



International evaluation and accreditation

EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION DOCUMENTS

Lebanese International University

Lebanon

January 2022

Rapport publié le 15/02/2022

High Council for evaluation of research and higher education

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International evaluation and accreditation

EVALUATION REPORT

Lebanese International University

April 2021



The Lebanese International University has mandated the Hcéres to perform its external evaluation. The evaluation is based on the "External Evaluation Standards" of foreign Higher Education institutions, adopted by the Hcéres Board on October 4th, 2016. These standards are available on the Hcéres website (hceres.fr).

On account of exceptional circumstances, the organization of the evaluation was adapted (replacement of the physical onsite visit by the panel by a visit by videoconference), while remaining compliant with the fundamental principles of institutional evaluation: external evaluation standard applied, the SER and requested annexes sent by the institution, panel of experts set up by Hcéres, collegial work by the panel, interviews with the institution and its partners by videoconference, report drafted and then sent to the institution in its provisional and then final version, response by the institution to the report written by the panel. This specific procedure is in line with the official position defined jointly by EQAR and ENQA.¹

Thierry COULHON, President

Jean-Jacques PAUL, President of the committee

In accordance with the decree n°2014-1365, November 14th, 2014,

¹ The President of Hcéres "contresigne les rapports d'évaluation établis par les comités d'experts et signés par leur président." (Article 8, alinéa 5) — "countersigns the assessment reports made by the experts' committees and signed by their President" (article 8, alinea 5).^[1]

² The evaluation reports "sont signés par le président du comité". (Article 11, alinéa 2) — "are signed by the President of the committee" (article 11, alinea 2).

¹ <https://enqa.eu/index.php/home/enqa-statement-on-covid-19-pandemic/>

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I. INSTITUTION IDENTITY SHEET

The Lebanese International University (LIU) is a private higher education institution that was founded in 2001 by Abdul Rahim Mourad. The university was established and recognized by the Lebanese State in 2001 under the name of Bekaa University under Presidential decree 5294 of April 9, 2001. It took the name of Lebanese International University congruent to decree 14592 of June 14, 2005.

Pursuing the vision of being an accessible and affordable university, LIU has established nine campuses in all regions of Lebanon and has devoted a substantial portion of its income to student aid. The university is structured into five schools (School of Arts and Science, School of Business, School of Education, School of Engineering and School of Pharmacy) which coordinate teaching and training programs, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, according to the American model. The teaching language is English. Today there are 9 campuses embracing about 35,500 students receiving financial assistance amounting to an average of 47% of the gross income.

It is worthwhile noting that the university has successfully expanded from its creation despite the challenges Lebanon faced: political instability (assassination of the Prime Minister in 2005, clashes between factions and governmental crises), economic fragility (depreciation of the Lebanon's national currency, high inflation, stagnation of the national production, growth of people below the poverty line, burden of refugees and blast of the port).

LIU is one of the 47 higher education institutions and one of the 38 Lebanese universities (1 public and 37 private) and probably the most numerous private one. Lebanese universities enjoy a great deal of autonomy. If their creation and the opening of the various programs depend on the authorization of the State, the general direction of higher education, created in 2002, carries out external evaluations and intends to set up a system of quality assurance and an evaluation system. For the moment, it mainly exercises quality control over medicine and engineering. Faced with the competition in which they engage, private universities are looking for accreditations that will allow them to forge an image of quality and seriousness. Twelve universities benefit from international accreditation (eleven private, and the Lebanese university), globally or at faculty level.

Research is still little-developed in Lebanon, which is ranked 70th in the world in terms of research according to the Scimago database. Only nine universities present a research production ranked medium or high by the "Top universities" website² and the first Lebanese university in the Scimago database web ranking of universities is ranked 724th. LIU does not appear among these nine universities with noticeable research activities; seven of which have a faculty of medicine, which represents a significant publication factor.

Ranked 4372nd in the world and 9th in Lebanon according to « Ranking Web of Universities », LIU claims that « triangulation of accessibility, affordability and quality education makes LIU distinctive among Lebanese universities ». LIU educational programs are based on the US model, students being awarded credits: 99 to 108 for a 3-year bachelor's degree and 36 to 52 for a 2-year master's degree, depending on the discipline (excluding pharmacy based on a 5-year program plus a doctorate). 63 specialties are thus offered throughout the university, but not all of them are offered on each campus.

In 2018-2019, LIU had 1 539 faculty members (226 full-time and 1313 part-time) and 229 administrative and technical staff.

The budget increased from US \$ 152 million in 2015-2016 to US \$ 216 million in 2018-2019.

II. VISIT DESCRIPTION

1- PRESENTATION OF THE INSTITUTION'S SELF-EVALUATION APPROACH

Since recent amendments to the Lebanese Higher Education Act have made the introduction and development of a quality assurance and evaluation system within universities obligatory, LIU aims at fulfilling

² See: <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/arab-region-university-rankings/2021>

requirements of international standardization, including accreditation as well as working on building its second 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

Previously to the evaluation, a Self-Study Steering Committee (SSSC) composed of deans, academic and administrative directors, as well as faculty members, was tasked in preparing a self-evaluation report (SER). This SER provides an analysis of the evolution of LIU over the past five years, shows the actual situation and puts forward some issues that need to be tackled in the future. Sectorial SWOT analyses are incorporated in the SER and a global SWOT analysis is also provided at the end.

2 - COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERTS PANEL

- **Jean-Jacques PAUL**, Emeritus Professor, Former French Rector of Galatasaray University (Turkey), Former Vice-President of the University of Bourgogne, Chair of the experts panel
- **Cécile CHICOYE**, Former Director-General of Services, University Toulouse Capitole
- **Patrice HOUDAYER**, Vice-Dean SKEMA Business School
- **Christine IMBERT**, University Professor, University of Poitiers
- **Fabrice MERIAUDEAU**, University Professor, Former Vice-President in charge of International Relations, University of Bourgogne
- **Maxime DE SIMONE**, Graduate Student, Technical University of Troyes.

Hcéres was represented by **Michelle HOUPE**, Head of project.

3 - VISIT DESCRIPTION

The assessment system was based on examining compliance with the standards defined by Hcéres, through documents and interviews. However, given the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID 19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted by video conference. While recognizing the involvement of the university authorities in the quality of the preparation of the interviews, the availability of all the actors and the seriousness with which they lent themselves to the interviews, it must be admitted that the mode of exchange has not always been the most natural. As a result, the speeches may have sometimes seemed lacking in spontaneity. But the triangulation of the information gathered gives the report's conclusions an undeniable solidity.

The interviews were conducted on-line, from Monday 23 to Thursday 26, November 2020, according to the following schedule:

- 2 meetings with the President, the Vice-Presidents and members of the Board of Trustees
- 1 meeting with representatives of the University Council
- 1 meeting with the 5 Schools Directors
- 1 meeting with representatives of 8 campuses
- 2 meetings with professors
- 2 meetings with the Vice-Presidents
- 1 meeting on the Centre of Excellence for Research and Development
- 1 meeting on the Centre of Excellence for Teaching and Learning
- 1 meeting with ingoing-outgoing students
- 1 meeting with Department Research Leaders
- 1 meeting on Student Affairs
- 1 meeting with PhD students
- 1 meeting on Human Resources
- 1 meeting on Finance and Budget Policy/ Real Estate
- 1 meeting on Documentation Centre
- 1 meeting with students
- 1 meeting on Information System
- 1 meeting with a panel of socio-economic/industrial partners
- 1 meeting with international academic partners
- 1 meeting on Public Affairs and Communication
- 1 meeting on Quality Process / Ethics and Deontology.

III. EVALUATION REPORT

AREA 1- STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

Field 1: The institution's missions and its strategic positioning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An ambitious strategic approach which calls for coherent consolidation

LIU was created with a clear mission, to open the doors of higher education to a population that did not have access to it, by creating campuses throughout the territory and by keeping registration fees lower than in other private universities. With a solid strategic approach, its ambition is to adapt the quality of its teaching to contemporary requirements and to promote research activities corresponding to a university worthy of the name.

LIU should be able to upscale its teacher recruitment policy and its economic model in order to be able to achieve its new strategic objectives and withstand the upheavals of its environment.

LIU intends to be distinct among Lebanese universities through the triangulation of accessibility, affordability and quality education and presents itself as the largest private university in Lebanon. In order to offer opportunities of higher education to financially and culturally challenged students, including females in remote areas, LIU established nine campuses in all regions of Lebanon. The university aims at keeping lower tuition fees than other universities in Lebanon and at dedicating near half of its revenue to financial aid. LIU states also its willingness to serve neighbouring countries by recruiting students from Syria and Palestine, who can receive financial aid.

The year 2017 represents a turning point in LIU's strategy. The strategic plan 2017-2020 adapted the revised vision and mission to take into account the fast development of LIU as well as international standards of universities. It announced a shift in favour of research activities and interactions with stakeholders.

During the period 2017-2020, LIU took the initiative to strengthen its internal structure by creating new services for quality assurance, research development, teaching and learning support, global engagement and public affairs and communication. Several handbooks and manuals have been produced to make clear the institutional and educational functioning and the recruitment and promotion procedures as well to pave the way for the development of research.

However, as the self-evaluation report recognises it, this plan did not reach all the scope of its goals, the new structures have not yet fully deployed their activities and the plan was not widely communicated to LIU community. The plan was mainly qualitatively oriented and the proposed performance indicators underused.

Based on this previous experience, the prospective strategic plan 2020-2025 intends to avoid several pitfalls in order to promote the evolution toward a more student-centred learning experience together with an increase in academic research capacity. LIU committed to "vigorously" engage more students, academic staff and external stakeholders in its preparation.

Schools and units will have to prepare their own plans in alignment with the overall plan of the university and to define indicators suitable to their monitoring. For qualitative aspects, managers will develop qualitative questionnaires and evaluation forms.

If a University Strategic Planning Committee spent one year and half preparing the new plan, with the collaboration of many internal stakeholders, it should be noted that only one student representative joined the Committee and no external stakeholder was part of it.

During the preparation of the plan, vision, mission and fundamental values were updated. To promote the employability of the graduates, the 2020-2025 strategic plan proposes a detailed list of thirty-five graduates' attributes that LIU endeavours to foster, which supposes adapted skills of the teaching staff. Surprisingly, whereas a Centre of Excellence for Teaching and Learning (CETL) is supposed to have been already implemented in 2019, the new plan intends (p.9) to "Develop a Centre for Teaching and Learning that offers strategies and support to teaching staff on pedagogy, course development, e-learning, assessment, supervision and research

monitoring." In order not to be a mere declaration, this statement has to be translated into a coherent step up of CETL.

The strategic plan defines the goals and objectives related to five strategic areas: Teaching and Learning Excellence; Student Success; Entrepreneurship, Community Outreach and Engagement; Research; University Governance, Infrastructure and Support Services. In order to achieve the objectives of the plan better than the previous one, the committee recommends the preparation of an action plan, to precisely identify the units responsible of the implementation phase, to link annual resources and budgeting processes, and to prepare monitoring metrics.

Another concern regards the gap between the explicit strategy aiming at prioritizing the development research and the composition of the present academic staff, with a modest proportion of full timers and PhD holders. According to the committee, a strong recruitment policy in this domain should be implemented to achieve this goal.

Risks for the future, derived from the organisation of the university, could be explicitly considered. LIU is owned by a foundation and its operations are fully funded by the tuition fees. Whereas the real estate and building in the Bekaa region belong to the foundation, the remaining campuses belong to a real estate company established by the founder. If such a structure reflected the very important commitment of the founder and allowed for the necessary flexibility in a period of rapid growth, it can be questioned when the sustainability of the institution is at stake for the uncertain coming years.

The Lebanese context does not make any precise projection easy but the reactivity of the university in face of the present economic and pandemic crisis, from a pedagogical and budgetary point of view, suggests it will be able to cope with unexpected situations.

Field 2: Internal organisation and strategy implementation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A clear but fairly complex organization facilitating the cohesion and efficiency of an institution with nine campuses

LIU has built a clear but rather complex organization, in order to maintain the cohesion and efficiency of an institution with nine campuses. The university's system of governance is clearly defined by a Governance document containing roles and responsibilities for all constituents. LIU's system of shared governance relies on councils with responsibility for making recommendations or providing advice specific to their areas of responsibility. Despite this apparent complexity, interviews suggest that the governance structure is quite effective relying on a very dense inter-personnel network of communication. Strategic and important financial decisions remain the responsibility of the President-owner of the university, supported by the two Vice-Presidents.

The Committee encourages LIU to involve students, support staff and external stakeholders more closely in the development of the educational strategy and its monitoring.

The university's system of governance is clearly defined by a Governance document containing roles and responsibilities for all constituents. The President of the university reports to the Board of Trustees (BOT) which is the governing body, chaired by an external personality elected by the board. The BOT consists of at least 12 members including university shareholders (maximum one third according to status). The President, who does not have voting rights, communicates directly with BOT. Communication by others with BOT may be performed through the office of the President upon approval. The President has the authority and autonomy required to develop and implement institutional plans, identify and allocate resources and leads the institution towards attaining goals and objectives set forth in its mission.

The executive organizational structure is based on the President and two vice-Presidents, one for academic affairs (provost) and the other for administrative affairs. The provost is assisted by five schools' deans and eight campuses' academic directors (which means that the provost plays the role of an academic director in the main campus) in addition to a director of teaching and learning, a director of global engagement, and the director of centre of excellence for research and development. In each campus, every dean is assisted by a campus assistant dean, in addition to chairs for each offered program or department in the school. Furthermore, the Vice-President for Administrative Affairs (VPAA) is assisted by eight campuses administrative directors (which means that he/she is the administrative director in the main campus), a director of students' affairs and a

director of public affairs & communications. Each campus administrative director is assisted by offices of human resources, registrar, admission, accounting, and information technology. Although there are central offices for the support function (HR, finances, IT, etc.), they do not appear in the organizational chart making it difficult to understand well the general organisation.

Deans and assistant deans are appointed by a selection committee for a 4-year term, with a maximum of two terms.

LIU's system of shared governance relies on councils with responsibility for making recommendations or providing advice specific to their areas of responsibility. The University Council (UC), chaired by the President, recommends major policies on all matters applicable to academic and administrative operations. Communication between the President and UC is direct or through the vice-President for academic affairs as chief academic officer and is in both directions. The UC is composed of the President, vice-Presidents, deans, academic and administrative directors, technical and administrative staff.

Campus councils are the advisory boards to the university President and UC. They have the right and responsibility to provide feedback to UC on all academic and administrative matters of fundamental importance to campus activities. Each campus council is composed of the academic director who chairs the meeting, the administrative director and campus assistant deans.

The Deans' Council is an advisory body who oversees, plans, implements, monitors, assesses, evaluates and takes improved decisions on academic and administrative tasks. It provides oversight and guidance to the President, and vice-President on administrative affairs. This council meets to discuss issues and policies that affect the academic and administrative operations of the university's schools. It is chaired by the provost and is composed of the five deans, director for research and development, and director of the graduate studies in the future.

As an advisory board, the School council, made up of a dean who chairs the council, chairs, associate chairs, and assistant deans, expresses opinion or makes recommendations on educational progress, problems as well as faculty members concerns to UC.

Department councils serve as an advisory board to the deans. Each department council identifies and transmits appropriate advice on matters pertaining to curriculum, program activities development, research and student and faculty affairs. It is composed of the chair of department, associate chair, course coordinators and department campus coordinators and it meets each month.

Despite this apparent complexity, interviews suggest that the governance structure is quite effective relying on a very dense inter-personnel network of communication. From a pedagogical point of view, the structure allows for a standardisation of curricula and contents amongst the different campuses.

According to the structure of the governance, councils have only an advisory function and the major strategic decisions are taken by the President, the owner of the university, supported by the two Vice-Presidents. Budgetary matters rely mainly on the shoulders of the owner and the Vice President for Administrative Affairs. The University Council does not discuss such matters.

LIU is aware of the absence of students in the council meetings but it deems impossible to organize student representative elections due to the political context. However, LIU plans to introduce student representatives to certain departmental and school councils, with selection criteria based on experience, academic performance and campus life participation. Such an experiment could be a test for further extension.

The university managers consider that the "open door" policy, which allows everyone, student or staff, to contact the President (his telephone number is given to all) or any of the leaders, meets the needs of communication of feedbacks and critics. However, the intention of institutionally involving students in the governance should be emphasised, so as not to rely too much on personal relationships.

LIU should involve all the shareholders more strongly in governance. Employers and alumni could be part of program committees to advice on course contents, so they can fit into the current demands of the socio-economic context. The experience of the School of Pharmacy, which has implemented an advisory council with employers and alumni, should be extended to the other schools.

Field 3: The institution's identity and communication

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An identity shared by the whole community but communication to be strengthened

The values and vision of its founder, "accessibility, affordability and quality education", with a marked interest in the education of young women, appear to be shared by the entire community. As a private university, the primary objective of communication is to be able to attract new students. All modern means of communication, as well as visits to high schools are mobilized for this purpose. The website deserves to be updated and improved. Internal communication remains based on direct exchanges, in a rather informal mode. Current efforts to get closer to alumni should be encouraged.

The Committee recommends further formalizing internal communication, to ensure that no member can complain about being left out of the main discussions and decisions.

LIU is presented as the final step in a chain of socio-educational institutions aimed at meeting the needs of a disadvantaged population of the Bekaa, around the slogan "Education for all". The values and vision of its founder, "accessibility, affordability and quality education", with a marked interest in the education of young women, appear to be shared by the entire community, as evidenced by both strategic plans and the self-assessment report as the interviews. These ones also reveal a strong sense of belonging to the institution and the marked presence of a family spirit.

The global policy of communication at LIU, designed under authority of vice-President for administrative affairs, is presented as aiming to address a large variety of objectives. As a private university, LIU intends to prioritize its provision of information to prospective students, current students, high school teachers and counsellors. Communication with staff and faculty as well as with the whole Lebanese community, including alumni, appears to be another strategic focus. In order to coordinate all actions related to university communication, a Public Affairs & Communication Office was restructured in 2017. This office has three units: alumni, events and communications, career services. The alumni unit is still in progress, as attested by its uninformative presentation in the website.

The main channel of communication is the website (liu.edu.lb) where all academic information about admission (online), schools and degrees, semesters and calendar are provided together with issues of concern on student affairs.

Admission requirements to programs including any relevant placement exams are explained. Similarly, graduation requirements for all programs along with recommended plans of study and courses descriptions are available on the website. An advising video helps prospective and current students to learn about the processes. Yearly, LIU launches advertisements campaigns across the country using billboards, broadcast media and high school visits, where campus academic directors and LIU staff directly visit high schools to orient students and instructors alike of available academic opportunities afforded at LIU.

The university has a respective handbook for faculty, staff and students readily accessible through its intranet to inform them of their rights and obligations. Moreover, LIU provides a link for online employment applications for both staff and faculty. To be sure, LIU further benefits from social media where subscribers of Facebook (73,339), Twitter (4685), LinkedIn (23,899), YouTube (1140) and Instagram (10,058) are fully operational; in addition to contacting students by Short Message Service (SMS) notifications.

LIU students, staff and faculty have access to University Management System (UMS) which is utilized for online registration, access to registered courses and uploading course syllabi and setting grades. All LIU students have a university-based email account that remains active even after graduation.

The flow of information is both bottom-up and top-down where academic and administrative units communicate through e-mails and memos vertically as well as horizontally.

While overall communication does not seem to be a major problem at LIU, judging by the opinions expressed in the interviews, there is room for improvement. The website has obvious updating flaws, possibly because it is the responsibility of the IT department, which is not directly responsible for communication. It is announced that the responsibility should pass to the marketing department. The same applies to the sites of the Schools, which are either non-existent or show a glaring lack of updating.

The last "Scope" newsletter featured on the website dates back to 2014. It was reportedly stopped "due to bureaucratic issues". The communications team wants to replace it with a user-friendly platform.

Internally, most of the communication seems informal, through emails and WhatsApp. The reports of the various councils are not communicated to the whole community, nor even easily accessible on the teachers' intranet. In order to allow more information to be shared on the orientations taken at the various levels of the institution, the Committee recommends that LIU further formalize internal communication, with a more systematic dissemination of the reports of the various councils.

As acknowledged by the self-assessment report, more proactive hard work is called for forging links with alumni.

AREA 2 – RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Field 1: Research policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research structuring is in progress to allow its development

In its strategic plan 2020-2025, LIU aims to move from a teaching excellence to a teaching and research excellence university. Priority will be given to research themes of national interest. The structuring of research is a recent concern for LIU and is not yet effective. Its implementation relies in particular on the creation of a Center of Excellence for Research and Development in 2017. Research groups are not yet formed and there is almost no laboratory dedicated to research. Resources devoted to research are low: low budget (1.12% of the gross income); high proportion of part-time faculty members; heavy administrative and teaching load of faculty members which leave little time to do research; lack of equipment; lack of staff supporting research for administrative tasks. However, a few active and good quality research niches already exist at LIU, especially thanks to students doing PhD co-supervised with foreign universities, and article production has increased in recent years.

The Committee recommends increasing the budget devoted to research and increasing the proportion of full-time faculty members, leaving them more time to do research.

In the strategic plan 2020-2025, the goal is to move toward an increase in academic research capacity. By developing research, LIU wishes to attract national and international attention to the university, impacting students and faculty recruitments, and national rankings (appendix IV, page 41). Indeed, over the next ten years, LIU aims to move from a teaching excellence university to a teaching and research excellence university. Priority will be given to the topics of national interest in different areas.

Currently, LIU's priority is to implement research governance based on clear and identified structures. This implementation relies in particular on the creation of a Center of Excellence for Research and Development (CERD) in 2017. The research organizational structure that is being developed is headed by the Director of CERD at the university level, assisted by school and department research leaders at school levels (appendix IV, page 41). Research groups are going to be formed thanks to this structure that is planned to be established by 2021 (SER page 18).

According to this structuring, four boards should finally manage research: Department Advisory Board, School Advisory Board, University Advisory Board and University Management Board. Each level makes recommendations (funds, budget, etc.) which must be approved by the upper one. The University Management Board makes the final recommendations to the President who is the sole decision-maker, highlighting a vertical research governance.

Strategies and resources dedicated to research are low. The current budget allocated to research is 1.12% of the gross income (SER, page 18). Even if there is a plan to gradually increase this budget in the next years, there is no concrete and precise timeline.

Even if the research profile is becoming a more important criterion for recruiting new faculty members, it appears that they are mainly recruited internally, among alumni. This strategy increases the feeling of belonging to the

institution. However, the lack of external recruitment certainly slows down the university's capacity for adapting, developing and innovating.

It is noted that a new system for hiring and promoting faculty members is being developed, that gives more importance to research. According to this system, the ranking-promotion criteria, employed to promote faculty members, are based on grades collected from research (weight = 60%), teaching excellence (weight = 20%) and faculty services (weight = 20%). Also, newcomers and non-ranked faculty members are ranked only based on research points earned in the last years (Appendix VII, page 2). So, this system should encourage faculty members to develop their own research activities.

However, staff structuration is not conducive to the development of research and three major issues are identified: reduced time for doing research, low proportion of PhD holders and very unbalanced distribution of academic grades among faculty members. The teaching loads associated to faculty members who are the potential stakeholders of research is very high: 270 teaching hours for professors to 360 teaching hours for assistant professors (document 2 "responses to Hcéres reviewers"). Faculty members also have significant administrative tasks. Overall, these heavy duties leave very little time to be devoted to research. Among faculty members, full timers only represent 15% of the staff, 85% being part-timers (statistical report, page 23). In addition, the supervision rate is low, with only 38% of faculty members holding a PhD ; the overall proportion of professors is only 0.78%, and that of associate professors and assistant professors being 3.4% and 21.2% respectively (Appendix II, page 24)".

The committee recommends to increase the proportion of PhD holders full-time members among the faculty and to carefully consider their availability to do research. Also, as the teaching is done on multi-campus, implying staff to teach on two campuses, research facilities could not be divided, a strategical choice has to be made on "where to emphasis what" implying in a near future to have Master Students (and later PhD students) moving across campuses for their research project.

Also technical and administrative staff supporting research is absent or almost absent. This staff could significantly support research, especially by helping to prepare research project proposals or in formalization of new collaborations. Moreover, CERD seems not to have any internal research call so as to instigate research within the newly formed research groups.

In general, the equipment allowing research experiments not based on simulation models is lacking at LIU. This situation is an important obstacle to the development of an autonomous research. Research would need more human and equipment investment. For now, research can only lean on collaborations with other universities of Lebanon and abroad, with industry and hospitals, etc.

Research activity is currently weak, but of good quality. According to the SER data (page 14), 28 students currently prepare a PhD. As LIU has no doctoral school, all PhD students are co-supervised by LIU faculty members in partnership with other universities, usually abroad, particularly in Europe. The overall number of publications made by LIU members has increased in recent years (53 in 2016, 99 in 2017 and 120 in 2018) (SER page 14). The field of engineering is particularly productive with 55 publications in 2018.

It is worth mentioning that LIU encourages faculty members to prepare a PhD, especially part-time members, mainly by offering time flexibility and funding for travels. However, offered conditions remain complex for researchers: little time available, almost absence of labs dedicated to research, few support, lack of equipment...). Despite all difficulties encountered by students, the duration of PhD is approximately 3 years, which fulfils international standards. The collaborations already established under PhD co-directions could be strengthened and enhanced by applying with these foreign collaborators to international calls for projects.

In the 2020-2025 strategic plan, LIU will give priorities to the more prevalent research areas in the region, particularly those in engineering and pharmacy, which are quite proactive. Key research themes are still very large. Their clarification and narrowing would permit to limit the dispersion of efforts and resources, even more as budget dedicated to research is still very modest.

The Committee recommends increasing the budget devoted to research and increasing the proportion of full-time faculty members, leaving them more time to do research.

Field 2: Teaching policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A wide range of training choices but an effort to be made
in terms of teacher training and evaluation policy

Since its inception, LIU has focused on teaching and learning. The number of students has increased dramatically in recent years. The LIU model relies mainly on external faculty members, which makes structuring actions in teaching and learning necessary. The rate of supervision of students by permanent Full-Time professors is too low. A Teaching and Learning Office was created but our committee found that its real impact was still low. The lack of a culture of systematic evaluation of all student services is already identified by LIU. Thus, this is one of its objectives in the context of its next strategic plan 2020-2025.

The Committee recommends systematizing the teacher training and evaluation policy.

LIU offers a broad range of bachelor programs (39) and several Master (13) (FC page 4) across most of the campuses. The School of Pharmacy is the only one, not offering any master degree. This large offer at the bachelor Level is implemented across all nine campuses and there is a steady growth of students since 2014 (41%, SER p. 21) for all programs, except Electronics Engineering and two Bachelors relative to Arts (Arts-Advertising, Arts in Interior Design). For example, raises of more than 100% over four years are recorded in Computer Engineering, Translation and Interpretation. School of Pharmacy has a constant flow, limited by the number of allocated positions by the order of Pharmacy after the national contest; Contest in which LIU performs extremely well with a success rate of 95% (SER p. 22), nutrition students perform similarly well. At the Masters Level, as they are not offered on all campuses, the repartition of graduates is uneven through all campuses compared to the undergraduates (Appendix II, p. 9-11). The retention rate is quite high in all schools but on the other hand, that might be explained by the difficult economic situation. The graduation rate is around 50% (Appendix II, p. 18-21).

On reading the various documents communicated to the committee of experts before the visit (RAE, SWOT and note from the Chairman), many questions arose, in particular on the consequences of the significant growth of students over the past 5 years (e.g. +40% for undergraduate students) while, at the same time, the staff increased by only 13%. This development raised questions about an ability to maintain the quality of teaching. The numerous exchanges made during the visit demonstrated a very strong availability of all staff (Faculty, staff). This is one of the key success factors of LIU along with the level of scholarships (47% of the total budget), the proximity thanks to 9 campuses and the open-door policy. The discussions also highlighted the many processes (course coordination, exam coordination, Program Learning Outcomes, Course Learning Outcomes, use of Bloom taxonomy, etc.) well shared by all the teaching staff (Full Timers and Part Timers) regardless of the campus to maintain the same level of teaching and evaluation on all campuses.

LIU's educational model is mainly based on part-timers. As stated by LIU in the RAE (p. 7) : "*As of the summer 2018-2019 semester, university faculty comprised 226 full-timers and 1313 part-timers for a total of 1539 faculty members that corresponds to 1373 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)*". Therefore, the distribution between permanent lecturers (15%) and part-time lecturers (85%) is very unbalanced with regard to certain comparable criteria in terms of national or international accreditations. For benchmark, in France, at Bachelor level, a minimum of 30% of permanent faculty members is required and, at Master level, this minimum reached 40%.

LIU offers a large number of specialties (63). This should be put into perspective with the number of campuses (even if they are not systematically offered on the 9 campuses) as well as with the number of permanent lecturers. Thus, nearly 30% of Full-Timers are responsible for courses, sometimes taught on multi-campus. This level of involvement seems a bit too much for people who are also researchers. However, it makes it possible to set up coordination mechanisms between the 9 campuses even if a strong centralization seems to exist. In fact, all School Deans are located on the main campus but this is counterbalanced by the positioning of a School assistant dean on each campus where a program of this school is delivered. Similarly, a decision to open a program or a major is based on a request by local campus, then the School assesses the request and, finally, the University council decides.

The program portfolio is consistent. However, certain shortcomings were noted during the various exchanges with stakeholders. As all private universities, LIU does not enjoy complete autonomy in creating new programs. Thus, the committee noted that a request for the creation of a Master in Pharmacy has been made to the

competent authorities. Our committee recognizes that this development is necessary for LIU's portfolio and recommends that this approach be answered positively.

LIU has established a Centre of Excellence for Teaching and Learning (CETL) to develop teaching and learning innovations. This initiative has been seen positively by some full-time faculty members. Many actions have been initiated as workshops on writing learning outcomes and how to implement it, trainings in new teaching methods, etc. However, the experts committee found that the CETL is not enough well known in all schools. Thus, part-time faculty members have mainly never heard about this key initiative for the development of learning and teaching skills. Overall, the committee of experts was not able to perceive neither the reality of a clear strategy on this theme nor the implementation of actions to date for both part-timers and full-timers. As LIU specifies in its strategic plan 2020-2025, the CETL needs to offer strategies and support to teaching staff on pedagogy, course development, e-learning, assessment, supervision and research monitoring.

Specific assessment data were not made available to the expert committee. In fact, as LIU acknowledges, an absence of a culture of evaluation appears to exist. This is one of the key points that LIU is highlighting in its next strategic plan. The experts committee recommends to implement a semester-based-assessment on teaching quality, program content, quality of student services, quality of career services, student's life, etc.

Field 3: The link between research and teaching

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An emerging link between research and teaching

LIU is a young university that aspired to be a teaching excellence university until now. In the strategic plan 2020-2025, the goal is to move toward an increase in academic research capacity to become a teaching and research excellence university, with a national and international visibility. Currently, LIU has graduate programs but does not deliver PhD and has no doctoral school. The main short-term targeted achievements are the implementation of 14 new masters by 2025 and 4 doctoral schools by 2030, the latest focusing on Human and social sciences, Economy, Health, and Science and technology. LIU graduate students currently do their PhD further to a strong selection, with a doctoral school from a university abroad, and are co-supervised by faculty members from LIU.

The committee recommends increasing the proportion of full-time faculty members, strengthening supervision by increasing the proportion of PhD holders and reducing the teaching load of faculty members involved in research. The committee also recommends to increase the research part through a larger number of credits (only 6/52 or 3/36) in the MSc program.

The link that currently exists between research and teaching is weak. LIU is aware of this weakness which is correlated to fact that LIU is a rather young university in which scientific policy and structuration of research are in progress. At the bachelor's level, curricula include some workshops that aim at acquiring research skills and tools. Currently, LIU offers graduate programs leading to 21 master (Appendix XIII, page 1) but does not deliver PhD and has no doctoral school. The master thesis, at the master level, introduces students to several research axes such as renewable energy, computer engineering, medical and pharmaceutical sciences, food science technology, math and so forth. However, looking at the number of enrolled students in MSc with at least a full semester dedicated to research, the number of publications could increase even more.

The main short- and medium-term targeted achievements are the implementation of 14 new masters by 2025 and of 4 doctoral schools by 2030, the latest focusing on Human and social sciences, Economy, Health, and Science and technology (appendix II, pages 26-27). As mentioned in the SER (page 28), dedicated research laboratories do not exist at LIU and need to be developed to make more concrete the research-teaching link. Credits earned through formal research project at master level, represent only a weak percentage of the total credits, whereas it should be near 25% (<http://www.liu.edu.lb/metaData/MIENG-POS.pdf>).

LIU has several MoUs with international universities that enable the students to pursue their PhD studies further to a strong selection based on their academic performance. The committee noted the general satisfaction of foreign supervisors regarding the quality of the involvement and the research works carried out by the students from LIU. The fact that teaching at LIU is in English certainly makes easier collaborations and integration of PhD abroad.

Faculty members are mainly recruited internally, among alumni. The lack of external recruitment certainly slows down the university's capacity of adapting, developing and innovating, especially for research and links between research and teaching, in particular due to a reduced sharing of experiences.

The new staff recruitment policy, that gives more importance to the research profile of candidates, should contribute to increase the link between research and teaching. However, the high teaching and administrative loads assigned to faculty members involved in graduate programs are a huge obstacle to the development of research and research-teaching link.

LIU is aware of the weakness of the link that currently exists between research and teaching and has initiated a structuring and development of research for the next ten years, which includes, among other things, an incentive for personnel to do research, as previously mentioned. LIU should initiate some seminars with their foreign partners to embed the staffs and the MSc students in a deeper research culture.

The committee recommends increasing the proportion of full-time faculty members, strengthening supervision by increasing the proportion of PhD holders and to reduce the teaching load of faculty members involved in research. The committee also recommends increasing the research part through a larger number of credits (only 6/52 or 3/36) in the MSc program.

AREA 3 – STUDENT ACADEMIC PATHWAYS

Field 1: Academic pathways, from career guidance to employment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A transition to the labour market facilitated by student work
but little information on the professional future of graduates

LIU is developing an important policy of openness to welcome a very large number of students representing a strong gender diversity and relative international diversity. The availability of staff and academic advisors should be noted and allows students to be supported. Relationships with companies exist but professionals should be more involved within LIU. Relations with alumni are still relatively underdeveloped and are one of the key goals of the next strategic plan.

The Committee recommends documenting the transition to the labour market for graduates and strengthening relationships with companies and alumni.

As already noted, one of LIU's strengths is its scholarship policy (47% of the total budget) associated with an open-door policy on student recruitment. This approach allows LIU to differentiate itself strongly from its direct competitors and to attract many students. The interviews revealed its double asset: the scholarships policy combined with the territorial coverage make possible a suitable offering in higher education for its students.

These two elements generate a strong attractiveness among applicants, which explains the strong growth of the student body. In order to support this important flow, each student has access to an academic advisor to support him/her in his/her educational progress. It should be noted that candidates may apply to each school without any obligation of previous track in the field, even for the engineering school. In this context, remedial courses are set up to allow new students to acquire the necessary prerequisites.

Gender diversity within the student body is a reality with 49% female and 51% male. The international dimension is mainly ensured in the context of direct student recruitments, which make up 13% of the total number of students at LIU.

Because of the economic situation, many students hold jobs at the same time as continuing their studies. A negative consequence of this situation is the impact on the graduation rates which, for example, are only 50% for undergraduates and 36% for graduates at the school of business in 2018-2019 (SER, appendix II, p. 17). Contrariwise, pursuing a professional activity in parallel with their studies allows many students to learn from these professional experiences and develop relationships with the labour market throughout their studies. However, graduation rates remain relatively low for the Graduate level in three schools among the five: 14% for the

Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, 19% for the Graduate School of education and 36% for the Graduate School of Business³.

LIU has been able to develop some relationships with companies in its environment in order to support its students towards employment. In order to meet the expectations of students, courses on entrepreneurship are currently in place. Agreements have been developed such as the one with the "United Nations Relief and Works Agency" which has given the agency the opportunity to recruit its 140 teachers in particular since 2017. In addition, and to support students at the end of their studies and young graduates, LIU organizes annual job-fairs on each campus. More generally, companies recognize the quality of graduates of LIU. The school of pharmacy has been cited as an example.

There is no placement survey to demonstrate the trajectory of young graduates. In view of the large number of graduates within the five schools, this lack is unfortunate because the results would undoubtedly provide high added value for LIU. The experts committee recommends that an annual survey be carried out in each school and for each degree.

Field 2: Learning resources

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LIU provides numerous physical and digital learning resources to students among all campuses. Even though campuses apart from Bekaa and Beirut have smaller libraries, all students have access to various and up-to-date online documentary resources. After the recent events due to Covid-19, LIU has been reactive in implementing distant learning while preserving proximity between students and staff as well as quality of education.

Accessibility and excellence in teaching are two key values at LIU. Accessibility of documentary resources and efficiency of e-learning tools are therefore two key elements.

Although the main libraries are located in Beirut and Bekaa campuses, all campuses have a library with study rooms accessible during week days for students. Additional online documentary resources, databases and magazines are accessible for all students. Some schools also provide specific access to online resources for their students.

For cataloguing purposes, LIU uses a Library Management System (LMS) common for all libraries. The LMS also provides valuable data and reports about students' book borrowing. Each academic year, the documentary resources update process starts with instructors who recommend new textbooks. The requests are discussed with coordinators at the School level and validated with the chairperson. Then the librarians make sure necessary resources are available for all students among all campuses. If some books are not available in one campus, students can generally access it easily in a nearby campus.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, an E-learning committee has been set up to enable distant learning at LIU while maintaining teaching excellence. Its main goal is to provide help on tools and logistics to be used for e-learning courses. The head of this committee reports to the director of the CETL who reports to the provost. Two platforms have been chosen for E-learning at LIU:

- Google Classrooms: as LIU is familiar with Google Suite and this tool provides an highly interactive experience between instructors and students, as well as between students themselves;
- Moodle: used only for exams because of advanced features not provided by Google Classrooms.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, most courses are recorded and posted on Google Classrooms.

Together with documentary infrastructure and IT tools, the proximity between students and instructors, as well as their availability and support, are important elements at LIU. They are appreciated by LIU students and recognized among prospective students. Apart from the open-door policy which makes it easy to reach any teacher or staff member, each student can also refer to an Academic advisor.

³ See Statistical Report 2018-2019, p.17.

Field 3: Learning environment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A rich campus life but relationships with external stakeholders to develop

Students at LIU benefit from a rich campus life to support their personal growth and well-being outside classes. The number of choices and opportunities may vary from one campus to another but overall students can participate in sports activities, enrol in clubs, attend events and take part in extracurricular activities. The committee believes that tighter relationships with employers, entrepreneurs and Alumni would offer more opportunities to the students. The Committee recommends to boost entrepreneurship with facilities, programs and more support.

LIU has both a complete learning environment and a rich campus life. The university encourages students to take part in extracurricular activities. Even though most students are forced to have a part-time job in parallel of their studies, they are more than satisfied with the quality of life at LIU. The student handbook given to newcomers provides all necessary information about processes and possibilities. The student affairs office also regularly promotes activities and engagement by email, on the website and the social media as well as the intranet.

LIU has a Health committee that provides awareness in 9 campuses. They organize seminars, workshops and conferences with professionals and NGOs about preventive medicine, addictions prevention, health and well-being in general. Furthermore, each campus has a first-aid room with identified first-aid workers as well as ambulatory cars.

Equal access to university is also supported by an inclusive policy for disabled students. These students are identified when they enter LIU and they benefit from special arrangements to attend classes and exams.

Dorms are available at Bekaa campus with a capacity of 400 male students and 400 women students. LIU also owns several flats in Beirut to accommodate local and international students depending on demand. 67 out of 409 international students are living on the campus. Even though housing for foreigners does not seem to be an issue at the moment, the fact that there is no reserved capacity for international students might be a problem in the future.

Regarding campus life, the Student affairs office organizes many events to connect students with the community or potential employers, to foster multiculturalism and entrepreneurship. The offer varies from one campus to another, however all students have a chance to enrol in some clubs and attend events.

Even though Bekaa campus provides the largest amount of facilities, various specific facilities are rented in Beirut and in other campuses, sports infrastructures are also always accessible. To join a sports team, students should apply at the athletics division of the campus by contacting the campus' sports coordinator. Students can choose between a total of around 20 sports disciplines and teams usually participate in local or international competitions.

To encourage students demonstrating great performance in their extra-curricular activities - such as winning a sports championship or an innovation award for example - LIU can provide additional financial support with an additional tuition fee reduction.

A big part of the student life actions at LIU are managed by students through clubs. There are 15 active clubs in the university with a number of enrolled students varying from dozen to hundred for the most popular ones. Although the open-door policy makes it easy for students to reach out to staff to organize events or propose new projects, they are not directly involved in any official instance at LIU with the Student affairs. Elections are organized every year to choose club leaders.

LIU encourages students to get in touch with the community and to go through a process of sponsorship to fund their events and actions. If additional help is needed from LIU, the process to receive logistic, material or financial help is clearly communicated and simple. At any moment, a club can submit a form to the student affairs office. Any request is validated by the VPAA within 2 weeks.

While some events are organized to connect students with alumni, employers and professionals, the proximity between students and the professional world still remains weak and LIU does not have any infrastructure or program for students-entrepreneurs. This point is a clear goal for the next strategic plan.

Overall, campus life at LIU is clearly a strong point. The committee still suggests to further develop equal access to extra-curricular activities among all campuses as well as the environment for entrepreneurship. Stronger relationships with the Alumni network as well as local companies and entrepreneurs are also encouraged.

AREA 4 – EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Field 1: Partnership policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A strong implantation through the Lebanese territory

LIU business model as well as its missions and vision have led to a University implanted throughout the whole country to satisfy the needs of the local economy as well as to offer excellent higher education to all. This geographical position, along with a high level of teaching and commitment, results in a good network of reliable partners and stakeholders. The committee recommends again to associate stakeholders and Alumni to the governance, at the school level and at the University level.

National Academic Partners:

The national landscape mainly composed of private institutions, engaged in a strong competition, does not offer a favourable ground for the development of formalized relations with them. Therefore, LIU has only few cooperation agreements (MOU) with other Lebanese universities (American University of Beirut, Lebanese American University...) and LIU strong national academic collaborations appear mainly through internationally funded projects, such as DigiHealth Erasmus + capacity Building Projects, with four Lebanese universities involved. On the same aspect trend, LIU also recently secured its participation in a H2020 project (Reshaping Attention and Inclusion Strategies for Distinctively vulnerable people among the forcibly displaced).

LIU is also engaged with the Lebanese Industrial Research Achievement Program (LIRA) to foster collaborations between academia and private sectors. Overall, the committee is missing figures (numbers of contracts, amounts involved, persons involved...) to assess the breadth of the LIRA program at the University Level.

Partnerships with the industrial/social sector:

LIU implantation, with its policy of addressing local needs and offering excellence in teaching for all, has established 9 campuses all over the Lebanese territory. This large implantation through the whole country is a strong asset and provides unique opportunities for each campus to build a good network of partners that may provide internships/final year projects/community projects to LIU students. Apart from the local strategy, based on the local needs, in order to strengthen further its partnership policy with the different stakeholders and offer to its student opportunities to complement their education, LIU has set up in 2018 its Global Engagement Office (GEO). The GEO aims at boosting LIU partnerships. The office is located in Beirut but liaises with the other campuses through the Assistant Deans of each school as well as the school coordinators.

The Office is still quite young and will soon need to increase its permanent staff to develop the international part of its actions; however, nationally, one can highlight that the school of Pharmacy with excellent results at the National exam contest, has secured a good network of Hospitals and pharmacies to host LIU students.

Some schools have established good partnerships with several companies. For example, the school of Arts and Sciences through its department of computer Sciences and Food and Science technology and the school of Business which also provided a recent entrepreneurship exposure to its students and set up a partnership with The British Council for accounting. Entrepreneurship being quite recent, no start-up is actually established on the various campuses.

It must be acknowledged that, as most of the LIU students are only doing a Bachelor Degree (87% of the students), for which internship is not mandatory, the involvement of private companies is sufficient but restricted in number. Unfortunately, LIU does not have a quantitative assessment of its relationships with companies,

therefore the committee was unable to obtain information on the number of students doing an internship as well as the evolution of MOUs over the years and their activities (number of students per year, employment after internships/projects with the company).

External stakeholders are not involved in the LIU governance, but following the School of Business, each school is on its way (strategic plan 2020-2025) to form socio-economic Councils. This involvement should be reflected on the future learning outcomes of each program and on the employability of LIU graduates, which for the later, due to the current economic situation, the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of figures, is hard to evaluate.

Finally, As LIU is moving to increase its research outputs, it has recently established a MOU with CNRS-Lebanon and participates to the Grant-Research-Program managed by CNRS-L (4 projects/Year),

Through his excellent territorial implantation and through its alumni, LIU is encouraged to take a more active role in the local economy. As done for the teaching and research, with the creation of the two centres CETL and CERD, the University is encouraged to develop a centre/office that will bridge the research activities/innovations developed through the final year projects with the needs of the local industries/companies. LIU is also encouraged to associate the partners to governance.

Field 2: International relations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From an international university to the internationalization of the University

LIU is international in its teaching delivery with courses fully taught in English, use of Program Learning Outcome and Course Learning Outcome, as most English/American Universities, design of Exam and assessment based on Bloom Taxonomy, exposure to foreign languages and a rate of 13% of international (based in Lebanon) students.

However, the mobility of students (incoming or outgoing), the mobility of staff, the number of foreign faculty members and the involvement of LIU in international projects are rather low, with a lack of clear strategy for the next period (strategic plan 2025) in term of geography, schools and research themes to develop internationally.

The committee recommends to define some clear Key Performance Indicators to be achieved for the next five years.

LIU delivers its entire teaching offer in English apart from the language courses. Since 2010, LIU, through his School of Business, has established a good quality long-lasting collaboration with a German University (Worms University of Applied Sciences) involving 10 to 20 students per year and has recently signed an active MOU with a Business School in Bucharest, Romania, with the first mobility occurring this year for few selected students. LIU is also participating in two European funded projects (Erasmus + DIGIHEALTH and H2020 RAISD), LIU has 28 students (Part-timers enrolled in PhD with a reduced teaching load) enrolled in foreign Universities, with a large proportion in Europe and has sent few students abroad through Erasmus mobility. LIU is a recognized DAAD partner as well as a Mediterranean Universities Union member.

During the last period (2017-2020), LIU has established the Global Engagement and has re-affirmed in its new strategic plan (SP page 12) its will to increase study abroad programs, faculty and student exchange. The infrastructures (dormitories) to welcome foreign students are only available on the two main campuses (Beirut - a total of 88 places for all students - and Bekaa - 800 places for all students). Schools are in charge of providing the information for outgoing mobility by means of email and information sessions but the process for incoming students is not clear.

Looking at the size of the University (> 36 000 students) and its expected target within the next few years (>50 000 students), the number of active MOUs and therefore the offered mobilities to students are extremely low and only concern few selected students per year. This is also true for incoming mobility and restricts LIU from welcoming more foreign students, preventing therefore an access to new culture, new teaching environment, new ideas and new research opportunities.

LIU does not have a clear strategy on how to expand its internationalization (where, why, how) and its international visibility and seems to rely mainly on opportunities.

Nevertheless, LIU, through its PhD students and the supervisors, has established some MOUs with some foreign universities (California State University, Aachen University, Lithuanian university of Health Sciences, the Bucharest

University of Economic studies, for example). The committee suggests to leverage on these agreements, to seek at the foreign Institution level more possibilities for collaborations (students exchanges, double degree, Internship offers (internships in some countries are fully paid), Erasmus + (International credit mobility), Erasmus+ (Capacity building projects).

LIU should set-up a proper KPI (active MoUs, targeted numbers of incoming and outgoing mobility, double degrees, participation to international calls) per school to increase its international offer. This should be accompanied by a more efficient structuration of GEO with some staff in charge of finding funding opportunities and helping schools to secure them.

AREA 5 – MANAGEMENT

Field 1: The institution's finances

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An efficient financial management that relies more on informal processes and strong vertical governance than on clear processes and management tools.

The business model is based exclusively on enrolment and a very large financial assistance budget: this fact plus a legal structure that does not ensure LIU has the mastery of its real estate raises an interrogation about the durability of the model in a difficult economic context. This should lead the university management to develop rapidly the tools for multi-year forecast that would give it the means to explicit its choices to come in a crisis situation. Regarding the internal management tools, the lack of resource allocation process should be remedied rapidly.

LIU's financial strategy is based exclusively on registration fees. Whether it is the 3-year plan adopted in 2017 or the draft strategic plan for 2020-2025, diversification of financial resources is not a priority. Only the increase in the number of students seems to be considered as a source of financing. However, the strong political will of the institution remains to allow everyone to have access to higher education thanks to low tuition fees compared to the Lebanese context and to a student aid policy that corresponds to almost half of the budget.

The financial context in which LIU evolves is difficult: with 47 private institutions, LIU is subject to a harsh competition. In addition, the political and economic crisis that has hit Lebanon and which has worsened with the health crisis on the one hand, and the explosion of the port of Beirut in the summer of 2020 on the other hand, makes the financial prospects hazardous. The President of LIU, who is also a founding member of the foundation which is the main shareholder of LIU, has reminded several times that he considers that LIU will not generate net profits in the next 3 years and insists on maintaining the accessibility of the University by optimizing the sound management of the past.

The financial governance of the University appears very simple and vertical: the ultimate authority is the VP administrative affairs to whom all decisions with a financial impact fall, whether in terms of budget preparation or individual decisions submitted to him. Schools and campuses manage specific budgets at their level that they can commit without going up to the VPAA level, but it was not possible to obtain precise information on the amount or type of decentralized expenditures in question. Moreover, the SER itself indicates in the strategic plan 2017-2020 and the draft plan 2020-2025 that the system for allocating resources remains to be specified.

The budget preparation process is based on a two-phase process:

- In the first phase, the VPAA with the support of the Director of Accounting Office prepares a basic budget based on the previous year's income and expenses with the modifications made necessary in view of the forecast evolution of the number of employees for the income and the modifications resulting from internal or external factors that may affect the expenses.
- In a second phase, the Schools through the deans and the campuses through the campus directors, the central management (ex IT Office) issue specific requests for the coming year in terms of jobs, research equipment, etc.

The consolidation is made at the level of the VPAA in view of the coherence of the whole in relation to the strategic plan and presented to the President for approval.

Financial management of the institution:

The past has shown a mastery of the financial management of the institution, which has generated net profits allowing it to invest in particular in new campuses. This management has also made it possible to keep pace with the increase in expenses, particularly in payroll, in relation to the increase in resources, while maintaining an extremely significant rate of social assistance.

It is the responsibility of the director of the accounting office: he can count on a team of 21 people spread over all the campuses, the main campuses, Bekaa and Beirut, with 4 and 6 people respectively. The matrix structure of the administrative organization does not make it possible to know in detail how many people actually work on the financial management dimension compared to those who manage the expenses. LIU relies on an accounting software that does not, however, make it possible to provide the governance with the financial elements necessary for financial management or to carry out financial reconciliation during the year (SWOT analysis).

Ongoing expenses:

Despite the complex structure of LIU's administration, interviews suggest that the financial commitment processes are fast and efficient. The use of informal networks, rather than explicit procedures, allows for quick decisions. It is worth noting the insistence of the actors on the regular payment of salaries which, in the Lebanese context, seems to be an achievement.

LIU's budget has increased from \$173 million in 2016-2017 to \$216 million, a 26% increase in line with student enrolment. During the same period, payroll expenses increased by 24.3% and operating expenses by 23.9%, demonstrating the effective control of the evolution of expenses. Student financial assistance grew by 11% in parallel.

This evolution made it possible, on the one hand, to set aside very large percentage amounts for the risk of non-payment and for emergency funds : from \$20 million to \$26 million over the period and, on the other hand, to increase net income from \$12 million to \$16.3 million. The level of provisioning, which seems very important since about a quarter of the net income (after deduction of the financial assistance), would be justified by the difficult situation of the country. Even if the budget has been in Lebanese pound for a few years, the devaluation of the latter has inevitably had an impact on the various costs incurred by the University. Moreover, the strong social vocation leads the management to consider with benevolence delays or even non-payment of tuition fees, as the President reminded during the interviews indicating that a student having started his studies at LIU must be able to complete them whatever his economic situation.

In the absence of written information, it appears from the interviews that, until now, the net income has been used for investments and, in particular, to finalize the real estate in the new campuses in relation with the real estate company that owns it. According to the committee's interlocutors, the bulk of the real estate investments has been made, and the net income acquired should enable the establishment to get through the current difficult situation without generating any profit for a return to normal in 3 years.

All of the elements described allow the committee to consider that LIU has demonstrated its capacity for good management in view of its past results, despite significant shortcomings in its information system and the absence of relevant financial management data.

The budgetary procedures as they exist today have not allowed the committee to understand the system for allocating resources and the distribution of budgets between schools, campuses and/or functions such as IT or real estate. In addition to intra-year management, the institution does not have short- or medium-term budget forecasts and therefore cannot rely on a risk analysis that would allow it to objectively make the necessary choices - particularly in times of crisis - beyond the absolute priority given by the President to the social and accessibility dimension of the institution.

Beyond this lack of steering tools, LIU's structure and economic model raise issues about the sustainability of this model:

1. The sustainability of a model based exclusively on low tuition fees (their proclaimed low level being in fact accentuated by the considerable amount of financial aid) raises questions about the institution's ability to face the future with regard to:
 - its strategy to position itself at the international level and thus notably to improve its visibility in terms of research. The national objective set by the Lebanese Ministry of Higher Education of 5% of the institutions' budget dedicated to research is far from being reached at LIU ;
 - its commitment to maintaining quality education: the low proportion of full-time teachers inducing a low supervision rate is likely to continue and even increase.

- a wage policy that automatically leads to salary increases that could go faster than the increase in resources.
2. The future of the Institution with regard to its legal structure: indeed LIU educational institution relies on a Foundation, the President of the University being the President of the Foundation and - from a real estate point of view - on a real estate company belonging to it. The institution therefore has very little equity capital. It is clear to the committee that this construction supported by a President with a strong will and vision has allowed a rapid and efficient development in the past. However, it questions the sustainability of the system: indeed, in the absence of other information, the committee wonders about the long-term structuring. Insofar as LIU does not control its real estate assets, for example, what is the guarantee, beyond the people currently at its head, that the existing model – with no need to pay high rents - will continue to exist?

The committee strongly recommends a clarification of the long-term perspective in terms of financial structure and the development of a resource allocation process. LIU has to develop short and medium-term financial forecasts and must try to diversify its sources of income, beyond tuition fees. It appears important to set up clear financial targets for its different missions and especially for research since it is a challenge clearly identified in the SER and the strategic plan for 2020-2025.

Field 2: The institution's human resources

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Clear HR management rules but lack of elaborate multi-year planning

HR management in LIU is ensured along 2 lines: schools, VPAA and Vice-President for Academic Affairs for academic staff; Office of HR answering to the VPAA and the Vice-President for Academic Affairs regarding administrative staff. There is no global management except at the highest level. The wage forecast does not seem organized so as to allow for multi-year planning. The structure of staff at LIU with 226 Full time permanent staff only, 1147 equivalent full time part time staff and 229 administrative staff raises interrogations about further growth and enhancement of research. On the other hand, an important effort has been made to ensure transparency in academic staff recruitment and promotion processes.

The rapid development of the institution, created less than 20 years ago, and its wish to position itself on the national and international scene as an institution centred around excellence in teaching and development of a research policy have led it to develop a policy of attractiveness in the recruitment of academic staff and a special effort to retain it. However, the low proportion of full time permanent academic staff, which is common to all Lebanese institutions, raises questions about the sustainability of a model that, in the long run, must be stabilized in order to face the constraints of the desired ambitious strategy. The pragmatic management that was necessary in times of growth needs to be strengthened by the development of a monitoring system that will allow the institution to objectivize its necessary choices in times of crisis.

The University's governance in the area of HR management remains highly centralized and vertical, with all decisions arriving at the VP and President level. In the field of academic HR, however, the processes are very well documented and precise, particularly with regard to the recruitment and evaluation of academic staff: even if the final decisions are the responsibility of the President, they are prepared in a context of procedural rigor that is both strict and transparent.

The staff of the University is divided between academic staff (226 faculty members full time and 1313 part time) and administrative and technical staff (229 agents) distributed among the 9 campuses with a greater number on the two main campuses. The Full time /part time ratio (15%-85%), if it appears to be the norm in Lebanon, is not the usual one at the international level especially in consideration to the student/full time academic ratio.

The administrative staff is managed by a directorate under the VP Administrative Affairs with a very small number of staff (2 persons in Beirut excluding assistants) at the central level, most of the staff attached to the HR function being located in the campuses within the framework of the matrix organization already described. This department supervises all HR activities concerning the administrative staff from recruitment to the end of the contract, including training and staff evaluation. On the contrary, academic staff are exclusively managed by the schools.

Concerning the academic staff, recruitment processes are perfectly clear and are well described in the available documentation⁴: candidates are evaluated both on the basis of their diplomas, their previous career and on the basis of an interview and jury process including a course presentation test and an interview with a "grand jury" at the end of a clear career path. It is worth mentioning that criteria concerning research have been introduced into the process in accordance with the institution's desire to develop this aspect of activity. Academic staff benefit from contracts according to a grid consistent with their level: it should be noted that even at the "professor" level there is no contract without a time limit, as they benefit from renewable 6-year contracts. The promotion and advancement systems are also very standardized ⁵and each teacher is subject to 3 evaluations per year: by students, by the Dean of the School and by peers. For those who have a research activity they are also subject to an evaluation by the CERD. Finally, the service activities (administrative) are also evaluated as part of the quality approach, the Quality assurance handbook providing a very precise system. However, an analysis grid is used to weight these various evaluations according to the type of contract.

During the interviews, it was confirmed to the members of the committee that part-time academic staff were also subject to the same recruitment procedure.

The same care does not seem to prevail in the processes for administrative staff: there are no job postings for external recruitment: LIU recruits a lot among its alumni (at the end of the interviews it appears that half of the administrative staff is made up of LIU alumni); the recruitment and promotion process is not transparent. The Staff Handbook does not give any details, even though it indicates that staff members are ranked according to their qualifications and that the annual evaluations may have an impact on their remuneration. However, there is a system of annual evaluation with an appraisal interview and the institution also insists on the "open door policy" which allows any staff member to communicate easily with his or her hierarchical environment.

The university does not seem to consider the quality dimension of the administrative staff as an issue even if it encourages administrative staff to pursue studies by giving them time facilities to follow training provided by the university. The organization chart does not give any indication on the structuring of the central services: HR, finance, assets. Only the campus services are presented. It is only in the body of the report that these services appear, without any indication of how many people in the Beirut and Bekaa campuses come under the administration of the campus itself or under centralized services. This lack of consideration is consistent with the weakness observed in various areas regarding steering tools. Moreover, it was indicated during the interviews that since the creation of LIU, the administrative staff has not moved and that no one has left the University in 20 years. If this reflects a real attachment to the institution and its values, there is a risk in the long run of creating a professional context without renewal capacity and/or acquisition of new methods.

However, the attachment of all staff (including part time faculty members) to the institution and its values appears remarkable and, at the end of the interviews, it appears that despite the youthfulness of the institution, staff turnover is very low, thus ensuring stability of both academic and administrative staff. Nevertheless, according to the staff interviewed and the SER, the strong competition with other institutions requires an active retention policy. In spite of the openness of recruitment for academic staff, it seems clear at the end of the interviews that LIU gives priority in its recruitments to staff who are already Part Time Faculty Members. This implicit priority, which is claimed orally, can surely contribute to the recruitment of quality Part Time staff invested in the functioning of the institution, but there is a risk of endogamy that could hinder the institution in meeting its research ambitions.

This is due in particular to the reliability of the institution which prides itself on having always paid its staff on time, which - in the Lebanese context - seems to be a very appreciable guarantee. In addition, beyond the strict respect of national regulations, LIU implements a social policy: e.g. maternity leave at LIU is 70 days, whereas the national regulations require a minimum of 40 days.

Despite the absence of formalized social dialogue institutions (a Health committee was created during the health crisis), the attachment of the staff to the establishment seems real and the open-door policy, if it does not replace a structured dialogue, is invoked as allowing a benevolent and understanding management.

Regarding the control of the wage bill, as mentioned above, the institution has so far been able to effectively manage the evolution of its main financial data, including the evolution of the wage bill. However, it is important to note an element that could not be clarified. The financial table provided (detailed LIU Budget) shows a payroll dedicated to permanent staff (including academic and administrative staff, i.e. 504 people) almost equivalent to the payroll dedicated to part-time staff (\$16.9 million permanent staff and \$17.6 million part time in 2018-2019), although there are 1313 part timers = 1147 full-time equivalents (see answer to Hcéres 12/11/20 question 10). This

⁴ Appendix 5: Hiring process

⁵ Appendix VII: Mechanism Ranking Promotion

element raises questions about the level of remuneration of part time academic staff in comparison with Full Time academic staff.

In addition, there does not seem to be any precise documentation on the forecast elements of changes in the wage bill: it was specified that the budget forecast was made with regard to these elements of change and in close collaboration with the Office of Accounting, but no multi-year data were provided.

In conclusion, it should be noted as strong points: the transparent and rigorous processes for the recruitment and advancement of academic staff with a comprehensive evaluation process, a real commitment to the institution and its values that is evident at all levels of staff and an attractive remuneration and benefit policy for full-time staff in view of the Lebanese context, particularly with regard to the reliability of the payroll systems.

The weaknesses regard the low number of full time faculty members, particularly in view of the large number of part timers, the absence of administrative staff to support the steering and support functions (e.g. research) and a very endogamous recruitment process that certainly ensures loyalty and unfailing support for the institution but does not allow for renewal open to the outside world. Another weakness relates to the absence of steering data, whether it is a question of forecasting the wage bill, which seems to be done in an artisanal manner, or social data: the elements resulting from the statistical report are relatively summary, and do not allow for a thorough analysis that would allow for a better measurement of skill needs, let alone a forecast management of jobs and skills system.

The Committee recommends introducing tools for managing the payroll, developing data to enable informed choices to be made to prioritize the objectives set by the multi-year strategy, opening up external recruitment more widely when possible in order to avoid the inevitable consequences of endogamy, which is useful in the start-up phase, but which may have negative consequences in the medium term, and promoting a comprehensive approach of the support administrative staff and a training policy.

Field 3: IT system

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An effective system that deserves to be placed in a more precise multi-year perspective

LIU enjoys a good level of IT infrastructure and an integrated system for student life functions that allows a performing dematerialization of all processes pertaining to this field. It has a well-organized IT office that prides itself on its capacity to develop its own systems adapted to its needs and is presently developing two important systems: Learning outcome Measuring Tool and Quality management system. However, the lack of multi-year programming does not allow for a precise date to achieve the implementation of these tools and thus allow for a better integrated IT master plan.

The IT function is managed at LIU by the Office of Information Technology: its director answers directly to the VPAA. 24 people, 13 of whom are located on the Beirut campus, are dedicated to IT⁶. However, as for the other support services, it is not known how many people are actually assigned to a central service and how many are working at campus level. But the centralization by the office of IT is real. The integration of the information systems of all the campuses in a single system (University Management System- UMS) is an asset to ensure the homogeneity of LIU's functioning. The role of each campus IT manager is well defined (support for the campus facilities) and exercised under the control of the Office of IT ensuring consistency.

The Office of IT benefits from an annual budget both in operation and investment (whose amount and / or proportion of the general operating budget was not communicated)). The schools can finance some investments. If some unforeseen expenses have to be financed, it is the responsibility of the VPAA to accept them. The number of computers for management and academic staff is substantial and the equipment for students is also important and recent⁷.

The University is very proud of its policy of in-house development of software adapted to its needs. It is claimed as a more flexible service allowing a better scalability to changing needs. Without prejudging an internal/external cost-benefit analysis that has not been carried out, the UMS tool seems to correspond to the needs of the institution. It allows for the efficient management of all the functionalities related to the student cycle (admission, monitoring of courses, production of grades, graduation, schedules) with dematerialization of the registration and study follow-up processes, and ensures coordination on all campuses.

⁶ STATISTICAL REPORT 2019-2020

⁷ Ser page 43

The institution also provides a lifetime email address to its students and makes available to them the Google LMS as part of a partnership with this company. Moodle is used too for remote examinations mainly, Google drive being used for the filing of documents. The rationale behind the use of 2 LMS has not been explained.

For the management of the establishment, LIU relies on various systems:

- An accounting system (external) Noria which only provides for the accounting in the strict sense and does not allow for example to develop a full cost analysis.
- The HR function is included in the UMS.
- Real estate and spaces are managed by another Information system.

To date, there is no decision support system that can integrate all the management software (finance, HR, real estate and education) to cross-reference data.

The office for IT is also leading two important projects:

- a Quality management system, which intends to implement the follow-up of the quality system and the automated edition of the KPIs. The discussions on the functionalities to be developed in priority have just started but it is hoped to have the main ones as soon as the end of the year.
- A project of "Learning outcome Measuring Tool" allowing to bring together the SLO (student learning outcome) and the PLO (program learning outcome): this should be a useful tool for the adaptation of learning processes.

Needs assessment process, if it is not formalized, is the result of an ongoing dialogue between the CETL Director, schools and campuses: the director participates regularly in the different school or campus committees. The needs are identified, evaluated financially and submitted for funding as part of the budget preparation process to the VPAA. However, this informal process would undoubtedly benefit from being formalized.

The elaboration of a portfolio of services would be an asset in order to program the work to be carried out over several years: despite the capacity of the University's departments to develop their own systems, it seems surprising that there is no medium-term programming document, since the development of complex systems requires rigorous programming.

As strong points, the Committee notes a team consistent with the size of the institution, the modern and consequent equipment both for the personnel (administrative and academic) and at the pedagogical level, the development capacities that have enabled the implementation of an integrated and homogeneous student life management system on all campuses. On the other hand, the Committee notes weaknesses related to the lack of a clear process to compare needs with current or future projects (no master plan was reported) and the absence to date of an integrated management system despite ongoing development projects that hamper the university's ability to produce and track KPIs.

The Committee encourages LIU to pursue efforts to develop an integrated system and adopt a multi-year perspective.

Field 4: Real estate owned by the institution

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Modern and well-equipped campuses, but questions may arise for the future

Over the past 20 years, LIU has established 9 campuses with seemingly modern and well-adapted facilities. However, the absence of a master plan and the campus ownership structure raise questions about the sustainability of this policy and do not facilitate a global vision of the weight of future infrastructure and / or maintenance costs.

Since its inception, LIU has developed 9 campuses across the country: 2 main campuses, the Beirut campus and the Bekaa campus which has the largest number of square meters and sports facilities; 7 smaller campuses spread all over the country and trying to cover a geographical field as complete as possible. The surface of the real estate assets ranges from 114000 m² on the Bekaa campus to 7880 m² on the smallest campus of Nabatieh. The main campus in the Bekaa enjoys more than 100 000 m² for 4165 students whereas the Beirut campus has only 40226 m² for 13185: the number of M² per student is very unequal going from 27.1 m² per student in the Bekaa campus to 2.9 in Beirut or Nabathieh.

The majority of the buildings are recent and in view of the elements handed over they appear to be of good quality. Due to this geographical distribution, it is clear that all campuses cannot benefit from the same level of infrastructure, especially as regards student housing (only in Beirut and the Bekaa campuses), sports facilities, associations / campus life rooms and study rooms for students or also laboratories. The university manages this inequality by combining secondary and main campuses with the best possible time and travel opportunities.

During the interviews it was indicated that most of the real estate investments have been made to date and that the main needs had been covered permitting further expansion of the university.

However, the real estate infrastructure does not belong to the University: it appears from the interviews that Beirut and Rayak are owned by the Foundation while the other campuses by a real estate company owned by the founder and President of the University: this structure has allowed flexibility and speed in the construction of campuses. The President believes it would not have been possible otherwise.

Finally, although the draft strategic plan 2020-2025 does indeed provide for the need to "pursue optimal development and use of existing facilities and strategic expansion of the university", there does not seem to be a real estate master plan to support this objective, nor any documents relating to the "strategic expansion of the university".

The structure of the financial documents submitted does not make possible to evaluate neither the percentage of the budget allocated to real estate maintenance nor the amount of investments made each year: it was indicated during the interviews that all real estate investments had been financed on the basis of the institution's current revenues. While this is further evidence of LIU's management ability over the past period, it does not allow for a documented opinion on the past or future prospects.

From the point of view of the physical organization of real estate management, there is no dedicated directorate at the central level, as the competence seems to be the responsibility of each campus director. The number of staff dedicated to maintenance is very limited: 9 people in total, including 4 on the Bekaa campus, 2 on Beirut, the others being spread over the 7 other campuses. The legal structuring of the real estate assets probably explains this situation; it is therefore risky to make a documented evaluation judgment on this dimension.

In conclusion, the Committee appreciates the recent and good quality real estate assets but considers as a weakness the absence of any master plan which would streamline the choices to be made in the future. Consequently, it recommends the development of a master plan highlighting the respective responsibilities of the stakeholders and ensuring the sustainability of the relationship between LIU and the building owners.

AREA 6 – QUALITY AND ETHICS

Field 1: Quality and continuous improvement policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An ambitious policy of quality assurance that needs operational translation

LIU has already put in place an ambitious Quality manual. It still has to implement this policy at all operational levels and set up a realistic approach to the development of this quality management system.

The Lebanese government has made the introduction and development of a quality assurance and evaluation system a legal obligation (Higher education act). It is within this framework that LIU wishes to benefit from an international accreditation by Hcéres.

LIU's commitment to quality assurance is ensured by the Office of quality assurance and institutional effectiveness and accreditation (QAIEA), which was restructured in 2017 to prepare for an international accreditation process. It reports directly to the President and has a Director and Deputy Director both from the academic staff. They have recently established a network of correspondents at the school and campus level.

A 3-year strategic plan was adopted in 2017 and a draft 5-year strategic plan exists and is in the process of being adopted, thus constituting the first steps of a real quality strategy. However, the 3-year strategic plan was not accompanied by a complete process that would have involved, as a part of an action plan, the setting of

objectives accompanied by relevant KPIs, annual progress reports and the end point of the advancement after the 3 years that would have served as a basis for the ongoing project 2020-2025.

The SWOT included in the SER indicates with transparency among the weaknesses, the fact that the quality culture is not yet acquired and is under construction. It also states the need to develop a tool for monitoring and evaluation.

LIU has therefore begun the construction of a Quality Management System that will provide, in addition to the automated production of KPIs, the monitoring of the quality process: in fact, the strategic plan must be complemented by an action plan both at the LIU level and at the level of each of its components, whether schools, campuses or departments, thus requiring a robust monitoring tool.

On the other hand, while much remains to be done to complete the process, LIU has developed a detailed quality management manual: It covers both the core activities of teaching and research, indicating very precisely all the structures and procedures necessary for their evaluation, and the management support activities, including detailed evaluation grids for all administrative and academic managers.

As far as individual evaluations are concerned, it remains to be specified how they will be used beyond the individual relationship to improve processes. It also remains to specify the timetable to produce the action plans required to initiate the process.

At the end of the interviews, the need for an automated monitoring tool appears urgent: the tool is under development and, according to the office of information technology, some of its components could be available quickly but the task appears very important and the construction of a synthetic dashboard could take several years.

As the construction of the tool appears indispensable to the actors encountered, it is important to complete it as quickly as possible (unless the actual implementation of the envisaged system is to be delayed indefinitely) and to start thinking without delay about the action plan, the objectives set and the corresponding KPIs.

The QAEIA has already begun a training policy for all the components of the University, necessary to raise awareness of the importance of the subject, through workshop and the constitution of various committees / self-study steering committee, working groups to examine compliance with international standards, teaching and learning quality assurance committee, institutional assessment committee, quality management system committee.

It is to be noted that alongside quality management at university level, some schools apply for quality certifications in their own field. The school of pharmacy has obtained accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education International Services, the school of Business is in the process of AACSB accreditation, thus demonstrating the commitment of LIU and its schools to achieve international standards.

LIU has shown a real willingness to develop a quality culture and to implement the continuous improvement process that it implies. The first steps have been taken and the scope of the exercise has been taken into consideration, but given the stated ambition and the scope of the task, it seems important to prioritize the actions to be implemented and to develop the relevant tools as quickly as possible. Among the priorities is the establishment of real KPIs that are not only statistical observations but also objectives established from an inventory and a desired progression.

The Committee notes as strong points the awareness of governance with the implementation of a strategic plan in 2017 and the structuring of the process with dedicated staff (QAEIA), correspondents in each entity and relevant committees. However, it regrets the lack of a monitoring tool, which is however under development, and the absence to date of a global action plan, broken down into components.

It recommends prioritizing elements of implementation, making quick progress on the effective implementation of a tool and establishing KPIs for the fields that allow it now.

Field 2: Ethics and professional standards

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strong affirmation of LIU values, clear grievance processes and regulations that still require tools to measure practical implementation.

The values claimed by LIU are strongly assumed and seem to be integrated by all the staff encountered:

- Inclusiveness and diversity;
- Accessibility and affordability;
- Responsibility to learners;
- Excellence in teaching, research and scholarship;
- Integrity and responsibility;
- Freedom and discovery.

“Accessibility and affordability “are values which have guided the growth of LIU and its policies in terms of geographic distribution and in terms of financial assistance. This commitment has guided the attitude of the institution throughout the ongoing economic and health crisis: the President reminded the committee that no student should be left behind due to difficulties in paying tuition fees for the duration of the crisis.

LIU has developed a very comprehensive set of formal procedures for appealing unfair or inappropriate actions. For both students and staff (academic or administrative), the processes are open and transparent and written in the Faculty handbook, the Staff handbook and the Student handbook. However, the grievance procedure is quite formal and the University indicates that everything is done to allow informal handling of grievances.

The Faculty handbook includes a very detailed code of conduct that each faculty member is committed to follow. This code is adopted by the board of trustees. The grievance process is very thorough and includes all types of harassment towards students or other staff. The discipline committee is made of persons proposed by the university council to the President who decides. The Faculty handbook includes a full description of a range of penalties commensurate with the offense.

The Staff handbook also includes a detailed description of the code of conduct to be followed as well as the range of sanctions. A formal procedure is followed which fully respects, as in the case of the faculty, the rights of the defendant.

University management and all those interviewed insist on the open-door policy which will allow a student or staff member to speak freely with their instructors, dean or higher hierarchy allowing for informal conflict resolution. The President of the university himself insists that his mobile phone number is open to everyone.

This open-door policy should, according to the various people interviewed, prevent recourse to formal grievance procedures. According to one of the interviewees, there have been at most 1 or 2 complaint procedures initiated by students in recent years.

As far as research ethics is concerned, it should be noted that LIU is one of the signatories of the conflict of interest charter drawn up by CNRS- L and has the relevant body (Institutional review board) to examine and approve research involving human and animal subjects.

Although LIU has the necessary tools to ensure ethical compliance (e.g. using Turnitin to combat plagiarism), it does not yet have the tools to collect information on the number and type of cases of integrity violation. It intends to create this tool in the near future.

In conclusion, it appears that LIU is very aware of ethical issues and has set up a solid set of rules and procedures. However, it is difficult to assess the implementation of this policy due to the lack of data. But LIU acknowledges this lack as appears in the relevant SWOT. However, the complexity of formal procedures is such that LIU encourages to informal setting up of conflicts at all levels by relying on the open door policy: it could be necessary to study a middle term between a formal procedure and the very informal way of dealing with these issues through the open door policy.

As strengths, it is worthwhile noting the existence of clear and publicized set of rules and procedures for all the categories of staff and students. Yet the lack of data and tools to measure the application of these rules should be addressed.

The Committee recommends developing a tool for collecting relevant information as soon as possible and studying the creation of an intermediate level between the full procedure and the informal way through the “open door” policy.

IV. CONCLUSION

The assessment of LIU was carried out three years after the launch of its first strategic development plan. After a period of strong expansion since its creation in 2001, LIU has initiated a reflection and a series of actions aimed at strengthening the original mission of higher education for all, the development of research activities and the intensification of interactions with stakeholders. Considering that the stage of its development and its strategy initiated in 2017 were likely to give it the status of a fully-fledged university, LIU decided to request international accreditation by contacting Hcéres.

Following a careful examination of all the documents provided and the numerous and informative discussions that the experts were able to have with a wide range of members of LIU and its partners, it appears in the eyes of the committee that LIU has the qualities of a university which knew how to evolve in a difficult context, by pursuing the missions which it had assigned itself to its creation. Its strong identity, shared by all of its members, the competitive level of its tuition fees associated with the generosity of its financial aid policy in favour of students, the wide range of its teaching, the quality and the scope of its infrastructure and the solidity of its governance were all factors favourable to its success.

To fully fulfil its university mission, LIU intends to strongly develop its research activities. This is one of its main challenges today, which must require a significant increase in the share of the budget devoted to research, allowing a massive effort to recruit full-time teachers, holders of a doctorate, an increase in administrative and technical support staff for research and the equipment of laboratories dedicated to this activity.

Given the risks that the future represents for the university, it would be in its interest to involve all its partners in the definition of its strategy and its governance, to equip itself with more precise forecasting management tools and consider the sustainability of its economic model.

STRENGTHS

1. A university that has been able to ensure rapid and extensive development across the Lebanese territory
2. A clear vision and an identity shared by the whole community
3. A generous student assistance policy
4. A clear but fairly complex organization, allowing the cohesion and efficiency of an institution with nine campuses
5. A wide range of training choices at the undergraduate level and a teaching quality recognized by companies and foreign partners
6. Good quality strategic planning process and comprehensive procedure manuals accessible to the whole community
7. An efficient financial management and clear HR recruitment and promotion rules
8. Modern and well-adapted facilities, numerous physical and digital learning resources, rich campus life over the nine campuses
9. Research activities, although still underdeveloped, of good quality and likely to benefit from an appropriate structure
10. Responsiveness to Covid-19, in implementing distant learning while preserving proximity between students and staff as well as quality of education.

WEAKNESSES

1. No specific action plan linked to the strategic plan, without real KPIs, for all areas of management and no master plan for equipment maintenance
2. An economic model potentially risky, especially since the university does not own most of its buildings
3. Low participation of students, alumni and employers in strategy development and governance
4. Low proportion of full-time tenured faculty members with a doctorate
5. A still embryonic faculty development policy
6. An international policy still underdeveloped, in terms of student exchanges and projects
7. Internal communication not very formalized and websites (at university and school level) suffering from a lack of updating

8. No information on the transition of graduates into the labour market.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INSTITUTION

1. Consider the economic model, in particular the question of the patrimonial structure, if the sustainability of the institution is at stake for the next uncertain years. Insofar as LIU does not control its real estate assets, for example, what is the guarantee, beyond the people currently at its head, that the existing model – with no need to pay high rents - will continue to exist?
2. Develop short and medium-term financial forecasts and try to diversify its sources of income, beyond tuition fees. The business model is based exclusively on enrolment and a very large financial assistance budget. This should lead the university management to develop rapidly the tools for multi-year forecast that would give it the means to explicit its choices to come in a crisis situation.
3. Draw the consequences of its objective of "prioritizing the development of research as one of its strategic objectives" on its staffing policy, on its budget and on research orientations. The research budget must be significantly increased in order to allow the development of research laboratories, the reinforcement of equipment and the recruitment of specialized technical and administrative staff. LIU will also need to strengthen its full-time teaching staff, who are likely to devote a strategic part of their time to research.
4. Involve all the stakeholders more strongly in governance. LIU's initiative of introducing student representatives to certain departmental and school councils should be encouraged. Employers and alumni could be part of program committees to advice on course contents, so they can fit into the current demands of the socio-economic context. The experience of the School of Pharmacy, which has implemented an advisory council with employers and alumni, should be extended to the other schools.
5. Strengthen the international relation policy and increase partnerships. LIU should define a clearer international strategy as part of its 2025 plan, so as to set explicit and ambitious objectives with regard to student mobility (incoming or outgoing), staff mobility, number of foreign professors and LIU's involvement in international projects. Such a strategy should specify the geographic areas targeted, the schools concerned and the preferred research themes.
6. Ramp up the activity of CETL. LIU must define a clear and detailed strategy for the development of learning and teaching skills and put in place ambitious actions for both full-time and part-time teachers.
7. Set up a systematic and permanent system for observing the professional careers of graduates. In view of the large number of graduates within the five schools, the results of such an initiative would undoubtedly provide high added value for LIU.

V. COMMENTS OF THE INSTITUTION



الجامعة اللبنانية الدولية
LEBANESE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Beirut, February 23rd, 2021

Prof. François Pernot

Europe & International Department Director

HCERES

Dear Prof. Pernot,

In the name of the LIU community, namely its faculty, staff, and students, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to each member of the Experts Committee presided by Prof. Jean-Jacques Paul for reviewing objectively and professionally our submitted application and latterly amid the visit conducting all the interviews. Furthermore, we would like to thank the Experts Committee for highlighting some of LIU's strengths like our teaching quality, our growth and extensive development across all Lebanon, our generous student assistance, our modern and well equipped facilities, our efficient financial management, and our responsiveness to the Covid-19 pandemic, among others.

LIU is strongly committed to continued improvement and this HCERES evaluation and accreditation process accords with our institution's strategic decision. In this regard, we highly value all the strengths that have been highlighted in the Experts report, and look very positively and proactively at the recommendations of the Committee as a road map in our quest for quality assurance and continuous improvement.

After receiving the HCERES Experts Committee report on Monday 15/02/2021, we proceeded to study and so internalize the report and as a first conclusion, we clearly state here that we understand and we will fully heed all recommendations made by the Experts in the report. Thankfully, we would like to add some comments to the recommendations spelled out in your report and apprise you of some strategic actions and vision for the next five years.





جامعة اللبنانية الدولية
LEBANESE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

1. Sustainability, Multi-Year Forecast, and Patrimonial Structure

Ensuring sustainability has always been at the core of the LIU's priorities. Since its inception in 2001 and until today, LIU always practiced sound financial management and was always very reactive with respect to the evolving Lebanese situation. During the academic year 2019-2020, we witnessed a severe economic crisis and the pandemic, and yet due to our sound management we had an increase of 5% in enrollment and maintained a positive financial result. So too in 2021, LIU was able to increase enrollment to 39,148 registered students (a 5 % increase over 2019-2020). This continuous increase in enrollment is largely due to LIU's strategy of establishing 9 campuses across all Lebanon readily accessible to all students, males and females, and especially to low income ones, and to competitive tuition fees as well as to the close follow-up and counselling to its students. This strategy is particularly attractive and perhaps even more in a time of economic crisis.

Despite the political and economic challenges in Lebanon, and with the aim of ensuring sustainability for the future, we used our strong financial results of previous years as a benchmark to make our financial forecast for the next five years. Knowing that the economic situation will be challenging, we forecast that our enrollment will continue to increase yearly at a rate of at least 5% over the next five years whilst at the same time controlling expenses so as to maintain a healthy positive result. In our forecast for the next five years and taking into consideration that our campus expansion is complete, we shall be using resources -once allocated in years past for expansion- towards new strategic priorities such as increasing the research budget and increasing the number of full-time faculty members, along with other prioritized activities. Likewise, we will continue to allocate yearly for the next five years an important amount of our budget to a miscellany of provisions which will help us steer and better deal with any unpredictable eventualities. These emergency funds have already served their purpose recently during the closure of the University due to the political disruptions in October/November 2019 and during the pandemic of 2020, and we will continue with such practice in order to safeguard the future well-being of our institution.

On the revenues side, LIU, like all private universities, is relying largely on students' fees, however, in the medium and long-term the University is targeting to diversify its income using specific projects with the economic sector (i.e. applied research, expertise), to increase participation to European and/or international programs, and to search for donations from its alumni. Nonetheless a rigorous management, as done since the inception of LIU, and a great reactivity, as shown during the Lebanese economic crisis and the pandemic, are undoubtedly essential to sustain the LIU economic model.

On the assets side, the patrimonial structure of the university, namely its real-estate is ensured since LIU owns the main campus in Bekaa and the Rayak campus, and has for the other seven campuses long-term agreements signed by the Foundation and the real-estate company for the exclusive use of the real-estate properties and buildings by LIU.



جامعة اللبنانية الدولية
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2. Research Development

Since the establishment of the Center of Excellence for Research and Development (CERD) in 2017, LIU developed a very strong and vigorous research policy which in turn contributed to enhancing research quality. However, in striving to increase the research quantity, the research structure was implemented as of summer 2020.

In order to bolster research output, the research budget will be gradually increased in the next five years to approximate as near as possible to the target of 5% set by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. This research budget will be used to purchase research equipment, support to teams/labs, increase staff mobility and support to PhD students, launch internal calls on specific subjects, and support to prepare projects besides other research activities. The expected increase in research output will come from two strategic actions: first from the new full-time faculty members whom will be hired according to research profile, and equally important from the integration to research of our part-time¹ faculty members. The part-time faculty members will be first ranked according to our ranking criteria, then they will be promoted also according to our promotion criteria, and they will be eligible to receive research funds just like the full-timers according to our funding policy. The addition of new full-time faculty and the integration and support of our part-time faculty will undoubtedly contribute to increase the quantity and quality of research output.

Pursuant to this, school research leaders and department research leaders, who met the experts' panels, were nominated based on a selection criterion that takes research profile, quality and quantity for each member into consideration. Currently, the research groups are being formed where every full-time and part-time faculty member is being classified as active, semi-active and non-active researcher. This classification will be used to identify faculty members who can receive course release such that more time is devoted to research.

LIU will further develop research with selected international partners using its already existing collaborations for PhDs with a view of establishing a doctoral school by 2030 or earlier if possible. Not only will LIU rely on already established research areas such as engineering and pharmacy but also will rely on strengthening other research areas important to the Lebanese economy and society such as computer science (information technology, data mining, cybersecurity), environment (water quality, air pollution control, waste management), economics, and management sciences. For this, the hiring plan will take into consideration the research profile of newly hired full-time/part-time faculty members. In the long term, LIU will set ambitions and priorities in the applied research domain by emphasizing national and regional needs and giving importance to the possible commercialization of research outputs.

3. Strengthening International Relations

LIU has 13% international students, however it is of utmost importance to further develop internationalization and external relations to be more linked with its strategic objectives. While progress

¹ Part-time faculty members at LIU have teaching duties and perform research under the research funding policy



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has been made regarding students' mobility in the last few years, namely the placing of some of our graduates in European universities, mainly France, to do their PhD studies under co-direction and other cohorts in dual degrees and student exchange programs with Worms (Germany) and Bucharest (Romania) universities. LIU through the Global Engagement Office (GEO), as per actions of 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, is to accelerate internationalization efforts through growth in students and staff mobility, and establishing new international degree programs (e.g. at least one double degree in each school).

The GEO actions are set to strengthen international relationships by seeking to increase the number of incoming and outgoing students, faculty, and staff regionally (Jordan, Gulf countries, and Egypt among others) and internationally (European Countries). Here it is worth mentioning that LIU has faculty members from Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. The GEO and the University will continue to provide the conditions for higher participation rate in international funding programs within the EU through Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, and EuropeAid and other international projects, as well as promotion of cooperation with foreign universities, research institutions, industry and other possible partner institutions.

4. Involvement of all Stakeholders in Governance

As stated in our action plan for the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan that is underway, the schools have already begun forming committees and selection criteria to include students in departmental, schools, and campus councils. Here it is worthy of mention that the Schools of Pharmacy and Arts & Sciences have students now included in some department level meetings. Such a fruitful and enriching experience will be expanded to other schools.

Moreover, Deans will establish Socio-Economic Councils (SECs) at departments and schools' levels. In addition, schools in consort with Center of Excellence for Teaching and Learning (CETL), will integrate employers and alumni to be part of program committees to contribute to course contents and skills needed for the job market. The school of Pharmacy has already formed an advisory board which includes employers and alumni who actively participate in program committees.

5. Teaching and Learning Reinforcement and Professional Development

Though (CETL) was established in 2019 and included in our strategic plan 2020-2025, the Center will be invigorated to define and promote activities directed to the capacity building of teaching faculty based on identified needs. It will carry out comprehensive continuous staff and personnel training and internal audits which should relate efficient relevancy of educational program goals and learning outcomes, compatibility of teaching, learning, and student assessment methods as well as compliance with international standards that lead to program accreditation.

6. Follow up of Graduates

We at LIU are fully cognizant of the need to track our Graduates and their career development by forging links with alumni especially in the MENA region, establishing a database of job offers in the region, developing new programs based on local and regional market needs and employability of graduates, as well as bolstering the links among LIU and employers as well as between research and learning.





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Our Public Affairs and Communication Office through its Career and Alumni Units will endeavor to devise a system to follow up the job placement and career of our graduates. This is very important because it will strengthen the relationship with our alumni, it will give us useful information for our potential graduates, and also to promote LIU. Again, the good practices of the school of pharmacy which has very close relations with its graduates and their careers will be used as a benchmark for the development of this system.

7. Action Plan & KPIs

The report has underlined the need for more KPIs and metrics. Based on our experience in the preceding Strategic Plan, we are now preparing action plans to apply our global strategy. Specific committees will set actions, with key KPIs, which will be yearly followed by the different councils and relevant offices. This will be the case for research development, HR policy (LIU is preparing a 2021 social report), finance, international relations, among others. The UMS (University Management System) will be continually developed accordingly to support these action plans.

Finally, we once again thank the Experts Committee for all its vaunted efforts and work during this evaluation period, and we wish to thank you for considering the points and actions described above.

Best regards,



Abdel Rahim Mourad
President





2 rue Albert Einstein
75013 Paris, France
T. 33 (0)1 55 55 60 10

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Europe and international Department

ACCREDITATION DECISION

Lebanese International University (LIU)

Lebanon

April 2021

SCOPE OF THE ACCREDITATION GRANTED BY HCERES

HCERES has built its evaluation process based on a set of objectives that Higher Education Institution must pursue to ensure recognised quality within France and Europe. These objectives are divided up into six fields among which are the accreditation criteria.

As for the "External Evaluation Standards", the accreditation criteria have been specifically designed for foreign HEI. The accreditation criteria were adopted by the Board on June 2016 and are available on the HCERES website (hceres.fr).

The accreditation committee, meeting his accreditation decision, has wholly taken into account the final evaluation report of the HEI. This accreditation decision is the result of a collegial and reasoned process.

The accreditation decision issued by HCERES shall not grant any rights whatsoever, whether in France or abroad. The decision to accredit an institution confers an accreditation label and does not infer recognition in France of the qualifications issued by the accredited institution. The HCERES accreditation process therefore has no impact on the qualifications recognition process in France.

FULLFILMENT OF THE ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

AREA 1: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

Accreditation criterion

The institution is governed based on a strategy adapted to its environment and identity. The internal organisational structure is clearly defined and allows the institution to fulfil its missions. The institution's stakeholders participate in its governance.

Criterion assessment

LIU was created with a clear mission, to open the doors of higher education to a population that did not have access to it, by creating campuses throughout the territory and by keeping registration fees lower than in other private universities. With a solid strategic approach, its ambition is to adapt the quality of its teaching to contemporary requirements and to promote research activities corresponding to a university worthy of the name.

LIU should be able to upscale its teacher recruitment policy and its economic model in order to be able to achieve its new strategic objectives and withstand the upheavals of its environment.

LIU has built a clear but rather complex organization, in order to maintain the cohesion and efficiency of an institution with nine campuses. The university's system of governance is clearly defined by a Governance document containing roles and responsibilities for all constituents. LIU's system of shared governance relies on councils, where no stakeholders are invited, with responsibility for making recommendations or providing advice specific to their areas of responsibility. Despite this apparent complexity, interviews suggest that the governance structure is quite effective relying on a very dense inter-personnel network of communication. Strategic and important financial decisions remain the responsibility of the President-owner of the university, supported by the two Vice-Presidents.

AREA 2: RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Accreditation criterion

The institution develops research and teaching policies adapted to its strategy and the needs of the socioeconomic and cultural environment. Study programs are coordinated with the institution's research activities. The programme offering is clear. Student admission, progress and qualification procedures are defined and implemented.

Criterion assessment

In its strategic plan 2020-2025, LIU aims to move from a teaching excellence to a teaching and research excellence university. Priority will be given to research themes of national interest. The structuring of research is a recent concern for LIU and is not yet effective. Its implementation relies in particular on the creation of a Center of Excellence for Research and Development in 2017. Research groups are not yet formed and there is almost no laboratory dedicated to research. Resources devoted to research are low: low budget (1.12% of the gross income); high proportion of part-time faculty members; heavy administrative and teaching load of faculty members which leave little time to do research; lack of equipment; lack of staff supporting research for administrative tasks. However, a few active and good quality research niches already exist at LIU, especially thanks to students doing PhD co-supervised with foreign universities, and article production has increased in recent years.

Since its inception, LIU has focused on teaching and learning, offering a wide range of training choices : bachelor programs (39) and several Master (13) across most of the campuses. The number of students has increased dramatically in recent years. The LIU model relies mainly on external faculty members, which makes structuring actions in teaching and learning necessary. The rate of supervision of students by permanent Full-Time professors is too low. A Teaching and Learning Office was created but our committee found that its real impact was still low. The lack of a culture of systematic evaluation of all student services is already identified by LIU. Thus, this is one of its objectives in the context of its next strategic plan 2020-2025.

AREA 3: STUDENT ACADEMIC PATHWAYS

Accreditation criterion

The institution is attentive to learning resources and the quality of life of students. It ensures that students are well-informed and provided with student services throughout their academic careers. Students must be able to participate in governance structures.

Criterion assessment

LIU is developing an important policy of openness to welcome a very large number of students representing a strong gender diversity and relative international diversity. The availability of staff and academic advisors should be noted and allows students to be supported. The transition to the labour market is facilitated by student work but little information on the professional future of graduates is recorded and relations with alumni are still relatively underdeveloped.

Students at LIU benefit from a rich campus life to support their personal growth and well-being outside classes. The number of choices and opportunities may vary from one campus to another but overall students can participate in sports activities, enrol in clubs, attend events and take part in extracurricular activities.

LIU provides numerous physical and digital learning resources to students among all campuses. After the recent events due to Covid-19, LIU has been reactive in implementing distant learning while preserving proximity between students and staff as well as quality of education.

AREA 4: EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Accreditation criterion

The partnership policy is designed and established to provide added value for the institution. The institution has structured its external relations and developed internationalisation mechanisms that are adapted to its strategy.

Criterion assessment

LIU strong implantation through the Lebanese territory results in a good network of reliable partners and stakeholders.

LIU is international in its teaching delivery with courses fully taught in English, use of Program Learning Outcome and Course Learning Outcome, as most English/American Universities, design of Exam and assessment based on Bloom Taxonomy, exposure to foreign languages and a rate of 17% of international (based in Lebanon) students. However, the mobility of students (incoming or outgoing), the mobility of staff, the number of foreign faculty members and the involvement of LIU in international projects are rather low, with a lack of clear strategy for the next period (strategic plan 2025) in terms of geography, schools and research themes to develop internationally.

AREA 5: MANAGEMENT

Accreditation criterion

Financial, budgetary and human resources are managed and organised in a defined and well-controlled manner. They are adapted to the strategy defined by the institution and involve multi-year planning. The institution has an IT system adapted to its strategy and objectives. The institution's assets are well-known and managed.

Criterion assessment

Although LIU benefits from an efficient financial everyday management, it relies more on informal processes and strong vertical governance than on clear procedures and management tools which, for the time being, are lacking. No multi year planning is envisaged either strictly financial or on the HR dimension when such a view is rendered necessary by the management of the crisis and by LIU's intention to develop research.

Although the IT system concerning student life is performing and relies on an IT office that prides itself on its capacity to develop its own system, no decision support tool is available notwithstanding the on going development of 2 important systems: Learning outcome Measuring Tool and Quality management system. However, the lack of multi-year programming does not allow for a precise date for the implementation of these tools and thus allow for a better integrated IT master plan.

As for facilities management over the past 20 years, LIU has established 9 campuses with seemingly modern and well-adapted facilities. However, the absence of a master plan and the campus ownership structure raise questions about the sustainability of this policy and do not facilitate a global vision of the weight of future infrastructure and / or maintenance costs.

AREA 6: QUALITY AND ETHICS

Accreditation criterion

The institution has defined a quality policy for all its missions and strives towards continuous improvement. It upholds ethical values and professional standards, and applies them in its day-to-day operations.

Criterion assessment

LIU has already put in place an ambitious Quality manual. It still has to implement this policy at all operational levels and set up a realistic approach to the development of this quality management system. Strong affirmation of its values and clear grievance processes and regulations still require tools to measure practical implementation.

FINAL DECISION

Considering the accreditation criteria analysis detailed above, the accreditation committee issues the following decision:

"Three years accreditation decision with conditions"

"Accreditation decision with conditions: report and/or follow-up visit after three years (April 2024) to verify the implementation of the prescriptive recommendations mentioned in the evaluation report and in the assessments of the accreditation criteria, in particular on the following points:

1. LIU aims to move from a teaching excellence to a teaching and research excellence university. In order to fully develop and implement the ambitious strategic policies already defined, the Commission allows LIU to take a 3-year period. It will enable the LIU community to ramp up the whole range of its academic activities and build capacities to reach this goal. The structures are in place and well designed but still need more time to bolster the expected output and give a decisive added value to the institution.
2. Consider the economic model, in particular the question of the patrimonial structure, if the sustainability of the institution is at stake for the next uncertain years. Insofar as LIU does not control its real estate assets, for example, what is the guarantee, beyond the people currently at its head, that the existing model – with no need to pay high rents - will continue to exist?
3. Develop short and medium-term financial forecasts and try to diversify its sources of income, beyond tuition fees. The business model is based exclusively on enrolment and a very large financial assistance budget. This should lead the university management to develop rapidly the tools for multi-year forecast that would give it the means to explicit its choices to come in a crisis situation.
4. Draw the consequences of its objective of "prioritizing the development of research as one of its strategic objectives" on its staffing policy, on its budget and on research orientations. The research budget must be significantly increased in order to allow the development of research laboratories, the reinforcement of equipment and the recruitment of specialized technical and administrative staff. LIU will also need to strengthen its full-time teaching staff, who are likely to devote a strategic part of their time to research.
5. Involve all the stakeholders more strongly in governance. LIU's initiative of introducing student representatives to certain departmental and school councils should be encouraged. Employers and alumni could be part of program committees to advice on course contents, so they can fit into the current demands of the socio-economic context. The experience of the School of Pharmacy, which has implemented an advisory council with employers and alumni, should be extended to the other schools.
6. Strengthen the international relation policy and increase partnerships. LIU should define a clearer international strategy as part of its 2025 plan, so as to set explicit and ambitious objectives with regard to student mobility (incoming or outgoing), staff mobility, number of foreign professors and LIU's involvement in international projects. Such a strategy should specify the geographic areas targeted, the schools concerned and the preferred research themes.
7. Ramp up the activity of CETL. LIU must define a clear and detailed strategy for the development of learning and teaching skills and put in place ambitious actions for both full-time and part-time teachers.
8. Set up a systematic and permanent system for observing the professional careers of graduates. In view of the large number of graduates within the five schools, the results of such an initiative would undoubtedly provide high added value for LIU.

After studying the follow-up report and the follow-up visit, the Accreditation Commission will give a reasoned decision on whether to extend the accreditation for a further two years.

SIGNATURE

For HCERES and on behalf of



Thierry COULHON,

President

Date: Paris, April 8th, 2021



2 rue Albert Einstein
75013 Paris, France
T. 33 (0)1 55 55 60 10

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