



***International Evaluation of the Quality Assurance  
Mechanisms and Procedures in the Czech  
University of Life Sciences Prague***

**A Report by the International  
Evaluation Group**

Second Edition - April 2012

**(This is the second agreed version of the Report which incorporates changes  
agreed following comments by the Board of the Rector at CULS)**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CULS) has developed rapidly in the last ten years and is now a thriving University on its own campus with over 22,000 students. The **quantity** of students has increased dramatically and now the attention is more focused on the **quality of teaching and research (education)**. The study programmes in the University are currently accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. It is likely that the Ministry will introduce new legislation in the next two years or so which will give greater powers to the Universities in the Czech Republic to accredit their own study programmes at all levels. In this situation the University will need to demonstrate that it has appropriate and rigorous procedures and mechanisms in place to assure the quality of its teaching and research.

In anticipation of new legislation, the University invited five senior members of universities in the Euroleague for Life Sciences (ELLS) and an independent consultant to form an International Evaluation Group to visit the University and evaluate the quality assurance mechanisms and procedures. The group visited the University for five days in late November and early December, 2011 to consider a self evaluation report and to have discussions with senior staff in the Rectorate, in the Faculties and in the Institutes. In addition to the main aim, the group was asked to evaluate the CULS quality assurance mechanisms in relation to the standards of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

This Report contains statements on quality issues which affect the whole University. These include organisational issues, committee and board structures, learning support, research, international relations, quality of staff, involvement of students, completion rates of students, learning outcomes, contacts with industry and the professions and the role of alumni. A separate section reports on activities in the five Faculties and two Institutes and identifies strengths and areas for development.

The group concluded that CULS has continued to make considerable advances in its work on many fronts. It has developed its systems for quality assessment and control well. It has benefited from its membership of ELLS in this respect and there would be further advantages to be gained from further contacts with this group. Members

of staff from ELLS are willing to help to further develop the systems. Quality has assumed a higher priority in the work of the University but we believe that there would be considerable benefits from providing an even sharper focus through the creation of a senior post, possibly at Vice Rector level, to provide an even greater stimulus across the whole University.

The University has made rapid and significant progress in developing and implementing quality assurance mechanisms and procedures and is likely to continue to do so in the next five year period. Even stronger collaboration with members of ELLS is encouraged to achieve this. Changes in the organisational structure of ELLS will also help this process.

## **SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CULS) has developed rapidly in the last 20 years and now has in excess of 22,000 students registered on its study programmes. Most of the studies take place on the campus at Suchbátka in Prague 6. However the University has expanded its work in recent years to deliver distance learning in Consultancy Centres located around the Czech Republic. It has also developed Lifelong Learning programmes and been active in providing programmes for the so-called University of the Third Age. It is a vibrant University located on a very attractive campus which is conveniently linked to the city of Prague by good public transport facilities. It is the only University in Prague to have its own campus.

CULS is committed to a strategy which combines both *teaching* and *research* in the study programmes for its students. We call this *education* and this term will be used in subsequent parts of this report. The Long Term Strategy (LTS) for the University is produced for a five-year period and is updated annually. The current strategy runs until 2015. The English version of the strategy was not available for this evaluation but at the time of this revised Report it is available in English. This document is considered to be a key one in the University.

The University is mainly funded by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The accreditation of study programmes is carried by the Accreditation Commission which is set up by the Government. The Accreditation Commission, which is independent from the Ministry, consists of experts in various areas of education. It reports its findings to the Ministry which cannot change its decisions and recommendations. The University is subject to visits from the Accreditation Commission to consider documentation and meet with staff.

It is likely that the Government will change the emphasis of accreditation, and therefore quality assurance, through a new Act. This is likely to transfer responsibility for accreditation from the Accreditation Commission to the universities in the Republic. It will therefore be very important that the universities are prepared for this transfer which may happen within two years of this

evaluation. This is the main reason why CULS set up this International Evaluation procedure. It will be important for the University to be prepared and be able to justify to the Ministry and the public that it has well-developed quality assurance and assessment procedures in place which are rigorously applied.

It is important to record that CULS has been very proactive in the past in inviting international groups to visit and assess aspects of its activities. This is a good thing and demonstrates a willingness to be open to constructive criticism and suggestion from external sources as well as being complimented for good practice. This evaluation is the fourth since the political changes took place in late 1989. In 1992 and 1993 a large team of evaluators was assembled from Wageningen Agricultural University in The Netherlands. This group published its report in late 1993. A second evaluation took place in 1999 as part of a Tempus-funded project entitled: 'Internal Evaluation Systems in Agri-universities in the Czech Republic'. In 2005 a further group was assembled to carry out a 'University Quality Assessment'. This group included members from Germany, Austria, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom. This was at a time when CULS was developing rapidly and the Bologna Process was well under way. The evaluation report was published in 2006.

### **1.2 The Brief for the Evaluation**

The Brief for the Evaluation was prepared by Dr Michal Lostak (First Vice Rector and Vice Rector for International Relations) in CULS together with members of the Board of the Rector (Rector, Vice Rectors, Deans and Directors of Institutes). It is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The three broad objectives are set out there but repeated here for clarity:

1. To evaluate quality assurance mechanisms (standards) existing at CULS in their complexity and to assess the readiness of CULS for the new system of accrediting the higher education bodies in the Czech Republic;
2. To evaluate the CULS quality assurance mechanisms (standards) in relation to the standards of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) ([www.enqa.eu](http://www.enqa.eu));
3. To provide the experience from foreign partners with the system of their internal evaluation mechanisms.

### 1.3 The Members of the Evaluation Team

The membership of the International Evaluation Team was carefully selected to reflect a wide range of experience from the European League for Life Sciences Universities (ELLS). ELLS is a network of seven leading universities in Europe which co-operate in the fields of Natural Resource Management, Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, Veterinary Sciences, Food Sciences and Environmental Sciences. The University felt that it was appropriate to do this as it has been a full member since 2008. This was a sensible move as there is much good practice within the group which could benefit CULS in relation to quality assurance. Five of the member universities nominated people to participate in the evaluation and they are listed below in alphabetical order by family names. The seventh university in the network is the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Sweden but it did not provide a member of the group because it was undergoing a similar evaluation at the time. The sixth member of the evaluation group was Professor Fred Harper, formerly Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Land Use at the University of Plymouth in the United Kingdom. He chaired the University Quality Assessment group in 2005/2006 and has had a long association with CULS.

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It is important to note that Professor Haas is a member of the ELLS Quality Assurance Support Team. Three of the members were also members of the University Quality Assessment Review group which reported its findings in 2006. The group quickly formed into a cohesive operating unit and carried out its work in a professional manner.

### 1.4 The Format for the Evaluation

The format for the evaluation was in four main parts. Firstly the group was sent the Brief as outlined above. Secondly the group was sent the CULS Document entitled: *The System of Czech University of Life Sciences Prague Quality Assurance - Self Evaluation Report*. This arrived in late September 2011. Thirdly the group then visited the University in the period 28<sup>th</sup> November to 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2011 (5 days). During this time there was a series of meetings around the University. The Chairman, Professor F Harper met with Vice Rector Michal Lostak on the morning of 28<sup>th</sup> November to go over the Brief and the Self Evaluation document. The international evaluation group held discussions with key members of staff and this was the most important activity. It was also important to have the opportunity to involve students of the University in the discussions. The group was shown some of the facilities of the University, its Faculties and Institutes. The programme included the following:

- Briefing by the First Vice Rector and two of his Colleagues who were also Vice Rectors (Vice Rector for Information Technology and Relations with Industry, Dr. Petr Hermanek; Vice Rector for Science and Research, Professor Dr. Marketa Sedmikova)
- Presentation on the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) system by the University Division for ICT
- Visit to the Study and Information Centre (SIC) for a discussion on the library facilities and how they support the quality of education
- Faculty of Agrobiological Sciences, Food and Natural Resources
- Faculty of Economics and Management

- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Environmental Sciences
- Faculty of Forestry and Wood Sciences
- Institute of Education and Communication
- Institute of Tropics and Sub Tropics
- The forest estate and castle at Kostelec nad Cernymi Lesy as an example of an off-campus facility used for research and education combined with student practical work.

Over three hours was scheduled for each visit.

Informal discussions continued over lunch and during the evenings at dinners hosted by the Rector and his staff, the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Management and the Dean of the Faculty of Agrobiological Sciences, Food and Natural Resources.

The fourth stage consisted of the Evaluation Group being asked to respond to comments made on the first agreed version of the Report by the Board of the Rector at CULS. This took place in April and May of 2012. Comments from the Faculties and Institutes will also be considered when received and incorporated into the third edition.

## 1.5 Information Provided for the Evaluation

The main document available before the evaluation visit was the CULS publication entitled: *'The System of Czech University of Life Sciences Prague Quality Assurance - Self Evaluation Report (first draft)'*. This was prepared by a small group in the University including representatives from each Faculty and Institute under the guidance of Dr. Michal Lostak, First Vice Rector and Vice Rector for International Relations. This document was concise and incorporated the activities of and information about the Faculties and Institutes. More detailed information about the Faculties and Institutes was provided during the visit as meetings were held in each of these sub-units of the University.

Another document was sent to members just before the visit. This was entitled: *'Some data and figures about CULS and its Faculties/Institutes'*. Generally speaking this was helpful and provided the basis for detailed discussions in the various parts of the University. It was important to receive these data separately just before the visit so that the group could work with the most recent information as supplied to the Ministry on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011.

One of the members of the 2005/2006 University Quality Assessment group asked for reference to be made to that report in order to monitor implementation of the recommendations. This was agreed and copies of the report, in English, were made available to members. In the event this proved useful as it highlighted areas where significant progress has been made and others where it has not.

Other information in a variety of formats was presented to the group as it moved through its meetings. Much of this was helpful and in some cases very professionally produced. In the introductory session, reference was made to the organisational structure of the University and members asked for a copy of this. Dr Michal Lostak presented annotated copies to members later in the week.

## SECTION 2: ISSUES AFFECTING THE WHOLE UNIVERSITY

Foreword: The report will consider quality issues at two levels. The first will be those that affect the whole of the University and we have tried to collate these from the programme undertaken. Secondly, specific issues relating to the Faculties and Institutes are presented.

### 2.1 The Organisational Structure

The organisational structure of the University is a complex matrix. This was explained in the introductory meeting. The Rector is the Head of the University. There are five Vice Rector posts for the areas of:

- International Relations
- Education
- Research and Science
- ICT, Relations with Industry and Public Relations
- Strategy.

Also in this line of the matrix is the Kvestor who is effectively the Finance Director.

The other layer of the matrix comprises the Deans of the Faculties and Directors of the Institutes:

- Dean of Agrobiological, Food and Natural Resources
- Dean of Economics and Management
- Dean of Engineering
- Dean of Environmental Sciences
- Dean of Forestry and Wood Sciences
- Director of the Institute of Education and Communication
- Director of the Institute of Tropics and Sub Tropics.

The Rector has responsibility for the University farms and forest estate. Prior to his election these areas were his responsibility as a Vice Rector. He has retained this responsibility.

On the face of it the organisational structure of the University might seem to be tangential to the main work of an evaluation group. However we believe it is important inasmuch as it might affect quality assurance procedures and policies. It is important in complex matrices of this kind that lines of responsibility and authority are clear and carefully defined. This is particularly important in the context of quality assurance. The 2005/2006 report recommended that: *The management structure of the University should be reviewed*

*on a regular basis to ensure that it is the most appropriate one to deliver the Strategy effectively and efficiently.* Given that there is going to be a greater emphasis on quality matters in the near future, it might be appropriate to conduct such a review soon as part of the updating of the Long Term Strategy. This review is planned to take place in 2014.

We also note that there is no senior post in the structure which is dedicated to the topic of quality and its importance. Such units or posts exist in other universities and we believe that consideration should be given to creating one in CULS. Quality is going to be high on the agenda of the work of the University in future and the creation of such a unit/position, possibly at Vice Rector level or as part of a Vice Rector's portfolio, would give a strong focal point for this. The 2005/2006 report also stressed this area and suggested that: *Consideration be given to the establishment of a central unit to provide a focus for this work.* It also needs to be a strong part of the job descriptions of the Deans and Directors as they will be largely responsible for quality assessment and assurance in their Faculties and Institutes. We understand that Vice Deans in the Faculties and Vice Directors in the Institutes are and will be responsible for assuring quality in their particular subject areas. In this updated version, it is pleasing to record that three Vice Rectors and the Director of the Institute of Education and Communication are actively involved in a project about quality in universities coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

The group also feels that the structure of the University should encourage inter-Faculty co-operation. This was mentioned in 2005/2006 and the discussions of the group convinced them that there is still considerable scope for increasing the quality of education through such cooperation. The organisational structure should encourage further co-operation of this kind. There are some good examples around the university but there are others e.g. landscape topics and rural development where there is further scope. The purpose of this co-operation is to improve the quality of the educational experience rather than just for its own sake.

We are also concerned about the model(s) of governance which might emerge for the University under any future Higher Education Act. Care should be taken to maintain/achieve a good balance between leadership by governance committees or boards, with a majority of external

members, and the participation of Faculty staff and students in decision making under any new Act. Several members of the group have experienced this in recent years in their universities and bemoan the loss of academic democracy which has ensued.

*Recommendations:*

- *The University management should seriously consider establishing a key position at the level of Vice Rector to lead developments in quality assurance and assessment. Such an appointment should have influence University-wide, be supported by a team of Vice Deans or their equivalent and utilise the experience already built up by staff of the Institute of Education and Communication.*
- *The University management should build a structure and procedures which encourage a culture of quality to permeate the whole institution.*
- *The University management should create a structure and procedures which encourage more collaboration between Faculties and Institutes to enable benefits from synergistic effects in teaching and research to be realised. As part of this process we recommend that the number of Departments be reviewed with a view to reducing the overall total.*
- *The University management should align professorial appointments with the research needs and priorities of the Faculties and Institutes.*
- *In the event of a new Act being agreed for Higher Education the management should try to ensure that the creation of a powerful and effective Management Board or Governance does not restrict academic democracy.*

## **2.2 Policies and Procedures**

We understand that the University has developed policies and procedures for the assessment and control of the quality of its education. This is apparently elaborated in the Long Term Strategy but this was not available to the group in English for the current 5-year period. However, the group understands that this is available in English at the time of writing this updated report. The self evaluation report gives a good insight into this area of work and we were able to explore it further in our meetings. The self evaluation document indicates that CULS will continue to develop its policies for quality assurance and refers to innovative methods. However it would be good if more detail could be supplied on what is intended.

There is much to be learnt from experiences within the ELLS group of which the University is a full member. In the first meeting the group formed the view that the University had benefited greatly from its association with the ELLS. The Director of the Institute for Education and Communication is a member of the ELLS Quality Assurance Support Team and has been involved in some key meetings and in the production of important documents. In particular we recommend that the University looks again at the document 'Accreditation and External Evaluation of Master Degree Programmes in the Euroleague for Life Sciences' produced by the Quality Assurance Support Team in 2008. This document provides a wealth of experience of accreditation in Euroleague universities.

We also recommend that another publication is considered again. This is the publication of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education entitled 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area' published in 2009. This publication can be downloaded from the ENQA website [www.enqa.eu/pubs.lasso](http://www.enqa.eu/pubs.lasso). Our group was asked to evaluate the CULS quality assurance mechanisms (standards) in relation to the standards of ENQA. It is possible for the university to do this as part of its self evaluation. The self evaluation document format follows that of the ELLS guidelines but further details could have been provided. CULS has been a member of the ELLS group for several years now and should have the contacts and experience to undertake this type of evaluation internally. It would have been good to see this as part of the documentation.

We are of the opinion that CULS needs to develop its policies and procedures for quality assurance further before it can claim to have achieved ENQA standards. However it has made a good start and should continue along these lines utilising its good contacts in the network. There is much help and experience to draw on.

*Recommendations:*

- *The senior management of the University should continue to develop its policies and procedures based on best practice in the ELLS group and ENQA standards. There are two key publications to draw on and also willingness amongst individuals to help. Membership of the QA Support Team is helpful. It has made a good start.*
- *The policies and procedures should form a strong part of the Long Term Strategy.*

## 2.3 The Committee and Board Structure in Monitoring Quality

It is important in any university organisation that there is a structure of Boards and Committees which can work to support the academic community and monitor quality of the activities. It is clear from the Self Evaluation Report that CULS has a multi-layered structure of Boards and Committees. These are described in the report in the section *1.4 Organisation and forms of the quality assurance system of academic activities*. The composition of the Boards and Committees, including the Academic Senates, and the frequency of meetings are set out in the report and there is little value in repeating them here. The discussions of the group would confirm that this system works particularly in the context of quality assurance. At the highest level of the Scientific Board, there is considerable representation from outside the University including people from other Czech and Slovak universities. This is good and indicates a willingness to embrace external comment. We also formed the impression that the Rector is outward looking in his attitude and regularly visits universities and institutes within and outside the Czech Republic.

Student representation is low on some of the Boards and Committees, e.g. the Academic Senate, compared to equivalent committees and boards in the ELLS group. Whilst we recognise that Czech law determines some of these factors, the University should consider ways of increasing student involvement in the management and day to day running of its affairs. This is particularly the case at the study programme level and this will be referred to later in the report. The University is encouraged to be forward-looking in this respect and not be influenced too much by history and what is.

### *Recommendations:*

- *The existing Committee and Board structure is good but could be developed more to focus on quality assurance and assessment. The Senior Management should review the structure and make any necessary changes within the law.*
- *Greater emphasis should be given to involving students in the management process; this might include greater representation in the Academic Senates and other committees and boards.*
- *The University should place more emphasis on committee activity at the study programme level and involve students more regularly in the academic discussions at this level.*

## 2.4 The ICT System

The group spent some time considering the development of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) System in the University. This has developed rapidly and now provides a strong service to enable managers to collect and monitor information. It has also enabled changes to teaching, learning and assessment in the Faculties and Institutes by providing the learning management system Moodle. It was apparent that this system has been widely utilised in the University and in particular in the Faculty of Economics and Management where it had been used to extend e-learning. This has helped to create time for staff to give more time to research than before. This is important in the context of quality assessment. We believe that the development of the ICT system has changed many things in the University and in particular has enhanced productivity. It is essential to have a good ICT system in place to support quality assessment through enabling effective and efficient collection and monitoring of data and other information. The ICT is now a strength at CULS and has progressed significantly since the last assessment.

The development of the ICT system has increased the visibility and transparency of the activities across the University and this is a good thing. The staff that we met, who run the system, were competent and well-prepared. The group also asked: *How do you guarantee the quality of the ICT system?* The representatives of the Unit responsible said that they consulted with the users and were open to change in response to changing needs.

### *Recommendations:*

- *The management should continue to build on the excellent work that it has done in developing the ICT system across the whole of the University's work. ICT will continue to be a key area in the assessment and assurance of quality in many areas of work.*
- *The staff of the ICT should continue to be in touch with its customers and provide for their needs in terms of providing information and data relating to quality assessment and assurance.*

## 2.5 Learning Support Areas

The group made a brief visit to the Library in the Study and Information Centre which was built and opened in 2002. The Head of Centre and Librarian gave a convincing presentation on how the work of the Centre has developed and how they respond to changing needs. The Centre is used by staff, students and research workers. It is open five days per week for 12 hours per day. It also provides a service for adult learners at the weekends when special events are held.

The historical trend of each Department having its own library appears to continue. However it is now more efficient as the purchasing of books and other materials is done centrally. Access to e-journals is rated highly by the users and this is an important part of the service provided. The Library has also developed techniques and facilities to help students with special needs e.g. deafness and partial sightedness.

It was not clear how the Library measure its own success. The group encouraged the Librarian to devise methods of asking users for their views on the services provided and how they might change.

The visit to the library was useful and positive and the staff that we met appeared to be very competent. However there are many other central support services, e.g. the Sports Centre, provided across the University which should be considered in the context of quality assessment. There should be a systematic way of including these services in the quality control processes. We understand that these support services are evaluated in the University Annual Report.

### *Recommendations:*

- *The library and other central support areas will continue to have an important place in assuring high quality of education and should be supported. This applies to students studying on the campus and those studying from a distance.*
- *Staff of the library should survey users to ascertain their needs and if they are being met.*
- *The University should adequately support all other support areas across the institution such as student support services in order to provide high quality services.*

## 2.6 The Quality of the Staff

The quality of the teaching staff is crucial to the delivery of high quality education in a modern Life Sciences University and the group was interested to hear about this aspect of the University's work. The University has well-developed systems and procedures for this area of work. Data were provided on the number of staff in CULS and the trends over the last five years. This was helpful as were the data on the number of female staff in different parts of the University. It would have been helpful to have data on two other aspects of staff:

- the age profile
- the numbers of Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Full Professors.

The group is conscious that the age profile of the University is still skewed towards the older end of the spectrum. We understand the reasons for this which are mainly focused on the new opportunities which arose as a result of the political changes which happened in the Czech Republic in 1989 and subsequently. A number of staff left the University to establish their futures in the new economic climate. This gap has never been completely filled again it seems. However as over 20 years have passed a number of younger staff are progressing through the staffing structure and making their contribution.

The proportions of the three main categories of staff do not seem to have changed much. However the **habilitation** process is a rigorous one and is active in considering candidates for promotion to Associate Professor or Full Professor. Staff are required to present a list of their publications as part of this process.

The group sees a need to continue to strengthen the staffing base of the University. It recommends that all appointments are widely advertised (and we believe that this happens) and that staff from other universities in the Republic and from elsewhere should be recruited. The University would benefit from an injection of new blood i.e. appointments from outside CULS.

The group was encouraged to see that Doctoral students are used in the education process. This is good for them and their students. The numbers of PhD students in CULS has increased dramatically in the last five years from 761 to 1,347. This is an encouraging trend and hopefully reflects a genuine desire to pursue PhD studies rather than difficulties of obtaining jobs outside.

The University provides help to staff to become better teachers. This is mainly done through the Institute of Education and Communication which provides training for PhD students and young lecturers. In addition, staff from the Institute will observe lessons and provide advice for improvements on request. The support system for staff is very good in this respect and the Institute plays a key role in this.

The University is still faced with the problem of high student to staff ratios (SSRs) in some Faculties and Institutes. The number of total staff in the University has not changed much in the last four years. However the numbers of Bachelor and Master students, together with the increase in distance learning and lifelong learning students, has resulted in further pressures on staff. This should be continually monitored. The use of the ICT and in particular the learning management system Moodle have already been referred to as mechanisms for reducing the amount of time devoted to teaching and freeing up time for research.

It was interesting to note that the University has a goal of being bilingual. This policy applies to all teaching staff and those administrative staff who might need to communicate with foreign students. This is a good development particularly as the language skills of the students are increasing.

#### *Recommendations:*

- *The University should continue to enhance the quality of its staff by a range of methods including staff development, appointments from outside to bring in new blood to fill vacancies and maintaining an active internal promotion system (habilitation).*
- *The University should continue to find methods of providing a more even distribution of staff in terms of their age.*
- *The University should continue to facilitate the promotion of staff to Associate and Full Professor status whilst maintaining international standards.*
- *The University should continue to offer incentives to achieve results in areas where it wants to achieve rapid improvements. This seems to have worked well with research in the last five years. Such incentive schemes should however better promote (and not inhibit) the collaboration between Faculties and Institutes.*
- *The University should continue to find ways for staff to be more efficient and effective in their teaching and assessment methods in order to create more time for **research**. In any case it is*

*appropriate to develop these methods in a modern Life Sciences University.*

- *The University should continue in its efforts to ensure high quality teaching and research.*
- *The University should continue to develop ways of involving Master and PhD students in teaching and research.*

## **2.7 The Involvement of Students in Quality Assessment**

The involvement of students in the quality assessment process is very important and the group was keen to know how this works at CULS. They are the recipients and customers of the University's study programmes and services and their views are crucial. This was an important aspect of the Assessment carried out in 2005/2006 and the group was looking for improvements. There are several ways in which students are involved in the quality assessment.

Firstly students can be involved in the **management and decision-making procedures** of the University through the Boards and Committees. This is referred to in the self evaluation document. Students have representation on the Academic Senates at Faculty and University level. However the feeling is that the representation on these committees is low and participation could be increased. The group felt that student representation should be stronger at the study programme level and it did not get positive feelings about their involvement at this level. We recommend that this be improved. It is important that there are opportunities for students to provide rapid feedback rather than have to wait for the Faculty level committees to meet.

Secondly students can be involved through **specific organisations societies or associations**. This has been a weak point in the University so far and was highlighted in the last report. It was encouraging to note from the self evaluation report and from visits to the Faculties that student organisations have been formed and are active. Apparently 13 such organisations are now active in the University. Representatives of these organisations now meet regularly with management at different levels in the University. It seems surprising that so many groups have formed but some are subject orientated. It would be sensible if, in due course, a strong cross-University organisation was formed which could represent the student body as a whole in discussions with senior management and

appoint delegates to the various committees at Faculty and Departmental levels to ensure greater independence of the students' representatives. Procedures for appointing or electing students to such positions should be formal and transparent. However it is very pleasing to note progress in this area of the University's work.

Thirdly students can be involved in the quality assessment process by **filling in evaluation questionnaires**. This system is now well-developed and a standard questionnaire is used for each study area/module in the University each semester. This is a relatively short questionnaire and can be completed online. There is some inconsistency in the use of these questionnaires across the University as in some parts the completion is voluntary and low return rates are often found. In other areas it is compulsory and may be linked to the signing up for examinations regulations. The group understands this and the members reported varying practices in their respective universities. It is interesting that the Institute of Education and Communication adopts a compulsory approach. The staff of the Institute have developed a lot of expertise in this area and been leaders in the University in the use of evaluation questionnaires. One weakness of this system is that no feedback is provided to the students on the outcomes of the process. When questioned, students which the group met said that they would welcome feedback. Others did not consider it important and wanted to move on to the next study areas. The group feels strongly about this matter and recommends that the University develops the system of student evaluation questionnaires to provide feedback to students, with the necessary safeguards to protect the staff in sensitive cases.

Other student evaluation questionnaires are used for selected study areas every three years. These are done in conjunction with the teacher and are more detailed. The questionnaires have been developed by staff of the Institute of Education and Communication and completed forms can be read by electronic optical readers.

The procedures for involving students in the quality assessment procedures are quite well-developed. They would benefit from some refinements as indicated above. Once again the University has gained from membership of ELLS in this respect.

*Recommendations:*

- *The University should continue to find ways of involving students in its quality assessment and assurance procedures and mechanisms. These should include greater involvement in the management process as indicated earlier. In making this recommendation, we recognise the constraints of the current legislation. However we hope that the University will pursue this with the Ministry to achieve the desired outcome and therefore harmonise its systems more closely with those in the ELLS group.*
- *The University and the students' associations should continue to encourage the cooperation between existing associations or bodies. At the moment these are developing but on ad hoc arrangements. Ultimately it would be good if there was a single umbrella student association which could talk to the management and appoint/elect representatives to the university committees.*
- *The widespread use of evaluation questionnaires should continue but it might be stimulating to review and refresh the process involved.*
- *Feedback to students should be an integral part of the evaluation questionnaire system.*

## **2.8 The Completion Rates of Students**

One measure of quality is the completion or drop out rates of students. Data were provided for this to the group. It was noted that the drop out rates are high, averaging around 30% for Bachelor programmes. In some cases the figures are as high as 60%. These figures are considered to be very high and a cause for concern. The figures for Master programmes are not so high but still significant.

The University is well aware of this situation and is acting to improve it. The problem seems to be both externally and internally driven. Externally, the Czech education system allows students to enrol on two Bachelor programmes. At some point they have to choose which one to follow or indeed drop out altogether. This is not helpful and should be addressed. Internally there are several factors which cause these high drop out rates. These include the quality of the intake (some blame the level of education in secondary schools), study difficulties in a university environment and motivation.

The University experiences a range of levels of demands for its study programmes and to date funding has been driven by student numbers. There has then been pressure on some Faculties to take students that perhaps they might not

have wished to. It is therefore important that Faculties and Institutes actively market their study programmes to attract a wide range of high quality students. This is already happening but more could be done including the widespread use of students in the process of marketing. As a consequence of this, the entrance/admission procedures should be rigorous. In these ways the quality of the intake may be improved. It is also possible that the introduction of more study programmes taught and examined in English will attract more and high quality students both from within the Czech Republic and abroad.

Once the students are enrolled there are actions that can be taken to improve their chances of success. Assuming that the quality of teaching is good, there may be students who have difficulties in understanding the content. Additional tutorial support, possibly involving experienced students as mentors, can help and this is occurring in some areas of the University's work. Additional help may be necessary for students with special needs. The Institute of Education and Communication and the library in the Study and Information Centre have both been active in developing these support systems. A more general counselling service is now available in the University which can help students with a wide range of academic and personal problems.

The University has taken a number of actions to reduce the numbers of dropout students. However these good practices could be more uniformly applied across the whole University. The development of a good student support service across the University will help motivation and success and improve the quality of education. The group encourages the University to continue to develop its student support services.

*Recommendations:*

- *The University management should continue with its efforts to reduce student drop out rates which are currently high. Methods used should include: more rigorous selection and admission arrangements, development of early warning systems for students at risk, additional learning support and counselling.*
- *The University should think about concepts of linking Bachelor students to research at an early stage of the study programme to enhance their motivation.*
- *The University, through its Faculties and Institutes, should review its range of study programmes and consider stopping or improving those which recruit poorly and have high drop out*

*rates.*

- *Consideration should be given to providing more study programmes in a foreign language where there are adequate staff resources to support them.*
- *The University and the Faculties should promote and market their study programmes vigorously in order to generate more applicants.*

## **2.9 Learning Outcomes**

The University has recently (2009) allocated specific learning outcomes to all of its study programmes at Bachelor, Master and Doctor level. This must have been an enormous task. However it is a job well done as it will enable more accurate assessment of quality. It will be possible to look at each learning outcome and decide if the student has attained it and the standard associated with it.

It is too early to comment on the results of this change. However the group commends the University in this move and encourages it to develop the system further.

*Recommendation:*

- *The University should monitor the implementation of the learning outcomes and their effectiveness in achieving higher quality education.*

## **2.10 Contacts with Industry and the Professions**

The group was interested to explore the ways in which the University establishes and maintains contact with the appropriate industries, public administration and professions. This is particularly important in considering the content of study programmes in relation to the needs of the labour market. Similarly good contacts may lead to collaboration in research and consultancy activities. Furthermore the group established that it was particularly important for these links to be strong where the study programmes are delivered by distance learning through the Consultancy Centres. We recognise that it is difficult to obtain reliable figures of demands by the labour market for periods of more than a few years. But, we believe it is important to keep strong links to industries, administration and professions in order to obtain the best possible information.

The discussions revealed that practices in these areas were variable across the University.

There are many informal mechanisms in place and external inputs from members of industry and the professions are widespread e.g. in the Faculty of Economics and Management. This prompts us to suggest that the University should consider more structured ways of establishing contacts with the appropriate industries, public administration and professions which it deals with. At the moment it seems to be done on an *ad hoc* basis. The group appreciates the difficulties associated with this but feels that it is necessary as study programmes may be accredited for up to six years during which time the labour market can change considerably.

One of the benefits of increasing such contacts will be in helping to write valid and relevant learning outcomes which can be measured. Furthermore it will help to improve the prospects of graduates in the labour market when they complete their studies. There is a national database of graduate unemployment and some examples were quoted to the group. However it would be equally, if not more, valuable to have data about what jobs students obtained or what else they did e.g. further studies.

*Recommendations:*

- *The University should consider more structured ways of linking with the relevant professions and industries in order to inform the process of planning study programmes and developing research.*
- *The benefits of having stronger links with the professions and industries should be exploited to provide better job prospects for students.*

## **2.11 The Role of Alumni**

It is normal for modern universities to have well-established alumni organisations in place. We understand from discussions that this is a relatively new development at CULS and experience is growing. The group encourages the development and more widespread use of alumni in the work and life of the University. It is perhaps worth stating the main benefits which can accrue from a strong alumni association:

- better study programmes can result which can lead to more specific and targeted learning outcomes
- can lead to additional external funding
- quality assessment can be improved by using peers in the quality process
- helping graduates to get worthwhile jobs
- regular promotion of the University to the outside world.

For these reasons the group recommends that the University develops its alumni association, formed in 2011, rapidly and takes advantage of the benefits which a strong alumni association can bring.

*Recommendations:*

- *The university should develop a strong alumni organisation as soon as possible to maximise the benefits which might accrue. It may be helpful to establish one support/contact point in charge of all alumni activities in the whole university.*
- *The alumni organisation should make provision for sub groups to cater for the large size of some of the Faculties.*

## **2.12 Research in the University**

It is widely accepted that a high level of research activity of a high quality is an essential part of the activities of a university of Life Sciences. The group was therefore interested to find out what progress has been made in this respect at CULS. After the first session with Dr Michal Lostak it became obvious that the research activity at CULS has increased enormously and in some cases the output has doubled in the last four years. This was reinforced by our visits to the Faculties and Institutes where the research activities were given high priority in the presentations. The one exception was the Institute of Education and Communication. However the Director convincingly explained that it was more difficult for him and his staff to publish in high impact journals as most of the work is related to pedagogical topics rather than scientific ones. Even in this Institute the publication rate was high.

The reasons for this rapid improvement were discussed. One of the reasons put forward for this was that the funding of the Faculties is linked to research activity and in particular output. Furthermore there are financial incentives for individuals to increase research output. These factors certainly seem to have been effective. The other important factor is that the Government has set up a database for research activities, the Research and Development Information System, for each university which is open for examination. It is very detailed and individual performances can be located. This is a very impressive and transparent system which enables this aspect of quality assessment to be monitored and used in management.

The impact on funding in the Faculties is one year retrospective. This can cause problems and the University has devised means of buffering the worst effects of annual fluctuations in research activity and the acquisition of grants from external sources.

The ICT system has been a big factor in the increase in research activity. The use of Moodle in the Faculties has enabled the development of more e-learning and the use of a wider range of student assessment techniques. This has been particularly effective in those Faculties with a high student to staff ratio (SSR). The Faculty of Economics and Management is a good example of this.

The Self Evaluation document provides a helpful statement on this aspect in the context of the University as a whole. It reinforces the point that all members of staff are expected to be good teachers and good researchers. Different Faculties have different targets on the balance of these activities but all must be good at both. In the Faculty of Agrobiological Sciences, Food and Natural Resources the targets are 40% for teaching, 50% for research and 10% for other relevant activities. These proportions are determined in the Faculties by the Deans.

It also clear that the students are increasingly involved in research. There is a commitment to support the creation of student research teams in the framework of Master studies. This is reinforced by the record of more and more students presenting papers at the annual Scientific Conferences of ELLS (28 in 2011). This is a good move to further embed a research ethos and culture in the university. The growth in the number of PhD students has also been a major contributory factor

Continued emphasis on research as a key factor in the activities of a successful university of Life Sciences is encouraged in the future.

#### *Recommendations:*

- *The University management should continue to provide incentives to encourage further developments in the scale and quality of the research activities including the outputs. The incentive system should be further developed to encourage more collaboration between the Faculties and Institutes.*
- *The ICT system should continue to be a high priority to help create time for research and also monitor the outcomes.*

- *The growing involvement of Master and PhD students in the research effort should be developed further.*
- *An appropriate balance of teaching and research should be achieved and maintained.*
- *A system for monitoring the effectiveness of research in enhancing the quality of the student experience should be designed.*

### **2.13 International Relations**

International Relations have a high profile in CULS. A strong focus is given to this through senior posts of Vice Rector, Vice Deans and Vice Directors. This is an area which has grown rapidly in CULS and it was clear from the visit to the Faculties and Institutes that it has widespread support and benefits.

Parts of the University have been very active in EU funded schemes aimed at providing opportunities for staff and students to undertake teaching assignments or studies in another country. The numbers of foreign Bachelor students at CULS has increased from 230 in 2006 to 538 in 2010. Similarly the numbers of foreign Master degree students has increased from 276 to 450 over the same timescale. All sections of the University have played their part in this growth but the most successful Faculty has been Economics and Management. The second most successful component has been the Institute of Tropics and Sub Tropics.

The numbers of exchange students have also increased over the same timescale and are still well-balanced. The numbers of outgoing students has increased from 185 to 398 in the same timescale and the number of incoming students has increased from 185 to 383. This is a significant improvement. It also worth noting that the range of countries from which students come from or go to is increasing. New networks are now involving middle Asian countries and also south east Asia.

The development of Double Degree programmes started over six years ago and has been successful. Double Degree programmes are in place with Cranfield University in the United Kingdom, Wageningen UR in the Netherlands, Grenoble Business School, Universite Catholique de Lyon in France, BOKU in Austria, Universidad Politecnica de Madrid, Spain and Technical University Zvolen, Slovakia. The University is currently developing a Joint Degree with BOKU, Austria, following the guidance given by ELLS in the 'Guidelines for

*Curriculum Development and Quality Assurance of Joint Master Programmes'* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. 2010. ELLS Quality Assurance Support Team).

The other striking feature is the development of study programmes taught and examined in English. These started in the Faculty of Economics and Management 11 years ago and are now available in all Faculties and the Institute of Tropics and Sub Tropics. In all Faculties and the Institute of Tropics and Sub Tropics study programmes in English are available at PhD level. However we did not get the impression that the uptake in this area was high. One of the reasons may be the high fees which can be charged as exemplified by the Faculty of Economics and Management. This did not seem to apply in other Faculties and the situation needs clarification.

Summer schools for foreign universities are now common across the University. Summer schools for overseas students are hosted at CULS and more recently summer schools have been organised for CULS students in foreign countries.

It was clear from discussion with the Faculties and Institutes that the number and scale of research projects with external funding has increased significantly. Good links have been forged with Universities in other countries (notably the ELLS group) and also research institutes abroad. These are not documented in a single source in the paperwork for this evaluation but were presented in the Faculties and Institutes and are available in the Annual Reports and on the National Research database administered by the Government.

The University is very outward looking in this respect and this is a strength. The group encourages further strengthening of international relations activities within CULS in support of its educational provision. This will contribute further to the quality of the educational experience for staff and students.

*Recommendation:*

- *Whilst it is difficult to be critical of the University against this background of success, it may be time to review the direction and benefits from international activities in the context of what they add to the quality of the student and staff experience. The activities cover at least five continents and many Faculties or Institutes apply for grants or schemes to get something going. It would be good if the activities could be more focused in future without losing any of the benefits which are evident.*

### **SECTION 3: SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE FACULTIES AND INSTITUTES**

Foreword: Many of the cross-university issues relating to quality are covered in Section 2 of this Report. However as the group visited all of the Faculties and the two Institutes it is appropriate to make some commentary on each without too much overlap. The format for the visits varied and the numbers and grade of staff present was not consistent. This conveyed different messages to the group. In future the University should provide a more consistent picture and give the activity priority. A further point for consideration in future is whether or not it is appropriate for the group to visit facilities in the departments. With this scale of activity and the focus being on quality assurance mechanisms and procedures, it is doubtful if this is the best use of time. In any case the group was not experienced in all of the subjects offered to make valid judgements.

#### **3.1 The Faculty of Agrobiological, Food and Natural Resources**

The group received a very professional and strong presentation from the Dean of this Faculty supported by one of the Vice Deans and other staff and students. There are 18 Departments in the Faculty which for its size is probably too many. However the Dean explained that the Departments are grouped into the following: Applied Science, Crop Science, Animal Science, Natural Resources and Environment and Food Security. The Faculty has a range of laboratories on site and also has field facilities at three other locations in the area together with the University farms at Lány.

The age structure of the staff is skewed towards the older end but there is a good number of younger staff coming through the system. A number of promotions has taken place over the last four years and the Faculty has a clear target for 50% of staff being Associate or Full Professors. It has a clear mission with quality mentioned in it and it has done a SWOT analysis of its position. One factor which it has considered is that it is one of three such Faculties in the Republic and competition for students and research funds is high.

The main focus of the study programmes is as follows:

- Agriculture and Horticulture
- Food Quality and Safety
- Landscape Architecture and Rural Development
- Management of Natural Resources
- Life Quality and Leisure Time Activities.

The Faculty has developed study programmes in English and has successfully diversified its portfolio.

The Faculty is very active in research and this is one of its major strengths. There are five major research branches and the Faculty has been successful in achieving research income in a difficult time. Similarly its publication rate in impact journals has been high particularly in the last year. This Faculty carries out its own evaluation on an annual basis and publishes its own Annual Report in Czech which is a good thing. This helps its Dean and Vice Deans to monitor activities and in particular how they are performing in relation to achieving their targets of activity: teaching 40%, research 50% and other professional activities 10%.

The Faculty is very active in International Relations. It values and supports membership of ELLS and benefits from it. It has active Erasmus programmes and its staff undertake over 300 visits abroad each year. The Faculty is involved with 5 to 7 international research programmes at any one time and some PhD students study at collaborating universities. It has a long record in running summer schools. Furthermore the Faculty offers study programmes in English at Bachelor, Master and PhD level.

The Faculty has clear views on the importance of quality assessment in future. It sees regulation of student numbers and the introduction of student fees as likely events to contend with. It also acknowledges that quality assurance will be delegated and teaching and research universities are likely to be differentiated in some way. Possible solutions include rationalization of study programmes, more scientific collaboration with reputable institutions, promotion of a fair internal performance-based evaluation system and greater listening to public opinion and needs.

Strong points:

- research activities are very well-developed and documented
- well-developed strategy for the future
- the development of international relations as an underlying theme is good
- teaching and research are well-coupled.

Areas for development

- the Faculty should find more ways of co-operating with other Faculties e.g. landscape studies generally
- there are too many departments (18) and these could be rationalized
- student questionnaires should be given out earlier and feedback provided to students
- develop the benefits of a strong alumni
- consider further ways of making teaching more efficient within the constraints of the statutory contact hour requirements
- consider rationalizing the number of study programmes.

### **3.2 Faculty of Economics and Management**

This is the largest Faculty in the University by a large margin with over half of the students (11,000) registered on study programmes there. The meeting was hosted by the Dean but the presentations were given by Vice Deans and the Head of International Relations. Representatives of all the departments (12) were present together with two students. The Faculty declared its priorities as education, research activities and advanced forms of internationalization.

On the education side, the Faculty has a wide range of study programmes at Bachelor and Master levels. The number of applicants for Master programmes has increased steadily over the last five years and this is reflected in recruitment which has gone up from 546 in 2006 to 2,186 in 2010. Numbers of applications for the Bachelor programmes have been more erratic but with small fluctuations. Recruitment to Bachelor programmes shows a small decline in recent years but is still high at 3,193 in 2010. The number of PhD students in the Faculty is the second highest in the University at 301. The Faculty therefore has a wide range of study programmes which are generally recruiting well.

The Faculty gives quality assessment high priority in its activities. It uses the standard questionnaires for each of its study subjects. It is also involved in the more detailed questionnaires administered by the Institute of Education and Communication every three years. In addition it co-operates with the Institute on specific research led by it periodically. The Faculty also uses questionnaires for seeking feedback from graduates once they have left the University. There are other mechanisms in operation in the Faculty to enable student feedback. Students are active in the Academic Senate where there are positive systems in place which work. In addition student associations have developed and are now much more active in bringing issues up with the Faculty management.

Research in the Faculty has increased greatly over the past five years. This is against a background of increasing teaching loads from increasing student numbers. The Faculty has used a number of ways of creating time for high quality research. The development of the University ICT system has helped enormously. The availability of Moodle has enabled staff to develop more e-learning to reduce teaching hours. More savings in time have been made by using ICT to develop more widespread use of different assessment techniques such as multiple choice tests. The Faculty has developed its own information and communication technology facilities and a short tour demonstrated this. The Faculty has a modern studio for teleconferencing with 8 outlets which is used in support of its distance learning programmes through Consultancy Centres in the regions. It is a tribute to the staff of the Faculty that they have managed to increase their research activity against this background of increasing student numbers.

Distance learning is very much a part of the Faculty's work. It has a number of centres around the regions of the Republic for delivering its programmes at a local level for those who cannot study full time nor travel to Prague. This form of delivery has been successful and the quality assessment is the same as for full time course at the main campus. The Institute of Education and Communication is also involved in the delivery and monitoring of these programmes. They are valued highly in the locality and this has been

confirmed by feedback from local dignitaries e.g. mayors. The quality of the study programmes delivered in this way was checked by the Ministry of Education in 2008 and considered to be good.

International Relations are strong in this Faculty. A number of bilateral agreements are in place and there is a good balance of incoming and outgoing students. The number of foreign students taught in the Faculty is 530, including Bachelor and Master categories. The Faculty is home to the Department of Foreign Languages which provides a service role across the University as well as having its own identity in the Faculty.

The Faculty has two Bachelor and three Master programmes taught in English and it has plans to develop more. In addition it offers PhDs in five study areas. The cost of taking such programmes has been highlighted elsewhere in this report and needs to be resolved. The Faculty also offers a successful MBA by part-time study. Further international activities include Summer Schools for universities in the USA and Portugal and attendance at the ELLS Summer School.

The number of staff engaged in teaching and research has not changed much in the last three to four years. In addition the age profile is still skewed towards the older end. This Faculty has a particular problem in this respect as it has close links to businesses and industries that might be attractive as alternative employers. Many of the staff are CULS graduates but this is not unusual in the University as a whole. It would be good if more young to middle age group staff could be attracted from elsewhere in the Czech Republic or beyond.

Strengths:

- a highly professional presentation
- systems for quality assessment are well-developed
- the incentive system is good
- ICT developments have increased and been helpful to staff
- international activities are very high in this Faculty - the highest of all Faculties
- there is a good student evaluation scheme with good involvement of students
- many improvements were noted since the last assessment.

Areas for development

- the students' association(s) are growing slowly. It would be good to have one for the whole university
- the alumni is not yet well-developed and this merits more attention
- the Faculty would benefit from recruiting more staff from outside CULS
- the fees associated with studying PhDs in English need to be reviewed. The current system will deter students
- whilst student involvement in evaluation is good, the group feels that more student involvement at study programme level would be beneficial
- further co-operation with other Faculties is encouraged.

### 3.3 Faculty of Engineering

The meeting was well attended by Vice Deans and other staff with four Bachelor students and two Master students. The Dean was unable to attend for valid personal reasons. The Faculty has changed its name from Technology to Engineering which better reflects the nature of its current and likely future mix of work. It has also changed its logo in an attempt to give itself a more modern identity. The old markets in traditional agriculture have now largely gone and it has diversified its programmes to attract new students. Relatively new areas of work and study include transport and telecommunication, techniques and technology of waste management, technological equipment for construction, control engineering for food processing and environmental restoration and conservation technology.

The Faculty is relatively small compared to some other Faculties with 153 staff and other employees in education and research. The Faculty has the lowest proportion of females in its staff profile (less than 15%). There are ten departments which is probably too many for the size of the Faculty. However it should be noted that this Faculty includes the Department of Mathematics which provides services to other Faculties.

Student numbers are relatively low and the Faculty acknowledges that it has difficulty in recruiting sufficient students of high quality to

its study programmes. The numbers of students enrolled on Bachelor programmes, of which there are three, is currently 783 with a declining trend in the last three years. Enrolments on Master programmes are slightly healthier with 162 enrolled in 2011. These are low figures in comparison to all other Faculties. PhD student numbers are also low but programmes are offered in five study areas. The drop out rates of students on the Bachelor programmes are high, but the situation in Master programmes is much better. Distance learning is part of the Faculty's activities and it has two delivery centres in the Republic which are linked to engineering schools so that they can share facilities.

The use of student questionnaires is widespread and well-developed in the Faculty and was a strength in the 2005/2006 assessment. The system is voluntary and students would appreciate feedback through this mechanism.

The Faculty has very strong links with the traditional engineering industries through alumni which work there. These include contacts in the machinery dealing trades, Skoda cars and machinery maintenance companies. These contacts are useful in determining the relevant content and learning outcomes for study programmes and research activities. Contacts have been made with alumni of 25 and 50 years ago. However there is more scope to use the alumni in the work of the Faculty.

Research has increased in the Faculty but not as rapidly as in others. Two new research areas have recently been opened up in Food Storage and Electronic Toll Systems for Motorways. Other research areas include increasing the effectiveness of photovoltaic systems, energetic and ecological aspects in the utilization of biomass and environmental aspects of transport. Incentives are provided for staff to carry out research which can be published in journals with high impact factors. Output in this respect has doubled in the last two years. This has partly been helped by more students participating in research activities. There are opportunities to collaborate with other Faculties in this respect and the group sees these in Agrobiolgy, Food and Natural Resources and Forestry and Wood Sciences. At the moment there seems to be little

or no co-operation with other Faculties. It may be helpful to review the coverage of research areas insofar as they fit into the overall portfolio of a Life Sciences university. It appears that a better focus on engineering issues in life and environmental sciences might also enhance the attractiveness of the study programmes.

International relations are quite well-developed. There is collaborative work with the Institute of Tropics and Sub Tropics in Indonesia. There is a reasonable level of student mobility with 28 incoming and 24 outgoing students in 2010. In addition there are foreign students registered on Bachelor (26) and Master (45) programmes. Only two study programmes are taught and examined in English; one at Master level and one at PhD level. International activities were not promoted strongly in the presentation in this Faculty but there is a reasonable level of activity which could be built on.

Strengths:

- student evaluation procedures are good and well-developed but feedback to students should be included as part of the process
- international relations are quite well-developed but could be developed further
- good links to the Association of Maintenance in the Czech Republic
- contacts with industry are good but the alumni links could be more formally developed.

Areas for development:

- student numbers are low and problematic. More effort is needed to increase both the quantity and quality of the intake through new ideas which might include more programmes taught in English, diversification of the current programmes taught in Czech and inter-faculty co-operation
- the research activities could be higher, and more focused on topics relevant for life and environmental sciences, and the use of existing facilities more effective
- more information on where the graduates go would help to inform the study programme planning process
- students could be used more in research
- the use of alumni could be greater and more effective.

### 3.4 The Faculty of Environmental Sciences

This is a relatively new Faculty created in 2007 by the separation from the former Faculty of Forestry and Environment. It occupies rooms and laboratories in the Forestry building and the newly-built Inter-Faculty Centre for Environmental Sciences. This latter building is also used by the Faculty of Agrobiological, Food and Natural Resources. The meeting was conducted by the Vice Dean for Teaching and Learning and he was accompanied by four teachers and three students. A short tour of the Facilities in the new building was provided. The Faculty has produced a high quality leaflet in English which sets out what it does and the links that it has.

There are six departments in the Faculty with 157 staff and other employees engaged in education and research. This includes 12 Associate and 11 Full Professors together with 58 senior scientists. Study programmes are offered in five areas at Bachelor level and eight areas at Master level (three in English). In addition specializations at PhD level are offered in four subjects. The numbers of students enrolling on Bachelor programmes has fluctuated over the last five years from 757 in 2007 to 1,141 in 2010. The numbers enrolling on Master programmes have also fluctuated and are currently as low as 488. This is surprising given that Environmental Sciences are popular subjects in many parts of Europe. The number of PhD students enrolling in 2010 was 58 which is slightly down on the previous two years. The Faculty considers its recruitment position to be healthy. The Faculty also delivers distance learning at three centres in the Republic.

Research appears to be strong with some 220 PhD students registered in the Faculty. They can study and present their theses in English but they must publish at least one paper in an impact journal before they can be successful. This is widespread policy now across the University. The areas of research are diverse and are listed in the Faculty brochure. They include conservation and management of selected habitats and selected areas, conservation of biological diversity in the landscape, increasing the retention and accumulation of water in the landscape. Research does not generally cover the sociological aspects of the environment but apparently one joint

research programme has started with the Faculty of Economics and Management. The Faculty claims that the practical implementation of its work is usually ensured by the direct involvement of commercial organizations. After a tour of some of the facilities some members of the group were surprised that there were not more science-based facilities and analytical equipment. This perhaps indicates the emphasis that this Faculty puts on its subjects. However the number of research publications in impact journals has doubled in the last four years.

The international activities in the Faculty are quite well developed. Three study programmes are available in English at Master level and four fields of study are available to study in English at PhD level. The numbers of foreign students studying at the Faculty are relatively low with 21 Bachelor students in 2010 and 18 Master in the same year. Similarly with exchange students, the numbers are relatively low. In 2011 there were 15 outgoing students and 12 incoming. These are the lowest numbers in all Faculties. As a general comment, it was difficult to obtain accurate data about international activities in the presentation and discussion.

The use of questionnaires in the Faculty as part of quality assessment is widespread and follows the format described for others. The completion of questionnaires is not compulsory and there is no feedback to students. The students present indicated that feedback would be welcomed by them. Links with alumni are not strong and this may be due to the relatively young age of the Faculty but stronger links should be developed.

Drop out rates of students seem to be high and there would be merit in making the entrance examinations harder.

Strengths:

- new Faculty with a range of opportunities ahead of it
- new and attractive building
- research publications have doubled in the last four years
- good comments on PhD students and their use in teaching and research
- relatively high proportion of women in the Faculty.

Areas for development:

- strong leadership from the Dean is needed for this type of evaluation event
- close relations should be developed with other Faculties to aid collaborative work and avoid duplication e.g. soil science and landscape studies
- increase the sociological and possibly natural sciences dimensions of the studies
- the Faculty should decide on the focus of its work and be equipped accordingly
- develop the alumni to inform the content of the study programmes, develop research and help students to get jobs.

### **3.5 The Faculty of Forestry and Wood Sciences**

The history of this Faculty in Prague goes back to 1919 when it was first established. However it effectively closed in the 1960s and was re-established on the Suchbátka campus in 1990 with a new building. It then became the Faculty of Forestry and Environment. However in 2007, it became the Faculty of Forestry and Wood Sciences after the Faculty of Environmental Sciences was created after a split of functions.

The meeting with the Faculty was well attended and managed by the outgoing Dean and his colleagues. Several members of staff were present and also a number of students were in the room. It is appropriate to mention here that the group also visited the forestry estate at Kostelec nad Černými Lesy. This is about one hour's drive from Prague and is extensive. In addition to the 8,000 hectares of forest there is a tree nursery and garden centre and a largely automated sawmill. Fish ponds also exist for production and research studies. The old castle has been completely refurbished to a high standard and now provides high quality teaching facilities and dormitory accommodation for students and staff. The facilities are also available for conferences and meetings. It is an excellent facility used by several Faculties.

A very professional and informative leaflet about the Faculty is available in English. There are seven departments and the Arboretum, which is located at Kostelec, where there is also a tree breeding station. The number of staff in the Faculty who are engaged in education and research is 132

which is the lowest of all Faculties and has been declining.

The study programmes cover a wide range of specialist sectors at Bachelor level including those in Forestry, Economic and Administration Services and Game Operation and Management (also available in English). There are Master study programmes in Forestry, Water and Landscape Management, Tropical Forestry and Agroforestry (in English), Forest Engineering and Wood Engineering. The Faculty also offers PhD studies in six subject areas. It therefore has a good range of study programmes and it cooperates with the Institute of Tropics and Sub Tropics and the Faculty of Environmental Sciences.

Applications for places on Bachelor programmes are reasonable with two for every place available. However the position with Master programmes is very different. In this case the number of applicants is low and needs to be increased. Whilst entrance examinations have been made harder, the drop out rate is still high with approximately half of the Bachelor students progressing to Master level. This was mentioned as a problem in the Faculty five years ago and remains. The group suggests that a more diverse range of study programmes are offered including more in English. The Faculty is very active in promoting its study programmes at fairs and other events with the stands built by the students. Open days are held and students are used in the recruitment process. A student society exists but there is not much enthusiasm for it amongst the student body.

Student questionnaires are used extensively in the Faculty in accordance with University guidance. The procedure is voluntary and there is no feedback provided to students. However students would welcome feedback and this is a factor which needs to be addressed across the University. Students would like more practical work and this is in spite of considerable practical work being incorporated into the study programmes and practitioners being used in lectures and excursions being arranged. Evaluation is also carried out by staff of the Institute of Education and Communication and this is welcomed.

Research continues to develop in the Faculty. The research priorities for each department are

outlined in the Faculty brochure and are wide ranging. There is also co-operation with other Faculties including Engineering and Economics and Management. Research output has increased substantially since 2006 and this is evidenced by an increase in publications in high impact factor journals. The delivery of teaching has become more efficient to enable this progress to be made. The age profile continues to be skewed towards the older end and there has been little reduction in the average age of Full and Associate Professors. This is an area that the Faculty needs to continue to work on in future. PhD students are used extensively in research and as elsewhere in the University they need to have at least one publication in an impact factor journal before they can be successful. The numbers of Doctoral students are quite high although the group questioned the figures provided in the handout.

The Faculty is active in International Relations activities. As has already been stated it has Bachelor and Master level study programmes available in English and Silviculture is available at PhD level in English. The Faculty has Double Degrees with two Universities: Universidad Politecnica de Madrid, Spain and Technical University Zvolen, Slovakia. The numbers of foreign students studying in the Faculty at Bachelor and Master level are 23 and 16 respectively. The numbers of exchange students show 57 outgoing students and 36 incoming students. The Faculty is a member of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), the European Forest Institute (EFI) and values its links with ELLS members. The staff and students of the Faculty take part in many international scientific and research orientated organizations in the areas of forestry, ecology and landscape management.

Strengths:

- looks after its students well in house
- 100% job placement for its students
- good number of PhD students
- big progress in research activities and outputs
- excellent field and teaching facilities at Kostelec
- good level of international activities.

Areas for development:

- the Faculty is in transition. It is one of two Faculties in the Republic and needs to focus its

activities

- it has a relatively small number of students on a wide range of courses
- the Faculty should consider the balance of its activities between practical and scientific aspects
- the Faculty should develop more links with other Faculties in such areas as landscape architecture, rural development and economics, the engineering of wood science and economics
- steps should be taken to reduce the drop out rates particularly on Bachelor programmes
- the Faculty should take steps to appoint younger staff when the opportunities arise
- feedback should be provided to students on the results of evaluation questionnaires
- the student association(s) should be strengthened
- greater use should be made of alumni in the work of the Faculty.

### **3.6 The Institute of Education and Communication**

The Institute of Education and Communication (IEC) is a part of the University located less than 30 minutes drive away from the Suchbátka campus. It has its own attractive campus close to the river Vltava including residential accommodation for students. Many of the buildings have been sensitively converted to modern usage. One area was in the process of being converted to a teaching area specially designed for students with physical disabilities.

The meeting was hosted by the Director who reports directly to the Rector of the University. This is a helpful arrangement. He was supported by two deputy Directors for Education and Science, Research and Postgraduate Studies. The Director is also a member of the ELLS Quality Assurance Support Team. After a very professional presentation and discussion the group met four Bachelor students who were studying for the weekend at the campus. A short tour of the facilities was made. A professionally prepared brochure was made available which helpfully outlines the activities of the Institute.

The Institute describes itself as a pedagogical and research institute of the Czech University of Life Sciences with nine aims (described on the web site). It clearly has its own study programmes

at Bachelor level together with some cross-University functions. It is important to elaborate more on these functions;

- offer extension of study programmes for all CULS students
- methodology and practice of consultancy work
- pedagogical preparation of teachers of vocational subjects
- increasing the pedagogical competences, communication and presentation competences for PhD students and university employees
- organization and coordination of the University of the Third Age at CULS
- helping health disabled students to integrate into selected study programmes
- on the authority of the management of CULS, to create methods and achieve a complex assessment to ensure the educational quality at the University and fulfil the aims of ELLS (Euroleague for Life Sciences) of which CULS is a member.

By writing out these aims in some detail it helps to illustrate the importance of this Institute in driving forward some key issues for the University, especially in ensuring its educational quality.

The Institute has three Departments and a relatively small number of staff engaged in education and research of 31. This needs to be considered further if the Institute is to continue its important functions. The Departments are: 1. Pedagogy, 2. Professional Personal Development and 3. Lifelong Learning and Study Support.

The study programmes were traditionally just for teachers already in service. It is still necessary for them to get a qualification to teach and this is one of the key roles of the Institute. The Bachelor programmes therefore focus on Guidance in Vocational Education (specialization in Pedagogy), Pedagogy for Teachers of Vocational Subjects and Pedagogy for Teachers of Practical Training. The first study programme is delivered by full time mode whilst the others are taught as combined (distance) study over three years.

The numbers recruited are healthy and applicants exceed the enrolment targets. The numbers enrolled in 2010 were 32 full time and 218 by combined studies. The total figure for 2011

was 305. Whilst the numbers of students are relatively low, recruitment remains healthy and the work fulfils an important niche in the market for vocational teachers in agriculture, forestry and related subjects. Whilst the Institute does not have its own PhD students it is involved in PhD studies and examinations.

In addition to these teaching activities, the Institute provides important services across the University which are in demand. As well as the ones already listed, the Institute provides an advisory centre for CULS students with special needs. It has developed a special role in this respect which was just starting five years ago. This work has led to the establishment of an Advisory Centre on the Suchdol campus. This is a significant development. In particular the Institute has been instrumental in the widespread adoption of questionnaires in the whole University to provide feedback from students. These have been described in earlier sections. It has also developed its own questionnaires for use with its student teachers and with staff of the University. It acknowledges that feedback in the use of questionnaires is a weak point and should be addressed.

The Institute is keen to be involved in the development of the **learning outcomes** which have been written for study programmes in the University. It is early days for any further comment on this but it is an interesting development.

International links are well-developed in the Institute. It is a member of five international organizations of which one is ELLS. Another significant one is the European Network for Learning and Teaching in Agriculture and Rural Development (ENTER). It is and has been a partner with many European educational and agricultural organizations. The Director tabled a paper summarizing the international projects at IEC since 2006 and the list is impressive.

Research in the traditional sense is not strong in this Institute. However, the nature of the work does not lend itself so easily to publication in impact journals. Nevertheless members of the Institute have published many reports, manuals and books and examples were provided during the visit. It is remarkable that they can find the

time to do this given their other activities.

The students which the group met were confident and responded to members' questions in good English. If they are representative then it is a good sign that the quality of students is good.

Strengths:

- strong reputation for its work
- fulfils important cross-University functions particularly on quality issues.
- the Director reports direct to the Rector
- relevant and popular study programmes
- developed good expertise in questionnaire design and use
- good international connections
- good publication output if not in the traditional scientific sense
- strong leadership
- it exposes itself to evaluation by students and they rank it highly.

Areas for development:

- feedback procedures to students from the outcomes of evaluation questionnaires with appropriate safeguards for staff
- continue to develop a high profile in raising the awareness in the University about the crucial importance of quality in all that it does. It is well-placed to do this
- continue to strengthen the staff numbers, qualifications and experience.

### **3.7 The Institute of Tropics and Sub Tropics**

This Institute is located on the main campus at Suchbát and occupies space in the Rectorate building. It also has specialist glasshouse facilities on site and access to other facilities on the University farm estate at Lány. In addition it relies on other external organizations for support such as Prague Zoo. It is a significant year for the Institute as, during the evaluation, it celebrated 50 years since its formation. Historically links with tropical and sub tropical countries were strong under the socialist regime which came to an end in 1989. Since that time the Institute has had to diversify its activities as fewer students have come from such countries particularly in Africa.

The visit was managed by the Director and supported by his four deputy directors for

Education, Science, Research and Postgraduate Studies and International Relations. For some reason there were two deputy directors for Education. Also in attendance were heads of departments, of which there are four, other key staff and three students. There are 69 staff employed engaged in education and research. 33 of these are teaching staff.

The Institute has two Bachelor programmes in Tropical and Sub Tropical Agriculture and Sustainable Development with 312 registered students. There are six Master programmes covering a wide range of topics with 174 registered students. This means that group sizes are relatively small but the group was told that there was some shared teaching. Nevertheless this is still an area that needs consideration as the pressure grows on University funding. The numbers of PhD students in the Institute are relatively high at 125.

The numbers of students who drop out from their Bachelor studies are high but are decreasing. In Master programmes the drop out rate is much more modest. A number of steps have been taken to improve the retention rates of students:

- class teachers have been allocated for all years of Bachelor programmes
- periodic meetings between students and the Institute management are held regularly especially in the early stages
- additional tuition support is provided
- problems with students are identified earlier.

No information was available on comparative drop out rates between Czech and foreign students.

Questionnaires are used to ascertain student feedback on the teaching. However there is no formal feedback to students of the results. This would be welcomed by students and mechanisms should be put in place to enable it to happen. Monitoring of PhD students is very detailed as are the procedures for examination of such students. This is a strength of the Institute with the PhD Boards made up of many members from around the university.

Research is well-developed in the Institute with a number of collaborative projects e.g. with Engineering. A number of these projects are

funded by the Czech government as part of aid programmes to developing countries. Details of research projects were not presented in the meeting but it is clear from the University web site that the Institute is very active in this respect and has a clear strategy. Due to the relatively small number of staff it is necessary for it to collaborate with other Faculties and research institutes outside the University. This collaboration is encouraged.

International activities in the Institute are strong as might be expected. The Institute offers six study programmes at Master level in English in a diverse range of subjects. This may be ambitious given the staffing base of the Institute. PhD study is offered in English in one subject area. The number of foreign students registered in the Institute at Bachelor level in 2010 was 102. The equivalent figure for Master level was 114. In terms of outgoing exchange students the numbers in 2010 were 19 and the number of incoming ones was 25. Given the size of the Institute these numbers are encouraging but still relatively small.

The Institute is the lead member for two major networks. One is NATURA which links all European universities which have similar activities in tropical and sub tropical agriculture. The other is more recent and is known as EURASIA 2 which is the European Academic Mobility Network with Asia. This is a major development and the Institute will be the base for the organization and has already organized activities. This development may lead to a double degree with Asian partners. The network currently makes provision for 110 mobility flows from Asia to Europe.

Traditional links with some former partners remain and the Institute is still active in Namibia and Angola. The group believes that there may be more opportunities for international cooperation through the ELLS group and encourages further examination of possibilities.

The links with alumni are not strong and could usefully be developed to provide direction for the future work of the Institute. The group sees a strong continuing role for the university in international development work and the Institute should develop a strategy on how this should

happen across the whole organization.

Strengths:

- strong reputation for its work over the last 50 years
- strong student support service
- strong arrangements for monitoring and examination of PhD students
- wide range of study programmes although this could be a weakness if they do not recruit higher numbers.

Areas for development:

- develop a clear strategy on its role in the University in future which should aim to bring together all development and related work in the University
- strengthen the staff and management base by recruiting new and young blood from outside the University
- consider the name of the Institute, with a view to changing it
- strengthen the research facilities base available for its work
- improve the drop out rates of students even more e.g. by establishing a tutorial system
- improve the quality of the student intake through more stringent selection procedures
- strengthen the alumni to inform the future planning process.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

A number of conclusions and recommendations have been made in the text of this Report along the way. It may be helpful to restate the main conclusions here and make some general conclusions.

Three of the evaluation group were members of the University Quality Assessment team in 2005/2006, and one other has been a regular visitor over this time. The University has continued to make considerable advances in its work on many fronts. The changes have been rapid and transformed the University. This progress is reflected in the types of study programmes, approaches to teaching, research and international activities. It is also noticeable that there is now a much greater emphasis placed on quality in all areas of the University's work. This was recommended last time and there has been a significant and positive response. New developments have occurred on the campus, which have further enhanced its attractiveness and improved access. These comments extend to the Institute of Education and Communication at Mala Chuchla and the forest estate and castle at Kostelec nad Cernymi Lesy. We did not visit the university farms or vineyards but assume that similar improvements have occurred there.

Overall we feel that the University has developed its systems for quality assessment and control well. It has benefitted from its membership of and participation with ELLS and the publications that the organization has produced. There is scope to further exploit these contacts and make greater use of the ELLS Quality Assurance Support Team. The University already has a member on this Team and the ELLS colleagues are willing to help. Regular meetings and attendance at ELLS Conferences has been very beneficial to many aspects of the University's work and this should continue.

One aspect that we have focused on is the structure of the University and its suitability for ensuring that a quality culture is further developed and that mechanisms and procedures are in place to assess and assure quality in all of its work. We feel that this would be helped by the creation of a post at Vice Rector level which is concerned

with quality rather like others are focused on research, studies and international relations. This might also be reflected at Faculty level. The Institute of Education and Communication has done an excellent job in the last phase of development and the experience and expertise of the Director and his staff should be harnessed further in future in this role.

There is no doubt that the recent development of the ICT system in the university, both centrally and in the Faculties and Institutes, has greatly enhanced the quality assessment systems. It has had major effects on approaches to teaching and assessment allowing more time for research and publication. Moodle is widely used. It has also provided a means of gathering data for monitoring purposes. The University is now in a much stronger position to assess aspects of the quality of its work.

There is a clear ethos of education in the University. By this we mean a good balance between teaching and research. There was awareness of this wherever we went and many areas had defined the proportions of teaching, research and other professional activities. This is important in a modern university of Life Sciences. Research activity and output have both increased in quantity and quality over the last five years. There is now a good system for monitoring where research is published and the national database for research is helpful. The introduction of incentives for increasing research activity has been successful. We express caution that research does not become over dominant. Teaching is vital and students will only benefit if they receive lectures and tutorials from the active researchers.

International Relations continue to be very strong in the University. Membership of ELLS in recent years has been an added stimulus in this respect. High numbers of foreign students now study in the University and there is a reasonable balance between incoming and outgoing exchange systems. Study programmes in English at Bachelor, Master and PhD level are offered throughout the University and there is probably scope for more development in this area. However the University must ensure that it has sufficient teachers who are competent in spoken

and written English to deliver the programmes. There is considerable staff mobility and there are many examples of involvement in international EU-funded research programmes. There has also been a growth in the number of summer schools.

The use of student questionnaires in obtaining student feedback on teaching is now widespread in the University. This development has been led by the staff of the Institute of Education and Communication and the Vice Deans for studies/education. Two systems are in place. The first is quite a simple questionnaire which is used for every study unit/module every year. The results are considered by the Vice Deans and Deans and the Institute writes an annual report on the outcomes. The second is used to conduct a more detailed evaluation for each study area every three years. There is some inconsistent practice in the use of the first type of questionnaire in the University. It may be handed out at different times in the delivery of the study unit or at the end. It may be voluntary or compulsory. There does not appear to be any feedback to students on the results from the questionnaires. We felt that this was an omission which should be changed. The majority of students that we saw were in favour of such feedback.

Students could also be used more extensively in the quality assessment process. Whilst they have representation on academic senates and other committees the proportions are not great. Furthermore we feel that there is scope for the development of study programme committees where students can provide feedback to staff on a regular basis. The development of student associations and bodies is encouraging but practices vary across the University. The University should try to encourage students to work more closely on this. Experience in ELLS universities may be helpful here.

The quality of data produced for monitoring activities across the university has improved. However this is an area where further improvements could be made to achieve more consistency. This is particularly important in areas of staff numbers and details, student numbers and student progression through their study programmes. The data need to be entirely reliable.

There is still scope for inter-faculty co-operation in education between the Faculties and Institutes. This is still at a relatively low level. Benefits would accrue from greater cooperation of this kind through an enhancement of the student experience from the synergy that would invariably follow. Some kind of incentive schemes need to be introduced over and above the ones that exists to make this happen. The structure and procedures of the University must not hinder such cooperation.

Links with industry and the professions are generally strong. However practices vary across the University and could be improved. Some Faculties such as Engineering and Forestry and Wood Sciences have very strong links with relevant organizations. A more structured approach to the use of these contacts would yield more benefits in obtaining information on what the industries need in study programmes and the job market for the future. The development of a strong alumni would complement these informal procedures. Alumni can be very supportive of universities. A stronger alumni organization, with a central co-ordination of activities, should be established in the University.

Public awareness of the University and its activities is considered to be important. The University has a good web site, in Czech and English, and this is good. The campus is open and people can visit. The Annual Reports are available as are other publications about the work and life of the University. The development of the Consultancy Centres around the Czech Republic has been good in making the work of the University known at local level in the regions. This is apparently valued by local dignitaries. Whilst it is always possible to do more on this we feel that the University has good public relations and opens itself up for visits and questions.

It is important to keep sight of the fact that the University has continued to make rapid and significant progress in the last five years and will continue to do so. This includes the development of quality assessment mechanisms and procedures.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation of the quality assessment mechanisms and processes has been a large and complex task. The evaluation group was asked to complete its work in a short timescale and it has done its best to achieve a fair outcome. This would not have been possible without the help of many people.

We are grateful to the Rector, Professor Ing. Jiri Balik CSc, for initiating the task and for supporting it. It was a bold decision but one which is in keeping with the practice of this University to seek external views from peers from time to time. We hope that our conclusions and recommendations are helpful to him and his senior colleagues in preparing for the future when a new system of accreditation and quality assessment will be required by law. We thank him for the personal time that he spent with the group and his generous hospitality.

We are particularly grateful to Doctor Michal Lostak, First Vice Rector and Vice Rector for International Relations. He made all the detailed preparations in terms of writing the brief, assembling the evaluation team and preparing the self assessment document which provided the basis for our discussions. He was a constant supporter throughout the procedure and ensured that the programme of visits went smoothly. We are also grateful to him and his staff in the International Relations Office for solving all administrative problems and making arrangements for travel and accommodation. We thank him for making his large office available to us as a base room.

We met a large number of staff during our evaluation. These included Vice Rectors, Deans, Vice Deans, Heads of Departments and staff of many categories. We thank them for being open and friendly in their discussions, which has helped us to do our job and draw our conclusions. They were all keen to tell us about their work and this is a good sign. It was also helpful to receive hard copy of the information in English from some of them.

We also met a significant number of students. It was helpful and necessary to have their comments

on their involvement in University affairs and we thank them for their time and wish them well in their future studies and careers.

Finally we are grateful for the hospitality and social events provided for us. This was enjoyable but also provided a more relaxed environment in which to carry out our work

## 6. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

## International Evaluation of the Quality Assurance Systems in the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

### Background

CULS develops periodically (in the interval circa 5-6 years; started in 1993) its international evaluation (evaluation is implemented by foreign partners). The international evaluation is used as the international benchmarking for the university. It also provides the important feedback to the Czech bodies (e.g. Ministry of Education) about the quality of CULS in an international context. Since the university became the member of the European League of Life Sciences Universities (ELLS) after the last evaluation in 2005 (in the last international evaluation also the experts from BOKU, Vienna and WUR, Wageningen, the Netherlands participated), the decision for the upcoming evaluation is to invite the willing experts from ELLS universities to consider together with the staff of CULS its quality. As such the evaluation aims at increasing the transparency which is highly demanded by the Czech government now.

### Reasons for the focus of the contemporary evaluation

Contemporary evaluation should look at the internal quality assurance mechanisms (systems) at CULS and to evaluate their coherence with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) standards. Since CULS implements many of the quality assurance standards and since these standards are implemented within ELLS policy and practice, the target of the evaluation is not to list what is missing or what is wrong but to evaluate how do the quality assurance standards work in the conditions of CULS (the standards are influenced by the national context which might modify them). The reason of this approach is that the Czech government is ready to launch the reform of higher education. The reform is linked to the new Act on Higher Education under which there will be completely changed the existing system

of the quality assurance mechanisms in the Czech Republic. Until now the accreditation committee of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports accredits only the programmes taught at the Czech universities. For the accreditation it uses its criteria which should reflect the ENQA standards. The new Act of Higher Education changes the situation. Once the new Act is adopted (about 2013) the independent accreditation agency will accredit the universities according to their quality assurance mechanisms and related fields of activities. If the university is accredited in this way (e.g. it operates through appropriate quality assurance mechanisms reflecting ENQA) the university itself shall decide and accredit its programmes.

Since this mode is working in the other ELLS member universities the decision was made to invite their experts to evaluate existing *status quo* at CULS. Although the system of accreditation in the Czech Republic was different, the European higher education area and participation in international networks (such as ELLS) necessitated its adjustment to international standards (ENQA standards). Therefore many of the requirements of the ENQA standards are already met and implemented by CULS. The reason for the international evaluation is therefore not only to check the existing system but, above all, to learn more from the experience of our colleagues whose universities already operate in the mode intended by the new Czech Act on Higher Education (in such a way ELLS will contribute to better readiness of CULS to cope with the change given by the new act which will affect all Czech universities).

### The objectives of the evaluation

- To evaluate quality assurance mechanisms (standards) existing at CULS in their complexity (not only related to the education but also to consider how the quality in science and research, international relations, relation with industries, relations with public, campus quality are achieved and guaranteed; it is because also such kind of quality assurance is expected to be evaluated after the new Act on Higher Education is implemented) and to assess the readiness of CULS for the new system of accrediting the higher education bodies in Czechia (once the new Act on Higher Education is accepted the

system of quality assurance evaluation will change, therefore the readiness of CULS for this change should be investigated).

- To evaluate the CULS quality assurance mechanisms (standards) in relation to the standards of ENQA (this objective wants to consider the coherence of CULS quality assurance standards with those used by ENQA – this goal develops the first goal listed above),
- To provide the experience from ELLS partners with the system of their internal evaluation mechanisms which might facilitate the change of CULS towards the new outlook of the quality assurance after the new Act on Higher Education is in work

### **Time schedule**

Mid of September 2011: self-evaluation report elaborated by CULS to be sent to the evaluating group members (the whole university, its faculties and institutes will provide the evaluation of their quality assurance systems according to ENQA standards, about 70-100 pages self-evaluation report)

October or November or December 2011 (detailed time depends on the decision of the group): one week site-visit of the group of ELLS evaluators at CULS (the time should be decided depending on time availabilities)

January 10, 2012: the first draft of the international evaluation report written by the international team based on the CULS self-evaluation report and site visit.

March or April 2012: the feedback from CULS as for the draft of international evaluation report (depending on funding available maybe second short term visit of the group in Prague)

June 2012: Final version of the evaluation report reflecting the objectives of the evaluation

### **Possible profile of the group of international evaluators**

It would be good if within the group of evaluators there are also those who have already participated in the CULS evaluation in the past (e.g. prof. W. Wenzel from BOKU, Vienna, prof. W. Heijman from WUR, Wageningen, The Netherlands and prof. F. Harper from University of Plymouth). It means those who are already familiar with CULS are welcomed since their experience combines

the views of insiders with those who are not from CULS. Therefore the quality assurance group people working in the ELLS support team do not have to be considered as the only ones who can participate in the international evaluation. The main aim of the evaluation is to help CULS with changing to the new system of accreditation (for this change CULS would like to utilize the expertise of the ELLS network and other experts) therefore the committed people who will participate are needed and welcomed.

Note: This is a modified version of the paper sent to the Evaluation Group in July 2011. The Section on Financial Conditions has been removed.

### **Appendix 2**

The following is an extract from an email sent by Michal Lostak in July, 2011 to the evaluation team outlining what would be incorporated in the Self Evaluation Report which was in preparation at that time and would be sent to the Group in September 2011.

- The set of principles (policies) and procedures guaranteeing the quality of academic activities at CULS Prague (the outline of CULS policy and procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of its programmes and awards)
- The system of approval, monitoring and periodical revisions of the study programmes and grades and degree awarded (description and the operation of the mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of CULS programmes and awards)
- The assessment of the students (criteria, regulations and procedures used to assess the students at CULS)
- Quality assurance of teaching staff (procedures guaranteeing that staff involved with the teaching of students is qualified and competent)
- Learning resources and students support (demonstration that the resources available for the support of students learning are adequate and appropriate for programmes offered).
- Information systems (how does CULS collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities)
- Public information (how does CULS publish up to date, impartial and objective information about the programmes and awards offered)



