and planning process at faculty level, for example in terms of finding out why students would change major in the course of their studies. In a situation where such information is collected and available at central level, and the team was told that central services are organised so to be able to report to faculties whenever requested, the team wonders whether defining more systematic flows of communication in this matter (as opposed to response upon request) would not help in improving faculty-based planning, and closing the feedback loop in this regard. Gaps in information at faculty level may hinder faculties in fully grasping all possibilities for improving their academic offer, whereas redesigning programmes is feasible. Both faculty and university central management could further discuss how to make a better use of the available data for faculty planning purposes – starting by ensuring that faculty management is aware of what data is collected and available

for them at central level. The team recommends that SU works towards closing the feedback loop in this area by better encompassing faculty management.

Generally, the team noticed that quality management is very administration-oriented, with tools such as ISO. This might be related to the historic weight of the university administration, or the fact that quality management at the university is mostly the work of administrators rather than academics. Mechanisms and processes for assuring quality in teaching and learning or research are less clear, and, more importantly, do not seem to be always linked to existing mechanisms at central level. The team recommends that the university introduces an all-encompassing university level QA system, which would include all missions of the university (teaching and learning, research, service to society) and offer possibilities to monitor the university's priority areas (internationalisation, interdisciplinarity). Such a system would be useful for consolidating existing practices into a coherent system.

7. Internationalisation

Internationalisation is one of the university's priority areas, where further efforts should be engaged. The university sees internationalisation as important for diversifying the student population and for personal development. There is a central International Relations Office. The International Relations Office reports to the vice-rector for research.

Academic exchanges and partnerships

The university and the faculties engaged significant efforts in developing partnerships and attracting international students, especially at graduate level. Providing an experience abroad to both students and staff through exchange programmes is also important to SU. Teachers as well as administrative staff can benefit from mobility periods, and internationalisation at home is addressed by attracting foreign students as well as welcoming guest lecturers (one or two per year). Exchanges often happen based on individual relations between professors, who invite each other to their respective home institutions. SU sometimes invites specific visiting scholars with a good reputation, following faculties' proposals. In the team's view, the university has the potential to further exploit this area: its main teaching language is English, and there is already a high ratio of academic staff with an international degree or experience abroad, notably in American institutions. On average, 88% of academic staff at SU obtained their PhD abroad, and 65% of them were working abroad immediately before joining Sabancı University (SER, p. App-24).

The university is active in international research projects and European funding programmes. As regards academic cooperation, the team recommends that the university explore ways to further develop joint Master degrees with peer institutions abroad. Consolidating and developing the university's capacity to be proactive in European research networks and programmes would also enhance SU's internationalisation strategy. This recommendation should be read together with recommendations formulated in section 4 above.

Geographical outreach

The university and its faculties developed ideas for targeting some geographical areas, both for international recruitment and academic cooperation. The team supports this approach, since the university defines its scope in terms of quality in recruitment rather than quantitative increase, and massive international recruitment would have an impact on the university's capacity and resources. The university conducts studies on target geographical areas. In particular, Eurasia is a region where Turkey is geographically important and higher education is becoming increasingly attractive. This region would enable new partnerships to be developed, as the university may be able to attract more undergraduate students who

would see Sabancı University as a fair and feasible opportunity to study abroad, in an international setting and with teaching in English. These students would also play an important role for SU's regional and global outreach, as they would maintain ties with the Turkish business sector when they go back to their home country. This seems to be already the case with the few students from Ural or Eurasia who have studied at SU. The university could find a way to profile itself as a centre of excellence in the "Eurasian" region. The university also seems to have been particularly successful in reaching out to some other countries, such as Pakistan and Iran. Another target group identified by the university is the Turkish diaspora across the world. The team recommends that the university continues to develop a more targeted strategy for its geographical outreach, building up on existing initiatives that proved to be effective in reaching their aims.

Constraints and challenges

The staff interviewed by the team identified the Turkish labour law as a constraint that challenges their attempts to attract international graduates. As it stands now, foreign students do not have an easy time finding a job in Turkey after they graduate. The university sees coordination between YÖK (that also prioritises internationalisation) and the Ministry for Labour as an increasing need.

On more practical grounds, students and staff noted the difficulty created by the difference of timing in the academic calendars between Turkey, Europe, and the United States, which causes problems for exchange students. Also, more could be done by the university to integrate international students, starting with increasing the number of English-speaking staff in the student residences. The team learned that many student support services were designed to address domestic student needs. Finally, the university is aware that the accessibility of its campus may appear as a challenge in attracting international students, and tries to remedy this by improving the transportation offer. The issue is of particular importance for international doctoral candidates or academic staff, who would move with their family and might consider the location of Sabancı campus as less attractive for combining professional duties with a family life.

8. Conclusions and summary of recommendations

The team sees Sabanci University as an institution with a strong reputation and strengths that are atypical within its context. The team believes that SU has all the capacities to take full advantage of these strengths, in line with its core values and in a forward-looking perspective. The 15th anniversary of the institution, in 2014, may constitute a good opportunity for further reflection on the future, and taking strategic decisions to address change processes and sustainability. The team hopes that the present evaluation report will make a contribution to this process, bearing in mind that, to reach high quality standards and impact on the Turkish higher education sector in a sustainable way, "it is the journey that counts".

Below is a summary of all recommendations that are offered throughout the report, and that the team wishes to emphasise:

Governance and decision-making

- Taking advantage of legally mandatory bodies: using those for serving the university's purposes;
- Rethinking university-level structures to deal with university-level issues: one structure for education and one for research (Senate-like top body with sub-committees);
- Revising membership of these bodies in order to gain a wider involvement across university community, including students;
- Improving general awareness and ownership through internal communication: systematic keeping of minutes, communication of key decisions, how they were taken, and subsequent action plans;
- Finding ways to increase scholarships.

Teaching and learning

- Keeping the policy of allowing students to make their final choice of studies after the Foundations Development Programme;
- Consolidating and developing interdisciplinarity at undergraduate, Masters and doctoral levels;
- Enabling and stimulating cooperation within and between faculties, in order to create attractive cross-discipline programmes (problem-based thematic approaches, transversal skills);
- Better advertise how Master and doctoral programmes can respond to different and specific student needs and profiles;
- Developing e-learning to complement academic offer.

Research

- Encouraging collaborative research while respecting academic autonomy and individual initiatives;

- Making use of pilot experiences at grassroots level to encourage the development of interdisciplinarity, and create platforms where it can be stimulated and practiced;
- Preparing a strategic discussion on the positioning of SUNUM in the university's organisation, including how its development should articulate with research in faculties;
- Promoting similar discussions for taking best advantage of the Istanbul Policy Centre's work;
- Improving work conditions and career paths for doctoral candidates and researchers;
- Providing training in transversal skills for doctoral students, by taking advantage of the RGP office.

Service to society

- Envisaging ways for better recognising staff's workload in this field in the staff evaluation system, and communicating this to the academic community in a clear way;
- Creating platforms involving external stakeholders in order to promote SU's collaboration with society.

Quality management

- Introducing an all-encompassing university level QA system, promoting awareness and use of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*;
- Devising a strategy and an action plan in order to overcome weaknesses identified through the SWOT analysis: the database system should be used for this;
- Closing the feedback loop, including with faculty management and planning.

Internationalisation

- Developing a more targeted strategy in terms of geographical outreach, building up on existing initiatives that proved to be efficient for addressing purposes they were set up for;
- Exploring ways to further develop joint degrees at Masters level;
- Consolidate and develop capacity to be proactive in European research networks and programmes.