

**Quality Enhancement Framework  
For Icelandic Higher Education**

# **INSTITUTION-WIDE REVIEW**

**Agricultural University of Iceland**

*September 2013*



## **Preface**

This is the report of an independent institution-wide review undertaken by the Icelandic Quality Board for Higher Education under the authority of the Icelandic Government. The review was carried out by a team of independent senior international higher education experts together with an independent student from the higher education sector in Iceland.

Institution-wide Review is one component of the Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) established by the Icelandic Government in 2011. The main elements of the QEF are:

- Quality Board-led reviews at the institutional level.
- A transparent, comprehensive program of subject level reviews led by the institutes themselves.
- A programme of annual meetings between members of the Quality Board and individual institutions to discuss institutional developments in quality assurance and enhancement.
- A series of quality enhancement workshops and conferences to share national and international developments in enhancing the quality of the student experience.

Further information on the Icelandic Enhancement Framework is available at the RANNIS web site.<sup>1</sup>

*Professor Norman Sharp OBE*  
*Chair*

*Dr Einar Hreinsson*  
*Secretary General*

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://rannis.is/english/qef/>

## **INTRODUCTION**

### *1.1 The Review Process*

Institutional Review is one of the main elements of the *Quality Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education* (QEF). All seven Higher Education Institutions in Iceland are being reviewed between 2012 and 2015. This is a report of the second review, of the Agricultural University of Iceland (AUI).

The review was conducted by the Quality Board with support from RANNIS, in accordance with the procedures described in the 2011 *Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education*. The review team comprised Professor Rita McAllister (chair) and Dr Frank Quinault (vice-chair) from the Quality Board, together with Professors Bruce Mallory and Thomas Palo, and Anna Maria Gudmundsdottir as the student member. Dr Einar Hreinsson and Eyrún Sigurðardóttir, both from RANNIS provided administrative support.

In preparation for the main visit by the Quality Board, members of the review team had three meetings on the Reflective Analysis with senior staff – one of them in AUI's premises in Reykjavik. The review visit took place on 11 and 12 March 2013 in the University's main building at Hvanneyri. After an initial presentation by the University, twelve meetings were held with staff, students and alumni, University Council members and representatives from the relevant industries. The schedule for the visit was designed by the review chair in consultation with AUI, after reading the University's Reflective Analysis and associated reference material. The preparation of the Reflective Analysis and the arrangements for the visit were overseen by the Rector Ágúst Sigurðsson and Vice-Rectors Áslaug Helgadóttir and Björn Þorsteinsson.

The Quality Board is grateful to the University for its ready cooperation in organising the proceedings, and to RANNIS for ensuring the smooth running of the visit.

## *1.2 The Agricultural University of Iceland*

The Agricultural University of Iceland was founded in 2005 with the merger of three long-established institutions: the Agricultural University at Havnneyri, the Agricultural Research Institute in Reykjavik, and the Horticultural College at Reykir. It is an educational and research institution in the fields of agriculture, land resources and environmental sciences, with a focus on the sustainable use of land and animal resources. With sites in various rural communities around Iceland, the University has an important and distinctive role to play in the development and economy of the Icelandic countryside as a whole.

With only 200 students at university level, a full-time staff of c100 (half of which are faculty members) and 140 part-time teachers, AUI is a small institution, especially by international standards. It has a focused and specialist curriculum, with only two faculties at higher educational level: the Faculty of Land and Animal Resources and the Faculty of Environmental Sciences. (AUI also runs a Department of Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning at upper secondary school level, which was not included in the review: see 1.8 below.) Five programmes are offered at Bachelor level; there is one formal Masters programme in Planning along with individually planned, research-based programmes at this level; the Doctoral programme is run jointly with the University of Iceland. Fifty per cent of the University's activities are devoted to research.

## *1.3 Mission and Strategic Objectives*

The University's mission is 'to lead the way to a better quality of life at peace with nature'. It aims to be an active participant in sustainable development in Iceland, and to represent the country internationally in its fields of academic expertise. Its Policy and Strategic Plan for 2009-13 were instigated in 2008, in response to Ministry of Education, Science and Culture accreditations of 2007 and 2008. The financial crisis of 2009 in Iceland, however, compelled the institution to modify its goals, and strategic priorities were further revised in relation to its most recent agreement with the MESK of July 2012. Its main aims are now to increase cooperation and collaborations with educational establishments both within Iceland and abroad, to

strengthen its current curriculum and to enhance its research-based studies. AUI already cooperates and offers joint courses with other institutions in the Network of Public Universities in Iceland (NPUI), and has formal collaborations with the Agricultural and Veterinary Universities of the Nordic Countries (NOVA Network). It also has strong ties with the rural industry bodies in Iceland.

#### *1.4 Organisation and Governance*

The AUI is governed by a University Council, chaired by the Rector and including members representing the Ministries of Agriculture and Education, the Farmers' Association, the Confederation of Icelandic Employers and the University of Iceland. This Council sets the teaching and research strategy and drives planning. The Rector, together with the two Vice-Rectors (for Academic Affairs and for Research), the two Deans of faculties and the Heads of Departments, constitute the Management Team, which is the main decision-making body, meeting weekly. Curriculum, teaching and progress issues are dealt with by the Education Committee, chaired by the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and including Programme Directors, the Director of Graduate Studies and student representatives. The terms of reference and reporting structure for this key Committee are still to be formalised. There are separate committees for MSc and PhD students.

The review team met members of the University Council. In recent times the main business of the Council has been the state of AUI's finances. These members saw this problem as largely a legacy from the past, which the Government should solve. They expressed complete confidence in the University's senior management, who had been admirable in dealing with the rapid pace of institutional change. In relation to this, the review team questioned whether it is best practice for the Rector to chair the University Council (whilst recognising that this arrangement is currently determined by the Ministry). The team perceived no tension in the current situation. Difficulties could, however, arise if views differed between Council (chaired by the Rector) and the Management Team (chaired by the Rector). In future it might be possible for AUI to consider the Council having an independent chair, and for the extent of the Rector's executive authority to be clarified.

### *1.5 Recent and pending developments*

In its present form, the Agricultural University of Iceland is a young institution which, before Iceland's economic crisis, was hoping substantially to expand both its critical mass and its educational horizons. Between 2005 and 2011, however, while student numbers increased by more than 50%, payments from the state budget increased only by 36%. Fifteen full-time equivalent staff were consequently lost; since 2008 student numbers have increased only at graduate level, and have dropped amongst undergraduates. On the other hand AUI has significantly decreased its student drop-out rate.

The institution signed its first Service Agreement with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in July 2012; from July 2013 it will fall under the Act of Public Universities instead of the Act of Agricultural Education, and will now comply with the same rules and regulations as other Icelandic public universities. This will clarify its accredited subject areas, will reduce the overall size but increase the number of elected members of the University Council, and should generally ensure better communication between the University and the Ministry.

Amongst positive developments, the University is involved in developing the United Nations' University Land Reclamation Training Programme; and it is currently preparing an application for the ECTS Label on behalf of the Network of Public Universities in Iceland.

### *1.6 Response to previous Reviews/Accreditation exercises*

The Agricultural University of Iceland obtained accreditation from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Natural and Environmental Sciences in 2007, and in Agricultural Science and Equine Science in 2008. It was conditionally accredited for Doctoral studies in 2009, and will submit for full accreditation in 2013. The accreditation panels made a significant number of recommendations, ranging from the expansion of external and international links to the elevation of entry

requirements. The institution's tabulated responses<sup>2</sup> are – understandably, but perhaps uncreatively - limited to statements on lack of funding. Collaborative arrangements are progressing; but further, systematic external involvement in the institution's processes would help to benchmark standards.

### *1.7 Production of the Reflective Analysis*

The production of a Reflective Analysis was new to the AUI, as it is to every institution in Iceland. A workshop on writing the documentation was delivered by the Quality Council in November 2011; additional guidance on the general content and structure (but no evaluation) of the submission was given by Professor McAllister. For an establishment of AUI's size, without a dedicated QA post, it was a substantial task. The resultant document is clear, comprehensive and well-written. Its authors consulted widely in its preparation: the Management Team was fully involved; all faculty were invited to discuss key issues; students were invited to write the chapter on the Student Voice – so that there was full institutional ownership of the content.

The structure of the Reflective Analysis closely followed that suggested in the *Quality Enhancement Handbook*. It was accompanied by comprehensive reference material; this was supplemented by the extensive additional documentation requested by the review team and provided promptly in advance of the visit itself. This helped the review team to focus fully on their task.

### *1.8 Evaluation*

The Agricultural University of Iceland has a distinctive mission and a distinct role to play in contemporary Iceland. It offers fine study facilities, including diverse and extensive land resources which support the institution's teaching and applied research programme; this spread of its geographical bases also, however, leads to some organisational and scheduling problems. Its management is in the hands of a small team of committed and focused individuals who have a strong sense of the University's locus and potential. They are in the process of building a collaborative

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<sup>2</sup> Reference material 1i to RA.

educational network with other public universities in Iceland, to complement and to supplement their own pedagogical and research capacity. The present University Council, representing a wide range of external interests, has been supportive but are somewhat mixed in their views on the institution's future; when the composition of the Council changes, as it is likely to do in the near future, AUI might consider the benefit of a smaller body with more experience of the intricacies of Higher Education, of agricultural research, and with an international perspective.

According to the Reflective Analysis, AUI's secondary school level Department of Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning is a separate entity governed by its own regulations; for this reason the University excluded it from the current Institutional Review - though the Rector said he had been minded to bring it in. It is very likely that the MESC will wish this area of the institution's activities to be subject to external evaluation in the future. It is therefore recommended that AUI should cover the DVTLL in an internal Subject Review, and thereafter should incorporate it in the following Institutional Review.

The University's development over the last few years has been much hampered by lack of finance, forcing it to cut back on both staff and plans for educational expansion. The resultant small critical mass of students and staff, together with the high proportion of distance learners, could threaten the viability of some of the institution's programmes.

## **2. SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS**

### *2.1 Organisational Structure for the Management of Standards*

The Management Team's oversight of the whole institution includes the safeguarding of academic standards. Primary responsibility rests with the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, who is in charge of all quality assurance and enhancement processes. He chairs the Education Committee, whose other members are the Vice-Rector for



Research, the Programme Directors, student representatives and the Academic Coordinator. Responsibility for each module is assigned to one or another of the Programme Directors. Administrative support is provided by the Education Office, supervised by the Academic Coordinator.

The organisational structure is thus transparent, with clear lines of responsibility. However, as openly acknowledged in the Reflective Analysis, its operational procedures are mostly informal. There are no written terms of reference for the Management Team, or for the Faculty Councils, which currently function in an *ad hoc* manner, or for the University Forum which, as the name implies, is intended to facilitate university-wide discussion of strategic matters pertaining to teaching and research. Moreover, the Education Committee, despite its central role in the safeguarding of standards, functions reactively, meeting as business arises, rather than having a regular schedule that would allow it to monitor quality and make necessary adjustments continuously, based on regular data analysis.

The Vice-Rector echoed a further concern of the Reflective Analysis: that individual teachers might be unaware of how AUI's quality assurance system operates because there is no Quality Assurance Handbook to which they could refer. This did indeed seem to be the case when the review team questioned members of the teaching staff about some of the details of quality assurance; and when Programme Directors were asked about their role in quality assurance there was considerable variation in their responses.

These problems are due in part to the heavy dependence, in a small institution, upon a few key individuals. The Programme Directors' need to fulfil several roles can give rise to conflicts of interest and the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs has an especially demanding set of responsibilities. A Quality Assurance Officer would be able to assume some of these duties and could help introduce more formal, written procedures. The main issue is one of cost. The review team was told that although AUI has not been able to afford such an appointment it might nevertheless be able to share the cost of a joint appointment within NPUI. There is already a NPUI working party on quality assurance of which the Vice-Rector is a member.

## *2.2 Design, Approval, Monitoring and Review of Programmes*

New programmes require the approval, on financial as well as academic grounds, of the Management Team and the University Council as well as the Faculty in question; both programme and individual course descriptions must be in accordance with the National Quality Framework. Course content must be validated by the Education Committee, to ensure compatibility with other provision, and students already on-course must sanction any significant change to an existing programme. This is all as it should be. Even so, there may be room for improvement: some of the external experts and industry representatives who contribute guest lectures told the team that they would welcome more of a say in course design, and some of the regular teaching staff were not entirely clear about the course approval process.

The Education Committee monitors teaching on an on-going basis, but the review team was not told of any standardised procedure for annual monitoring: the account in the Reflective Analysis of the system adopted by one Programme Director noted, with regret, that other teachers had not participated. Nor does there appear to have been any standardised procedure for the periodic review of programmes. This is now required as one of the main elements of the Quality Enhancement Framework, beginning next session in the case of AUI, and the University needs to decide how it proposes to conduct these Subject-level Reviews. Annual monitoring reports are normally a key part of the evidence base for periodic reviews, and both annual monitoring and periodic reviews are important for enhancement as a source of good practice that may be transferable to other disciplines within the same institution.

AUI's small size and, still more so, its current financial challenges would now make it very difficult for it to initiate any completely new programme on its own. It is, however, ready to co-operate with other Icelandic universities. The review team welcomed AUI's realistic assessment of what is feasible and its openness to collaboration, whilst at the same time emphasising the special care that must be taken when the University is designing and implementing quality assurance procedures for programmes that are delivered by more than one institution.

### *2.3 External Reference Points and Benchmarks*

Externality, from within the institution as well as from outside, is an indispensable component of any quality assurance system. There is already much good practice in this regard: programmes have been designed in consultation with professional bodies, such as the Farmers' Association and the Icelandic Association of Planners; MSc and PhD theses are assessed by external examiners, often from abroad in the case of doctorates; and at least two of the three members of the Evaluation Committees that assess applications for academic posts are drawn from outside. AUI is an active participant in the NOVA network and NPUI has entrusted the University with the task of preparing an application for the ECTS Label as a model for the other public universities to follow.

On the other hand, the Programme Directors told the review team that their involvement of external colleagues in quality assurance was informal and at their own initiative, and the Reflective Analysis identified a need to develop tools for systematic international benchmarking of study programmes. The introduction of a regular cycle of Subject-level Reviews will of itself increase externality and may help with the identification of appropriate benchmarks. Hitherto, one of the most important sources of externality has been the accreditation exercises conducted in 2007 and 2008 on behalf of MESC, and so the review team was somewhat surprised to find that the University Council did not know how AUI had responded to these reports.

### *2.4 Staff Induction, Appraisal and Development*

AUI's tight financial constraints have affected staffing in many ways: a senior manager told the review team that their greatest wish would be the freedom to recruit academics internationally and not just domestically; everyone lamented the lack of sabbatical leave; concern was expressed as to whether AUI can afford to pay its many part-time staff what they could earn at other institutions; and the University has not had a Human Resource Manager since 2009.

It is therefore especially important for AUI to make the best possible use of existing staff and of any new recruits. It welcomes the recent adoption of new rules for appointment and promotion that will bring it into line with the other public universities. It recognises the value that a formal induction programme could have and it would like to reinvigorate its annual appraisal scheme. Both are difficult to achieve without a Human Resource Manager, and it may be that AUI will have to forego an academic appointment in order to re-establish that post. Academic staff interviewed by the review team appreciated the value of pedagogic training as an element of staff development. Insufficient funding was again cited as the reason why this was seldom available to part-time staff, despite what were perceived as major potential benefits. The Reflective Analysis mooted the idea that regular pedagogic training might be made mandatory for all teaching staff and there was definite support for this among those interviewed by the review team.

Unlike some other Icelandic universities, AUI does not have a Teaching Coach, but some staff have been able to take advantage of courses offered by the Teaching Centre at the University of Iceland. The Reflective Analysis suggested that more could be done within AUI itself to encourage teachers to share good practice, for instance through peer observation of teaching. This is likely to be especially important in a university that comprises just two Faculties. Consideration could also be given to some form of reward for exemplary teaching, as also proposed in the Reflective Analysis.

The advent of NPUI has created new opportunities for faculty exchange and co-teaching, which were welcomed by AUI. It will also be easier to make joint appointments with other institutions. The review team was told about a recent example of collaborative teaching, involving staff from UNAK and the UoI as well as from AUI, which had been particularly vibrant and would be repeated even though different timetables, as well as geography, meant that it could only be scheduled at a weekend.

Some staff regarded their heavy teaching load as a major obstacle to research and career advancement, but one active researcher disagreed, citing the time taken up by administrative duties as the real hurdle. Either way, the reduction in staff caused by the financial crisis has meant that all who remained have had to work harder.

Sabbatical leave was universally regarded as essential for the advancement of research, to the extent that, if funding remains as tight as it has been, senior managers may have to contemplate reorganising some teaching so that it is delivered only every second year.

### *2.5 Use of Management Information*

Two new data management systems are already enhancing this area of work. UGLA is designed to keep track of information about such matters as student numbers and progression, all of which can be analysed and presented through its powerful reporting tool. Moreover, it will allow comparisons to be made with the other public universities since all of them are using it too: another example of the collaboration fostered by NPUI. In addition, AUI has been pioneering the use of the accounting database, ORRI, for project monitoring and reporting.

### *2.6 Published Information*

AUI's homepage was undergoing a fundamental reconstruction at the time of the review, in part as a consequence of the adoption of UGLA. One of the University's enhancement aims is the publication of an annual report, which would include the outcomes of quality evaluations.

### *2.7 Assessment of Students*

How students are assessed is a matter of special importance in any review of teaching: it must be rigorous to ensure that standards are maintained and students are treated equally, and it should support student learning by providing them with feedback that can help them to improve their performance.

The use of learning outcomes supports all of these aims, provided that there is a clear relationship between a given outcome and the chosen means of assessment.

AUI introduced learning outcomes at the programme level in conformity with the National Qualifications Framework, and has extended the practice to cover individual modules. Staff viewed the writing of learning outcomes as a valuable exercise rather than seeing it as an imposition. Students also welcomed them and confirmed that assessment methods are varied, with no teacher relying solely on a final written exam. However, they also said that some teachers were better than others at explaining the intended learning outcomes and at ensuring that all received the right amount of coverage in a module. Feedback on assessed work was generally good and, with a few significant exceptions, timely. Students were looking forward to the deployment of new software that will allow an individual student to compare his or her grade with the distribution for the class.

The review team raised three issues concerning the assessment of undergraduates in its final meeting with senior staff: comparability across programmes; double marking; and anonymity. Courses with average marks that are unusually low, or high, are inspected by the Office of Academic Affairs for possible action. This is good practice, but the review team would support the suggestion, made in the Reflective Analysis, that it would be desirable to supplement this by introducing some element of double marking. Quite apart from its value as another form of check it serves to exchange teaching and assessment practices between teachers. The fact that most grades are derived from more than one set of marks was rightly mentioned as itself contributing to sound assessment, but it was also presented as an obstacle to anonymous marking, whereas the review team considers that such difficulties can easily be overcome in most cases.

### *2.8 Evaluation*

AUI exhibited a commendable capacity for self-reflection throughout its Reflective Analysis, making frequent use of italicisation to highlight practices or procedures that it considered capable of improvement. Self-criticism and a willingness to change were also a feature of the meetings with senior management. What the University now needs to do is to complement its own analysis with more robust prioritisation.

The review team agrees with AUI's own judgement that it needs to formalise its quality assurance processes, as identified above, and make them more visible within the institution. Shortage of funds and the loads already being carried, especially by the most senior staff, in what is a very small university are genuine impediments, but they underline the need for a definite action plan with target dates. This is beginning to emerge but requires further work, perhaps in conjunction with the preparation of the next Strategic Plan, due to cover the period 2014-18. A dedicated Quality Assurance Officer, perhaps appointed as a shared post with another public university, could expedite implementation.

The new opportunities for collaboration between institutions that are becoming available through NPUI should be of particular value to AUI, as one of the smallest Icelandic universities, and the review team therefore welcomes the manner in which AUI is embracing them. In the matter of the ECTS Label, AUI has taken the lead. There are other aspects of quality assurance where it should feel free to – as the saying goes – 'beg, borrow and steal'.

### **3. THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

#### *3.1 Overview*

This section of the report is concerned with aspects of the educational journey of an undergraduate or graduate student at Agricultural University of Iceland, beginning with the process of application and induction, covering the experience of programme delivery and the support offered to students on course, and outlining the help made available at later stages, including the preparation for employment or for further study. It also surveys the importance of the student voice both in gaining maximum benefit from, and in assuming some responsibility for, their studies.

Three representative groups - of undergraduates including Student Association members, graduates and alumni - were asked about their experiences at these

various stages; academic and support staff were also asked about programme delivery and learning support.

The University is to be commended for providing detailed statistical information on student numbers and graduate destinations<sup>3</sup>; this was most useful for the review team and will also help AUI in the development of its quality enhancement processes. The pan-institutional management information systems, UGLA and ORRI, will undoubtedly be of future benefit – not least for bench-marking – but these systems have only recently become available.

### *3.2 The undergraduate student journey*

Numbers on all programmes at AUI are small. The majority of undergraduates are studying either Agricultural Science (35 full-time, 13 distance), or Landscape Planning and Architecture (32 full-time, 1 distance); full-time students in Equine Science, and in the various streams of Natural and Environmental Science and Forest Science programmes number little more than single figures, and distance students likewise. Recruitment in these latter fields is problematic, and registered undergraduate numbers are falling. Both senior management and the University Council thought the institution's name (it might be perceived as offering only 'programmes for farmers') a possible deterrent to its wider aspirations.

Applicants are expected to have passed the Matriculation Examination or equivalent (with natural science components as relevant to some programmes). There are pressures to accept a high proportion of part-time students: admissions criteria sometimes, therefore, have to be lowered. The admission of less-qualified students is associated with high drop-out numbers, and this in turn both de-stabilises any student cohort and threatens the viability of some programmes and courses. The situation is exacerbated by progression issues – students deciding to take longer than normal to complete their courses (only 49% of students finish in three years) – and by an increasing demand for distance learning options. Senior management felt that an answer to issues of critical mass lies in closer collaboration with a larger

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<sup>3</sup> Reference material 1e and 3d.



institution, such as the University of Iceland; but this would do little in itself to solve these internal problems.

The University aspires to (and the accreditation of 2007 recommended) raising its entry standards, as a pre-requisite to raising academic standards generally. This could be addressed in a number of ways: by more actively, widely and imaginatively targeting appropriate applicants; by devising appropriate access courses – before and/or after entry – to support non-standard entrants; by more closely monitoring individual student progress; by strengthening academic support for students struggling, especially in the early stages of a programme; and by tightening the rules for progression.

Student groups consulted were generally happy with their learning experiences at AUI. They appreciated the benefits of a small institution: its small class sizes, easy access to information and expertise, and informal atmosphere. They felt they were (being) well prepared for their chosen careers – a view strongly reinforced by the findings of the University's first graduate survey, which showed positive feedback from 87% of respondents, 84% of whom are working and 10% still studying<sup>4</sup>. It was a view shared by the representatives from the industries whom the review team met: 'this is the University that provides the students best qualified for the industry'.

But students were also aware of the disadvantages of the institution's size. They felt that, while the initial induction process was effective, there was little follow-up so that students were often unaware of their rights and responsibilities. Staff sometimes seemed a little insular and inward-looking. Full-time academic staff varied in their levels of expertise; part-time staff brought first-hand contact with the industry but varied in their teaching abilities. There were often limited course options for any given year, and inconsistencies between years on the courses offered; some courses were so similar that they might as well be taught together. Stronger curricular links with the wider world of industry, including by way of placements, would be welcomed (by the industries too), as would more formal career guidance.

Two particular matters caused both the review team and the student body some concern. The first is the issue of distance learning. It is entirely appropriate, in the

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<sup>4</sup> Reference material 3d.

light of its mission, that this University should offer its programmes through distance and blended learning options, ideally combining study with relevant employment. AUI should be commended for its commitment to these developments. Such options, however, present challenges - social, academic and administrative – when offered alongside full-time study. It is clear, from both faculty and students, that there are tensions and communication problems here, along with organisational infelicities which need to be resolved, so that neither full- nor part-time students feel disadvantaged by the presence (or absence) of the other group. (In the distance learning context, communication through Facebook seems to have been more successful than through Moodle). As the institution itself has suggested, addressing the challenges of distance learning could well be combined with a reassessment of teaching methodology and delivery (see 3.5 below).

The second issue relates to student confidentiality – and to staff impartiality – both of them of especial importance in a small institution. Inevitably in an establishment of this size, faculty have more than a teaching responsibility and often have to wear several hats. Some of these multiple responsibilities risk conflicts of interests: Programme Directors who oversee assessment but also counsel students, for example. In two areas in particular students felt confidentiality and staff objectivity were threatened. Most course assessments are single-marked by the tutor: it was suggested that anonymous marking (along with random double marking) would avoid tutor subjectivity. This view was supported by the review team. Likewise the programme/course evaluation process was felt not to be entirely anonymous, and was not trusted by either undergraduates or postgraduates consulted. It is recommended that the University addresses these matters as a priority.

### *3.3 Graduate studies*

Graduate studies are thriving and developing well at the University. Since 2005 the number of Masters students has increased from 14 to 54 (24 of them in Landscape Planning). While the MSc in Planning has a formal structure, the rest are individually-designed programmes, mostly offered in collaboration with the University of Iceland and universities abroad. PhD students registered at AUI have increased from 1 to 7. The institution is well pleased at this progress, with the attendant

support to its research profile; it intends to develop these activities further within the limits that its resources will allow. In discussion, representatives of the graduate students expressed their satisfaction with the quality and quantity of the supervision they received, including from external supervisors, found much of their coursework interesting and challenging, and appreciated the encouragement to publish and to attend conferences.

Some in the science fields, however, expressed feelings of isolation: they wished for more of a 'body' of graduates and more regular meetings to discuss and present their work. They asked, too, for more consistency and formality in course requirements and more systematic feedback on progress. They would also welcome a greater range of opportunities to undertake undergraduate teaching.

This is quite a substantial body of graduate students to be overseen by a small number of busy academic staff; it is particularly important, however, given the individual profile and flexibility of most of the Masters programmes, that the performance and progress of students is (and is perceived to be) effectively monitored – especially in view of the significance placed by the University on the future development of its graduate studies.

#### *3.4 The Landscape Planning and Architecture programmes.*

This discipline was the subject of the Reflective Analysis's Case Study; it is included here because (a) it is the largest programme area and untypical in that almost all of its students are full-time; (b) the academic staff undertake more teaching than in other departments and the nature of their research interests is more 'applied'; (c) it is physically separated from the other departments and quite self-contained; and (d) the staff feel 'different' and a little isolated from the rest of the institution. The student learning experience here is therefore singular within AUI, in that they – both undergraduates and the relatively large number of postgraduates on the structured Masters programme - form a much more conventional student body. Full-time faculty is small; part-time staff are employed specifically for this subject area.

The staff of LPA felt that they needed greater encouragement and understanding from the other, more scientific, departments - especially in the area of research. They would also welcome opportunities for interdisciplinary and collaborative teaching, both within AUI and with other institutions. The review team supported these ideas. In that the Reflective Analysis speculates on the lack of synergies between the specialist fields of AUI, here was a clear demonstration to the review team that both faculty distinctiveness and staff interactions have to be managed, and also that the different disciplines in the institution have much to offer one other.

### *3.5 The management of student learning*

The University employs a range of teaching approaches, depending on the nature of the various subject areas. That range covers practical classes, fieldwork, and projects; but the main mode of delivery, especially for the science courses, is the conventional lecture. Distance learning students have access to videos of these lectures: practicals and fieldwork are concentrated into the two weeks of obligatory campus attendance in each semester. This pattern of delivery has evolved, rather than been planned, with the rapid increase of part-time students in the science subjects. While students confirmed to the review team that individual communication with tutors is good, they felt that current scheduling and delivery was ideal neither for full-time nor distance students.

The Reflective Analysis acknowledges that there are issues here that can be addressed only by a major revision to teaching methodology. The problems are partly organisational, exacerbated by the involvement of a high proportion of part-time teaching staff. The main issue, however, is lack of interaction: little intellectual or social intercourse amongst students or between students and tutors; lectures passively received, recorded to camera; few problem-solving challenges; inadequate practical and fieldwork experience. Along with a review of teaching approaches, which might make studying on site more attractive and thus might move the balance towards more full-time students, the Division of Academic Affairs should consider rationalising aspects of course content, so that more common elements can be shared between the departments.

Despite AUI's fine employment record, the addition to the core curriculum of industry placements and mentoring schemes, and of shared, interactive classes on both problem-solving skills and career management – enterprise skills, business and financial management – would both cement the institution's ties with industry and provide essential opportunities for student interaction.

### *3.6 Teaching and support staff*

The University has a well-qualified academic staff: all full Professors and the majority of Associate Professors have doctorates, Assistant Professors are mainly qualified to either MSc or PhD level, and most faculty are research-active. Additionally there are 11 Research Scientists and some PhD students who do some tutoring. Nonetheless there are some gaps in expertise (commented upon by the students consulted), and the full-time staff is aging: largely because of the financial situation, AUI has been unable to recruit younger scientists in recent years. The knowledge gaps have been filled through the employment of part-time and guest teachers, with some course components taught entirely by them. Part-time staff bring with them industry reality, but also, with a high turnover rate, discontinuity in course delivery.

While there are no serious repercussions for either standards or quality identified from this situation, a number of related issues need to be addressed to improve both teaching delivery and staff involvement with enhancement – not all of them implying additional costs. Firstly, the institution needs to improve and formalise staff induction; and, in a rapidly changing environment, to strengthen all aspects of staff development and training. This has some cost implications for part-time staff. For full-time staff, all who were consulted agreed that on-going training should be compulsory. This could be delivered, with minimum additional funding, through a combination of industry placements (external industry members met by the review team supported this, as they did re-training their own staff at AUI), peer review of teaching, and better use of the teaching support courses offered by the University of Iceland. Inter-departmental communication and collaboration, neglected because of the speed of institutional change, also needs managing by senior staff. As soon as funding permits, there is an urgent requirement, too, for general teaching staff

support – additional secretarial and technical back-up, a programme of sabbatical leave, and the reinstatement of a formal HR function.

Support staff who met the review team were aware and supportive of recent institutional developments. They expressed positive views on the expansion of distance learning options, and on closer collaboration with other universities. They felt that, as a group, they were valued and had a voice in the direction of change. They also felt, however, that their number was inadequate fully to support increased institutional activities in teaching and research.

### *3.7 Facilities and support for learning*

The Agricultural University of Iceland is housed in attractive premises, and is surrounded by the unique natural resources of the country. It owns large areas of the countryside, farms and experimental centres, and good use is made of these resources both for research and teaching.

In Hvanneyri the teaching spaces and the social facilities are good; there are ample laboratory and office resources. Students have access to the building at all times. There is a clear lack, however, of physical library resources and of areas for private study. And while the post of Librarian had been reinstated as a result of student pressure, it is a part-time post and this, along with pressure on the inadequate supply of text-books and journals, severely disadvantages distance learning students in particular.

The students consulted by the review team were generally satisfied with both the facilities and with the help received from the Student Counsellor and the International Coordinator. They were a little vague, however, on how the institution deals with the range of Equal Opportunity and Disability issues, and also on its code of Ethics. These issues are covered to some extent in AUI's regulatory documentation; but there is a need to disseminate them more effectively to the student body.

### *3.8 The student voice*

The student voice is given serious consideration by the University. Students consulted felt that they are important in decision-making and they saw action resulting from their expressed views. Their voice was communicated directly in the Reflective Analysis - though some of the issues raised here were not addressed in the document. They felt well-informed, on the whole, but would welcome more direct and more formal information on institutional policies on, for example, plagiarism, complaints and appeals, equal opportunities, ethical and disability issues. Formal student representation on key committees – the University Council and the Education Committee – was appreciated. Currently there is no student on the Management Committee: there was no senior staff objection to this, however, and reserved business could be instigated in this case.

Despite there being around 30 active student and staff exchange agreements with universities through Europe and in the United States, very few overseas students come to study at AUI. The main reasons are the size of AUI, that Icelandic is the working language, and the lack of supportive funding. And while the United Nations University - Land Restoration Training Programme is run by the University, there is limited interaction between it and other educational activities: AUI is aware that much more could be made of this association. For the benefit of staff and students, and also for the benchmarking of the institution's standards, there is now a real need to open this University up to external influences, and to bring in personnel with wider perspectives, both national and international.

### *3.9 Evaluation*

The review team concluded that the University can be satisfied with many aspects of its processes in so far as they affect the student learning experience and graduate careers. The institution is run by an effective and respected management team, who are to be commended for their readiness to listen to, and act upon, the student voice. In a small and open educational environment, students find it easy informally to access information and help, and realise that their programmes, along with the

institution's links to industry, equip them well for future employment and for further study (often overseas).

AUI is clearly committed to the development of distance and blended learning options for its science courses, and is intending to address the difficulties that result from the mixed delivery of its programmes. Its academic and social facilities are, on the whole, well fit for purpose; its physical and land holdings are substantial and they are effectively used both in teaching and research. The institution is committed to extending its intellectual resources, through closer collaborations with educational and industry networks both in Iceland and abroad.

At the same time there are a number of challenges facing this young institution as it enters the next phase of its development. The tensions which exist between full-time and distance learning streams on its science programmes need to be addressed, and the balance between these two perhaps adjusted. The down sides to the University's small size, in terms of formalising information and processes and also of ensuring student confidentiality where necessary, need to be faced and solutions found. It is recommended also that interaction between staff and students, and between the different disciplines, so essential for a dynamic academic community, be promoted and fostered by the Management Team.

Senior staff recognise that the delivery of aspects of the curriculum is in need of a major review - to attract more high quality full-time students, and to ensure a varied and effective range of learning experiences. This would be welcomed by course tutors, as would the opportunity for on-going staff development and training, in order that they can best support the institution in its future aspirations.



## **4. RESEARCH AND TEACHING**

### *4.1 Overview*

The University's research output is small by international standards, with a low critical mass of students and faculty imposing limitations on the extent of the research portfolio and the diversity of studies. However, the research carried out at AUI is of high quality, of long standing (stretching much further back than the current university establishment), and is directly relevant both to academic teaching and to Icelandic needs and conditions. Research has not evolved into new areas due to the financial consequences of the recent crisis in Iceland. While this is an underlying limitation on expansion and exploration, it has not hindered the development of an environment and research culture that are built upon scientific method and critical thinking: the University has an admirable scientific output in spite of the obstacles imposed. Researchers exhibit a good publication record, publishing in highly respected journals within their subject fields.

Funding for research comes from both the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the Ministry of Industries and Innovation – the latter because AUI's budget as the former Agricultural Research Institute has been retained. This is block funding, and accounts for about 50% of the overall funding for the University.

The two faculties operating at HE level within AUI, the Faculty of Environmental Science and the Faculty of Land and Animal Resources, are research-active in most areas. Within Environmental Sciences, research is carried out in the fields of nature and environmental sciences, forest science, and restoration ecology and management. The Faculty of Land and Animal Resources carries out researches in agricultural science and equine science. Both faculties are accredited to offer BSc and MSc awards, but the number of students enrolled in different programmes varies between subjects and levels. The BSc programme in Agriculture enrolls most students (48); the BSc programmes in Equine Sciences and Restoration Ecology enrol 7 and 6 students respectively. A rather small number of students are in MSc and PhD programmes, irrespective of subjects. In total, 16 MSc students graduated in 2010. PhD degrees are offered in collaboration with the University of Iceland (UoI), and follow the regulations of this university as agreed in 2012. The PhD

programme has started slowly, with only 1 graduate so far and 3 due to finish in 2013.

An annual conference is arranged for the presentation of new research, and is a forum for both PhD and MSc students.

#### *4.2 Academic staff*

A framework for the recruitment and promotion of academic staff with research experience is in place and there are stated criteria for the different levels - assistant professors, associate professors and full professors: this is similar to the general university system in Iceland. Currently, 19 faculty members have a PhD. Academic staff at AUI consistently bring their own research expertise into their courses and give a great deal of encouragement for research and critical thinking, including at undergraduate level. This was acknowledged and appreciated by both undergraduate and graduate students met by the review team. Students feel that they have many skilled teachers with a lot of practical and research experience. New findings relevant to the subject are introduced in class and in supervisions, and courses are updated accordingly. Graduate students are dispersed geographically and thematically over the different University sites, however, making academic contacts and research interactions between graduate students somewhat sporadic. Reductions in financial support in recent years have made it impossible to extend research developments into teaching and supervision to the degree that was initially planned.

#### *4.3 PhD programmes*

AUI is successfully developing research activities within all of its disciplines, with the exception of Landscape Planning and Architecture. Each PhD student has a main supervisor at AUI, and a co-supervisor at another institution in Iceland (often the UoI) or abroad. The course work is often done as part of exchange agreements within NPUI, within the NOVA-network, or elsewhere abroad. It is possible for PhD students to have study periods at one of nine universities abroad, under AUI's collaborative arrangements. The standard of PhD studies and the general conditions

and regulations for the PhD programme follow those of the UoI. The AUI will re-apply for accreditation at PhD level in 2013, and will also extend its agreement with the UoI.

As recommended in the institution's 2007/8 accreditation reviews, it is desirable for closer contacts to be developed between undergraduates and MSc and PhD students, in order to enhance the research culture within the institution. Programme Directors also wish to see more cooperation and coordination between MSc and PhD programmes.

In their meeting with the review team, graduate students stated that they are satisfied with the conditions offered. It is suggested, however, that a monitoring system for PhD students is implemented, with stated targets and milestones. This would not only be a support for students but would ensure that supervisors keep track of progress and timelines.

#### *4.4 MSc programmes*

AUI offers MSc programmes in all of its disciplines within both faculties. There is an in-house, structured MSc programme in Planning which focuses on methods, planning processes, and governmental systems. MSc courses in other fields of study are offered in collaboration with university partners within NPUI (most often with the UoI) or the NOVA network. For its MSc programmes, AUI runs courses in scientific methods and writing, and in ethics and philosophy of science. A preparatory course in applied research for Planning is also offered within the MSc program and is a starting point for examination work.

#### *4.5 Student support*

Graduate students at AUI undoubtedly benefit from the institution's collaborative network. The geographical spread of the University, however, along with the small number of academic staff and limited library resources have repercussions for

students, in terms of intellectual contact, supervision, feedback and access to information. This is especially true for MSc students. Some of the MSc students met by the review team expressed a feeling of isolation, as well as frustration at the apparent inconsistency of progress regulations and difficulty in obtaining timely feedback from supervisors.

#### *4.6 Relationships between AUI and industry*

The University's links and collaborations with industry are successful and well developed. These relationships are especially important to the institution for external supervisors and for applied research projects. In many cases it is industry that provides short-term funding for applied research. Industrial representatives met by the review team regarded their collaborations with AUI as rewarding.

It was the general opinion among these industry representatives that the research profile of the University needs to be further enhanced, and that funding is needed for this. They also stated that the sector finds AUI graduates better qualified within their fields of study than those from other institutions. (No information, however, was presented on whether AUI's graduates in Forestry were able to find employment in industry or in the forest service; it seems that many graduate students in this field go abroad.) There is the capacity for AUI to be more involved with the relevant industries in course delivery and in joint research projects with, for example, the Farmers Association, and this latter could probably attract additional funding support. Environmental Sciences could also benefit from closer relationships with industry partners.

#### *4.7 Evaluation*

Arising from the Reflective Analysis and from the discussions during the visit, the following recommendations are offered:

- The University should seek collaborations for its MSc and PhD programmes with other institutions, in order to broaden students' course options and

provide opportunities for interactions. Cooperation and agreements with industry are also important for MSc and PhD programmes.

- For the general visibility of the University, for the benefit to all areas of teaching, and for the understanding of research at AUI by politicians, stakeholders and the general public, it is suggested that the University enhance and further develop its research profile. Further, both the University Board and industry representatives see the development of research as a priority, and crucial for shaping AUI's unique position in Iceland in relation to land use and natural resources.
- It is strongly encouraged that AUI develop a research policy linked to a research strategy that is appropriate to its developing research culture. As part of the strategy, staff in Landscape Planning and Architecture should be supported in developing their scientific understanding of the field, should perhaps first develop an MSc in Landscape Architecture, and thereafter PhD programmes built upon wider scientific understanding. It is also important in the research policy to define the balance for academic staff between the development of their teaching skills and those for research.
- Research projects in BSc programmes, such as case studies, modeling, on-site explorations and theoretical exercises, should be developed further. For these, AUI could take advantage of its good facilities and geographical holdings. BSc students expressed the view that more contact with, and knowledge of, research practices would definitely enhance the quality of their programmes. On the same tack, a forum to discuss research activities for MSc and PhD students should be developed. This could be in the form of regular seminars and scientific paper discussion sessions.
- The current reporting of MSc and PhD student progress is inconsistent; a more formal system for evaluation of progress should be developed. This reporting system should include individual study plans with milestones and targets, and with clear timelines for achievements.

## **5. ENHANCEMENT**

### *5.1 Overview*

AUI has many assets and strengths, as demonstrated throughout this report. This section will highlight those areas that would benefit most from focused efforts to improve plans, processes, and resources to advance the mission of the University. The overriding area for attention reflects the need for closer and deeper collaborations across all departments (both academic and administrative), leading to new, presently unrealised synergies and efficiencies. Such an effort must be guided by a robust, meaningful strategic plan for the University.

### *5.2 Academic Enhancements*

Several efforts could be taken to assure the highest quality instruction for AUI students. These include assuring that all courses are taught by individuals with appropriate qualifications and increasing collaborations among faculty within and across disciplines to share effective teaching practices. This is especially important to assure comparable quality for distance learning and residential students; the former are somewhat isolated from the community of AUI students and would benefit from more informal and frequent opportunities to interact, both on-line and in person. Collaborations with University of Iceland and University of Akureyri regarding distance learning pedagogies and content delivery could also be beneficial. More consistent and public articulation of student learning outcomes, related to assessment gradings, across all academic programmes is a related goal, to be sure that both faculty and students are aware of the expected outcomes and focus their studies accordingly. Access to a wider array of courses for M.Sc. students, taking advantage of the NPUI and NOVA consortia, is also seen as a necessary area for instructional improvement.

Strengthened support for student learning can be realized through several measures. To the extent that AUI continues to admit some students who are not fully qualified for post-secondary study, regular academic monitoring and accessible academic support will be crucial. These resources are not fully in place presently. Similarly,

increased availability of a librarian, enhanced holdings, updating of search and data base software, and dedicated study space in or near the library are all important steps necessary to assure the best possible learning experience for all students, undergraduate and graduate. An additional support area is that of career guidance to assist students make wise decisions with respect to choice of degree programs, internships and other field experiences, and job seeking upon graduation. The current resources for career guidance could use significant augmentation to achieve this purpose.

Finally, with respect to academic programmes, AUI should attend to its practices for grading student assignments. It is critical that the process for marking assignments be anonymous and that students' grades should be treated as confidential matters. Likewise, it is important that students receive timely feedback on their assignments, consistent with existing, but not always heeded, university policies. This is especially a concern for graduate students, so that focused efforts in those programmes is recommended.

### *5.3 Research enhancements*

The first and most important step for AUI with respect to strengthening its research enterprise is to develop an overall research policy that reflects the distinctions among the disciplines while encouraging collaborations, interdisciplinary activity, and the need for increased scholarly productivity. Such a policy should provide guidance for the relationship between research and teaching (so that faculty research informs instructional content, and students are engaged directly in authentic research within their courses). Growing research opportunities related to the environmental sciences could be a central goal of research plans and policies. Faculty sabbaticals dedicated to scholarly work, with clear expectations and accountability measures, would benefit the institution as it seeks to enhance its research profile. Any research policy that is created for AUI should allow the institution to be nimble, such that it is able to take advantage of new opportunities for external funding and collaboration. As research activity grows, policies to address the responsible conduct of research, intellectual property, allocation of research funds, evaluation of research in the promotion and tenure process, and use of research space all will need to be developed.

#### *5.4 Administrative enhancements*

Improved administrative functions will be dependent on full implementation and utilization of the UGLA system. This should be an area of priority for AUI, as there is not yet a culture of continuous assessment and improvement in place. A first step will be to assure that the information necessary for assessment and decision-making is readily available. This will allow for the development of a realistic, comprehensive strategic plan, with clear priorities, timelines, and assignments for responsibility (including the prioritisation of the goals listed in Table 7 of the Reflective Analysis).

A named quality assurance officer must be charged with overseeing the regular collection and analysis of institutional data, including that related to student learning and post-graduate placements, programme quality, and administrative functions. This function might be shared through the NPUI consortium, but there needs to be sufficient time and expertise devoted to AUI to be sure that meaningful activity with respect to quality assurance is taking place. Increased use of external review panels for programme initiatives in their early stages and programme results after they have produced graduates is also recommended.

AUI would clearly benefit from more explicit, transparent, and formal processes for human resource management. The current activity is overly centralized in the Rector's office, who also acts as HR officer. Processes for the filing and hearing of staff grievances and other attention to protection of staff rights are necessary. Regular, systematic processes for staff evaluation should be put in place. There is need for policies related to anti-discrimination practices and assurance of equal treatment for all members of the community. On a related note, formal processes for physical and psycho-social accommodations for students with disabilities need to be created. Information management, especially with an eye toward confidentiality and equitable treatment for all members of the AUI community, is a related HR function that would benefit from concentrated effort.



### *5.5 Evaluation*

As the diverse disciplines within AUI continue to evolve, reflecting both scientific developments and external conditions, clarity regarding mission and purpose will be critical. Key elements of a strategic plan should address such goals as:

- the integration of research into teaching (with respect to both content and skills)
- the evolution of agricultural sciences, the importance of interdisciplinary research and teaching that draws on natural resource and environmental sciences as well as sustainability
- the development of effective systems for quality assurance in all aspects of University operations, from teaching to research to administrative functions.

A strategic planning process should engage both traditional and new stakeholder communities, such that the interests of farmers and others concerned with land-based agriculture would be supplemented by expertise related to natural resources, environmental sciences, and sustainable land and energy use. In this light, a direct engagement with the question of AUI's future as primarily an agricultural teaching and research institution or one with a broader mission in the natural and environmental sciences will be an important step.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Following its consideration of the Reflective Analysis and associated evidence submitted by the Agricultural University of Iceland, and its visit to this institution on 11 and 12 March 2013, the Institutional Review team commissioned by the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education wishes to commend the following strengths and elements of good practice:

- The distinctiveness of the University's role in Iceland
- A strong and respected senior management team
- An impressive capacity for self-reflection (which, however, needs to be complemented by more robust prioritisation)
- The readiness of the management team to listen to the views of both staff and students
- Extensive land resources, which support the institution's applied research mission
- Attractive and well-maintained buildings, supportive to the educational programme
- An effective use of educational networks and openness to new collaborative possibilities
- A strong research urge, good research links to industry, and the integration of research into the whole curriculum
- Commitment to the development of blended and distance learning, appropriate to the institution's mission
- Easy access for students to information and support
- A strong record of graduate employment and further studies, nationally and internationally.

Areas which the review team considered to be in need of further development include:

- As a matter of priority, formalising quality assurance processes and making them more visible within the institution
- Creating more transparent and consistent processes for the assessment of student work

- Resolving the mismatch between the aspiration to raise admission standards and the need to strengthen academic support for non-traditional entrants
- Monitoring graduate performance and progress more effectively and systematically, especially for students on individually planned Masters programmes
- Producing, as part of its next Strategic Plan, a research strategy that is appropriate to its developing research culture
- Addressing current tensions between full-time studies and distance learning
- Taking better account of the particular need to safeguard student confidentiality in a very small institution
- Ensuring that policies for equal opportunity and disability issues permeate the entire institution
- Strengthening all aspects of staff development, and formalising the HR function
- As funding permits, addressing the inadequacies of the physical library
- Providing a comprehensive career guidance service
- Fostering synergies between the various departments.

Three important contextual facts were noted by the review team:

- A substantial funding gap since 2005 has hindered the development of the institution and limited its ability to implement recommendations from accreditation reviews.
- The University's facilities cover a wide geographical area, as is appropriate to the institution's mission; but this situation also presents organisational difficulties.
- The small size and critical mass of the institution, together with the high proportion of distance learners, threatens the viability of some programmes.

The review team concluded that:

- **confidence** can be placed in the Agricultural University of Iceland's present and likely future arrangements to secure the **academic standards of its awards**
- **confidence** can be placed in the soundness of the Agricultural University of Iceland's present and likely future arrangements to secure the **quality of the student learning experience**.

These judgements were based both on the team's review of present practice and on the institution's own examination of that practice.

## ANNEX 1

### Submitted documents

Ref. 1.a. Act on Agricultural Education no.57/1999

Ref. 1.b. Act on Public Higher Education Institutions No. 85/2008

Ref. 1.c. Regulations for the Agricultural University of Iceland

Ref. 1.d. U-Map data for AUI

Ref. 1.e. Basic information and statistics on AUI

Ref. 1.f. Policy. Agricultural University of Iceland. 2009-2013

Ref. 1.g. Accreditation Report. Natural Sciences. Faculty of Environmental Sciences. Agricultural University of Iceland

Ref. 1.h. Accreditation Report. Agriculture. Agricultural University of Iceland. Faculty of Land and Animal Resources

Ref. 1.i. AUI responses to EC committee Reports

Ref. 2.a. AUI Regulation on Recruitment and Promotion of Academic Staff

Ref. 2.b. Code of Ethics for AUI

Ref. 3.a. AUI rules for B.Sc. studies

Ref. 3b. AUI rules for M.Sc. studies

Ref. 3.c. AUI rules for Ph.D. studies

Ref. 3.d. A study on the Fate of Former AUI Students after Finishing their B.Sc. Degree 2003-2009

Ref. 3.e. A list of Faculty Members, their Academic Position and Qualifications

Ref. 3.f. A list of ISI Papers from 2010-2012

Other documents were submitted on demand during the site visit.

ANNEX 2

Schedule for Meetings with Students and Staff

Monday 11th March Time	AUI at Hvanneyri	Participants from AUI
09:00-11:00	AUI presentations	Ágúst Sigurðsson, rector, Áslaug Helgadóttir prorector, Björn Þorsteinsson prorector
11:00-12:00	Rector/VRs/Finance	Ágúst Sigurðsson, rector, Áslaug Helgadóttir vice rector, Björn Þorsteinsson vice rector, Þorvaldur Jónsson, Head of Fiscal affairs
12:00-13:00	Lunch	
12:45	Short Panel meeting	
13:00-13:45	University Council	Stefán Logi Haraldsson, Jón Torfi Jónsson, Orri Páll Jóhannsson.
14:00-15:00	Deans and Programme Directors	Jóhannes Sveinbjörnsson, Dean of dep. of Animal and Land Resources, Emma Eyþórsdóttir, associated professor, Auður Sveinsdóttir, associated professor, Hlynur Óskarsson, Dean of dep. of Environmental studies, Bjarni Diðrik Sigurðsson, professor, Anna Guðrún Þórhallsdóttir professor, Sigríður Kristjánsdóttir assistant professor
15:15-16:00	Support services	Þorbjörg Valdís Kristjánsdóttir, international liaisons, Álfrheiður B. Marinósdóttir head of Office of Academic affairs, Guðjón Helgi Þorvaldsson, system manager, Þórunn Edda Bjarnadóttir secretary Office of Academic Affairs, Halldóra Lóa Þorvaldsdóttir, student counsellor, Áskell Þórisson, Information Officer
16:00-17:00	Alumni	Berglind Ósk Óðinsdóttir (B.Sc. and M.Sc. in AS), Agricultural Extension Centre, Jóhannes Baldvin Jónsson (B.Sc in NA-EN), Lífland- seed handling company (on video), Valdimar Reynisson (B.Sc. in FS-REM), Iceland Forest Service
17:30	External and Industri Reps.	Arnór Snorrason Forest Service, Guðmundur Halldórsson Soil Conservation Service, Sigurbjörg Áskelsdóttir Independent Landscape Architect, Borgar Páll Bragason Agricultural Extension Centre
17:00-17:30	Stock taking with Senior Management	Ágúst Sigurðsson, rector, Björn Þorsteinsson, prorector
	Panel meeting	

**Tuesday 12th March**

Time		
09:00-10:00	Senior management on accreditations and reviews	Ágúst Sigurðsson rector, Björn Þorsteinsson, prorector
10:15-11:00	LPA on case study	Helena Guttormsdóttir, associated professor, Auður Sveinsdóttir, associated professor, Samson B. Harðarson, associated professor, Steinunn Garðarsdóttir, Brynhildur Svava Ólafsdóttir, Sigríður Ævarsdóttir, Jón Auðunn Bogason, Svanhvít Lilja Viðarsdóttir, Hrafnkatla Eiríksdóttir, Hrannar Smári Hilmarsson, Heimir Gunnarsson.
11:15-12:15	Students	
12:15-13:30	Lunch and Panel discussion	
13:30-14:15	"Ordinary" Academic staff	Ása Aradóttir professor, Sigtryggur Veigar Herbertsson assistant professor, Sigurður Már Einarsson Guest assistant professor, Þorsteinn Guðmundsson professor, Járngerður Grétarsdóttir assistant professor, Ólafur Arnalds professor, Ríkharð Brynjólfsson professor emeritus
14:15-15:00	Graduate students	Anna Sigríður Valdimarsdóttir, Bryja Davíðsdóttir, Þórey Gylfadóttir, Lilja Dögg Guðnadóttir, Ólaf Ósk Guðmundsdóttir, Sindri Birgisson
15:00-16:00	Open meeting Staff 15:-15:30 students 15:30-16:00	
16:00	Closing meeting with Rector and Vice-rectors.	Ágúst Sigurðsson rector, Björn Þorsteinsson, prorector