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# **FOLLOW-UP REPORT**

ON INSTITUTION-WIDE  
QUALITY BOARD-LED REVIEW  
JUNE 2016



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# 1. PREFACE

This follow-up report is written in accordance to section 72 in the Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education (2011). Its aim is to provide an update on institutional developments since the institution-wide review took place in 2014, and to address main points raised by the Quality Board in its Review Report from January 2015. By the time the institutional review was undertaken, five of six reviews at the subject level were already completed, which provided important descriptive and analytical material for the production of the institution-wide Reflective Analysis.

The Iceland Academy of the Arts would like extend its thanks to the Review Team for its insightful and helpful reading of the institution. The Team's report confirmed issues raised in the RA, and identified areas for further growth – both of which are extremely important for further enhancement and strategic planning.

The preparation and production of the Reflective Analysis was very informative for all parties involved, and has left the Academy with an even stronger culture for sharing experiences and debating what it means to create a vibrant and creative quality culture in higher arts education.

The report is divided into four sections; the first section addresses the troublesome external circumstances that continue to threaten our institution; the second describes our approach to quality management; the third outlines an overview of developments since the Team's visit; and the fourth responds to the Team's main suggestions raised in its Review Report.

## 2. AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES

### *IAA among other HEIs in Iceland*

The Iceland Academy of the Arts (IAA) is the only higher education institution in the field of the arts in Iceland, and thus responsible for education, research, scholarships, and policy making in that particular sector of society. It is the only institution teaching performing arts, music, fine art, visual communication, product design, fashion design, architecture, and arts education at a university level in the country.

As a relatively small institution in an international context, the IAA has focused on its role as a unifying force for the whole of Iceland by creating a network of collaborators; with national educational and cultural institutions as well as with independent companies, industries and individual professionals. The IAA also works with a wide range of networks abroad as well as with international HEIs, artists and other creative entities. The creative industries annually provide around 20,000 jobs in Iceland, or more than the agriculture sector and fisheries do jointly. In a recent survey from KreaNord, the creative industries are seen as one of the main driving forces behind economic growth, increased job opportunities, and innovation in the Nordic countries in the years to come.

Despite its undisputed responsibility in terms of research in the field of the arts, the Academy's institutional funding for research is minimal. In 2016 the government contribution for research was approximately 8.6% of the institution's total government funding, when other HEIs received anything from 19.3% (University of Reykjavík) to 40.8% (Agricultural University). Thus, the IAA core research funding amounts to less than half of the second lowest contribution, and just about one fifth of the highest contribution. In effect this means that artistic research, as well as research on creative practices and the cultural heritage of Iceland, is badly neglected in comparison to other fields of research in this country.

### *Financing*

It is only now, in 2016, that the IAA will finally receive the same funding as it did in 2007, the year before the crisis hit Iceland. In 2007 the funding amounted to 905 million ISK (for 378 students / 86 staff), in 2008 it was 931 ISK, and now in 2016 it is 910 million ISK (for 446 students / 82 staff). Effectively this means that the IAA has made an effort to develop a more efficient infrastructure, renew its policies and frameworks and expand its study programmes, without any increase in income to meet higher standards set both by student and staff.

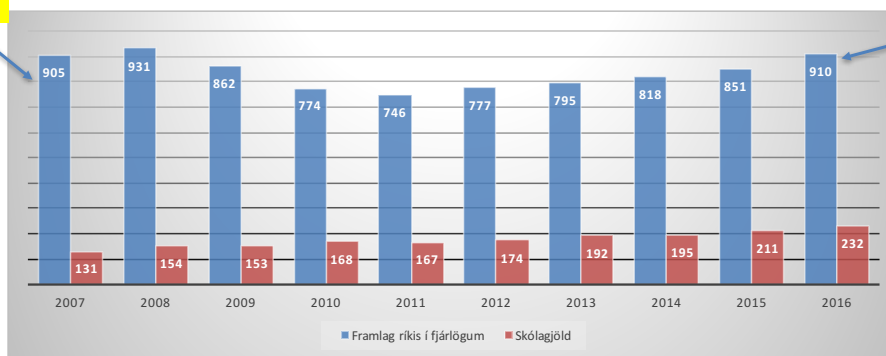
Thus in 2016, the IAA is educating a higher number of students with similar or even less staff for the same budget as nine years ago. As an institution the IAA has now reached a point where further cuts in cost would seriously threaten the service provided in individual departments or buildings. Therefore, further cuts can only be implemented once the government's policy on the IAA housing situation has been made clear.

**Government contribution and tuition 2007-2016 in million ISK calculated at January 2016 values\***

*\*The basis of the calculation uses the published value of cost of living index and consumer price index.*

Number of students 2007  
378

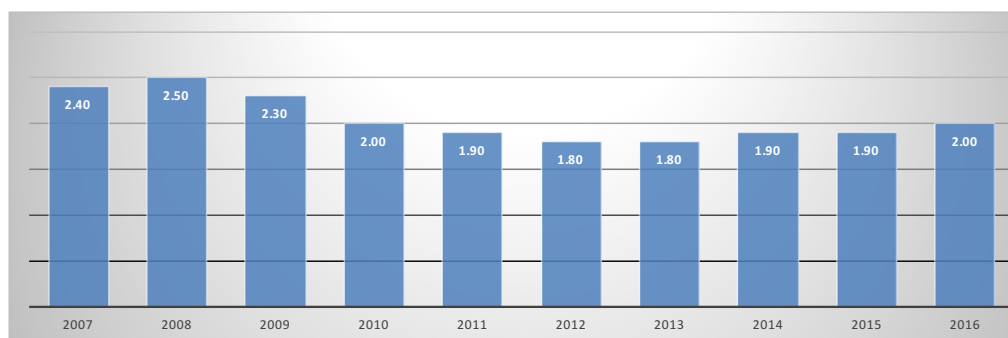
Number of students 2016  
446



	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Government contribution	905	931	862	774	746	777	795	818	851	910
Tuition	131	154	153	168	167	174	192	195	211	232

**Government contribution per student 2007-2016 in million ISK calculated at January 2016 values\***

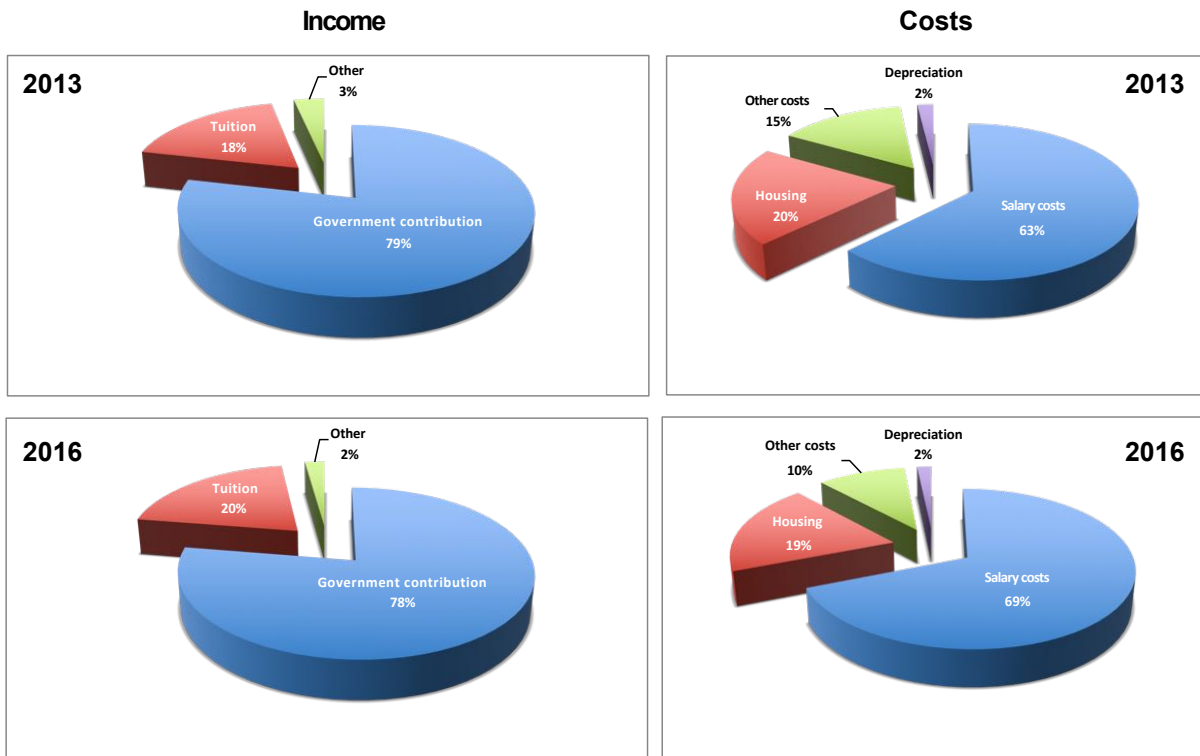
*\*The basis of the calculation uses the published value of cost of living index and consumer price index.*



	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Government contribution	905	931	862	774	746	777	795	818	851	910
Number of students	378	379	380	382	383	439	438	442	440	444
Contribution per student	2,39	2,46	2,27	2,03	1,95	1,77	1,82	1,85	1,93	2,00

Number of full time positions	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	86	77	73	72	73	77	84	83	88	82

Two new MA programmes  
in Fine Art and Design



### *Housing*

Since the presentation of the Reflective Analysis, where the Academy's housing situation was examined carefully in a case study, there has been little progress. The IAA has called for a clear policy decision by the Ministry of Education on the future development of the Academy's housing situation for the last three years, without success.

The greatest recent improvement was in 2015, when a new and excellent facility for performing arts was opened in the city centre with support from the municipal authorities. It includes a dance studio and a black box venue with good dressing rooms and access for everyone.

The timeframe to address the housing situation, which has been unsatisfactory from the time the IAA was first founded in 1999, is now very limited, as a sizeable portion of the Academy's activities will soon need to move. The lease on the building in Thverholt, where the Department of Design and Architecture is located, in addition to the administrative and support services, will expire within 5 years and is not likely to be extended. The lease on the temporary buildings in Sölvhólgata will expire in the next two years. Those buildings have been in use much longer than was initially anticipated. The main building at Sölvhólgata does not fulfil the IAA's needs, neither for students nor staff. It does not fulfil requirements in terms of access since there is no lift.

The same applies to the building in Laugarnes. Although some of the facilities there are good, the building has not been fitted with interiors that take in to consideration its future serviceability if it were to house the Academy in its entirety.

The solutions that the IAA has prioritized in its line of reasoning demand that the Ministry take a stand concerning location and subsequent development. In this regard, two possible locations have been proposed by the IAA in recent years; Laugarnes and Sölvhólsgata. Last summer, the IAA also presented the idea that the buildings belonging to Landsbanki in the city centre could be a feasible option for the future.

### **3. INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO QUALITY ENHANCEMENT**

The experience of going through a full cycle of reviews in QEF<sub>I</sub> has proved to enhance general awareness and understanding of quality issues across the whole institution, both among students and staff. Having gone through six reviews at the subject level and one at the institutional level since 2012, has helped shape a clearer approach to the management of standards, emerging in the birth of a formal quality enhancement system at the time of this report.

In sum, the overall learning output of QEF<sub>I</sub> can be grouped into three main themes:

- A formalization of working procedures and general administration, followed by a heightened transparency and accountability.
- A higher level of student participation in academic decision making and administration.
- The development of a formal and all-inclusive quality management system (outlined below).

The current academic year is seeing a thorough reorganization of quality management across all departments and support services. The system will be designed in line with external benchmarking, such as European Standards and Guidelines 2015, national legal framework for higher education and the national qualification framework, in addition to the Academy's own set of rules and internal benchmarking. Furthermore, the system will also be designed to accommodate and encourage organic flow between all stakeholders, allowing the system to adapt to the culture of learning, teaching, research and administration, while shaping it at the same time.

Main issues in formalising the quality management system include:

- A person-to-person documentation of experiences from QEF<sub>I</sub>.
- Meetings with regulatory bodies, faculty, and students in order to create an inclusive and vibrant bottom-up quality culture.
- A formalization of a public quality policy.
- An implementation of a formal quality information system, including a revised quality handbook, key statistics and an internal file management system.
- A revised approach to the institutional action plan, in alignment with the strategic plan, departmental action plans and personal working plans.



- Follow-up on committee structure and remit under the Academic Council (AC).
- Mapping of team work possibilities across support services and departments.
- A continuing emphasis on student involvement in decision-making processes and planning.
- A redesign of the internal review process at the subject level, in accordance to QEF2 (when published).

In all cases, the revised quality management system will put the institution's capacity for open self-reflection to the forefront, which, as noted by the Review Team itself, is one of the Academy's main strengths.

## **4. OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE REVIEW**

Some significant organizational changes have taken place since the review, mainly within the five domains of organizational management, academic faculty, support staff, learning and teaching, and research. Highlights in each domain are listed below. The following is a short overview of developments, elaborated in more detailed where relevant in Section 5.

### Organizational Management and Structure

- The appointment of the Academy Board has been revised in relation to the abolishment of The Society for the IAA and the emergence of a new stakeholder association in its place; "Bakland Listaháskóla Íslands". Main changes include: a) a public call for board candidacy with the aim of ensuring participation from all fields within the arts; and b) the board now consists of seven members in total: four from each subfield taught at the IAA, one from the Alumni Association and two voted directly by the members of new association itself.
- The Charter is currently being revised, with main changes including: a) Rector's appointment is now limited to a period of ten years (instead of unlimited time before); and b) a revised appointment of the Academy Board in accordance with the new stakeholder association mentioned above (still in process).
- The AC has undergone a major transformation in regard to appointment, number of members, student participation and remit. See response to suggestion 4 in Section 4 for further description.
- The Grievance Committee on Students' Rights has been revised and does not have a student representative anymore.
- Follow-up on decision making within the Management Council (MC) towards departments and support staff is now enhanced with the recruitment of a project manager in the Rector's Office.

- The recruitment of a Dir. of Teaching has defined the line between student affairs and teaching affairs, enhancing student services and counselling on the one hand, and creating an opportunity to map and manage teaching affairs in a clearer manner than before.

### Framework for the Appointment, Progression, and Continuing Education of Academic Faculty

At the time of the Team's review, the Academy was undergoing a thorough revision of the framework for the appointment, progression, and continuing education of academic faculty. The process led to significant changes in the rules for appointment and other fundamental documents, describing in more detail than before each academic title, criteria for qualification, roles, and management of working hours. The new framework was approved by the Board in August 2015, implementation is taking place during the current academic year. This reform process took place over a sum of one and a half years, with substantive mapping, analysis, proposing, and discussing among all faculty. The aim was to enhance transparency and equality between departments and members of staff, and to define core roles in more depth than before.

Main developments include:

- The external evaluation committee for academic appointment has now two fixed members for a period of two years, with the third being included for each appointment so as to ensure peer-review of applicants. This arrangement has proved to work well and creates consistent feed-back on the framework by the fixed external committee members.
- Specific qualification criteria for each academic position is now in place (Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor). Deans are to have qualification as Professors.
- Total appointment period for academic faculty is now limited to 4+4+2 years, or a total of 10 years. Total appointment period for deans is 5+5 years, accommodating one sabbatical within each of the five year periods.
- Definitions of Honorary Doctor, Professor Emeritus, Guest Professors, and Research Fellow are now in place.
- New rules on sabbaticals have been issued, with the first two faculty members due on leave in the next academic year.
- A framework for progression is now in place, where faculty members can apply for promotion at the end of each hiring period.
- A new human resources policy will be implemented in fall 2016, including a framework for continuing education and staff development.
- Yearly working plans were developed as a management tool at the departmental level, where each faculty member lays out their hours and timing for teaching

and research in relation to their formal duties and titles. Administration is now inclusive in each of the two working components (teaching and research), except for programme directors, who have a defined number of hours for administration. The working plan is also a way for faculty members and deans to oversee and control the high level of work load.

### Framework for Support Staff Development

This work has been in progress since autumn 2015 and is at its final stage, to be implemented in autumn 2016. Main issues include:

- Mapping and analysis of all positions in the support division, leading to renewed job descriptions.
- More transparent roles and responsibilities, and new management tools to ensure the leadership, management and follow-up of projects.
- The development of team work models, leading to collaboration of tasks and a more even distribution of work load.
- A new human resources policy, including a framework for continuing education and staff development for all staff.
- A new Staff Development Fund for support staff has been established (with very limited funding of 750.000 ISK).

### Focus on Research

Since the review, a considerable effort has been put into defining artistic research within the context of the IAA. The Rector and the Research Committee have had significant impact on the IAA research culture and institutional approach, which is now more open and transparent. The leadership has put a lot of effort into analysing research funding to the IAA in relation to other HEI's in Iceland, and have presented a clear agenda in this regard.

Main developments include:

- A new framework for a formal internal evaluation of research output has been completed and implemented in autumn 2016. All faculty members with research time went through the first round of evaluation, which was carried out as a trial. Feed-back and follow-up are being processed.
- Rules on sabbatical have been implemented with the first two faculty members going on sabbatical leave in 2016-17.
- The Rector and the Dir. of Research were invited to all departments to have an open discussion about each faculty member's output and research plans, follow-up with a meeting with the Dean only. These meetings proved to be an excellent platform for a consensus of terms, concepts and institutional approach to research.

- Every faculty member with research time is now required to reflect critically on their artistic practice.
- A guideline on critical reflection has been issued, where content and form are addressed. Writing workshops have been organized where faculty members can train and exercise their writing skills. Other workshops/seminars/lectures have been organized as part of staff development for faculty.
- A new on-line journal is being prepared where faculty can publish their critical reflections. The journal will have an in-house editor and some sections will be peer-reviewed.
- Research agendas at the departmental level have emerged from within all departments, with action plans being developed respectively.
- A new Publication Fund has been established (with very limited resources of only 1 million ISK).
- A new Research Fund has been established (with very limited resources of only 1 million ISK).
- The arts have now entered the panel of humanities in the Iceland Research Fund.

Despite efforts to pave a way for research in the field of the arts among other fields of study in Iceland (with international benchmarking), a clear definition of concepts and criteria, a customized database to register faculty research output, the development of a new framework for the evaluation of output, a firm structure for internal review of research in place, a new framework for sabbaticals, the establishment of internal research and publication funds, and various other efforts to create platforms for critical reflection on artistic output in the wider context of research, the IAA has not yet enjoyed a full recognition of research from the government. Not only does this go against the core idea of a university, where teaching and research are interdependent practices and mutually sustainable, it also means that the IAA is constrained to allocate some of the funding for teaching to research, since the actual expenditure for research was 7.8% of its total budget while government funding summed up to 5.7%. The IAA will continue to invest in research as it refuses to operate higher education by ignoring research as one of its core elements.

## 5. RESPONSE TO SUGGESTIONS FROM THE TEAM

Throughout the entire Review Report, the Team detects numerous areas for further enhancement, summarized in 11 key points in the concluding chapter (p. 49). These points are listed below in the original order of appearance, followed by a description of the IAA response.

1

**Suggestion:** *“The need to promote and market the institution more effectively in order to heighten the Academy’s profile in Iceland and abroad.”*

**Response:** After a period of ten months with no Director of Communications in office (due to budget cuts in 2015), the management has now been able to hire a new Dir. of Communications since November 2015. Main tasks include a thorough revision of the institutional approach to marketing and communications, both domestically and from the perspective of internationalization. This revision will lead to a new policy on communications and marketing, to be implemented in fall 2016.

2

**Suggestion:** *“The need to define more clearly the institution’s interdisciplinary mission.”*

**Response:** The concept of interdisciplinarity has long been one of the IAA’s main focus points. Now that new graduate programmes have been emerging and with others on the agenda, the hope is that this will create an opportunity to define the interdisciplinary mission more clearly. It is also obvious that as soon as the housing situation is solved, the sooner cross-disciplinary work will be enabled.

In the meantime, some significant initiatives have been conducted in this context; New cross-disciplinary courses have been designed in collaboration with other universities both in Iceland and abroad. The evaluation of these courses, Konnect and Dark Matters, will form the basis for further policy making this year.

3

**Suggestion:** *“The need to reconsider the membership of the Academy Board and to strengthen its capacity to support the institution’s activities.”*

**Response:** The membership of the Academy Board’s has been revised with the aim of strengthening the Board’s capacity to support the Academy’s activities (see p. 7 on latest development on organizational management and structure).

4

**Suggestion:** *“The need to further clarify the management structure, together with the remits and decision-making powers of various key committees.”*

**Response:** The renewed AC and its subcommittees have been in operation since 2014-2015, which has defined remits and roles in decision making processes. This has especially cleared the distinction between the MC and the AC, giving the latter more agency in discussing and influencing the development of core academic issues relating to teaching and research. The subcommittees consist of faculty representatives from all departments, allowing for strong bottom up ownership, where the sharing of experience and knowledge at a cross-departmental level takes place. The AC can commission a specific task to its subcommittees, which also develop their own agenda for each appointment period, in line with action plans.

Instead of previously consisting of seventeen members, the AC now has a total of nine members with cross departmental representation (the Rector and one representative from each department, thereof one dean), and two student representatives. The council elects its own chair, which cannot be the Rector. This is to ensure a clear division between the AC and MC, and to give the AC a more independent remit to suggest topics for the agenda. At the same time, a clear communication line is maintained between the two councils, with the Rector and a dean present on both of them. Furthermore, the AC mandate has been clarified with focus on academic issues and quality in relation to teaching and research. The AC operates two sub-committees (teaching committee and research committee), also consisting of members of academic staff and. The two sub-committees report at least once every semester to the AC, otherwise working independently with the Dir. of Teaching on the one hand and the Dir. of Research on the other.

5

**Suggestion:** *“Ensuring that there are departmental strategies, in line with overall institutional planning.”*

**Response:** A concrete output of the SLRs in QEF1 was departmental action plans. The design of the institutional action plan is currently being revised and has not been systematically operated during this academic year. Separate strategies both for teaching and research are being developed at the departmental level, which are meant to be sustained by departmental action plans. During 2016-2017 a new institutional strategy 2017-21 will be prepared and published at the end of the spring semester. Departmental strategies will play a key role in the institutional strategy, and will be aligned systematically with action plans.

6

**Suggestion:** *“The need for a realistic timetable and for the prioritizations of the target areas in the institutional Action Plan, in order to balance the workload of key staff.”*

**Response:** A new approach to the Action Plan is being developed as preparation for the implementation of the next strategic cycle (2017-2021). In this process, main issues addressed in the new framework for support staff will be in focus; i.e. greater emphasis

on team work, systematic support for staff development and training, the introduction of administrative tools for project management and definition of responsibilities. The excessive workload of the Rector and the Managing Director has been met with the recruitment of a part time project manager at the Rector's Office, who also has a part time position as the Director of Human Resources. Furthermore, the role of the Head Bookkeeper has been changed to include Financial Management.

7

**Suggestion:** *“The need to develop a systematic outreach and community policy, involving the whole country.”*

**Response:** There is general awareness of the fact that this important component of our work needs to be strengthened, and will be inclusive in the new marketing and communications policy. Programme directors in each department work towards a systematic outreach policy, involving students in a vast variety of collaborative projects with cultural institutions, the state and municipalities, other education institutions, independent artists, private businesses and the creative sector in general.

8

**Suggestion:** *“The need to develop a systematic staff development and training regime for all staff, including support staff.”*

**Response:** With the new Director of Academic Affairs, the new framework for academic staff (implemented in August 2015), the new framework for support staff (to be implemented in fall 2016) and the new Director of Human Resources, important steps have been taken in order to enhance the Academy's ability to enable staff development. This is evident in the new human resources policy developed in spring 2016, which includes a framework for continuing education and staff development for all staff (see p. 8-9).

9

**Suggestion:** *“The context of reviewing the staffing structure, the need to recognize the important role of the large number of part-time staff, and to ensure a framework for their integration, development and reward.”*

**Response:** The integration of part time teachers will be addressed systematically in 2016-17, with the establishment of a working group on the issue early fall 2016, led by the new Director of Human Resources. In the meantime, the issue has been addressed by offering regular training programmes, work-related courses and practical guidance on the role of the faculty members – specifically including part-time teachers.

10

**Suggestion:** *“Enhancing career and professional preparation for all students.”*

**Response:** Student counselling has been enhanced in the last couple of years with the

reorganization of the Teaching and Learning Services (splitting into two positions of Dir. of Academic Affairs and Dir. of Student Affairs). This has also lead to the development of a programme for career counselling, which was still in its early stages during 2015-2016. Implementation of career counselling services began in 2015 and will be enhanced further over the next academic year. The main focus has been on offering students workshops on practical skills in relation to the job sector, how to develop a career plan, etc. As part of this process, the goal is to ensure that all graduates will receive some training and preparation for their respective field.

## II

**Suggestion:** *“The need to further review institutional policies on appeals and grievances, and to formulate policies on bullying and harassment.”*

**Response:** The Grievance Committee on Students’ Rights has already been revised, and a new policy on bullying and harassment is in place (Policy on Equality).



