

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ASSESSMENT  
UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE BARCELONA  
EXTERNAL EVALUATION COMMITTEE REPORT

December 9 & 10, 2009

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### Internationalisation of higher education – definition and standards

One of the most widely used definitions of internationalisation is that presented by well known Canadian researcher Jane Knight:

*"Internationalization at the national, sector and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (Jane Knight, Journal of International Higher Education, no. 33, Fall 2003)*

Only a few years ago internationalisation was something extra, something that came over and above the regular day-to-day work at a university. As a result of the new communications technology (and it is fast spread) the world is becoming smaller. Nowadays it is not only our next door neighbours that we have to know a little about. We need to know about the world. Almost every part of society has been affected by this process, not least higher education. In our sector the need for more international contacts and collaboration, possibilities for benchmarking with universities in other countries and the preparation of students to work in other cultures and languages is more and more evident. And it is clear, from Knight's definition, that all aspects of higher education are involved. It is also clear that internationalisation is an ongoing process. It has no starting date and no end date.

Knight's definition is an excellent basis for discussions. However, in an assessment of the type that we have been asked to perform we need to move from theory to practice. The definition has to be turned into something more operational. We have tried to do this and elected a very concrete approach. We have made a draft set of standards for internationalisation at the UAB. As a starting point we have used an audit from Austria <sup>1</sup>. We converted their standards into our own set:

- There should be a **strategy** for internationalisation. This strategy should be integrated into the governance of the university in terms of steering documents and make it possible to trace in terms of action.
- The strategy should include **at least three elements**: mobility for students and staff, internationalisation at home and international collaboration.
- The university should have a **language policy**.
- The **internal organisation** should support internationalisation. One of the most important aspects is that it should be clear where the **responsibilities** for internationalisation lie among the staff of the university.
- There should be a good supply of **information** on different aspects of internationalisation at the university, and it should be accessible for staff, students and stakeholders. The information should include global trends.

- There should be **measurable goals** for internationalisation.
- The internal **quality assurance** system of the university should include monitoring and evaluation of internationalisation.
- The results of monitoring and evaluation of internationalisation should be used to **develop and improve** the work in this area.

Our aim with these standards has been to identify some ways of working that we believe will constitute a good path towards internationalisation. In our assessment we have been looking for these ways of working or signs that they are being used.

1) FOCUS Audit at the KFU Graz, Performance area: Internationalisation and Mobility Key, Processes: Joint Degrees & Mobility, Report of the Review-Team, Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance, February 2009

## ASSESSMENT APPROACH FOR INTERNATIONALISATION AT THE UAB

### 2.1 University description (\*)

The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) was founded in 1968; the founders aimed to establish four principles of autonomy: freedom to select teaching staff, admission available to everybody (but with a limited number of places), freedom to create its own study plans and freedom to administrate the University's budget.

From its foundation until now the university has gone through several changes. Currently it has 3 campuses, 15 faculties and colleges plus the affiliated schools. There are about 45,000 students enrolled and among them approximately 2,250 foreign students; in addition, there are 2,678 exchange students, 1,440 of whom are foreigners.

The University has about 3,400 teachers and 2,300 support staff. The annual budget of the UAB is over €400 million.

Focusing on research, the UAB carries out its work around the Esfera UAB, the UAB Research Park and the upcoming inauguration of the Synchrotron.

In the past few weeks the UAB has been recognized as a Campus of International Excellence within the program launched jointly by the Ministries for Education (MEC) and for Science and Innovation (MICINN): the Campus of International Excellence Program in the Spanish university system. The main objective of this plan is to place the best universities in Spain among the top 100 of Europe. Five Spanish higher education institutions have been recognized; this distinction will support the empowerment of these universities.

### 2.2 Reasons for the evaluation

In 2007, the Rector and the Vice Rector for International Relations decided to begin the process of self-assessment of the area of international relations (ARI) at the UAB, using the ANECA questionnaire.

By carrying out this process the UAB wants to know the current situation with regard to the ARI so as to analyze the needs for the future in this area. It is intended that the self-assessment and the subsequent external evaluation processes should provide indicators for establishing improvement plans, help to develop a vision of continuous improvement, and achieve quality within the field.

(\*) Source: the UAB web page

### 2.3 Methodology

At the institutional level, and in order to push ahead the review of its International Relations, the UAB appointed a monitoring committee that was chaired by the vice-rector for International Relations and composed of the (at that time) dean of the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting, the deputy manager of Academic Planning, the director of the Planning and Quality Assurance Office and the director of the International Relations Area.

The project was initiated in 2007 when the UAB was involved in a plan proposed by ANECA aimed at supporting the evaluation of the International Relations areas in the Spanish universities. Based on the EFQM and with an interesting repertoire of good practices the ANECA plan included a methodology for the International Relations self-assessment development. The ANECA plan was centred on self-assessment, and thus led a few universities to organize their own external review of their International Relations. Some universities appointed a review committee or an EFQM representative to conduct the external assessment

The UAB appointed a working executive committee to manage and to prepare the self-evaluation questionnaire, reporting to the monitoring committee. This committee includes the Director of Organisation, the Manager of the ETSE and the Director of International Relations.

Having completed the ANECA self-evaluation questionnaire, the monitoring committee agreed on the necessity to continue the project with an external review coordinated by a QA agency, and for this stage AQU was selected.

AQU and the UAB agreed to promote a pilot and collaborative scheme for this assessment process.

AQU accepted the proposal of the UAB also as an opportunity to develop quality assurance methods and evaluation procedures for International Relations in Higher Education. In fact, it is an aim of AQU to develop methodological elements for thematic assessment as well as to make them available and potentially applicable to the whole Catalan University System. Moreover, International Relations is a dimension of major importance in the European Higher Education Area. This can be seen in The Leuven Communiqué of the European Ministers of Education in which they expect that, in 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the EHEA should have had a study or training period abroad. In the same Communiqué the Ministers call for further internationalisation of the HE institutions' activities.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned framework, AQU's definition of the Terms of Reference for the project included the following items:

- To facilitate international benchmarks and to promote the international comparability of the ARI at the UAB with other European universities.
- To appoint an international review committee, including the academic and the students' points of view.
- To use an international review methodology to check its performance in a Catalan HE institution.
- To produce conclusions and methodological elements for future implementations in

other Catalan universities.

After an analysis of different European experiences the method of the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education for assessing International Relations in all Swedish universities over two rounds (2004 and 2008) was considered the main reference for the project. The reasons were:

- It was applied in all Swedish universities, offering very good opportunities for benchmarking.
- It addressed adequately the strategic issues concerning International Relations for HE in the current European framework.
- The Swedish Agency produced a public report for the whole system with interesting conclusions.
- The method was considered suitable for the UAB and its previous exercise with ANECA, and adaptable, with new contextual issues, to the rest of the Catalan universities.

The Swedish Agency methodology is based on a questionnaire including 6 major sections in the field of international relations:

- Premises on which the internationalisation activities at the UAB are based.
- Organisation of international activities and resources allocated to them.
- Areas in which the internationalisation processes are considered at the UAB.
- Results achieved through the internationalisation processes.
- How the UAB evaluates problems and opportunities related to internationalisation.
- Overview of best practices related to internationalisation processes

Taking into consideration the previous ANECA self-evaluation report, the UAB used the Swedish methodology to prepare a report with the answers for the external review process. That report was discussed with AQU before being sent to the review panel.

The preparation for the review process ended with the appointment of the review panel members that were proposed by AQU.

## 2.4 External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

An international committee was proposed for this evaluation:

**Mrs. Isabel Martins**, Vice-rector of the University of Aveiro (Portugal) for post-graduation studies and scientific affairs, in the last five years. She is a Full Professor and also the scientific coordinator of the Research Centre in Didactics and Teacher Education, a Research Unit recognized by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology. She is the local coordinator of the European Consortium of Innovative Universities at the Aveiro University.

**Mr. Gunnar Enequist**, Project Manager at the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education. He has conducted the two evaluation surveys on international relations over the whole Swedish high education system the years 2004 and 2008.

**Ms. Magda Staniewicz**, student, graduate in Political Sciences at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan and currently studying the Master's in Research in Sociology at UB. She has been an international student in Sweden and now in Spain.

**Ms. Carme Edo**, Project Manager at AQU Catalunya.

### 3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

#### 3.1 Description and assessment

The external evaluation committee (from now on EEC) was created in October 2009. AQU Catalunya submitted the evaluation questionnaire with answers from the UAB in English to the EEC in Nov 2009.

The EEC asked for the annexes mentioned in the UAB answers to the questionnaire. AQU Catalunya submitted the annexes to the EEC after contacting the UAB.

Prior to the visit, the EEC studied the documents received, in order to prepare the evaluation. The UAB prepared a meeting schedule for the visit that was submitted to the EEC before the visit.

#### WEDNESDAY, December 9<sup>th</sup> 2009

9:30 – 11:00	Internal committee meeting
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11:00 – 12:00	Deans and institution exchange coordinators
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12:00 – 13:00	Students
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13:00 – 15:30	Lunch with the management team: vice-rectors of undergraduate studies, postgraduate studies, research & international office and services managers
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15:30 – 16:30	ARI staff
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16:30 – 17:30	Tour of facilities (library, IWP - International Welcome Point)
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#### THURSDAY, December 10<sup>th</sup> 2009

9:30 – 10:30	Services: careers service, FAS, language services, student services.
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10:30 – 11:30	Academic managers and decentralised support staff
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11:30 – 13:00	Deliberation
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13:00 – 15:30	Lunch
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15:30 – 17:00	Oral report
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The external evaluation was conducted on December 9 and 10 2009 at the UAB Rectorate building facilities. The auditorium was reserved for the evaluation and all the meetings were held there, including the internal meetings of the EEC.

The UAB informed the community members who were going to attend the meetings in advance about the purpose of the evaluation and the meetings schedule.

During the visit the EEC asked for some adjustments in the schedule in order to get more information to improve the quality of the results, namely for two more meetings with the management team and to extend the schedule of the first day two more hours in order to have an internal meeting.

The EEC considers the quality of the answers to the questionnaire adequate and in line with the requirements to conduct the evaluation using the Swedish approach.

All the EEC members agree that no problematic incidents occurred during the assessment process.

### **3.2 Brief description of the meetings with community groups**

At the beginning of each session the EEC team introduced themselves, presented the aim of the meeting: to clarify the vision of each one about internationalisation at the UAB. The EEC explained that it was very important that each participant should feel free to present his / her point of view about the subject.

#### **Internal committee for internationalisation**

The EEC met with members of the internal committee led by the vice-rector and composed of a total of 9 people. This group seemed committed to internationalisation and is actively working on the development and promotion of this field. During this meeting discussion was centred on the answers to the questionnaire elaborated by a small group and then distributed widely.

When asked, the members reported that the students did not take an active role during the preparation of the report. The main reason, according to the members, is that "it is difficult to engage students in this kind of matter" or maybe the UAB did not find the way to engage them. However, they see the necessity to involve students much more.

In the answers to the questionnaire they take into account the opinions of the students collected through questionnaires and the Teachers' Reports presented to the coordinator after each mission abroad. The UAB is right now preparing the next Strategic Plan to be analysed by the Government Council. It was explained how important it was for the UAB to be appointed an International Excellence Campus. According to the internal committee: "until now all the Spanish Universities have been "equals" although they are not". The title of excellence will help, the EEC members consider, to increase collaboration with the top universities in the world. They emphasize the importance of raising the number of foreign students, as well as the number of

Spanish students who go abroad for studies. From this international evaluation the UAB would like to have answers to questions like “Where do we stand?”, “Is what we are doing correct?” and “What must we change in the future?”

### **Deans and institution exchange coordinators**

The EEC met with a large (about 15 people) representative group of people from different faculties, who were all willing to participate and contribute with their own opinions.

The exchange coordinators seemed very involved in their job; most of them expressed a vocation towards helping people in mobility matters. They explained their functions and their workload related to internationalisation.

It was evident that every faculty should be considered a particular case, with its own challenges, characteristics and problems. This makes it necessary to debate and establish the internationalisation strategy at each faculty, and in the UAB as a whole. In some degree courses almost all the students go abroad (Translation) and in other ones the students prefer to complete the studies exclusively at the UAB (Medicine: due to the final exam based on the Spanish program). Also, with regard to teacher mobility, the situation varies greatly from one faculty to another. For example, from the Faculty of Education 30 teachers go abroad each year and these missions are also used to identify where the students have problems. Other faculties emphasize the necessity to have time and incentives to go abroad. The role of the coordinators for internationalisation was very much discussed. They recognized that it is a time-consuming job and it is not well taken into account as a merit. Representatives from several faculties recognized that they do not benefit enough from their external experience. They also mentioned that after an external mission they were not invited to report their experiences. Very interesting was the suggestion presented by one coordinator: this job should be for a very senior Professor, who does not need to put all his/her efforts into gaining an academic reputation. He or she could have sufficient time to visit other universities in order to know better what conditions the UAB students will find and how to be prepared for them. In all cases it was recommended that students should be asked about their own mobility experiences.

### **Students**

The EEC met with around 15 students. They represented a very specific group: they were all local students, and had experience of studying abroad or were just about to have it. The majority studied within the Erasmus program but some of them also in the double degree program and in the programs in Australia, Korea and Japan. The majority studied languages or biotechnology. Apart from one master’s student, they were all undergraduate students. All of them spoke English very well, were self confident, and willing to share their opinions.

The main subjects of the conversation were related to their own experience of going abroad, including the problems they found, and to the activities developed at the university to promote internationalisation.

Their main reasons for participating in mobility programs were – according to the students – to improve language knowledge (English, Japanese, etc.), to open doors for the future (labour market, grants for further studies), to have a great experience, to study a special subject (for example, corals in Australia). In spite of these positive aspects they were very critical: it is a very

expensive experience available only to a small number of students, and the UAB has a very small number of grants. Also, there is a lack of information about the best courses, the best universities and the best companies. Sometimes, once at the destination, a course is not available and the students are invited to take courses from different disciplines instead, which are recognized in the UAB.

When invited to say what could be improved in the UAB concerning internationalisation, the students mentioned:

- Increasing the number of recommended books in English
- Increasing the number of classes in English
- English courses should be free of charge
- The person in charge of the mobility program should know better the conditions for the students since some of them said they felt alone. On the other hand some others said that their coordinator was very helpful.

#### **Area of International Relations staff**

The EEC met with a group of around 15 people. They seemed very devoted to their work and were very willing to answer questions, to give new information, and to reflect on the initiatives, objectives and strategies they conduct. Also the group presented the structure of the ARI. The EEC noticed it seems there is a good collaboration between them and the other units. Everybody seems to be an important part of the team and is very committed to his / her job.

During the meeting their functions were discussed. They emphasized the importance of having a quality control of procedures in order to minimize mistakes and duplication of procedures. It was also recognized by the group that it will be possible to improve the International Relations Plan by taking into account the answers to student questionnaires.

During the evaluation the EEC was invited to visit the campus facilities and among them the International Welcome Point (IWP). The IWP Manager explained to the EEC the structure and functions of the Point. The EEC believes the IWP is very well located, in a central place where all newcomers - students, teachers and administrative staff - can obtain crucial academic and other practical information (regarding visa matters, accommodation, language courses, scholarships, etc). The long opening hours are helpful for the public.

#### **Services Managers**

The EEC met with the managers of the Language Services, Fundació Autònoma Solidaria, the Student Unit and Treball Campus. All the managers seemed enthusiastic about their work. They collaborate with each other and work on internationalisation at home. Each manager explained the work done by their unit. All Services are very important in the support to Erasmus Students, teachers in mobility Programs, and students with disabilities.

#### **Academic managers and decentralised staff**

The EEC met with the largest group, representing all faculties, of around 20 people. They deal with the administrative matters for the exchange programs. Their position is quite new at the

university (2 years). They have previous experience working at the UAB but not with internationalisation and they have not had any specific training before starting the present work. Just a few of them had had an opportunity to visit a foreign university (although they mentioned new opportunities that have recently appeared).

The main subjects of the conversation were languages (especially the need to know if the UAB classes are offered in Spanish or Catalan in order to inform incoming students and also the need to test knowledge of Spanish and Catalan, especially in studies like Medicine), the need to regulate the arrival period of the incoming students (late arrival during the academic year produces many difficulties), and also difficulties for foreign students in meeting with some coordinators, probably due to the coordinators' overload of work. All of the group members met with the coordinators, on average, once a week, and had contacts with the universities which the students come from. Concerning internationalisation at home, they said that only the language matter is a real issue at the moment.

## 4 ASSESSMENT OF SPECIFIC TOPICS

### 4.1 Premises of internationalisation

#### Description and assessment

The UAB defines itself as a Catalan public university with an international vocation. The management team expresses its willingness to confer an international perspective on all university actions aimed at teachers, students and support staff, and to open up the university to all cultures.

The UAB sets up the foundations of internationalisation in several documents:

- Master Plan for the years 2002–2005. This plan has been monitored for 2006–2007.
- Contract program 2002–2005 defining objectives regarding internationalisation.
- Strategic plan for international relations 2006–2007 stemming from the Master Plan.

The management team has extended the period of validity of these documents up to the present.

At this moment the UAB is in the process of updating these documents. The EEC understands these documents are not as updated as they should be and considers this an important area for improvement.

As a result of the meetings held with the community members, the EEC has the impression that the documents are not widely known; the central management and staff know them well but this knowledge does not spread to the faculties. The EEC regards this as an area for improvement.

Goals for internationalisation – The EEC has seen very few measurable goals for internationalisation. This kind of goal and its follow-up are important since the UAB has the ambition to improve its internationalisation.

These goals should be fixed individually for each faculty considering its own singularities and they should be aligned to the mission and strategy of each faculty.

In order to clarify and make the management of internationalisation easier, goals should be prioritized. On an annual basis, a follow-up should be carried out presenting figures and an analysis of the results. For this purpose, the university quality assurance system could be used. Regardless of how it is done, internationalisation should be regularly monitored and evaluated.

Strategy for internationalisation – The EEC believes that a good strategy for international relations should consider three major areas:

- Mobility
- Cooperation
- Internationalisation at home

During the visit, the EEC has seen several examples of mobility and cooperation actions but it has not seen the internationalisation at home. As the majority of students do not go abroad, this latter element of internationalisation grows more important along with globalisation.

An element that is sometimes mentioned separately is the recruitment of students and teachers from other countries. The EEC regards the recruitment of students as included in mobility and recruitment of teachers as included in Internationalisation at home. However, little has been said about such activities at the UAB.

Since the university is preparing a new Director Plan and a new Strategic Plan for international relations the EEC encourages the leaders of this project to take into account these thoughts on goals and strategy, especially those concerning internationalisation at home.

International relations involve all the university communities; the EEC encourages the management team to include representatives of all these communities, including the students' representatives, in decision- making on international relations.

The EEC values the existence of a language policy highly, and considers it even better because it contains an action plan and a timetable attached to it. The committee has not seen any monitoring report but hopes the monitoring is done as the plan states.

## 4.2 Organisation, resources and methods

### Description and assessment

The university has a well-established organisation for international relations divided into a central area and a decentralised management structure:

The central one is the Area of International Relations, responsible for planning, implementing and coordinating and also is the head of several units related to internationalisation.

Part of the structure is devolved to each of the faculties. Each faculty has an exchange coordinator and a support office, who are in many cases doing their duties on a part time basis or with very little remuneration.

The EEC believes the internal organisation supports internationalisation and the staff responsibilities are reasonably clear.

Considering this structure, the exchange coordinators are apparently very important for the quality assurance of the mobility and should therefore be selected with great care and rewarded accordingly. It is also important to recognise the figure of coordinator as something very positive for his / her career. The devotion of these people to internationalisation can make a great difference for the students. The role of the coordinator should be promoted and his/her dedication to international relations increased in every way.

During the meetings held the EEC has found some very good examples of the work that some coordinators do at their faculties to enhance quality in periods abroad. These cases of good practices should be made apparent to all faculties. Among these examples are the visits to the partner universities to know them and their staff better in order to improve the advice given to students interested in studying abroad. On the other hand, it seems hard to understand how, during the hours established for coordinating (around 9 hours per week) the coordinator is able to manage all the matters related to the exchange program in her/his faculty.

Faculty coordinators meet twice a year to deal with practical topics; strategic topics are dealt with in management meetings. The EEC recommends the university to allow coordinators to discuss strategic topics on internationalisation more often.

The administrative staff at the faculties need regular training and knowledge about internationalisation. It seems that support staff from partner universities come to the UAB for study visits but very few from the UAB go out. The EEC recommends offering them opportunities to go abroad to gain experience from other countries and universities. The university should promote actions to increase the number of support staff interested in going abroad.

The UAB is a member of several important associations, as mentioned in the answers to the questionnaire. However, nothing is said about what the membership means to the university. These associations should be used for systematic gathering of information about trends in higher education and in the surrounding society.

### 4.3 Areas considered involved in internationalisation processes

#### Description and assessment

The UAB has established several measures addressed to students, teachers and support staff related to internationalisation:

These measures are described in the report prepared by the university and include:

- Language training and other language resources
- In & Out days
- Joint programs
- Mobility promotion
- Internships for students in international companies, etc.

The EEC has asked the interlocutors for their impressions of these measures:

#### 1. Students

Students go abroad mainly to practise languages (English mostly but, in the case of the students of translation, also other languages); another reason to take part in exchange programs is to meet other people and cultures.

Students expect better guidance by coordinators, teachers or other UAB staff on which foreign university (and in the case of internships, which firm) would be the best choice considering their area of studies. As for now they feel the quality of this guidance varies from one case to another and this aspect could be improved.

Students of translation, due to the faculty specificity, feel that the UAB has an international atmosphere, but the other ones are not so convinced. Even if they are eager to meet Erasmus students, they consider that they live in another dimension and that the Erasmus world is separate to their own.

They also pointed out the necessity of introducing activities in order to integrate the incoming students with the local ones.

The students believe that enrolling in an exchange program (including Erasmus) is a luxury, due to the insufficient amount of the scholarship (they point out that in other autonomous regions of Spain the scholarships are higher). For many students money is a reason for not applying for the program. They also think that the number of places offered, for instance in the Leonardo program, is insufficient and that there are no agreements with the countries they would really like to go (e.g. US). The Erasmus program, according to students, is the one where the procedures and information are clear, however with other exchange programs the information and procedures need to be further developed.

The students emphasise the necessity to give English-medium courses at the UAB; however they are not confident about the teachers who can offer them, due to their language skills. Just a few of the interviewed students took part in courses given in English or in a class given by visiting teachers at the UAB.

The students agreed that the English courses offered at the University Language School are in general not affordable for them. They would like to have more accessible chances to study. The EEC recommends that the UAB should try to offer English courses without fees or with reduced fees for students.

The students also proposed considering another way of evaluating the grades obtained during the studying abroad program, taking into consideration that it is more difficult to study in a foreign language and academic culture. On the other hand, even if they had to change some courses from the learning agreement when arrived at the foreign university, they did not have problems with credit recognition at the UAB. As the recognition is very important for the students, the EEC is very pleased to note that the system at the UAB seems to be working well. This is an area that presents a lot of problems at other universities. In order to keep up the good work the EEC recommends that the recognition is incorporated in the monitoring of internationalisation that should be done on a regular basis.

The EEC has the impression that the students were not involved in the internationalisation at home policies. The UAB could consider passing them more responsibilities and giving a more active role in taking care of the foreign students, for instance.

## **2. Teaching staff**

There is a low mobility of teaching staff; according to the deans and coordinators. This is basically due to financial matters and overload of work. The possibility of "sabbaticals" is difficult to obtain due to the internal regulations. The EEC strongly recommends that the UAB try to find ways of stimulating teaching staff to go abroad for teaching purposes. By doing this they will be able to bring international experiences to the teaching at the UAB and also to give better advice to their students on studies abroad

There are not many teachers giving courses in English. Although there are some, the incentives offered might be insufficient. However, the coordinators believe this is a specific demand of Erasmus students and they do not detect this demand from the rest of the students.

## **3. Administrative Staff**

Comparing all the interviewed groups, the administrative staff seems to be a group that the university should pay more attention to and who should be given a more active role in internationalisation since they are the people dealing with it in practice on a daily basis.

It seems a good idea that, apart from the administrative knowledge, the officers get a chance of self-development in academic matters, a chance to obtain knowledge about the foreign universities collaborating with their faculties, etc. This would make them more involved not only in their tasks but also in internationalisation in general, and more confident in their work to help students. Also they should have the opportunity to improve their English competences (For example English courses free of charge on an obligatory basis).

Mobility and English courses should be promoted within this community.

#### 4. The UAB Agreements

The UAB has a lot of agreements; as it is important to keep a good and updated knowledge of them, and all the databases the university has are very important. The EEC believes these databases should be made accessible to all the community, including students, staff and stakeholders. The databases should be promoted and their quality maintained.

At present, the agreements are revised periodically (usually every two or three years) but, as far as we understand, it is done without a systematic procedure. The EEC believes agreements should be revised systematically following an established procedure. Furthermore, the results from the revisions ought to be discussed regularly, for example once a year in the group for strategic matters that the EEC recommends the UAB to establish. The EEC wants to emphasise that renewal should not be done on an automatic basis.

## 4.4 Results achieved through Internationalisation

### Description and assessment

The results from monitoring and evaluating internationalisation are important for the development and improvement of the work in this area. The EEC detects an insufficient use of this kind of information and believes this is an area for improvement. Monitoring should be done in a planned way and on a regular basis.

Having said this, the EEC believes that the UAB understands the importance of monitoring and evaluating internationalisation and had already started its effort by preparing the ANECA self-evaluation and undergoing an external evaluation of its international relations. The UAB is also aware of the need to analyse and systematise the international relations processes. As a result of these self-evaluations the UAB has prepared an Improvement Plan. This plan was presented to the EEC during the visit to the UAB and includes actions for establishing ways of collecting and analysing data on a regular basis.

The EEC asked the international relations area staff, about processes and indicators related to internationalisation. The staff explained they are now developing them as planned in the improvement plan.

Mobility results:

- Students – Comparing the past two academic years there has been an increase of the students coming in and going out; the increase is higher for the students coming from abroad.
- Teaching Staff – Comparing the same two academic year periods there has been a slight decrease of teachers enrolled on the Erasmus out program.
- Support Staff – Comparing the same two academic year periods there has been an increase of support staff going in and out.

The figures shown for all three groups are considered low by the EEC. The EEC recommends that the UAB promote actions to increase these figures.

To gather information, the international relations area sends out questionnaires to outgoing students on mobility programs, as the interviewed students confirm. This is a good practice but the EEC believes that UAB ought to make a recurrent (e. g every second year) survey among students and staff about internationalisation and its different parts, for instance about the interest in going abroad and to what countries or about different aspects of internationalisation at home.

## 4.5 Assessing problems and opportunities in internationalisation

### Description and assessment

The UAB has conducted an exercise to spot strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to internationalisation. As a result of this exercise the UAB has identified measures to take advantage of these opportunities and counter the threats.

The analysis presented in the questionnaire contains several interesting parts. However after the interviews we get the feeling that there are different opinions about what a strength, a weakness, an opportunity and a threat are. Despite this the EEC believes that the academic values at the UAB should be taken into account much more. Surely there must be areas of special academic competence within the UAB, areas that would be interesting to students and teachers in other countries and a basis for collaboration and recruitment to the UAB. This will probably grow even more important when the Bologna process becomes more mature and a higher number of students look around for the best universities to do their master's degree. The EEC recommends the university to look deeper into this aspect and to consider these measures as part of the Action Plan.

## 4.6 Good practices

### Description and assessment

The EEC comments on some of the good practices revised during the visit:

#### International Welcome Point

The IWP offers support to visitors coming from abroad. The EEC has visited the IWP and has seen a motivated and organised team. During the last years several improvements have been deployed.

#### Language Services

During the meetings with community members language has been one of the most commented subjects.

The UAB offers several language services as the Language Services Director explained to the EEC.

The Language School offers services to students, teachers and support staff who want to improve their language skills. It also offers exams to certify levels of language proficiency.

Teachers have specific training courses focused on developing skills in different aspects of their work like preparing oral presentations, writing scientific papers, or teaching in English.

The Language Services also offers translation services and advises the university managers on language policy.

The EEC considers some of the services offered by the Language Services should be promoted to reach a higher number of people. As an example, 45 teachers (15 x 3 groups) took a training course to teach in English; but this number is much too low considering the total number of teachers is about 3.400, though not all of them need to attend courses. The support staff is another important group that should get the opportunity to improve their English.

To promote these services several actions could be taken including increasing the financing of the courses.

#### Website

The university has a website in English, Catalan and Spanish with a specific page on mobility and exchanges. The EEC has seen the website and noticed that it contains a lot of information in English, which is very good.

The management team explained they are in the process of creating a new page for students coming from abroad; this page will be available in a few weeks.

## 5 ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

First of all, the EEC congratulates the UAB for taking the self evaluation process. The UAB is a big university with a declared vocation for internationalisation. Voluntarily it has carried out the international relations assessment, first by preparing the answers to the questionnaire and second by undergoing the external evaluation process. The UAB has become a pioneer in this field. It shows that the UAB is deeply engaged with the internationalisation process. The EEC also wants to thank the UAB for the warm welcome and the assistance received in order to conduct the assessment.

As a summary of the evaluation, the EEC would like to return to the standards initially mentioned. It could then be said that

- There is a strategy for internationalisation, but the EEC finds it difficult to judge whether it is fully integrated into the overall governance of the UAB or not.
- Two of the three necessary elements are present in the strategy for internationalisation at the UAB, but internationalisation at home is not.
- There is a language policy and the necessary tools to monitor and evaluate it.
- The internal organisation seems to support internationalisation and the division of responsibilities is reasonably clear.
- Quite a lot of information on internationalisation is available, but more could be done to this end.
- There are no measurable goals for internationalisation.
- Much more could be done about including internationalisation in the internal quality assurance system of the UAB.

In order to be more specific the EEC would like to emphasise the following aspects:

### ***Best practices:***

- 1) One important aspect is the UAB's language policy. This policy document details all the actions that will take place during the next years.
- 2) The EEC considers especially important the high level of motivation of the internationalisation unit. This unit is involved in a process of continuous improvement and this should continue.
- 3) The International Welcome Point is an important source of help to all foreign students. It is well-organized and is a focal point for different activities for foreign students.
- 4) The web is considered by the EEC an important tool to access all the information. The whole web is published in English, Spanish and Catalan. Also, the EEC encourages the UAB in its new website project, especially designed to help foreign students.
- 5) The EEC considers that the cultural programs designed to show Catalan culture to

foreign students are good practices.

- 6) The EEC considers that activities in the Mentor Program are good practices. The EEC encourages the UAB to allow more people to join this program.
- 7) The EEC considers that including the internationalisation process in the Internal Quality Assurance System is necessary for a continuous improvement.

### ***Areas for improvement:***

- 1) The UAB has a policy and a strategy for internationalisation but they are not updated as they should be. The EEC recommends an update of the documents related to strategy and internationalisation policy. It is also important to establish a systematic process of review and follow-up regarding the strategic goals.
- 2) The goals for internationalisation at the UAB should be measurable and they have to be monitored systematically. Also the strategic goals have to be developed into more operational goals and indicators. Operational goals should be designed with the participation of the faculty coordinators, in order to adapt the strategic plan to their needs.
- 3) One of the measurable goals should be to raise mobility among students and staff. This will require certain activities of promotion. In order to find out what kind of activities will have the best effects, the UAB should conduct surveys among students and staff to find out, among other things, which are the preferred countries of destination and the obstacles for taking part in mobility. The UAB should analyse why some mobility programs have more success than others.
- 4) There should be a follow-up every year to find out how well the goals have been achieved. The result from the follow-up should be discussed at the management level, for example in the advisory board that we propose – see below. This exercise could preferably be made a part of the internal quality assurance system of UAB.
- 5) The dissemination of the Internationalisation Policy and Strategic Plan, especially the goals, should be improved. The documents are well- known by the central units but not enough by the faculties and other university services involved in the internationalisation process.
- 6) The new strategic plan should prioritize actions in order to focus efforts on the most strategic goals. The EEC considers that internationalisation at home should be taken into account in this new strategic plan
- 7) The time dedicated to the internationalisation actions by academic managers and coordinators seems not enough in some cases. The EEC thinks that it has to be extended.
- 8) The EEC recommends involving the international coordinators in the process of developing the strategic objectives. The EEC also believes that the possibilities for coordinators to meet each other and the people at the central area should be strengthened.

- 9) The coordination between the central unit and faculties units should be improved. Administrative staff from the faculties should be trained about internationalisation administrative issues. Also, administrative staff should participate in the design of the internationalisation administrative procedures that are involved in (for instance, scholarships procedures and credit recognition procedures).
- 10) The power of good examples should not be underestimated. We therefore propose that some of the many good practices within internationalisation that undoubtedly exist should be identified and made public, for example via the Intranet of the UAB.
- 11) In order to enhance internationalisation at home the UAB should make systematic use of the experiences of teachers and students taking part in mobility. This should include those out-going as well as in-coming. For instance they could share knowledge of the way other universities are organized in this area. In addition, contributions from experts of all kinds, including the private companies that the UAB is cooperating with, should be seen as possibilities.
- 12) The scanning of trends in the international environment is an activity close to internationalisation. The UAB could improve its ability to meet new challenges by systematically gathering information from the many international associations to which it belongs. This work should not be limited to internationalisation as such, but used for the university as a whole.
- 13) In order to make the best possible use of the existing agreements with universities abroad, information about these agreements should be made as public as possible. In this way some of the existing agreements could be extended and eventually turned into strategic ones. At the same time, other agreements could be ended..
- 14) The EEC believes that the program for training teachers to give their classes in English and improve their language skills includes too few teachers. This program is very important if the UAB wants to increase the mobility and internationalisation of its academic staff. The EEC recommends training them in how to teach in a foreign language- This involves both language and pedagogical knowledge.
- 15) Information to incoming students on which language the different courses are offered in should be improved. It is essential for foreign students to know this before coming.
- 16) Also, the EEC recommends including representatives of the students in the internationalisation process in order to take their points of view into account.
- 17) Finally, the EEC recommends the creation of an Advisory Board comprising representatives of deans, coordinators, support staff, students, and maybe external experts. The main objectives would be to advise on strategic matters. This Advisory Board should report to the University Rector.

## PROPOSALS TO AQU TO DEVELOP A METHODOLOGY FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS EVALUATION

- The EEC recommends AQU to rewrite the questionnaire drawing on the experience of the UAB answers. The EEC believes that some questions have been either misunderstood or at least not fully understood.
- Separate answers to the questionnaire from student representatives (student organisations) should be asked for.
- AQU should schedule the work for the EEC in such a way that the external evaluators have the opportunity to meet at least half a day before the interviews at the university start.
- Representatives of student unions and teachers should be among those interviewed.
- The EEC should have the opportunity to choose some people (some functions) to take part in the interviews.
- A good basis for the interviews – and a part of the answers to the questionnaire – could be a survey among staff and students (separate questionnaires) on their opinion of internationalisation.
- The university should be asked to present a list of participants in the different interviews and their responsibilities to the external evaluators. This should be done in advance
- Each of the members of the EEC should be asked to formulate questions in advance to the different groups taking part in the interviews.
- Each evaluation should take into account the conclusions of the previous report as well as its recommendations.

## 7 RECORD OF SUBMISSION OF THE EXTERNAL REPORT

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**Assessed service:** International Relations

**University:** Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

**EEC visit date:** 9 - 10 December 2009

**Delivery date of the draft report to the university:** 25 February 2010

**Date of receipt of comments from the university:** 22 March 2010

**Delivery date of the final report to the university:** 25 March 2010

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This report has been prepared by the external evaluation committee:

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**The chairperson of the external evaluation declares that this document constitutes the final report of the assessed university.**

**Signature:**

**Mrs. Isabel Martins**

**Place and date:**