

# EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND STUDY OF LAW IN ICELANDIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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## **Part I – General Outline**

## **I. Introduction**

### **I.1. The Expert Committee**

- Hjördís Björk Hákonardóttir, former Supreme Court Judge (Chair)
- Prof. Dr. Dermot Walsh, University of Limerick
- Iðunn Hauksdóttir, The Agricultural University of Iceland, student representative (observer)
- Magnús Lyngdal Magnússon, Deputy Director, RANNIS (liaison officer)

### **I.2. Terms of Reference**

The Expert Panel is appointed according to Article 8 of Rules No. 321/2009 on Quality Control of Teaching and Research in Higher Education Institutions. The Committee is to base its reference on the components of Article 4 of the same act. They are:

- a. role and objectives,
- b. administration and organisation,
- c. structure of teaching and research,
- d. competence requirements of personnel,
- e. rules regarding admission requirements and rights and duties of students,
- f. facilities and services provided to teachers and students,
- g. internal quality management system,
- h. description of learning outcomes,
- i. finances.



### **I.3. Working Method**

Each of the four universities<sup>1</sup> submitted a self-evaluation report (see Appendix II) made available to the Expert Panel in fall of 2010. The reports were compiled and written with guidelines from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The Panel made site visits to the universities during the period 6-9 September 2010 (see Appendix I) where it met the Rectors, Deans, representatives from supporting services, a number of teachers and students as well as those who made up the self-evaluation team. The Expert Panel had originally planned to circulate a draft report by November 2010. However, Prof. Dr. Claus Haagen Jensen, of Copenhagen Business School, who had been appointed to the Expert Panel and did indeed participate in the site visits, withdrew from the Expert Panel due to unfortunate circumstances. This caused a delay in preparing the draft but the Expert Panel (remaining members) agreed on a final draft during a meeting in June 2011. Part II of the draft report was sent universities (individual parts to the relevant institutions) for corrections of factual mistakes and misinterpretations in June 2011. The universities replied later that month. After reviewing the feedback, the Expert Panel took some specific comments into account and corrections have been made accordingly.

### **I.4. Short Evaluation of the Work Process**

The Expert Panel found the work process very rewarding. During the site visits, the Expert Panel was met with academic qualities of openness and frankness, making it possible to discuss both strengths

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<sup>1</sup> University of Akureyri, University of Iceland, Bifrost University and Reykjavik University.

and weaknesses of the law studies in Iceland. Due to the difference in both size of the units (legal departments) and approach to legal studies each of the universities pursue, the exercise was highly complicated in regards to comparison and general findings and recommendations. The Expert Panel therefore decided to structure the report in such a way to treat each university separately in Part II of the report, including findings and recommendations for each university respectively. Part III of the report includes summary of findings and general recommendations applicable to all of the four universities.

The Expert Panel has, during the whole working process, been supported by RANNIS, its staff being instrumental in both making practical arrangements smooth and comfortable for committee members and interpreting the Icelandic traditions and the culture of higher education learning.

## **Part II – Reports on Individuals HEIs**

## **II.1. University of Akureyri (UNAK)**

### **II.1.a. Role and Objectives (UNAK)**

The University of Akureyri (UNAK) was founded in the year 1987. Its role is seen as to provide its students with opportunities for an academic education in an ambitious and attractive international environment of study and research. The University emphasises an interactive relationship with industrial activities and has developed successful cooperation of diverse character with numerous companies, institutions and individuals, both in Iceland and abroad.

Four values are emphasised in the UNAK strategy: that of academic *freedom* exercised in a responsible and dignified manner; that of *trust* by students that they will obtain a sound education and by the public, industry and the authorities in that the University will meet the task facing it with critical judgement and be guided by the ideal of promoting the communal good; that of *progress* by promoting an atmosphere of academic pursuits and a willingness to seek innovative ways of development; and that of *equal opportunities* for everyone.

The future vision of the UNAK is to become an international educational institution with a leading role in selected academic disciplines and an attractive choice for qualified students and staff. That is to be achieved through a personal study and work atmosphere, pleasant work facilities and energetic research and an interactive relationship with society. UNAK thus aims to be on par with highly respected universities with regard to course offerings, teaching methods, research activities, the transfer of knowledge and administration. An emphasis is placed on *international operation* through student and teacher exchanges. The official language of the

university is to be Icelandic, but course offerings in English must be guaranteed in response to the requirements of the university's international environment. The introduction of the Bologna process is emphasised as this ensures the coordination of a framework of academic studies in Europe. The university is committed to working with internationally recognisable standards in education and to this end is following the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, and the National Qualification Framework for Iceland.

Legal education has been offered at the University of Akureyri (UNAK) since 2003. The law programme seeks to hold a unique status on the scene of legal education in Iceland, both in respect of its structure and emphasis and also in its geographical location. The BA law programme aims to prepare students for working and studying internationally as well as locally. The faculty holds that the programme's emphasis on legal theory and on comparative and international law constitutes pioneering work in law studies in Iceland, and marks its unique character; and that this emphasis has attracted students that otherwise would not have studied law. Preparation for international careers will predictably be increasingly significant in the future, as Icelandic business and industry will continue to become ever more interdependent with the global economy. It may be agreed that the programme's emphasis on preparing students for working beyond the narrow confines of the Icelandic legal system is in itself a valuable and a timely contribution; however, this approach may have its drawbacks as well.

The Law Faculty's role and objectives and future vision are in harmony with the University's aims and values, as these are outlined in the strategy for the years 2007-2011. The objectives are:

- (1) *A challenging and personal study environment*, which the university means to obtain by placing increased emphasis on the student's participation and benefit from the study and training in critical thinking; improving the quality of teaching; improving facilities and services for study and teaching, including state of the art information and communication technology; and concentrating the entire operation of the university in one location before the end of 2010.

The law programmes aim to serve this objective by challenging students from the outset by courses in English and Icelandic that set high standards both for knowledge and critical thinking. The student-teacher ratio would appear to afford a personal and supportive study environment. In the fall semester 2009 the average number of students per course was 35 in the BA programme and 22 in the ML program.

- (2) *Vigorous research activities*, which the university means to obtain by strengthening research-based postgraduate study; enlarging the budget set aside for research; strengthening support for research and improved research facilities; adding to the number of teaching staff and experts with doctoral degrees; increasing the annual number of publications in international and Icelandic peer-reviewed journals up to 50 in 2011; and encouraging the publication activities of the University of Akureyri.

At the law faculty, all members in permanent full-time positions have earned a PhD degree and are active researchers. The same is true of many of the visiting staff.

- (3) *Active contacts with the community*, which the university means to obtain by strengthening the mutual transfer of knowledge

between the university and industry; taking the initiative in the building of a science research centre at the university campus; taking into account the needs of the community for new knowledge and skills; and improving the community's access to research results.

The law faculty sees itself as serving this objective in several ways: 1) Courses in the ML programme are taught by part-time adjuncts and temporary teachers who practice law domestically, both in private practice and in public service. This arrangement facilitates a two-way transfer of knowledge between the university and the professional legal community. 2) By organizing the law forum, which has provided a venue for researchers outside the law faculty to present their research to law students, to the UNAK academic community, and to the public. 3) Supporting a longstanding and important role of UNAK in that they deliver graduates who are more likely to establish professional careers outside the capital area than graduates from universities in that area.

(4) *International co-operation*, which the university aims to attain by introducing the Bologna-process; strengthening exchange programmes involving students, teachers and staff; supporting students who decide to embark on postgraduate study at foreign universities; offering postgraduate programmes in selected fields where all teaching is in English; and developing study and research in selected disciplines in co-operation with universities abroad.

The law faculty aims to serve this objective by providing a good number of courses which are taught by visiting teachers affiliated with universities outside Iceland. In some cases, these

teachers also collaborate with UNAK staff members in research. The Polar Law programme is international, exclusively taught in English and most students and teachers come from outside Iceland. The law programmes attract more international exchange students than any other academic unit at UNAK. Icelandic law students have also made use of exchange agreements and have studied abroad, for example in China, Denmark, and Latvia. Faculty members regularly teach abroad as well, as part of ERASMUS agreements and bilateral agreements with universities outside Europe.

- (5) *An efficient organisational unit*, which the university aims to attain by: ensuring a clear and efficient organisation, providing a smooth flow of information; improving planning procedures and the monitoring of plan implementation; strengthening targeted marketing operations; and improving the financial efficiency of operations.

The law faculty sees itself as serving this objective by alternate year teaching in the BA- and ML programmes which reduces the cost of teaching by 30-40%, and enables these programmes to stay within their limited budget without compromising relatively small class sizes. Each of the three programmes in law (BA, ML, and Polar Law) has a coordinator who is responsible for its normal functioning.

The objectives and standards that the Law School has set itself are appropriate and in line with international standards. The emphasis on research and international contacts are in tune with expectations of modern universities.



### **II.1.b. Administration and Organisation (UNAK)**

The University of Akureyri (UNAK) is run as a public higher education institution under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in accordance with the Act on Public Higher Education Institutions No. 85/2008 and Higher Education Institution Act No. 63/2006 and regulations set in accordance with and supplementary to these Acts.

Today the university is divided into three schools: the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, the School of Health Sciences and the School of Business and Science. Within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences are the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Education.

The administration of public universities is entrusted to the University Council and the Rector.<sup>2</sup> The Central Administration of the University also includes the Managing Director, School Presidents and Deans of Schools.

The *University Council* wields supreme decisive authority within the University and is in charge of matters concerning the University in general and shapes a comprehensive policy for it. The University Council also contributes to and organizes supervision of and cooperation between faculties and their communications with parties outside the university including cooperation with other schools and research institutes. The University Council has decisive authority in matters relating to the university, as prescribed by law and as regulation more specifically stipulates.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Article 5, paragraph 1 of Act No. 85/2008.

The *Rector* is appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture for a five-year term according to the University Council's nomination, which sets rules for the appointment procedure. The Rector is the chairman of the University Council. He is the head of administration of the university and its main representative. The Rector is in charge of the daily operations of the University and initiates the shaping of University policy by the University Council. The Rector is responsible for and supervises all operations, including staff recruitment and finance, and makes operational and budget plans, but the School President hires academic staff, although the Rector will be in charge of these appointments. The Rector appoints Deans of Schools for a two year term, after receiving a recommendation from the relevant School and consulting with the University Council.

The *management board* supervises coordination of daily operations of the University and ensures that the decisions of the University Council are implemented. The management board consists of the rector, school presidents, faculty deans and the managing director of the university office.

A *Quality Council* is operated within the University and seats there are held by the Rector, Deans of Schools, the Managing Director, the Director of Quality Management, a representative from the staff and the students. The Quality Council meets at least once a month. It is responsible for the implementation of the University's quality system.

The *University Office* is divided into five sections which provide service for students and staff: a) Financial, Staff and Administrative Section, b) Academic Administration, c) Marketing and Public

Relations, d) Research and Development Centre and e) Information Services.

Several other councils and committees function within the university such as the *Science Council*, which shall be the highest advisory authority regarding the promotion of research; the *Ethics Committee* which shall have the highest authority on the writing and interpretation of the *Code of Ethics* of the University of Akureyri; and the *University Assembly* which is a consultation platform for the university community, where discourse on the development and promotion of the work of the University takes place; its meeting shall be held at least once a year.

The University Council approves further regulations concerning its role and appointment. Representatives of students and staff have a seat on almost all councils and committees of the University, and the central management of the University is in regular contact with student and staff organizations to discuss their various issues.

#### *The School of Humanities and the Social Sciences*

The School of Humanities and the Social Sciences is divided into three faculties: Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Education and Faculty of Law. The highest authority in matters concerning the School is the faculties meeting (also called the *School Assembly*). School Assembly seats and voting rights are granted to: The Dean, professors, senior lecturers, lecturers and adjuncts, regardless of their appointments' percentage of FTE, Specialists and Director of the Centre of School Development, one representative of the visiting lecturers from each faculty, appointed by the visiting lecturers of the relevant faculty for one year at a time, and one student

representative from each faculty, appointed by their student union for one year at a time. It addresses main issues regarding the operations of the School and is, along with the Dean, responsible for its operation being in accordance with laws and regulations. Among other tasks the School Assembly makes a suggestion for the hiring of the Dean of School, after prior voting between the candidates. The School Assembly can delegate matters to the *School Council* which deals with matters concerning individual student cases, and other internal matters which relate to the School.

The *School Council* of the School of Humanities and the Social Sciences, consists, in addition to the Dean of School, of his/her deputy, heads of faculties, heads of departments, the Director of the Centre of School Development, one representative of teachers, and one representative of students.

#### *The law faculty*

The Dean of the School, Heads of Faculty and faculty meetings are responsible for teaching, teaching structure, and academic development. Each faculty is responsible for the planning and development of courses which the School has approved for teaching in the faculty. Each faculty offers at least one path of study, a specified combination of courses, which the student must complete. According to the Rules No. 611/2009 on the Organizational Structure of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Akureyri, the Law programme structure is among other things based on the Act on Professional Lawyers No. 77/1998 and Regulation on Solicitors License Exams No. 1095/2005.

Faculty seats in the Faculty of Law-which include the right to attend, make suggestions and vote at faculty meetings-are granted to

adjuncts, lecturers, senior lecturers and professors who perform at least 50% of their teaching duty in the faculty, and one student representative who is appointed by their student union for one year at a time. The head of the law Faculty shall be appointed by the Faculty Meeting for two years at a time, from among the permanent lecturers, senior lecturers and professors in the faculty. The Faculty Meeting shall also appoint the Head of Faculty's deputy for the same length of time. The Head of the Faculty of Law is responsible for the operations of the faculty, academic organization, preparation and procedures, development and communication, and also participates in the management of the School, e.g. by sitting on the School Council. She or he handles communication with students, plans the teaching load, makes suggestions for new hires, selects course tutors for each academic course in consultation with the Dean of School, and is involved in class scheduling in consultation with the School Office. The Head of Faculty of Law presides over Faculty Meetings and follows through on meeting agreements.

In December 2009, 118 students were enrolled in the law programmes. In April 2011, there were 94 students (BA 59, ML 35). One professor and one senior lecturer hold full time tenured positions; in addition there are seven part time positions, including two temporary ones (in February 2010). Temporary instructors and visiting teachers are an important part of the teaching staff at UNAK's law programmes. The first eleven candidates for the BA degree graduated in 2006, and the first ten candidates for the ML degree graduated in 2008. In 2009, the first candidates graduated with a master level diploma in Polar Law. Between 2006 and 2009, a total of 76 candidates have graduated from the UNAK Faculty of Law.

The setup of the administration and organization of the Law Faculty is in line with comparable faculties in other countries. The impression obtained on the site visit was that the university's authorities see the Faculty of Law as an important asset to the University. However, the reading of the self-evaluation report and the site visit left some questions as to the structure and its execution. A part of the university's administration are several committees such as the Quality Council and the Science Council, their role and involvement in the routine of the Law Faculty is, however, unclear and could be better structured. Students mentioned that some classes have been cancelled or changed on occasion.

### **II.1.c. Structure of Teaching and Research (UNAK)**

#### *Teaching*

The Faculty of Law at UNAK offers a three year study programme leading to a BA degree in law and a two year graduate programme of legal studies leading to a ML degree. It also offers study programmes in Polar Law—concentrating on legal issues pertaining to the Polar Regions. Together, the various programmes in law offered at UNAK are meant to provide the academic rigour, intellectual stimulation, and practical knowledge to be expected from a law school that prepares graduates both for legal practice in Iceland and for wider participation in a dynamic, international labour market. The Faculty of Law emphasises that the nature of legal education means that a careful balance must be maintained between both theoretical knowledge and practical legal skills. Given the rapidly evolving nature of law and legal practice, it sees it as fundamental to ensure that students gain the most up to date knowledge. To this end, it can

broadly be stated that the BA programme is principally staffed by teachers with strong research portfolios (both full-time and visiting professors), whereas the ML programme is staffed by teachers with extensive experience in the practice of law. The Polar Law courses are taught to a considerable extent by leading world experts in the respective fields, reflecting their innovative and ground-breaking character.

There are five Curriculum- and Credit-transfer Committees at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. One of these is for the Law Faculty. The Committee consists of at least three representatives of academic staff (adjuncts, lecturers, senior lecturers or professors) who shall be appointed for two years at a time by the pertinent Faculty Meeting, and of one representative of the students, who is appointed by their student union for one year at a time. The Curriculum- and Credit-transfer Committee shall conduct formal mutual consultation, with a view to establishing as much collaboration as possible on academic programmes and programme choice in the School. Curriculum- and Credit-transfer Committees make suggestions for the assessment of previous education and of proposed exchange studies of students at the pertinent faculty or department. Curriculum- and Credit-transfer Committees also make suggestions to the Faculty Meeting for amendments to the curriculum or course catalog.

The Law programme structure is among other things to be based on the Act on Professional Lawyers No. 77/1998 and Regulation on Solicitors License Exams No. 1095/2005. To complete the BA degree in law 180 ECTS are needed, normally 60 ECTS per year, and additional 120 ECTS are needed to complete the ML degree. In total, 300 ECTS are thus needed to complete legal studies for the ML

degree. This requirement is in agreement with international standards. The Polar Law Programme offers a MA degree of 120 ECTS, a LL.M degree of 90 ECTS, a graduate diploma of 60 ECTS and an undergraduate diploma of 60 ECTS.

#### *BA*

Law studies leading to the BA degree at UNAK are in many ways designed in a manner that is different from the conventional programmes at Icelandic universities hitherto. The Law Faculty at UNAK considers it critical to legal education that students learn not only *what the laws are*, but that they also have a solid understanding of *what law is*. Law and jurisprudence are thus examined in a context that is historical, social and philosophical in character. The qualification gives access to both academic and professional graduate studies in law.

According to the description on UNAK's website, the B.A. in law is an undergraduate degree in legal studies, with particular emphasis on Icelandic legal basics, comparative law, international law and human rights, European law, constitutional law, legal theory and law in its social context. In the second and third years, students undertake a 12 ECTS thesis in law, which is submitted at the end of the third year of study.

The main goal of the BA in law is to teach students the foundations of law and legal practice in Iceland, Europe and beyond. Students learn to think critically about legal topics, analyse legal issues, create and defend legal arguments, in addition to developing expertise in professional, academic and legal writing and oral presentation, in both Icelandic and English.



In the first year of studies, students are introduced to Roman law, legal history, legal theory and interpretation, foreign legal systems and international law, as well as foundational subjects in Icelandic law and general academic skills. During the first year, 10 core courses are obligatory, each giving 6 ECTS credits. In addition, attending the so-called law-forum is obligatory in both semesters, but this does not give ECTS credits. The first year of studies amounts to 60 ECTS credits, but students are nevertheless able to commence the second year after completing 54 ECTS in the first year. This provides the necessary historical and theoretical knowledge and skills in order to tackle the second and third year courses with a nuanced critical and analytical perspective.

In the second and third years of studies, students examine European Law, constitutional law, human rights law, sociology of law, administrative law, international private law, legal ethics, the law of the sea and some black-letter law subjects—introduction to Criminal Law and Property Law and Introduction to Contract Law—with a substantial emphasis placed on theoretical and comparative context. The curriculum of the second and third year is composed of 9 obligatory (core) courses each year of 6 ECTS each, i.e. 54 credits each year, plus the work on a final BA assignment, for which the calculated work is 6 ECTS each year (amounts to 60 ECTS credits each year). In addition one elective course of 6 ECTS is offered in the last semester of the third year, in competitive court performance. Students have the opportunity to apply their legal knowledge and develop their practical legal skills in two moot court courses (one in Icelandic on Icelandic law and one in English on international or foreign law). There is scope, by means of two open courses and one workshop-based course, to study cutting-edge legal topics, chosen

by the teacher each time. These five courses, called Seminars in Law, Capita Selecta I and II and Moot Court I and II, are all core courses, amounting combined to 30 ECTS credits out of the 180 needed for the BA degree. Towards the end of the second year, students choose a topic for their BA thesis, which counts for 12 ECTS credits, and begin working on this well in advance of submission at the end of the third year.

All BA courses are taught in intensive three week blocks, during which students devote themselves exclusively to one subject. The fact that other programmes at UNAK do not employ this system makes it somewhat difficult to offer law courses as elective or core courses for students in other faculties. Nevertheless, students from other faculties do select law courses, and law courses are popular with international exchange students at UNAK. The block-teaching is also maintained because it has paedagogical advantages; it is viewed favourably by students; and it makes it possible to offer courses taught by international and other experts who live outside the Akureyri area and who would not be able to stay in Akureyri for a whole semester.

Interdisciplinary influences include some teaching by members of the Faculty of Social Science (e.g. professional ethics, legal interpretation, philosophy of punishment, writing and critical thinking), and research collaboration (e.g. a project named *Human Rights in Crisis*, 2009-2011). Preparations have also been made for collaboration between the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Education in the area of human rights in school curricula.

The BA degree is intended to provide an excellent academic basis for those who intend to continue to qualify as practicing lawyers. Moreover, it also provides a solid foundation for those who do not

intend to pursue conventional legal careers but rather wish to focus on careers in related fields such as international relations and political science. The approximately equal balance between courses taught and examined in English and Icelandic prepares students for work in both the domestic and international labour markets.

For the BA degree, students must complete 180 ECTS credits by taking 28 obligatory courses of 6 ECTS each (168 ECTS) and submit a thesis of 12 ECTS. The courses are completed in 3 weeks periods so the students are earning 2 ECTS credits for each week of work. Given that each ECTS credit should entail 25-30 hours of a student's work, it would appear that 50-60 hours of learning are expected of the students each week. One optional course of 6 ECTS is offered (competition in court performance) in the last semester of the BA studies. Out of the 29 BA courses offered to students commencing their three year BA studies in 2011, there are only 6-7 courses, each giving 6 ECTS, that seem from the description on UNAK's website to belong to the traditional (black-letter) areas of law. These are Introduction to Icelandic Law, Introduction to Criminal Law and Property Law, Introduction to Contract Law, Constitutional Theory, issues in Administrative Law, Legal Interpretation and Sources of Law. The important information above on subjects and work requirements students must meet in order to be granted the BA degree were not to be found in the self-evaluation report and had to be gathered from the UNAK's website. It is to be noted that it seems that only introductory courses are given in core legal subjects and some subjects that traditionally would fall in that category are not introduced at the BA level.

## **ML**

The ML Degree in Law requires full time study for two academic years, 120 ECTS including a 30 credit thesis. Access requirements are a BA degree in Law from the University of Akureyri or another comparable degree and generally a grade point average of 7 (or comparable grade in another grading system). The ML qualification gives access to doctoral studies in law and is meant to constitute a professional law degree.

At the graduate level of study leading to the degree of ML students focus exclusively on Icelandic law. The ML is taught exclusively in Icelandic as it is aimed at preparing graduates for legal careers within the Icelandic legal community and at preparing students for the Icelandic Bar examination. All ML courses are taught in traditional full-semester format with continuous assessment spread throughout the semester. The 15 ML courses offered are all obligatory core courses. Each counts for 6 ECTS, seven of which are completed in the first year of study and eight in the second year. Students begin working on their 30 ECTS ML thesis during their first semester, giving them nearly two years to ensure that they can produce the very highest quality of work. The work on the thesis counts for 18 ECTS credits for the first year of study and for 12 ECTS for the second year. In a final thesis in a subject of their choice within any area of Icelandic law, each student has an opportunity to further develop and improve their critical and analytical skills and to demonstrate their capacity to conduct extensive independent research at a level that would qualify them for doctoral study.

There are three legal process courses covering civil procedure, criminal procedure and enforcement of claims; and there are substantive law courses in contracts, torts, property, company,

labour, family, constitutional, administrative, tax, criminal and claims. Many of the instructors on the programme are practising lawyers who bring a contemporary and practical perspective to the courses as well as encouraging positive interchange between UNAK and civil society.

### *Polar Law*

Studies in Polar Law concentrate on legal issues pertaining to the Polar Regions. Polar Law includes the following study options: a 120 ECTS MA degree, a 90 ECTS LLM degree; a 60 ECTS study at the master level leading to a graduate diploma; a 60 ECTS study at the bachelor level leading to an undergraduate diploma; and individual courses leading to a certificate.

The Polar law programme offers a focus on the legal regimes, rules and processes pertaining to the Arctic and Antarctic. The coverage extends from human rights to the law of the sea, from environmental law to good governance, and from transportation law to security considerations. The programme focuses on areas of international and domestic law concerning the Polar Regions and courses are offered in the areas of: international law, including the law of the sea, environmental law and biodiversity, climate change management; the laws of and the laws protecting indigenous peoples and other residents of the arctic; arctic human development; governance (international, local and indigenous), and economies, industries and business in polar regions. Students in the LLM or MA lines also write a substantial thesis.

The programme is taught exclusively in English, meeting twin objectives of appealing to the widest possible student body and

ensuring that the research conducted by the students can be disseminated to the widest possible audience. Students, particularly indigenous persons, are also encouraged to disseminate the results of their work in their native languages. In this programme, UNAK is working closely with a number of other higher education institutions, both domestically and internationally. These include universities in Canada, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Alaska).

The annual Polar Law symposium is also integrated into the Polar Law programme and students' attendance, which is an integral part of their studies, is free of charge.

Upon completion of the studies, students should be competent to embark on academic and other professional careers in Polar Law or in related fields. The UNAK considers this programme to be of great contemporary relevance and application.

The BA study programme of Law at the University of Akureyri is not a traditional law programme by Icelandic standards. It is a programme that focuses on historical, social and philosophical questions about what law is and its purpose and ethical dimensions in society such as in relation to human rights' questions. It also emphasizes critical thinking and academic methods. This focus has been lacking in the traditional legal education in Iceland and is thus a valuable asset to the legal scholastic flora. The heavy emphases on this aspect of the law, and the absence of scholars in Icelandic law at the faculty does, however, inevitably mean that less attention is given to teaching and research of the core subjects respective to the Icelandic legal system. This may cause problems of mobility of students between the Icelandic law schools. It is important that the Faculty recognizes and

accepts the pros and cons of this line of study and decides either to stick to it, with the results that traditional Icelandic legal studies will not have as strong a profile, or alternatively amend the undergraduate program, without abandoning the ideology behind it, by introducing and putting more emphasis on teaching and research in basic Icelandic legal subjects. Another solution might involve cooperation with other universities thus providing students with the possibility to take additional courses in subjects they may need to master before embarking upon a masters programme in Law. Most importantly, students must be given information about the success rate of ML-graduates from UNAK (and other law schools) in the Bar examination.

At the site visit, students expressed satisfaction with the block-teaching method which is prevalent in the BA program. This method does in a sense complicate interdisciplinary scholarship as it is more difficult for students in other fields to take courses in the undergraduate law program; on the other hand it does have the advantage proposed, to make it possible to get highly qualified teachers and specialists to come to Akureyri and teach individual courses.

The tenured staff has a strong academic profile. However, most of the teachers of graduate courses are part time teachers holding 30-50% positions as adjuncts at the UNAK's Law Faculty. Their main occupation remains elsewhere, most of the time carrying demanding responsibilities as advocates or judges. They can hardly be expected to add much to the research output of the Faculty. It does not seem that any formal academic evaluation takes place before these part time positions are granted, whereas this is neither required by the university rules nor the law. At the site visit, it was disclosed that no

guidance in teaching is given for external teachers. In spite of a valuable contribution of experienced lawyers to the teaching, all this is bound to mean that the academic profile of the master's programme does not satisfy best international standards for university courses and needs to be addressed. This is, however, a situation that is possible to change by financial support for hiring more staff. The Faculty does recognize that the lack of qualified Icelandic legal academics to supervise teaching of Icelandic law is a drawback for the programmes.

The Polar Law programme is a novel and an interesting line of study encouraging international cooperation and an important asset to legal studies in Iceland and also the international academic community.

#### *Research*

The two full-time teachers in the BA programme have strong international research backgrounds and continue to publish widely. Their research has appeared in peer-reviewed journals in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Israel and the Nordic countries. One of them has also published three books and has contributed to a monograph recently published by Oxford University Press, entitled *Law and Justice in Community*.

Other regular teachers in the BA program, who are formally based in the Faculty of Social Science, have also published and continue to publish extensively. The BA programme is also enriched by visiting guest teachers, including highly respected international scholars undertaking groundbreaking research in, for example, human rights, international law and property law with a number of books to their



names. The BA programme has also attracted visiting Fulbright teachers with strong research profiles.

The emphasis in the ML programme is on preparing students for legal practice and Icelandic bar examination and to this end they benefit from teaching by experienced legal practitioners.

The Polar Law courses are taught by pioneers in their respective fields, with impressive international research portfolios. The Director of the Polar Law Programme is a prolific researcher who has published extensively on issues regarding Arctic policy and law.

In addition to the before mentioned annual Polar law Symposium, the UNAK Faculty of Law is also home to the *Yearbook of Polar Law*, published by Brill Academic Publishers in the Netherlands.<sup>3</sup> The *Yearbook* covers a wide variety of topics relating to the Arctic and the Antarctic. The first volume contains the presentations made at the first Symposium on Polar Law (September 2008), and the second volume will contain presentations from the second Polar Law Symposium (September 2009).

Smaller conferences are regular features of academic life at UNAK and these are always free of charge to students. A regular law forum, *Lögfræðitorg*, is open to the public as well as students and is mandatory for first year students. Lectures are given by visitors and faculty members who introduce research projects they are currently undertaking. The Law Forum provides the students with the opportunity to consider legal issues in contemporary contexts. The law students at UNAK publish a law journal, *Lögfræðingur*. As of its fourth edition, it is a fully peer-reviewed journal.

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.brill.nl/default.aspx?partid=210&pid=34474>.

Students have on several occasions applied for and received research grants from the Icelandic Student Innovation Fund (Nýsköpunarsjóður námsmanna).

Many of the teaching staff's own publications are used as teaching material and this is especially the case in Polar Law. Students may also be asked to consider cases in which teachers have themselves been involved. The UNAK finds that teachers' research is vital to the aims and purposes of the study programmes, and it significantly enhances the quality of the studies. It is noted that students in the BA programme report satisfaction with the fact that teachers have specialized knowledge and are able to explore the area of their expertise with the students.

The research profile of tenured teachers and visiting lecturers in the undergraduate and the Polar Law programmes is high, and compares well with international standards. However, it is not clear from the evaluation report how the University executes its policy to support its tenured staff in respect to research. It is not clear either whether, and if so how and to what extent, students are encouraged to participate in research, thesis apart. However, a handful of BA graduates have been hired as research assistants for periods during their master level studies. A weakness in the law studies at UNAK is, as already stated, the lack of qualified academics to organize and teach Icelandic law. The ML programme seems to suffer from this and it is essential to support the Faculty so it may employ a few academics in this field. Those who currently teach Icelandic law are highly qualified lawyers; however, they all pursue another demanding full time occupation. This is not in accordance with the goal of the University of Akureyri in respect to research-based postgraduate education.

#### **II.1.d. Competence Requirements of Personnel (UNAK)**

Permanent teaching staff at UNAK consists of professors, senior lecturers and lecturers, and these alone are considered by law to hold full-time positions in teaching and research at the University. Also employed are adjuncts, project managers, specialists and temporary instructors. Only individuals who have graduated from a university or another comparable institution, and have majored in the subject or a subject related to the one they will be teaching, may be hired as permanent faculty members.

The Rector shall appoint a three person Assessment Committee for a two-year term, based on nominations by the University Council and the Minister of Education, for the purpose of evaluating applications for the posts of professor, senior lecturer and lecturer. One of the two members nominated by the University Council shall be employed outside the University. Only individuals who have a master degree can be appointed to the committee. The Rector shall nominate a specialist, recommended by the relevant faculty, to act as a consultant to the committee when it evaluates the applicant's academic work.

Applicants for the positions of professors, senior lecturer and lecturer shall provide a thorough report on their scientific or academic work, writing, research, teaching, management work, academic record and other jobs. The Assessment Committee shall issue a written statement where it argues whether the scientific value of the applicant's publications and research, and his/her academic career and jobs, indicate that she or he is qualified for the job. No person may be appointed to the post of professor, senior lecturer or lecturer, unless a majority of the assessment committee has expressed in a written statement that she or he is qualified for it.

If the position of professor, senior lecturer or lecturer is advertised, and the qualifications of more than one applicant are deemed by the Assessment Committee to be satisfactory, the Rector shall ask the relevant faculty/faculties to comment on the candidates' suitability before hiring.

In its task the Assessment Committee is to follow Rules No. 1207/2007 on the work of the assessment committee, hiring and professional advancement of faculty at the University of Akureyri issued by the Rector on 3 December 2007.<sup>4</sup> These include detailed rules on the procedure as well as qualification criteria. As a general rule a tenured member of faculty shall at least hold a masters degree or an equivalent education, however, professors and senior lecturers should preferably have obtained a doctorate.

Rules No. 1207/2007 in respect to assessment do not apply to the hiring of adjuncts and temporary instructors; these are hired by the Rector. Laws on the rights and duties of government employees No. 70/1996, laws on universities No. 63/2006, laws on the University of Akureyri No. 40/1999 and rules on the University of Akureyri No. 466/2007 apply to all employees of the University of Akureyri.

The Assessment Committee evaluates the qualifications of applicants for the position of Dean of Faculty in the same way as qualifications of applicants for faculty positions are evaluated. Applicants for the position of Dean of Faculty should fulfil general qualification requirements for faculty positions, either in the academic field taught in the faculty in question or in a field very closely related to its main subjects. According to Article 17 of the Act on Public Higher Education Institutions No. 85/2008, which applies to UNAK and UI, it

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Higher Education Institution Act No. 63/2006.

is the Dean that grants academic positions at a school and institutions that pertain to a school. Before granting an academic position at a university, the vacant post shall be advertised. However, a university rector may, according to school proposition and with the University Council's consent, offer the position to a scientist without advertising the position. A university may also deviate from the obligation of advertising when the position is based on specific temporary grants, when the position is connected to particular temporary projects, when the position is held by students during their graduate research studies and when the position is connected to a particular job outside the university through a cooperation agreement. In practice, permanent positions at UNAK are advertised, temporary positions on the other hand are used to meet temporary needs, e.g. because of developing programmes, sabbaticals, and parental leaves.

Teaching staff in law at UNAK with faculty status include only two 100% positions (one is held by a professor and one by a senior lecturer) and seven part time positions, including two temporary ones (in February 2010, there were three adjuncts in 50% positions, two adjuncts in 30% positions, one lecturer in 75% position and a senior lecturer in 50% position). Both full-time academic teachers have doctorates, and so does one part time lecturer. Temporary instructors and visiting teachers are an important part of the teaching staff at UNAK's law programmes. They are hired to teach one course (or part of a course) at a time, and such teaching amounts in a typical year to about 3-5 courses in the BA programme, 2-4 courses in the ML programme and 5-6 courses in the Polar Law programme. In 2009-2010, temporary or visiting teachers were responsible for approximately 26,3% of the teaching in the law

programmes; the rest was carried out by members of the UNAK Law Faculty (65,3%) and members of other UNAK faculties (8,4%). Despite the relatively low staffing level, efforts have been made to ensure that the education available to students is not unduly compromised.

The relatively many visiting teachers are in most cases very experienced university teachers in addition to being scholarly experts in the subjects they teach. They are each directed to the Staff Handbook which is in English to ensure accessibility to visiting scholars from outside of Iceland. The Handbook condenses essential information regarding course requirements, evaluation standards and minimum administrative responsibilities for course coordinators; provides summary guidance on payment procedures for teaching; introduces visitors to services available within UNAK and the local community; and consolidates links to University rules and regulations.

A full time lecturer position was advertised in January 2008 but no hiring resulted. A desirable permanent faculty member with expertise in Icelandic law has not yet been hired, but a new application procedure for such a position was opened on 27 April 2011.

The requirements made to applicants for academic positions are in line with relevant rules and regulations and meet international standards. The permanent faculty members are highly qualified and so are many of the visiting lecturers who come to Akureyri to teach individual courses. The ratio of part time teachers is, however, rather high and an effort should be made to reduce their number. As mentioned above it is essential that the Law Faculty manages to hire a full time academic with good knowledge in Icelandic law. This

is particularly important since the full time faculty members both have obtained their education at foreign law schools. In the spring of 2011, an application process was opened for a full time lecturer at the Law Faculty. The lecturer is expected to teach both in the BA and ML programmes and supervise the administration of all ML theses. Requirements include a law degree, either a Cand. Jur. or a BA in law followed by a Masters degree in law or another related subject.<sup>5</sup>

#### **II.1.e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students (UNAK)**

##### *Admission requirements*

The Rector of UNAK, and the Deans under his mandate, are responsible for the registration of students.<sup>6</sup> However, the University Council is the final authority on student admissions. The Council can limit the admittance of new students.

Students enrolling in programmes leading to a first cycle university degree at universities must have completed the matriculation examination from upper secondary school (*stúdentispróf*) or equivalent examination. Universities may admit students who have not completed the matriculation examination or another equivalent examination if they possess the experience, knowledge and skills that are equivalent to the university's preparation requirements for studies at higher education level.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.starfatorg.is/kennsla\\_rannsoknir/nr/14198](http://www.starfatorg.is/kennsla_rannsoknir/nr/14198).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Article 18 of the Act on Public Higher Education Institutions No. 85/2008.

The BA programme at UNAK is aimed at students who are interested in law as a theoretical subject that includes perspectives from social science and political science, as well as an international perspective. The programme also targets students who want to study law but do not want to close their options for graduate study or work in related fields. At the same time, UNAK finds it very important for the programme to attract students who are well prepared academically; the programme therefore emphasises the admission requirement that students must have completed their secondary school diploma (*stúdentspróf*).

The ML programme is open to graduates of the BA programme who have obtained an average grade of at least 7 in their undergraduate studies or a comparable qualification from another institution.

The master programmes in Polar Law are designed for and open to students who seek theoretical as well as practical background in the range of legal issues relevant to the Polar areas. Although the emphasis is on law, much of the teaching is inter- and cross-disciplinary, and the programmes accordingly admit students with BA degrees in disciplines other than law.

The admission procedure at the UNAK's Law Faculty complies with legal requirements and is in accordance with international standards.

#### *Students' rights and duties*

According to Article 19 of the Act on Public Higher Education Institutions No. 85/2008, students shall avoid any actions in their studies or in their manner, within or outside of the university, that may dishonour them or damage their reputation or that may disgrace their studies or their university. Should a student be found



guilty of behaviour which goes against the Act or rules based on the Act, the Dean of the school where the student is registered shall treat the case. Taking into account the gravity of the offence, the Dean may reprimand the student or suspend him from his studies, temporarily or permanently. Before deciding on suspension, the student shall be given a chance to express his/her opinion on the matter. Having exhausted all the appeal channels within the University, a student has the right to appeal a decision to a Committee of Complaint for University Students which according to the Higher Education Act deals with complaints of all university students. The board's functions are further stipulated in Rules No. 1152/2006. According to the Act on Public Higher Education Institutions, the University Council shall issue rules, after consulting with the University Students' Association, stipulating students' rights and duties including rules for students' right of appeal within the university. The University has, since the fall of 2010, fulfilled this requirement by publishing information on student rights and relevant legislation in the "Student handbook".

Regulations on Course Assessment at the University of Akureyri No. 885/2009, issued in accordance with Article 21 of the Act on Public Higher Education Institutions, stipulate that the University Council shall set rules regarding examination arrangements, including the recognition of foreign examinations, entrance and preliminary examinations, grading and other related matters. According to the Act and the Regulations, a student is entitled to clarifications from the teacher regarding the assessment of his written examination within 15 days from getting the grade. If a student who has failed an examination does not accept the teacher's assessment, after that he can turn to the relevant Dean. A moderator shall then be appointed

for each case. Both a teacher and a student majority can, if they find this necessary, request the appointment of a moderator for individual examinations.

The Code of Ethics of the University of Akureyri, issued by the Rector on 1 August 2008 recalls that the staff and students at the University of Akureyri form a community which is based on *justice, respect* and *responsibility*. In the name of these values, the members of the academic community adhere to the ethical obligations stated therein. The Code of Ethics is also in the spirit of the fundamental values which UNAK policy 2007-2011 is based on: freedom, innovation, trust and equality (see section II.1.a). An *Ethics Committee*, deals with alleged cases of plagiarism at UNAK; it consists of five permanently employed teachers.<sup>7</sup>

Arrangements and rules in respect to students' rights and duties are in line with international standards. It must, however, be guaranteed that students are well informed as to those rules and standards as well as of their possibility to appeal to the Committee of Complaint for University Students both in respect to a final decision of the university's authorities and the procedure of their claims.

#### **II.1.f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students (UNAK)**

UNAK's housing facilities are new or recently refurbished; the total size of the housing is 11.499 m<sup>2</sup>. The entire School of Humanities and Social Sciences, of which the Law Faculty is a part, is located in one and the same building, *Sólborg*, from autumn 2010. A new wing of

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Rules No. 727/2006, issued by the University.

2.300 m<sup>2</sup> has a conference and lecture hall seating up to 500 persons, two lecture theatres with inclined seating for 70 students each, three ordinary classrooms for 35-40 students each, three small classrooms for 20-25 students and a study room accommodating approximately 40 students. All facilities are to be furnished with state of the art equipment and technology. The older part of the building has classrooms, computer rooms, conference rooms, offices of teachers, the UNAK Library, the Computer and Media Centre, the cafeteria, the office of the Student Union (FSHA) and a service desk.

*Classroom housing* measures almost 2500 m<sup>2</sup>. Classrooms are generally well equipped with computers and overhead projectors, but many are also equipped for distance education with teleconferencing equipment such as cameras, wireless microphones, loudspeakers and electronic blackboards.

All permanently employed members of the teaching staff have an *office* with a desk, a computer and telephone. Most have a private office, but in some instances two teachers share an office with a partition.

The *University Office* is divided into five sections which provide service for students and staff: a) Financial, Staff and Administrative Section, b) Academic Administration, c) Marketing and Public Relations, d) Research and Development Centre and Library and e) Information Services.

*The Academic Administration* is responsible for the planning and co-ordination of teaching at UNAK and the dissemination of information to students and teachers concerning teaching. This includes administration of teaching, faculty office management and registration of students, study counselling, examination

management, distance education, management and counselling pertaining to student and teacher exchanges, the development of UNAK's information system and operating the UNAK switchboard.

*The division of Marketing and Public Relations* is responsible for UNAK's PR activities to prospective students and others who want to familiarise themselves with its operations. The division publishes all brochures and pamphlets aimed at prospective students, manages UNAK's web, organises events, receives visitors and guests and handles interaction with the media.

The University of Akureyri *Research and Development Centre* (RHA) is an independent centre within the university that provides research support for academics in the law department.

The University of Akureyri *Library* held approximately 61.000 copies of library volumes at the end of 2009. The library's inter library loans services have always been a priority and emphasis is laid on rapid document delivery both from domestic and international libraries as its stock of printed material does not amount to many copies yet compared to international libraries. It is the library's policy to buy all published Icelandic material on law and most of the older published legal material as available on the market. The libraries stock of electronic materials is on the other hand quite impressive already. *Reading rooms* with 64 seats are located in the library and 24 of them are equipped with computers. Students also have access to three work rooms equipped with computers. One of these rooms accommodates 6-8 persons whereas the others have room for 4-6 persons. There is a computer in every room.

The University of Akureyri *computer system* operates in Windows and Linux environments. The systems managers of UNAK responsible

for the operations of the computer system also attend to safety measures, both operational and data safety, in addition to supervision of access and accounts controls. The computer system is accessible almost everywhere in UNAK housing facilities, both by means of fixed and wireless connections. All members of the UNAK staff and students have UNAK e-mail addresses and accounts in the system accessible with user names and keywords and e-mail addresses.

The *Computer and Media Centre* offers work facilities for students and teachers, such as computer booths, access to specialised equipment and software. Facilities for printouts, including colour printouts and spiral binding, are available at the Computer and Media Centre for students and teachers free of charge. *Computer rooms* are accessible to students during off-hours from teaching.

There are more than ten *conference rooms* in UNAK that students and teachers can reserve. There is *fitness and exercise room* open to employees and students. At Sólborg there is a 214 m<sup>2</sup> *cafeteria* for both students and teachers and there are 200 *storage lockers for rent* to students. Half of the lockers contain sockets for chargers so that lap tops, mobile phones, etc. can be stored and charged there. An automated *teller machine* for students and teachers is located at Sólborg. *Photocopying machines* and *printers* are available for students and teachers. As a part of the town of Akureyri's environmental policy *bus services are free of charge*. Schedules have recently been modified in response to student and faculty requests.

Housing and support services at UNAK are quite satisfactory and fulfil international standards. The library is small but well stocked and obviously makes an effort to serve students and researchers as well as possible given the local circumstances. Students also profit

from the proximity of teachers. On the other hand it was not clear to the Expert Panel whether common rooms for students and teachers are provided. In modern universities, these play an important role in consolidating the academic community and strengthening the university spirit of learning and research. It would be in accordance with international standards to provide such facilities and encourage their use.

### **II.1.g. Internal Quality Management System (UNAK)**

#### *Quality assurance*

At the University, regular self-assessment shall be conducted of its internal operation, as well as external assessment aiming at continuous improvement, in accordance with the law. The UNAK's Quality Council is lead by the Rector and composed of all the Deans of the University, the Director of administration, the Director of Quality Management, one representative of staff and one of students. The Council meets every month og the academic year. The Director of Quality Management manages the daily operation of the quality system of the University, but the Rector is ultimately responsible for it, subject to consultation with the Quality Council.

#### *Students' assessments*

The strategy at UNAK law school for the continuous enhancement of quality includes a significant role for students. The information collected in surveys is used to improve and safeguard the quality of courses and programmes. At the end of each semester, the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Science receives an electronic copy of all course evaluations. The evaluation is conducted online

and students complete this anonymously. Students are invited to comment on the quality of the course, the teaching materials and the teaching itself. On one hand the student assesses the course as a whole and on the other the teaching performance of teachers who gave six lectures or more in the relevant course. The Dean pays special attention to teachers and courses that receive low scores or negative evaluations from students. This may result in an ad hoc interview where the teacher and Dean go over the evaluation and commit to specific means of improvement. All adjuncts, lecturers, senior lecturers and professors are also called for a career development interview bi-annually, and have the right to such an interview annually if they prefer. Going over course evaluations is part of the protocol for these interviews, both with a view to improvement and also in order to praise and recognize achievement. The Deans are also responsible upon conclusion of the interviews for providing the Director of Quality Management with written reports on the decisions made or proposed improvements that have been decided upon and how they are to be followed up on and monitored.

The course evaluation is discussed regularly at UNAK's Quality Council as a part of UNAK's policy of ongoing quality review. A decrease in the students' participation and their view that little is done with the results has caused concern and led to the forming of a work group, which suggested improvements to the course evaluation and its follow-up that might result in better participation by students. The Quality Council decided that the university will in the future support more than one method of course evaluation as it is important to execute evaluations in such a way that teachers have an opportunity to improve courses while they are being taught. It is also likely that students become more willing to participate if course

evaluation leads to immediate improvements. The Quality Council is discussing that teachers will be able to ask their students for mid-semester evaluation using questions constructed by the teachers themselves. The results of the evaluations will be sent to the teacher only to begin with but will follow the regular course evaluation information sent to the Dean at the end of the semester. Another change has been that teachers have the opportunity to comment on and change/add questions used in the main course evaluation at the end of the semester/term. This is in response to the views of some teachers that the evaluation does not fit their course. As means for a follow-up on the course evaluation results the Quality Council recommends that the teachers should fill out a special form, at the end of teaching their course, with information on their view of the course, what went well and what needs to be improved. They would then send it to the Dean who discusses it with the teacher at the next staff development interview along with the result of all course evaluation results.

These plans are promising and should be executed. It is of importance that questionnaires are simple, are relevant to the course taught, and that they are given both mid term and at the end of the course. In this way possible flaws may be corrected. If answering the questionnaires does not take up too much time students are more likely to answer them.

Information is also collected on graduates' opinions of the various aspects of the programme from which they are graduating. This survey was conducted among all UNAK candidates for graduation in spring 2008 and spring 2009. The results are instructive and indicate areas where students experience strengths and weaknesses. They also offer constructive criticism regarding the shortage of staff and



consequent need to put more effort into administration and leadership than current resources allow. This valuable feedback strengthens the case for hiring a third full-time teacher.

UNAK has various rules and regulations for ensuring equity and professional conduct. An overview with links to University Rules and Regulations is available at the UNAK website.<sup>8</sup>

### *Study standards*

The university is committed to working with internationally recognizable standards in education and to this end is following the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, and more specifically the National Qualification Framework for Iceland (Bologna Process). Implementation of the Bologna process is lead by the Course Curriculum Committee and is in the hands of the teachers in the faculty, subject to guidance and supervision by experts from outside the department, including the Quality Council and personnel from other departments with considerable experience in this field.

UNAK's Quality Council is responsible for planning and assessing the implementation of standards and criteria regarding teaching and study assessment. The Council reviews the results of course evaluations every semester, and is responsible for the development of these evaluations. It also oversees the implementation of the Bologna process in the various faculties and schools of the university. The law programmes are all subject to ongoing review to ensure they continue to meet the ever-changing needs and expectations of the

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.unak.is/haskolinn/page/logogreglur>.

students. The course curriculum is reviewed annually under the supervision of the Course Curriculum Committee, at which time the committee reviews the overall study lines and the principal teachers review each individual course, amending the description and learning outcomes if necessary. Both the committee and the teachers take on board prior experiences, results and stakeholder feedback. Minor improvements are implemented immediately. Major changes are also introduced as soon as practically possible, usually the following semester.

UNAK is in general very content with the excellent teaching and research produced by the limited staff involved in legal studies. In particular, the novel framework of the studies is considered to be pedagogically congruent with the aim of providing Iceland with a pool of learned, dynamic graduates, equipped to fully participate in society. Although the studies themselves are considered to be sound, it will be necessary to increase the staffing level within the faculty, in particular and in the immediate future, with the appointment of a permanent, full-time expert in Icelandic law.

The standard measure of research activity at UNAK is the annual assessment of research points. Each year, each faculty member (adjunct, lecturer, senior lecturer, professor) is expected to submit a report with evidence of his or her publications and other research activities in the previous year, and receives an evaluation in which the research activity has been quantified according to standard rules that take into account not only quantity of output but also quality of publication venue. Points are awarded for research activities; one article published in a respected, international peer-reviewed journal is assessed at 10 or 15 points depending on further qualifications of the journal. The members of the Law Faculty earned more research

points on average in 2004-2008 than their colleagues within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS) and UNAK. The average research points per Law Faculty in years 2004-2008 was 26,72, more than six points higher than the SHSS-average of 20,47 and more than eight points higher than the UNAK-average of 18,25.

It should be recommended that research evaluation is performed annually by an external group which meets international standards. Perhaps there should be an external evaluation for the whole of the Icelandic legal community: such panels exist in larger counties. The language may, however, be some barrier to getting examiners from abroad. This said, it is clear that the limited number of tenured staff at the UNAK's Law Faculty has a very good teaching and research record, but as mentioned above, and as the university clearly is aware of, it is essential for the Faculty to enlarge the group by employing academics specializing in Icelandic law. Nevertheless it is to be expected, because of the special circumstances, that it will be necessary to continue to involve part time teachers. Thus it is necessary to offer special training or guidance for part time teachers.

#### **II.1.h. Description of Learning Outcomes (UNAK)**

The learning outcomes for all study lines were reviewed and revised in 2009 and are subject to constant review and revision to ensure their ongoing appropriateness. They are compliant with the Bologna process and the National Qualifications' criteria and hence facilitate international comparison of student skills within the European area.

Descriptions and learning outcomes for each course are presented in UNAK's Course Catalogue, ensuring that exchange students and

graduates can clearly explain the essence of their education to European universities and/or employers. Diploma Supplements are among the papers issued by UNAK to its students upon graduation as required by the Bologna process.

The BA degree in law aims to provide an academic basis for those who intend to continue to qualify as practicing lawyers. Moreover, the studies should also provide a solid foundation for those who do not intend to pursue conventional legal careers but rather wish to focus on careers in related fields such as international relations and political science. The approximately equal balance between courses taught and examined in English and Icelandic has the aim of preparing students for work in both the domestic and international labour markets. The construction of the BA as a broad social science degree seems to appeal to students with different interests, which in itself enriches the study environment. It may open doors to a wider range of academic or professional futures than a more classical black-letter undergraduate law degree and it is also meant to prepare students for full participation in a democratic society.

The ML degree in law focuses on Icelandic law and is taught exclusively in Icelandic. It is aimed at preparing graduates for legal careers within the Icelandic legal community and participation in the Icelandic Bar examination.

The Polar Law programme establishes UNAK as a centre of pioneering research and education within a fast growing, exciting and under-explored discipline and it is meant to provide a unique pool of graduates to research and advance knowledge, interests and human development in the Polar Regions. The LLM and MA may also constitute a good preparation for doctoral studies or further research on polar issues.

It should be recognized that the BA programme's emphasis on legal theory, the sociology of law, and on comparative and international law does constitute a pioneering work in law studies in Iceland, and marks its unique character. Likewise this structure of an undergraduate education is no doubt a good preparation for studying law. Further, both full time teachers and many distinguished visitors comprise a highly qualified faculty at the undergraduate level. On the other hand the ML programme may be struggling to meet its expressed aims. This is not surprising. The formal legal education in Iceland and in other Nordic countries (earlier the cand. jur. degree) requires intense legal studies for five to six years, for the most part on core legal subjects (the current model is a BA degree in three years and addition two years for ML degree). Given the nature and structure of the BA programme at UNAK, as promising as it may be, it does not seem to give the average student a strong enough background to complete thereafter a traditional Icelandic law education in two years with sufficient results. In addition the ML courses are mostly taught by part time teachers who have another full time and demanding occupation to attend to. It seems that very few ML graduates have enrolled in the course for the Bar examination and that only three have successfully completed the course from the first graduation in 2008. This is very little in the light of the official aim of the ML program: to prepare students for that examination and a career as practising lawyers. This may be rectified by rearrangement of courses and emphasis and more permanent academic staff specializing in the area of Icelandic law. The Law Faculty and the administration of the University are aware of this matter. Attention should be paid to the important fact that many graduates from UNAK work outside Reykjavík, for this reason a Law Faculty situated at Akureyri is valuable.

### **II.1.i. Finances (UNAK)**

According to Article 24 of the Act on Higher Public Education No. 85/2008, each university is allocated an independent budget out of the state treasury. The Minister of Education, Science and Culture shall propose the financial contribution for each university regarding their expenses for teaching, research and other projects. Universities may generate income in addition to their budget allocation with e.g. registration fees, fees intended to cover the issue of certificates, the design, implementation and revision of assessment examinations, entrance examinations, repetition examinations and distance education examinations, fees for services considered to be an addition to the services that a university is obliged to provide, fees for services provided by the university on the basis of an agreement with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and fees for providing continuing education and lifelong learning for the public.

Universities may increase the registration fee by 15% for those who wish to register outside of the announced registration period. According to Article 25 of the Act, the University Council may enter into agreements with students, their associations or organizations, alumni associations, individuals, their associations and companies or public institutions, to carry out service on behalf of a university.

No additional sources of income, besides the State's contribution and the basic registration fees, seem to be reported by UNAK's Law Faculty.

The budget is based on the state allocations by the prediction of number of students, which are calculated on the basis of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students per year by considering how many course credits are completed per year and dividing that

number by 60, the number of ECTS units measuring full-time study for one year. For budgetary purposes, the actual number of FTE-students at UNAK is assessed and predicted in this way for each calendar year.

In September 2009, the number of FTE-students at UNAK in the general area of social sciences and law combined was assessed and predicted for the year 2010 to be 398 FTE students in total. For 2009 the number of students in the Faculties combined was 290, out of which 118 were enrolled in the Faculty of Law. In 2009, the average direct cost per FTE-student was 529.950 ISK in direct expenses and 517.095 ISK in overhead expenses calculated in the most inclusive way possible.

The average cost per FTE-law student has grown from just under 800,000 ISK in 2003 to just over 1,000,000 ISK in 2009. These numbers do not take inflation into account. Moreover, they represent total costs. That is, they reflect not only the cost associated directly with the law programmes, such as staff wages for the Law Faculty, but also overhead costs, such as housing, support services and university administration. The overhead housing costs include depreciation and finance, combined overhead costs amount to about half of the total cost per FTE-law student. *Direct costs* for the Faculty of Law are calculated in combination with the Faculty of Social Sciences, the approximate direct cost for the Faculty of Law is arrived at by multiplying the combined direct expenses for these two faculties with the course credits offered by the Faculty of Law, divided by the course credits offered by the two faculties combined. The Law Faculty's share in the overall *direct costs* of these two faculties is thus considered equal to its share in course credits offered. *Overhead costs* for the Faculty of Law are arrived at by

multiplying UNAK's total overhead cost with the ratio between FTE-students in law and FTE-students at UNAK. The *number of FTE-students* at UNAK and its faculties is assumed in the annual state contribution, based on UNAK's prediction of the development of student numbers together with the state budget assumption of predicted overall number of university students in the country. The result is a concrete number of FTE-students for the faculties of law and social sciences combined. The *number of FTE-students in the Faculty of Law* is arrived at by multiplying the total FTE-students in the faculties of law and social sciences combined with the Faculty of Law's proportion of course credits. The *total cost per FTE-law student* is arrived at by dividing the sum of direct and overhead expenses of the Faculty of Law by the number of FTE-law students.

UNAK is a public university and thus subject to the rules of state finances. It is clear from the report that limited means affect the possibility of the Law Faculty to hire more permanent staff, and thus affects its efforts in reaching the aims set, especially at the ML level.

### **II.1.j. Summary of Findings (UNAK)**

#### **a. Role and Objectives**

The University of Akureyri (UNAK) is a small public university and the only university in North Iceland. It was founded 1987. The aim of the University is to create environment and facilities conducive to research and innovation, supporting the growth and progress of Icelandic society, especially in rural areas. Among its objectives is to stimulate new perspectives, fresh currents of opinion and critical thinking, and an international academic environment. An example of this may be the Polar Law programme offered at the Law Faculty.



Students have had the opportunity to study for a degree in law at UNAK since 2003. The Faculty of Law sees its role as to provide a solid academic background for legal studies and specialized knowledge in Icelandic law. Its objectives are to provide academic education; encourage vigorous research activities; uphold active contacts with the community; and support international co-operation.

These objectives and standards are appropriate and in line with international standards. The emphasis on research and international contacts are in tune with expectations made to modern universities.

*b. Administration and Organisation*

UNAK is a public university under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in accordance with legislation on higher education. It is divided into three Schools. The Faculty of Law is one of three faculties within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Several Councils and Committees with defined roles provide special service and or supervision to the Schools and Faculties of the University.

The Dean of the School, Faculty meetings and the Head of Law Faculty are the authorities responsible for the organization of courses, teaching methods and “academic development”. The Head of the Faculty is responsible for the execution of programmes and administrative matters. The law programme is supposed to refer to the Regulation on Solicitors License Exams in its structure.

The average number of students at the Law Faculty is about 100. The Faculty has two full time permanent academic positions, a professor and a senior lecturer, and seven part time positions, thereof two

temporary ones. Application procedure for a position of a full time lecturer was opened in April 2011.

The setup of the administration and organization of the law faculty is in line with comparable faculties in other countries. The impression obtained on the site visit was that the university's authorities see the Faculty of Law to be an important asset to the University. UNAK is a small university and the Law Faculty benefits from collective services provided by diverse councils and committees of the university, such as the Quality Council and the Science Council. The site visit left the Expert Panel, nevertheless, with some questions as to the organization and emphasis on the administration of the Faculty. Students expressed a concern that some classes have been cancelled or changed on occasion.

*c. Structure of Teaching and Research*

The Faculty of Law at UNAK offers study programmes to obtain an undergraduate degree BA, and a master's degree ML, following the Bologna model. In addition it offers various degrees in special studies of Polar Law. The objective is to equip students with the ability both to practise law in Iceland and in an international environment. Emphasis is on giving an insight into the nature of law and maintaining a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical legal skills. The Law Faculty aims at creating a challenging and personal study environment and has structured a novel framework of the studies at undergraduate level, both in respect to the choice of subjects and in the method of teaching. The ML programme concentrates on Icelandic law. The Faculty's objective is to deliver learned, dynamic graduates, equipped to fully participate in society, to support vigorous research activities, uphold active contacts with

the community, and strengthen international co-operation. A Curriculum- and Credit-transfer Committee oversees academic programmes and collaboration of those.

In order to complete legal studies at UNAK the student has to complete 300 ECTS; 180 ECTS for the BA degree in three years and additional 120 ECTS in two years at the master level. In the BA programme the main emphasis are on subjects such as legal theory and methods, legal history, human rights, international law and other subjects pertaining to give the student an insight into what law is and to promote critical thinking and academic skills. A few core legal subjects are also introduced. The programme also includes moot trials, a workshop and a thesis. The BA programme is principally staffed by teachers with strong research portfolios (both full-time and visiting professors). The programme is taught exclusively in intensive three week blocks, the purpose of which is partly to make it possible for visiting scholars and experts to come to Akureyri to teach. At the site visit the impression of the Expert Panel was that both students and teachers are pleased with this arrangement. Courses are taught to an approximately equal amount in Icelandic and English.

The BA study programme of Law at UNAK is not a traditional law programme by Icelandic standards. It is a programme that focuses on historical, social and philosophical questions about what law is and law's purpose and ethical dimensions in society. This focus is valuable. On the other hand there is a risk that students may not acquire a solid enough basis in Icelandic law if their aim is to practice Icelandic law after taking a graduate degree. It is important that the Faculty recognizes and accepts the pros and cons of this line of study and decides either to stick to it, with the results that traditional legal

studies will not have as strong a profile, or alternatively amend the programme by introducing and putting more emphasis on teaching and research in core legal subjects.

The aim of the ML programme is to qualify students for practising law in Iceland. The main emphasis of the studies is on core subjects of law; all courses are taught in a full-semester format and exclusively in Icelandic. The studies are completed with a 30 ECTS master thesis which students begin working on during the first semester. Many of the instructors on the programme are experienced lawyers holding a full time job elsewhere and a part time position at the Faculty. They bring a contemporary and practical perspective to the teaching as well as encouraging positive interchange between UNAK and civil society.

There is no academic evaluation in respect to external teachers and no guidance in teaching is offered. This situation is not in accordance with the best international standards and needs to be addressed. The Faculty does recognize that the lack of qualified Icelandic legal academics to supervise teaching of Icelandic law is a drawback for the programmes. There is also a question whether the basis in core subjects of law at undergraduate level is sufficiently strong to support a successful outcome at the graduate level, providing its aim to deliver graduates prepared to embark on a professional career in law in Iceland.

The Polar law programme focuses on international and domestic law pertaining to the Arctic and Antarctic. Polar Law includes the following study options: a 120 ECTS MA degree, a 90 ECTS LLM degree; a 60 ECTS study at the master level leading to a graduate diploma; a 60 ECTS study at the bachelor level leading to an undergraduate diploma; and individual courses giving a certificate.

The programme is taught exclusively in English. In this programme, UNAK is working closely with a number of other higher education institutions, both domestically and internationally.

Because it is a small unit the teaching is to some extent combined with the BA and ML programmes. It is however not quite clear to the Expert Panel how it is structured. There is no doubt that the Polar Law programme is a novel and an interesting line of study encouraging international cooperation and is an important asset to legal studies in Iceland and the University.

Teachers in the BA programme and in the Polar Law program, both tenured and visitors, have a strong research profile. Teacher in the ML programme are prominent lawyers and judges that do not necessarily have much research experience or output. The average research points per Law Faculty in years 2004-2008 was 26,72, higher than other faculties and Schools of the University. Faculty of Law is also home to the *Yearbook of Polar Law*, and students publish a law journal, *Lögfræðingur*. The Polar Law symposium is a yearly event. Smaller conferences feature academic life at the university. The Law Forum is a regular event, it is an interesting platform for various contemporary legal issues and research projects, it is open to the public and attendance is obligatory for first year students.

The research profile is high of tenured teachers and of visiting lecturers in the undergraduate and the Polar Law programmes, and meet international standards. A weakness in the law studies at UNAK is the lack of qualified academics to organize and teach Icelandic law. The ML programme seems to suffer from this and it is not in accordance with the goal of UNAK in respect to research-based postgraduate education.

*d. Competence Requirements of Personnel*

At the Law Faculty there are two full time permanent academic positions, a professor and a senior lecturer, and seven part time positions, thereof two are temporary ones. Both tenured teachers and one part time lecturer hold doctorates. Temporary or visiting teachers are responsible for approximately 26,3% of the teaching in the law programmes; the rest is carried out by members of the UNAK Law Faculty (65,3%) and members of other UNAK faculties (8,4%).

The Dean grants academic positions. A three person Assessment Committee, appointed by the Rector, evaluates applications for an academic post; the members of the committee must hold a master's degree at least. A consultant is appointed to assist the committee in evaluating the applicant's academic work. In the case of positions of Professor, Senior Lecturer or Lecturer the majority of the assessment committee has to agree that the candidate is qualified.

As a general rule a tenured member of faculty shall at least hold a masters degree or an equivalent education, however, professors and senior lecturers should preferably have obtained a doctorate. Applicants for the positions of professors, senior lecturer and lecturer shall provide a thorough report on their scientific or academic work, writing, research, teaching, management work, academic record and other jobs.

The Rector hires adjuncts and temporary instructors; an assessment of qualification is not required.

The Dean of Faculty is hired by application and should fulfil general qualification requirements for faculty positions, either in the academic field taught in the faculty in question or in a field very closely related to its main subjects. The Assessment Committee

evaluates the qualifications of applicants for the position of Dean of Faculty in the same way as qualifications of applicants for faculty positions.

Academic posts are as a rule advertised, however, the Rector may under certain conditions offer a post to a scientist and there are a few other exceptions from this rule.

The requirements made to applicants for academic positions are in line with relevant rules and regulations and meet international standards. The permanent faculty members are highly qualified and so are many of the visiting lecturers who come to Akureyri to teach individual courses. The ratio of part time teachers is, however, rather high and an effort should be made to reduce their number. As mentioned above it is essential that the Law Faculty manages to hire a full time academic with good knowledge in Icelandic law. An application process has been opened for a full time lecturer at the Law Faculty.

*e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students*

The Rector and the Deans under his mandate are responsible for the enrolment of students, but the University Council has the final say. Admission requirement to the BA programme is completion of secondary school diploma or equivalent examination. Exceptions may be made. The BA programme at UNAK targets mainly on students interested in law as a theoretical subject, in its social and political aspects, and in international perspectives.

Admission requirement for the ML programme is a completion of the BA degree with a minimum grade of 7 or a comparable qualification from another institution.

For being admitted in the masters programme of Polar Law a BA degree in law or another discipline is required.

Rules of admission are according to international standards.

The Dean of the School is in charge of disciplinary actions. A student may be reprimanded or suspended depending on the gravity of the contravention. The student shall have the opportunity to express his/hers views on the matter before a decision is made and may have it reviewed by higher university authorities. Having exhausted appeal channels within the university she or he can turn to the Committee of Complaint for University Students. Information on the appeal process at UNAK and general rules on rights and duties of students is published in the student handbook. UNAK has adopted a Code of Ethics. An ethics committee deals with complaints of alleged plagiarism.

The University Council sets rules regarding examinations, grading and other related matters. Students are entitled to an explanation concerning grades. In the case of a student having failed a course and not being satisfied with the explanation given, the student can appeal to the Dean who then appoints an external examiner. On the request of teachers and/or students an examiner may be appointed for individual examinations.

These arrangements are in line with international standards.



*f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students*

The housing facilities are quite satisfactory, the entire School of Humanities and Social Sciences is since recently located in the same area. Classrooms and study areas are furnished with state of the art equipment and technology. Computer rooms are provided. Private offices are provided for most of the teaching staff, in some cases two teachers share an office. The library, the cafeteria, the Computer and Media Centre and the Service desk are in the same building as the Law Faculty. The library has a satisfactory stock of legal literature and emphasis good access to inter library loans services and assistance to students and staff.

Housing and support services seem to be good and fulfil international standards. It is not clear, however, to the Expert Panel whether a common room for students is provided, as none was presented on the site visit.

The library is small but well stocked and obviously makes an effort to serve students and researchers as well as possible given the local circumstances.

*g. Internal Quality Management System*

The University's Quality Council is lead by the Rector and composed of all the Deans of the University, the Director of administration, the Director of Quality Management, one representative of staff and one of students. The Council meets regularly. It is responsible for planning and assessing the implementation of standards and criteria regarding teaching and study assessment. It also oversees the implementation of the Bologna process in the various faculties and schools of the University.

Students participate in courses evaluations by the end of each semester. They assess the courses as a whole and teaching performance. The Dean takes action if the outcome of the evaluation is poor. He also conducts staff interviews bi-annually or more frequently if necessary or requested. The participation of students in the evaluation has decreased. Thus the Quality Council is discussing changes in the evaluation methods such as introducing questionnaires more frequently and to give teachers the opportunity to direct at least some of the questions in order to connect the questionnaires better to their courses. These plans are sensible. It is important to conduct an evaluation at least twice in each course so that possible flaws may be corrected. Also, questionnaires must be clear and simple so they do not take up too much time of the student, and they must be relevant to the course in question. Students must also have the notion that their evaluation output is meaningful.

The course curriculum is reviewed annually under the supervision of the Course Curriculum Committee, at which time the committee reviews the overall study lines; the principal teachers review each individual course, amending the description and learning outcomes if necessary.

There is no mention of training or guidance for teachers being offered.

There is no mention of regular evaluation of research output. Research evaluation should be performed annually by an external group which meets international standards. Perhaps there should be an external evaluation for the whole of the Icelandic legal community. The language may be some barrier as to getting examiners from abroad.

The limited tenured staff of Law Faculty has a very good teaching and research record, but as mentioned above it is essential for the Faculty to enlarge the group, at this point in time especially with academics specializing in Icelandic law.

*h. Description of Learning Outcome*

In its structure the Faculty of Law is in compliance with the Bologna process and the National Qualifications criteria. The BA degree is designed as a broad social science degree and should provide an academic basis for those who intend to continue to qualify as practicing lawyers or focus on related fields such as international relations and political science. Approximately equal balance is between courses taught and examined in English and Icelandic. The programme's main focus is however not on a traditional black letter undergraduate law degree.

The ML programme focuses exclusively on Icelandic law with the aim of preparing students for the Icelandic Bar examination and legal practice in Iceland. It is taught exclusively in Icelandic. It is a matter of concern that very few ML graduates have attended the Bar examination course.

It should be recognized that the BA programme's emphasis on legal theory, the sociology of law, and on comparative and international law does constitute a pioneering work in law studies in Iceland, and marks its unique character. Likewise this structure of an undergraduate education is no doubt a good preparation for studying law. Further both full time teachers and many distinguished visitors comprise a highly qualified faculty at the undergraduate level. It is, however, equally obvious that the ML programme

struggles to meet its stated aims. This is not surprising. The formal legal education in Iceland and in other Nordic countries (earlier the cand. jur. degree) requires legal studies for five to six years, for the most part on core legal subjects; the current model is a BA degree in three years and addition two years for ML degree, also with a strong, although not exclusively, focus on core legal subjects. A focus on legal theory and contemporary relevance in a changing world and dynamic labour market is essential in a good modern law faculty. Given the nature and structure of the BA programme at UNAK, as promising as it may be, it does not seem to give the average student a strong enough background to complete thereafter a traditional Icelandic law education in two years with sufficient results. In addition the ML courses are taught by part time teachers who have another full time and demanding occupation to attend to. Only a few ML graduates have attended and only three have completed the Bar examination. This is very little in the light of the official aim of the ML program: to prepare students for that examination and carrier as practicing lawyers. On the other hand it should be noted and is important that many graduates from UNAK work outside Reykjavík.

The Polar Law programmes are aimed to prepare students for work in the public and private sectors; at different levels of government; with international organisations; in the NGO sector; with indigenous peoples in the Arctic; and with universities and research institutions.

#### *i. Finances*

The university is allocated an independent budget out of the state treasury on the proposal of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. In addition it may generate income by registration fees, fees intended to cover specifically defined expenses, fees for services

additional to those obligatory, fees for services by agreement to the ministry, and fees for providing continuing education and lifelong learning for the public. The Law Faculty gets its share of the budget in accordance to the number of FTE students, it does not seem to have other income than that share and registration fees.

The total average cost per FTE-law student has grown from just under 800,000 ISK in 2003 to just over 1,000,000 ISK in 2009.

### **II.1.k. Recommendation (UNAK)**

#### *a. Role and Objectives*

The Akureyri University is a small public university in the North of the country. It seems important for the growth and balance of the population and standard of living to locate a university in these parts. As to law, law is a subject that touches the lives of every citizen. It may be argued that it is thus important to support the access of lawyers equally throughout the country and to locate a law faculty at Akureyri may help in this respect. It is obvious, likewise, that at the present a university outside Reykjavík needs an extra support if it is to succeed in upholding good standards and sufficient number of academic staff, which in turn should attract good students and produce desirable educational results. All this is, however, a question of policy and so are the educational emphases in such a university. It is not the role of the Expert Panel to make recommendations here, but it should be recognized that this Law Faculty at UNAK has added a perspective to legal education in Iceland that had been neglected, and has initiated a programme in a new, international and important area.

*b. Administration and Organisation*

The self-evaluation report does not give an entirely clear picture of the organization of the study programmes and the administration of the Faculty of Law. The Faculty should make an effort to clarify its structure and its place within the administration of the university. At the site visit some insecurity could be marked in respect of its status and future. The Faculty should make sure that course prescription, requirements, and other elements of the study programmes are clear and accessible to students and will be followed.

*c. Structure of Teaching and Research*

The Law Faculty at UNAK has chosen a novel plan and direct by emphasising history, theory and sociology of law at undergraduate level, and also by the structuring of the Polar Law program. The general outcome, as to capabilities to engage in legal practices in Iceland, however may be problematic. This is probably both due to the emphases in the programme, resulting in insufficient background in core legal subjects, and in shortage of tenured academics specializing in Icelandic law. It is thus necessary for the Faculty to reflect on these issues. If it wants to offer traditional Icelandic legal education for the purpose of producing advocates and judges for the Icelandic legal system it seems necessary either to offer more of Icelandic legal core subjects at the BA level or to design the possibility for students to take extra courses if they want to pursue the path of the legal profession in Iceland. In any case it is essential to hire some full time qualified academics with good knowledge of Icelandic law.

Whatever route the faculty decides on, it is essential that the students are well informed at the outset about what kind of

education they are likely to obtain. The Faculty should also strive to come to an agreement with other law faculties in the country, in order to make it possible for its students to pursue a further education in law elsewhere if they so desire. Whatever the decision, it should be a long term project to decrease the proportion of part time lecturers in the ML programme and strengthen research in Icelandic law, so that the programme may meet international standards.

*d. Competence Requirements of Personnel*

The present permanent Faculty of Law has high academic qualifications. It is however too small and needs to be strengthened by academics in Icelandic law. Part time positions need to be replaced by permanent ones where requirements of academic standards apply. An additional funding may be necessary in order to attract qualified personnel.

*e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students*

The Faculty should strive to come to an agreement with other law schools in the country on how to evaluate courses and requirements of admission in order to make it possible for students to move between universities if they so wish.

*f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students*

Generally facilities and services seem to be good. A common room for students and teachers would be likely to encourage discussion and strengthen the sense of university atmosphere.

*g. Internal Quality Management System*

The way questionnaires for student evaluation are conducted has resulted in little participation. This seems to be a general problem in the Icelandic universities. The Law Faculty at UNAK has recognized this problem and the importance of the student input. An effort should be made to find a way to present questionnaires in such a form that students are willing to participate and need not spend too much time on each one. A mid-term or mid-course evaluation should be introduced. A regular research evaluation by an external panel would strengthen the profile of the Faculty.

*h. Description of Learning Outcome*

As discussed above it seems essential that the Faculty of Law should reflect on its programme objectives and structure to consider how it might be possible to enhance the capacity of its ML-graduates to succeed for example in the Bar examination.

*i. Finances*

No recommendations.



## **II.2. University of Iceland (UI)**

The School of Law in the University of Iceland was set up in 1908. When the University was established in 1911 it included a Faculty of Law which took over the functions of the School of Law. It is one of the largest faculties in the University and is by far the oldest and largest law faculty in Iceland. Up until relatively recently it was also the sole law faculty.

### **II.2.a. Role and Objectives (UI)**

The Faculty's published strategy and objectives for 2006-2011 includes its mission statement which reflects an emphasis on offering a "traditional legal education in the format comparable to other Nordic countries and Europe". The Faculty sees its primary role as providing an excellent legal education that will equip students to work as legal practitioners in Iceland and enhance their international mobility. This was confirmed forcefully during the site visit.

The Faculty also aims to ensure ambition, quality and results in legal education and research. It looks forward to further strengthening its leadership position in research and teaching of the foundations of law. These very broad statements are supported in more detail with prescriptive goals and strategies on research, education and administration set out in the Faculty's statement on strategy and objectives for 2006-2011. These goals and strategies are wholly consistent with the Faculty's objectives. While they consist mostly of setting commendable output and development targets that are heavily dependant on the availability of increased resources, they also include some important structural features. Examples of the

latter are the emphasis on: recruitment and progression of doctoral students; accessing external research funding; international research cooperation; the engagement of students in research projects; increasing the weight of assignments in final grades; and the provision of continuing education.

As the oldest and largest Law Faculty in Iceland its emphasis on excellence in a traditional legal education is understandable and, in many respects, commendable. Similarly, the ambition and standards that the Law Faculty has set itself are appropriate and are generally in line with international standards. It must also be acknowledged, however, that the Faculty is now operating in a domestic and international environment that has changed rapidly, even over the past five years. Competition from the establishment and growth of other law schools in Iceland has intensified. Globalisation in the market for law students, graduates and education has continued to accelerate. All of this is now happening in very difficult economic circumstances domestically and internationally.

There is a sense from the Faculty's self assessment report, reinforced during the site visit, that the Faculty is responding to these challenges by seeking to emphasise and prioritise its exclusive status as the provider of traditional legal education for practitioners. This is evident most notably in its approach to the pre-requisites for admission to its Mag. Jur. programme, and in its assessment of the equivalence of legal education provided by the other Icelandic law schools. While this brings many benefits in terms of the quality of legal education on offer to the practitioner community, it also runs the risk of frustrating the full potential of what the Faculty has to offer all sections of the Icelandic community. There is clear evidence in the richness and diversity of subjects offered at undergraduate

and postgraduate level, together with the range and quality of expertise among its tutors, that the Law Faculty is very well placed to serve these broader needs.

With the imminent expiry of the 2006-2011 statement, it may be an opportune time for the Faculty to revise its mission and objectives so as to give more prominence to the richness and diversity of what it has to offer and the range of constituencies that it is serving. A related issue is the absence of any reference to cooperation with other law schools in Iceland. The current mission statement conveys the sense that the Faculty sees the other law schools almost exclusively through the lense of competition. This was strongly reinforced during the site visit. While a healthy competitive relationship is inevitable and desirable, it should not operate to the exclusion of mutually beneficial cooperation in a small jurisdiction such as Iceland. Accordingly, the mission statement should include reference to internal, as well as external, cooperation. The general part of the mission statement would also benefit from a more explicit and substantive expression of how the Faculty sees itself and its future development in legal education in Iceland, the EEA and the international community generally.

### **II.2.b. Administration and Organisation (UI)**

The University of Iceland is run as a public higher education institution under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in accordance with the Act on Public Higher Education Institutions No. 85/2008 and Higher Education Institution Act No. 63/2006 and regulations set in accordance with and supplementary to these Acts.

The Law Faculty is one of the largest faculties in the University of Iceland and is one of six faculties comprising the School of Social Sciences. It has about 806 students. Tenured teaching staff number 14 full-time and nine part-time associate and assistant professors. Furthermore, the faculty employs eight adjunct part-time lecturers. It also relies heavily on part-time non-tenured teaching staff, employs a Director of Studies and two Research Associates, and benefits from the support of a Research Institute Director and a Law Librarian. Within the limits set by the University's common regulations, the Faculty is independent and bears responsibility for its own research, teaching and the granting of degrees on completion of study.

The Head of the Faculty combines the roles of academic head and executive director. He or she is elected at a Faculty Forum for a term of two years. Together with the Dean of the School of Social Sciences, the Head is responsible for the quality of teaching and research, communications with associates and ensuring that the organisation of the Faculty and its departments is in accordance with the budget of the University. His or her main role is to take the initiative in formulating overall policy for the Faculty, handling its day-to-day operations and supervising its functions and administration. The Head is answerable to the Dean of the School of Social Sciences and the Rector for the Faculty's finances.

The Faculty Forum has the supreme power of decision in all matters pertaining to studies in the Faculty. It comprises: 18 tenured tutors; two lecturers; two institute directors; and four student representatives. Adjunct lecturers can attend Forum meetings but have no voting rights. The Forum meets every month throughout the university year. The Faculty's teaching and academic staff also meet

informally once or twice a year with the Head to discuss Faculty business and policy, teaching and research and future development.

The academic administration of the Faculty is enhanced by subject-specific committees. The Research and Master's Study Committee oversees the organisation, delivery and development of teaching and research on master's and doctoral programmes, together with admissions to those programmes. It comprises three tutors and the Head of Faculty ex officio. The BA Study Committee monitors the organisation, delivery and development of undergraduate studies. It comprises three tenured tutors and the Head of Faculty ex officio. The Study Committee plays an advisory role across a range of matters relating to tuition and study, including the selection of courses in other faculties or universities that should be evaluated for inclusion in the Law programme. It comprises the Head of Faculty, one representative of teaching staff and two student representatives. The Library Committee decides how the Faculty of Law's funding is spent on purchasing books and periodicals in the field of law for the library. It comprises five tenured tutors, one student representative and the Director of the Institute of Law as chair.

Administrative support for the Faculty is provided primarily by: a Faculty administrative officer who works in close cooperation with the Head in managing the daily running of the Faculty: two support staff serving the needs of students, tutors and international linkages; and a dedicated unit within the office of the School of Social Sciences.

The Faculty is integrated into the management structure of the School of Social Sciences primarily through the School's administrative board which comprises: the Dean, the Heads of

Faculty and one student representative. The board deals with issues affecting the School as a whole. It is complemented by a Science Committee which formulates and reviews research policy; and a Teaching Committee which supervises the preparation of the School's teaching policy and implements it on behalf of the Dean. These Committees are composed of representatives from each of the School's faculties and departments.

Four research institutes play an important role in the Faculty's overall research organisation and activity. The Institute of Law is based within the Faculty and, as its name suggests, supports research projects and publications across the field of law generally. It embraces distinct concentrations in: European Law; Penal Law and Criminology; and Environmental and Natural Resources Law. Its board comprises four faculty tutors and one student representative, and is managed on a daily basis by a full-time Director. The Armann Snaevarr Institute for Family Affairs is a multi-disciplinary research institute based within the Faculty. It supports research and publications in law and other disciplines on: marriage, cohabitation, families and children. Its board comprises representatives from the contributing disciplines of: law; health sciences; educational sciences; philosophy; and moral philosophy. The chair is an assistant professor in family law. The University of Iceland Institute of Human Rights was established jointly by the University, the Icelandic Bar Association and the Judges' Association of Iceland. It supports research and publications on legal aspects of human rights. Its board comprises representatives of the Bar Association and Judges' Association, and is chaired by a professor in the Faculty. It is based in the Law Faculty and receives administrative support from the Institute of Law. The Nordic Criminology Research Council is an

independent Nordic research institute, but it will be based in Iceland for three years from 1 January 2010 and will use facilities provided by the Law Faculty. It fosters research in criminology and penal law and feeds into the policy making process. Three representatives (15 in total) from each of the Nordic countries sit on the Council. The current chair is a professor in criminal law at the Law Faculty. Furthermore, the Faculty actively participates in the Nordic Environmental Law, Governance and Science Network (NELN), which objective is to organise PhD seminars and facilitate cooperation and mobility. The professor in environmental and natural resources law is a member of NELN's steering committee.<sup>9</sup> Lastly, the Faculty has a member of a board comprising representatives from the law faculties of Aarhus, Bergen, Copenhagen and Gøteborg which administers nordic seminars in legal theory and legal philosophy for PhD students.

The impression gained on the site visit is that these organisation and administrative structures are working satisfactorily within the Law Faculty. There was also concrete evidence that the Law Faculty's integration with the School of Social Sciences is working smoothly and beneficially for both parties. Regular meetings of the Heads of Faculty are driving more dynamic policy making and the sharing of ideas. More elective courses are being offered across Faculties, enterprising inter-disciplinary programmes have been developed and there is a cross fertilisation of research activity among staff. A concrete example of the latter is research collaboration in constitutional law and political science. These developments are in line with international trends in law schools.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.neln.life.ku.dk/>

The structures are generally in line with standard practice for comparable Law Schools in other countries. It would be appropriate, however, to establish a research committee to develop and monitor the implementation of Faculty research policy and output. It would appear that this important function is not currently owned by any of the existing committees at Faculty level. The Research and Master's Study Committee focuses on the delivery and development of master's and doctoral programmes, while the Institute of Law is focused on initiating and supporting specific research projects and publications. There is a research committee at School level but, inevitably, it is not confined to research policy and output in law. For the most part it would appear that this function is dealt with informally along with other business at general staff meetings. Given that research is one of the primary functions of the Faculty, it really needs to be the subject of a committee with the distinct remit to promote and report on the development of Faculty research policy, activity and output. In a comment to the draft of this report the Faculty stressed the important status of The Law Institute which has approved the Faculty's research policy for the next three years, and aims to support research by teachers and post-graduate students at the Faculty, for example by attracting research funding and publishing selected projects.

It might also be appropriate to expand the remit of the Library Committee beyond decisions on purchases to include an explicit reference to the development and implementation of policy on matters such as the role of the library and how it can best serve the needs of actual and potential users in a world of rapidly changing laws, technologies, pedagogy, research needs and lifestyles.



### **II.2.c. Structure of Teaching and Research (UI)**

#### *Teaching*

In line with international standards, the Law Faculty has been following the Bologna model since 2002. The effect is that its 5 year master's degree, the Cand. Jur., is now divided into a 3 year undergraduate course for a BA degree (180 ECTS), and a 2 year master's course for the Mag. Jur. degree (120 ECTS). The Faculty also offers a specialist international LLM degree in Natural Resources Law and International Environmental Law, and it offers a structured doctoral programme for a PhD degree. Since 2009 it has been offering interdisciplinary studies in Tax Law and Accounting in collaboration with the Faculty of Business Administration. A range of legal studies is also offered as a minor subject for students pursuing BA and BSc degrees in other faculties in the University.

This combination of a core Bologna compliant law programme, specialist master's programmes, structured PhD programme, interdisciplinary programmes and service teaching is consistent with international standards. A commendable feature is the international outlook of the master's programmes which are successfully attracting students from other countries.

The programmes are delivered in accordance with the general regulations of the University of Iceland no. 569/2009, cf. arts. 90 and 91, covering subjects, degrees, credits and examination grading amongst other things. More detailed rules adopted by the Law Faculty itself deal with specific aspects of the structure of the study programmes which it offers. The BA and master's studies leading to the Mag. Jur. degree form the primary core of the Faculty's teaching. They are aimed at providing students with what is described in the self assessment report as a "traditional legal education".

## **BA**

Undergraduate studies to a BA degree require students to complete 180 ECTS credits in three years. All BA-courses are obligatory, including a BA dissertation worth 6 ECTS. Students shall complete 17 compulsory courses in foundation subjects and, in compliance with the Faculty of Law's objectives of study, particular emphasis is placed on the general basic subjects of Icelandic law so that students acquire an all-round foundation knowledge of law and methodology which can be the basis for further studies at postgraduate level. The courses and their ECTS values are as follows: Year 1: autumn term, 30 ECTS: general legal theory with overview of legal history 18 ECTS; introduction to law 6 ECTS; introductory philosophy course 5 ECTS. Spring term, 30 ECTS: European law 6 ECTS; family and inheritance law 10 ECTS; constitutional law with outline of international law 15 ECTS. Year 2: autumn term, 30 ECTS: contract 10 ECTS; tort 15 ECTS; administrative law I 5 ECTS. Spring term, 30 ECTS: property law 15 ECTS; administrative law II 15 ECTS. Year 3: autumn term, 30 ECTS: law of obligations I 10 ECTS; criminal law I 10 ECTS; legal procedure I 10 ECTS. Spring term, 30 ECTS: law of obligations II 8 ECTS; criminal law II 8 ECTS; legal procedure II 8 ECTS. BA dissertation 6 ECTS.

A grade of 6.0 is required to pass each course, as is also the case in the master's programme. Students may register for other BA subjects than those that are taught in the first year on condition that they have passed examinations in *Introduction to Law* and *General Legal Theory with Overview of Legal History*. *Introduction to Law* is a 4-week course at the beginning of the term with an examination at the beginning of October. The course on *General Legal Theory with Overview of Legal History* is taught immediately after this, with an examination in December.

Classes consist of lectures and discussion forums. In discussion forums students are divided into smaller groups. The total number of classes on undergraduate courses depends on the courses' credit weighting and varies between 48 classes per term in the 6 ECTS courses and 117 classes per term in the largest course, *General Legal Theory with Overview of Legal History*, which is 18 ECTS.

From 50% to 100% of study assessment for undergraduate studies is by written examination, although on most courses students also take distance examinations (home examinations) in the middle of term which have an assessment contribution of between 20% and 50%, variable according to course. All students are obliged to submit a BA dissertation, worth 6 ECTS, in order to graduate with a BA law degree. Each year the Faculty of Law runs a short preparatory course for those about to start work on their dissertations or other BA degree assignments, in which practical guidelines are given to students about basic rules for composing academic papers, including the gathering and use of resources. The faculty regulations on BA dissertations include time limits for choosing subjects and submission deadlines, what is entailed by supervision by a supervisor, and the basic principles applicable when awarding grades.

The first three years appear to cover most or all of the core law subjects and a dissertation component. Although the panel has not had sight of course syllabi, it has no reason to believe that the subjects offered are not covered to appropriate international standards.

The Law Faculty places a heavy emphasis on coverage of Icelandic law in this three year programme. That is compatible with international standards for the premier law school in a relatively

small jurisdiction. It is also notable, however, that all of the courses offered in the first three years are obligatory and are heavily weighted towards the needs of legal professional practice. While there is no absolute international standard on this issue, it is at least arguable that the more progressive premier Law Schools are sensitive to the needs of broader national constituencies in legal education. This will be reflected even in the undergraduate programme by the inclusion of electives such as: human rights; environmental law; welfare law; and international law. This is a development which the Law Faculty might consider adopting without undermining its very necessary servicing of the needs of the domestic legal professional community.

*Mag. Jur.*

The graduate course for a master's degree is worth 120 ECTS and students who complete a master's degree at the Faculty of Law are awarded the degree of magister juris (Mag. Jur.). Students are required to complete 90 ECTS in elective subjects and submit a dissertation worth 30 ECTS.

Each academic year the faculty offers around 40 elective courses at master's level, each being generally worth around 6 ECTS. Particular courses are commonly on offer every other year, though some are available every year. In total just under 70 elective courses are on offer at master's degree level at the faculty.

Each elective course generally consists of 36 classes in the form of lectures and discussion forums. Most courses last the whole term, i.e. 12 weeks, though in some cases the courses are covered in 6 weeks, with more teaching days per week. In each subject, students

hand in projects counting for 20%-50% of the assessment for that subject. Examinations in elective courses are usually oral. Further rules have been issued on elective courses. As a rule, 10 master's degree courses are taught in English each academic year. They are also attended by foreign exchange students at master's level and are compulsory for those on the international LLM programme in natural resources law and international environmental law.

The Faculty has laid down rules in which ten areas of specialisations in the masters programme are defined. Students can choose to graduate in any of them.

Students on the master's programme can pursue exchange studies at law faculties of designated foreign universities with whom the Faculty of Law has entered into a collaborative agreement based on the ERASMUS or NORDPLUS inter-university exchange programmes. As a rule, such exchange study programmes last one term and contribute up to 30 ECTS to the master's programme, though in special cases they may contribute up to 60 ECTS over two terms. Students can also attend courses in other faculties of the University of Iceland where there are specific links to legal studies and it is deemed appropriate to treat them as contributory to the graduate programme; these have a normal maximum credit value of 18 ECTS, though in exceptional cases and subject to more specific rules they may extend to 30 ECTS .

Graduate students also have a number of options where legal training done by them may be accepted for credits towards the graduate programme. There are rules on teaching assistance provided by graduate students in discussion forums, project work and examining for BA studies, such teaching assistance contributing up to 6 ECTS credits towards the master programme.

The Faculty of Law may authorise graduate student internships to be assessed as part of the graduate programme; such internships to be at companies or public bodies accredited by the Faculty of Law, and worth up to 6 ECTS credits. There are rules on accreditation of companies and public bodies able to provide internships and professional oversight of interns.

The master's programme of study culminates in the submission of a thesis worth 30 ECTS. The Faculty's has approved comprehensive rules on theses, covering amongst other things choice of subject matter, the standards expected of supervisory tutors, their duties and what their supervision entails. Students have to undergo a viva voce examination on the content of their theses in the presence of an external examiner.

In addition to the Mag.Jur. degree the Faculty offers two LLM programmes. LLM in International and Environmental Law was introduced in the autumn of 2003. In 2006 the study programme was revised to concentrate more specifically on laws applicable to natural resources and the environment, with emphasis on Icelandic, European and international points of view; it is since titled LLM in Natural Resources Law and International Environmental Law. The programme gives 90 ECTS and is taught in English. The other is an interdisciplinary programme in tax law and accounting. It began in 2009 and is run in collaboration with the Faculty of Business Administration. The programme is worth 90 ECTS with a two-year (or 4-term) period of study culminating in a 18 ECTS thesis.

The programme aims to provide an academic education in a variety of fields pertaining to taxation and accounting in order to meet society's needs for research, support and policy development in the field of taxation and accounting. The Faculty of Law provides six

courses, each worth 6 ECTS, dealing with domestic and foreign tax laws as well as company law. The Faculty of Business Administration provides a comparable contribution. Specific rules have been laid down regarding detailed content for the programme.

At master's level the Law Faculty has almost 70 courses available, with about 40 being offered each year. The number and range of such courses are most impressive and easily satisfy international standards among comparable Law Schools. Once again it is not possible to comment specifically on the course syllabi, but there is no reason to believe that they do not satisfy the best international standards. Notable and attractive features are: provision to pursue exchange studies at designated foreign universities through ERASMUS and NORDPLUS; the opportunity to take courses in other faculties in the University of Iceland; and the facility to award course credits for legal training, teaching assistance and student internships. These are all consistent with best practice developments internationally. Commendably the master's component is based exclusively on electives and a compulsory dissertation. This is in line with best international practice.

In its delivery of the master's component the Law Faculty aims to combine serving the needs of the Icelandic community with international engagement. This is appropriate and in accordance with international standards for comparable Law Schools. As noted earlier, however, there is a risk that the Law Faculty may be adopting an unnecessarily narrow view of the needs of the Icelandic community. Admittedly, this is not evident in the commendable range of courses offered at master's level, but it may be surfacing on the question of admissions to the master's level. Accordingly, it will feature again in that context. It is being mentioned here only

because, if not resolved, it has the potential to undermine the full range of benefits that can flow for the richness and diversity of what is on offer at master's level.

The specialist master's programmes on Natural Resources Law and International Environmental Law and on Tax Law and Accounting are excellent initiatives. Both are niche and outward-looking programmes which reflect distinctive Icelandic strengths. The former, in particular, will play a valuable role in raising the profile of the Law Faculty abroad.

#### *PhD*

A structured doctoral programme was introduced at the Faculty of Law in the autumn of 2004, providing new possibilities for Icelandic lawyers to engage in extensive research in Iceland with grants from Icelandic and foreign research funds. The doctoral programme is based on the one hand on a 150 ECTS doctoral thesis, and on the other hand on a further compulsory contribution worth 30 ECTS required of the candidate during the study period.

The doctoral programme is detailed in the Rules for doctoral study programmes from October 2004, and the Procedural rules on evaluation of courses, assignments and other submissions of doctoral candidates at the University of Iceland Faculty of Law dated 24 April 2007. The first student graduated with a PhD degree from the Faculty of Law in the spring of 2009. When the self-report was written five students were on the doctoral programme. Two of the doctoral candidates are at the same time assistant professors at the Faculty of Law and one is a research associate at the Institute of Law.



Prior to the structured doctoral programme's introduction at the faculty, a few people did complete a Dr. Jur. degree consisting of an independent research study programme and defence of a doctoral thesis. Between 1927 and 2005 seven lawyers defended theses at the Faculty of Law to gain Dr. Jur. degrees.

To strengthen the Faculty's PhD programme, cooperation with JurForsk (Dansk Juridisk Forskeruddannelsesprogram (Danish Research Graduate School)) allows its PhD students to participate in particular fundamental courses designed for the PhD level and organised by Danish Universities. PhD students can furthermore participate in courses held by the Faculty of Law at Uppsala University.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the Faculty has, since 2004, organised, in cooperation with others, and hosted four international seminars for PhD students; one in jurisprudence (2007), two in environmental and natural resources law (2004 and 2009) and one in human rights (2010).

The Law Faculty's PhD record is below international standards for the premier Law School even in a relatively small jurisdiction. The fact that only seven candidates had defended doctoral thesis before 2004, and on the bases of independent research, suggests that the Faculty may not have been giving the necessary attention and resources to this aspect of its teaching and research. The introduction of the structured PhD programme in 2004 is a commendable initiative and has the potential to bring the Law Faculty into line with practice abroad in this area. The structure of

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<sup>10</sup>[http://www.hi.is/is/felagsvisindasvid\\_deildir/lagadeild/nam/doktorsnam\\_vid\\_lagadeild](http://www.hi.is/is/felagsvisindasvid_deildir/lagadeild/nam/doktorsnam_vid_lagadeild)

the programme itself seems compatible with international standards. The requirement to spend part of the study time at universities or research institutions abroad is particularly commendable in the Icelandic context. While it may be too early to comment fairly, the numbers being recruited and graduated still seem on the low side. Currently, there are only five PhD students in the Law Faculty compared with almost 100 in the School of Social Sciences as a whole. It is reported that four more students will commence studies in the fall of 2011. This is encouraging. One student is scheduled to defend his thesis in September 2011. The Law Faculty's research institutes and association with the Institute of Human Rights and with the Nordic Criminology Research Council should also be developed as resources to support a vibrant PhD programme in a reciprocal and complementary manner.

Class teaching requirements at undergraduate and master's level appear to be in line with the international Bologna requirements. Generally, there would also appear to be a satisfactory balance between lecture and discussion methods in line with international standards. Significant efforts are made to supplement large group teaching with smaller discussion fora. Commendably, this includes extensive use of master's students as teaching assistants. It would also appear that appropriate use is made of the latest teaching methods, electronic packages and information technologies to enhance the teaching experience in line with international standards, although there may be scope for further development here; e.g. podcasting and web-based learning. There is evidence that full-time tutors are easily accessible for students needing support outside of class hours. This is in line with best international practice. The arrangements for assessing and promoting quality in teaching are

discussed later at II.2.g under the heading of Internal Quality Management System.

It is standard international practice for law faculties to engage part-time staff from the legal profession, public administration, the private business sector and abroad (e.g. visiting scholars). Typically these will be engaged to bring distinct specialist expertise or outside experience. They may teach a whole course, or give one or more lectures. Some may be brought back year after year. Such part-time teachers have a valuable and necessary contribution to make to the quality of the student experience. They bring richness diversity, specialist expertise and a practical perspective into the classroom. Generally, they are regarded as giving significant added value; bringing knowledge and experience that would be otherwise beyond the reach of the students. Typically, they are seen as a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, full-time staff. Excessive reliance on them can result in: courses being delivered in a disjointed manner, gross disparities in teaching quality within and across courses, less student accessibility than would otherwise be the case with full-time tutors, increased student demands on the full-time tutors and a mismatch between the staff/student size of a unit and its collective research output.

There are about 40 external part-time lecturers teaching in a school year as against 14 full-time tenured staff and 9 part-time tenured staff. Furthermore, the faculty employs 8 adjunct part-time lecturers. External lecturers teach individual courses or parts thereof, mainly at master's level. Many courses are taught by full-time tenured teachers and some part-time lecturers along with student assistants. External lectures play an important role in the provision of tuition at

the faculty.<sup>11</sup> Reliance on part-time teachers is thus a significant and persistent feature of law teaching at the University of Iceland. During the site visit students criticized that many courses were taught by a number of different part-time lecturers. All of this is in excess of international standards. The imbalance is unsustainable in a country's premier Law Faculty that prides itself in providing an excellent traditional legal education and in achieving international excellence in legal research. Inevitably, with such a heavy reliance on part-timers the benefits will be swamped by the drawbacks. This is a situation that has prevailed at the Law Faculty for so long now that it is becoming normalised. Urgent and decisive action is required to start bringing the Law Faculty back into line with international standards in this area. A plan needs to be drawn up to convert substantial numbers of these part-time positions into full-time positions on a rolling basis over the next 5 years.

Unlike the visits to the other law schools, the site visit to the Law Faculty at the University of Iceland did not include a session with a selection of part-time lecturers. Accordingly, the panel did not have the benefit of exploring some of these issues with them or to get their perspectives on their role and experiences at the Law Faculty. As will be seen later at II.2.g. (Internal Quality Management System), concerns were expressed by the students over the quality of teaching from some of the part-time lecturers.

A closely related concern is the staff-student ratio. In the Law Faculty it is currently running at 1:30; or 1:49 depending on which measure is adopted. Either way, this is grossly in excess of international

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<sup>11</sup> Self-evaluation report p. 8.

standards and the Faculty's own target of 1:17. Inevitably, such a poor staff-student ratio impacts adversely on the quality of the student experience. Equally, it imposes intolerable strains on staff, with negative effects on the quality of their teaching and research output. Decisive and urgent action is required to start pushing the ratio back in the direction of international standards.

The faculty's policy regarding priorities in teaching corresponds closely with the University of Iceland's overall policy strategy and is, in fact, identical to it in many respects while proceeding to identify further particular objectives. The aims of legal training at the Faculty of Law are, firstly, to train students to work independently on research and to resolve legal issues of all kinds, and secondly to prepare them for work which will require all-round extensive legal knowledge. This work is primarily carried out by the traditional professions of lawyers, i.e. the professions of judges and attorneys, but emphasis is also placed upon preparing students for work in other arenas, such as in public administration and in private companies, where legal expertise may be required or useful. In order to achieve these aims, courses need to combine the requisite depth of study with sufficient breadth of content to cover all the very many aspects of law with which lawyers need to be familiar. At the same time, the faculty aims to graduate lawyers who meet international standards of quality.

Part of the prioritisation of tuition involves deciding on a balance of teaching time between lectures and discussion forums. Students are expected to prepare well before classes, and a comprehensive teaching plan is distributed at the outset of each course detailing the reading material required for each class. Powerpoint presentations are much used in teaching. These and other documents are

distributed in advance of classes on the University's information intranet, UGLA, where each course has its own homepage providing an important communication forum for tutors and students registered on each course. Students must be prepared to answer tutors' questions during lectures, and are also encouraged to ask questions themselves.

On most courses within the BA programme, master's degree students are appointed as teaching assistants. They work in collaboration with supervisory tutors to prepare practical projects based on material recently covered in lectures. Students are given assignments well in advance, and their outcomes are discussed in discussion forums with smaller groups of students under the guidance of teaching assistants. On some BA courses the supervisory tutors combine their lectures with discussion of the outcomes of practical projects. Students must, as a rule, submit assignments or take distance examinations counting for 20%–50% of assessment as against written examination. Rules on obligatory exercises in BA studies at the Faculty of Law require students to carry out one or two obligatory exercises (practical projects or short dissertations), and the right to sit examinations on courses may be made conditional upon students having completed at least one such assignment to the satisfaction of their tutor.

In the Master's programme there is even more emphasis on discussion forums rather than lectures, and on interactive tuition, and a large proportion of students on the general master programme take courses taught in English, along with exchange students from foreign universities. The student group is, on the whole, smaller than in the BA programme, and there is a variety of approaches to students' contributions during classes. On many

courses assignments are handed out to students at the outset of the course and they are expected to prepare a presentation in class on a designated subject as well as submitting a short essay on the same subject. A typical example of an assignment of this kind is groups of three to four students being asked to analyse a specific judgment, e.g. from the Supreme Court of Iceland or from an international court, to explain the rules of law that are being tested therein, and then to submit a determination of the conclusions that may be drawn from the judgment. Students work thus in groups from time to time, but the emphasis is on producing individual written assignments, this being considered by the faculty as a more rigorous training for the individual student in written work.

The impression gained on the site visit was that the quality of law teaching among the permanent tutors was generally high and in line with international standards. Even here, however, concerns were expressed that some of the tutors are overloaded with adverse consequences for the quality of their teaching. Perspectives on the part-time lecturers were mixed. Concerns were expressed by students that they mostly used powerpoint, with some doing little more than reading from the screen. These comments serve to underpin the concerns over the excessive reliance on part-time lecturers. They also reinforce the importance of improvements in the quality and status of instruction given to new teaching staff, and especially part-timers lecturing on anything other than an occasional guest lecture basis.

There is evidence that the Law Faculty is broadening its range of assessment methods in line with international standards. It would appear that the traditional end of term/year exam is being supplemented and displaced by greater use of coursework

assignments, essays, mootings etc. There has been some experimentation with “home exams”, but it would appear that students are not generally enthusiastic about that. The Faculty has also introduced prize awards to outstanding students. They play a valuable role in incentivising excellence among students. All of these developments are commendable and accord with international standards. Impressions gained on the site visit are to the effect that there is room for further progress in the use of alternatives or supplements to end of term/year exams. Concerns were expressed, for example, that planned discussion sessions (and associated assignments by way of preparation) were not included in the assessment. The master’s students expressed concern that their teaching assistance was not assessed. There would also appear to be scope for further progress in facilitating the use of computers to complete end of term examinations.

It is standard practice in many law schools to involve external assessors in overseeing standards and equity in the annual student assessments. There is no evidence that that practice is followed consistently and universally in the Law Faculty, apart from rules on viva voce examinations which require the presence of an external examiner. It is acknowledged that external assessment presents distinct challenges in a national jurisdiction as small as Iceland. Nevertheless, these challenges are not insurmountable, especially with the recent development and growth of other law schools in the country. Serious consideration should be given to the issue of how an element of regular external oversight might be introduced to the annual student assessments in each of the programmes.

An issue that is relevant to teaching/assessment structures and methods is the very high rate of failure among students in first year.



This is also relevant to admission requirements and services to students. It is dealt with later at II.2.e under the heading of Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students.

### *Research*

Research is one of the three primary duties of the teaching staff. They pursue their research on an independent basis, and are supported by the research institutes described earlier. The Faculty of Law's teaching staff are usually the leading authorities in Iceland in their respective specialties, they are frequently employed in the drafting of major legislation relating to fundamental aspects of Icelandic law. This often requires lengthy preparation and research, for which tutors may appoint their students as legal assistants. Such legislation then becomes the foundation for a variety of important courses, especially at undergraduate level. Recently, for example, the new Criminal Procedures Act no. 88/2008 took effect, which was drafted by a professor of legal procedure at the Faculty of Law and now, together with a substantial accompanying commentary, forms the bulk of the study material for the *Legal procedure II* course held in the spring term of the third year of the undergraduate course. Another example is the *Tort* course held in the autumn term of the second year; the prime study material for this course is the Tort Act no. 50/1993 and its accompanying commentary, drafted by the faculty's Professor of Tort.

The Faculty promotes research output by enabling tutors appoint assistants from the postgraduate students. The system for organising research within the University actively encourages tutors to involve students in their research. To that effect it is generally a condition

that a Faculty of Law tutor's application for a grant from the University's Research Fund shall include the hire of assistants, particularly students in the master's programme, to take part in given research projects, usually for 2-3 months. Such applications must be backed up with a specific explanation of how the work and research will benefit the student. It is thus common for law students to be employed for this purpose in summer jobs under the supervision of a tutor who has been awarded a grant from the University of Iceland's Research Fund. The Faculty also encourages research funding arrangements with external commercial organisations and the submission of applications for research grants from domestic and foreign competitive funds. The University's Research Office provides support for external research funding applications. All of this is consistent with international standards.

The University evaluates and supports research output primarily through a point assessment system. Each tutor submits an annual report to the Science and Research office of the University's joint administration on their publication and research which is evaluated for an award of points according to a designated scoring system based on research weighting. The Law Faculty has consistently been one of the top performers in points total in recent years. The Faculty has also maintained an average annual publication ratio above 3.5 per academic FTE in recent years. This compares very favourably with international standards. It is more difficult in an assessment exercise of this nature to comment knowledgeably on the quality of the publications. It is apparent, however, that most of the primary teaching texts are authored by tutors from the Law Faculty. They also present a strong showing in peer reviewed domestic journals, with a lesser but not insignificant output in international peer

reviewed publications and conference papers, as well as books published by foreign publishers. That would be the standard in most comparable law schools. Indeed, it would be fair to say that the publications profile of the tenured Law Faculty tutors compares favourably with international standards for comparable law schools. This is all the more remarkable given the very poor staff student ratio that the tutors must contend with. It must also be said, however, that the actual research productivity is less impressive when viewed in the context of its overall size (as measured by student numbers and the total of full-time and part-time staff).

The profile in attracting research funding is disappointing. While there have been a few significant individual successes in recent years the overall picture is poor by international standards. A Law Faculty that has been established as the sole law faculty in a country for almost one hundred years should have been generating significant research funding in recent decades. Surprisingly, there is no persuasive evidence that the Law Faculty has a clear strategy and infrastructure to improve this situation. At the very least it needs to establish a unit within the Faculty with a specific remit to: identify domestic and external sources of funding in the public and private sectors; to lead the development of the skills necessary to submit applications successfully; to support individuals and groups in the submission of applications and in the project management of the funds awarded; and to oversee performance and quality in the completion of research projects. This unit should work closely with the University's Research Office and the School's Science Committee, and should submit an annual report on research policy, activity and performance for discussion at the Faculty Forum and staff meetings. It has, however, been reported that The Law Institute, affiliated with

the Faculty, approved its research policy for the next three year in May 2011, with the aim of supporting research by all teachers, attracting and managing research fundin both in Iceland and abroad, involving post-graduate students in research and publishing selected projects. The Law Insitute aims to work closely with the Faculty of Law, other university schools, seVICES or committees and is ready to submit an annual report of its activities for discussion at the Faculty Forum.

It is important that research activity within a law faculty should not remain an exclusive preserve of tutors. Students must benefit from it by getting the opportunity to engage with it at first hand and through tuition. Commendably, the Law Faculty at the University of Iceland is maintaining international standards in this area. Students are engaged as assistants in research projects and they run the country's oldest law periodical. They also benefit from being taught by the staff who are authoring much of their reading material and who can bring into the classroom the benefits of direct experience in contributing to policy-making and legislative drafting.

#### **II.2.d. Competence Requirements of Personnel (UI)**

There are over 17 FTE tenured teaching staff in the Law Faculty. These include seven full-time professors and one part-time professor. Most of the tenured staff have postgraduate qualifications and the younger members have LLM degrees from foreign universities. It would appear that only three of the tenured staff have doctorates. It would also appear that an LLM (and preferably a doctorate) is not prescribed as an essential requirement for the recruitment of tenured staff. Generally, this profile and recruitment

policy would fall below best international practice. This is an area, however, where it is necessary to appreciate the broader context. The Law Faculty must recruit personnel who are capable of teaching and researching in Icelandic law. It may not always be practicable to fill that need exclusively from staff with doctorates and LLM degrees from foreign universities. It would seem that the Law Faculty has been generally successful at recruiting and retaining suitable tenured staff with international ranking profiles and/or relevant domestic experience. The impression gained on the site visit is that they are also regarded as highly competent teachers. It would be inappropriate, therefore, to make too much of the fact that their collective postgraduate qualifications profile may not be wholly in line with best international practice. It is clear that the Law Faculty are conscious of the need to upgrade the qualifications of existing and future tenured staff, and efforts are being made to that end. They need to be encouraged and supported to increase those efforts.

The appointments process for permanent positions in the Law Faculty is broadly in line with international standards. Vacancies are advertised and a University and Faculty selection committee, incorporating the necessary expertise, will evaluate the qualifications and suitability of the applicants. It is standard international practice in the appointment of tenured staff to include at least one subject expert from another university on the appointment's board. It would appear that this is not yet standard practice in the Law Faculty. In some respects this is quite understandable. Up until recently, there was no other law school in Iceland and it is not always feasible to include someone from a university in another country where the appointee will be expected to teach exclusively or mostly Icelandic

law. The situation has changed in recent years, however, and there is now more scope to include a subject expert from another university. The Law Faculty should adopt this practice in every case where a suitable expert is available.

The formal appointments process for permanent staff does not apply to part-time staff in appointments of less than one year. Given the excessive reliance on part-time lecturers in the Law Faculty, this means that there is a very large body of lecturers delivering a substantial component of the Law Faculty's teaching who have been appointed without the control checks associated with the formal process. The dangers associated with this practice hardly need to be stated. Ideally the issue should be addressed primarily by the conversion of a substantial portion of the part-time lecturing positions into their equivalent in full-time positions. It is also desirable, however, to introduce greater transparency and independent quality checks into the appointment of part-time lecturers. This is a necessity if the Law Faculty is to continue to rely excessively on these part-time positions.

There is now an established trend internationally for universities to provide courses in third-level teaching methods and skills leading to formal transferable qualifications for their teaching staff. Increasingly newly appointed staff are expected to take this qualification and are facilitated in doing so. It would appear that this is not being done in the Law Faculty or in the University of Iceland as a whole. It is also common international practice for universities and individual faculties to provide a regular programme of continuing education on teaching methods, technologies and philosophy. While some of these matters may be addressed on an ad hoc basis at Law Faculty meetings, it would appear that there is no dedicated design and

delivery of such courses on an organised basis. These matters need to be addressed. They are important not just for current and future permanent staff, but also for the heavy complement of part-time staff.

#### **II.2.e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students (UI)**

The admission criterion for the undergraduate degree is graduation from a high school or other upper secondary school in Iceland (or equivalent from a foreign college). Since there are no standardised final examinations across the Icelandic schools it is not possible to set a particular level of qualification for admission. The net result for the Law Faculty is a very high intake of students of widely divergent abilities in first year; currently running in excess of 350. On the one hand this relatively open admissions arrangement enhances social equality. On the other hand, it presents significant teaching challenges and is driving an extraordinarily high drop out rate of in excess of 60 percent in first year. This drop out rate is seriously at odds with international standards and needs to be addressed urgently. It is not acceptable that such large numbers of students should be admitted onto a university course only to be rejected some months later. The adverse effects on students' lives, self-esteem, educational development and resources are gross, inevitable and avoidable. The serious waste of public resources involved should also be a matter of some concern. It is reported that a comprehensive investigation was carried out by the University in 2008 into student dropout rates and suggestions for improvements were made; the Faculty of Law has discussed various possibilities to improve the situation.

The Law Faculty needs to consider initiatives to bring the drop out rate within the scope of international standards. It would appear that the course General Legal Theory with Overview of Legal History is the primary driver in the high drop out rate. It is taken in the first semester and students must pass it to proceed. In recent years it has recorded failure rates of almost 80 percent. The Faculty must re-consider how it manages teaching and assessment on this course. Additionally or alternatively, it should consider the possibility of an entrance exam that would be taken consequent on a short intensive introductory course offered over the summer preceding admission. It is important that this should be managed in a manner that would not prejudice a student from being admitted to the university in the Autumn term to pursue another programme, should he or she be unsuccessful in the law entrance exam.

The admissions requirement for the master's component of the Mag. Jur. Degree is successful completion of the BA component of the degree at the University of Iceland or an equivalent degree from another higher education institution. This is broadly in line with international standards. It is a matter of concern, however, that the Law Faculty has taken an internal decision that the BA law degrees from two of the other three Law Schools are not equivalent to their counterpart in the University of Iceland. The impression given during the site visit is that a similar view is held of the BA degree in the third Law School. The Law Faculty takes the view that the degrees at the other Law Schools do not cover "some important core subjects" and that the extent of the courses and number of classes taken at the other Law Schools do not satisfy the minimum standard required by the Law Faculty. It will only admit BA graduates from the other Icelandic Law Schools if they take some supplementary courses at



undergraduate level at the University of Iceland. This position is problematic given that the other Law Schools comply with the international Bologna requirements in their BA components, and the Law Faculty at the University of Iceland recognises their degrees for admission to its LLM programmes. It also reflects an unnecessarily narrow perspective on the shape, content and purpose of a law degree at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Given the relatively small size of the Icelandic jurisdiction there is surely merit in taking advantage of the opportunities of richness and diversity offered by freer interchange between the Law Schools at master's level. That would be consistent with the spirit of the Bologna model and international practice. The panel feels that there is scope for this to be achieved on the basis of mutual recognition of each other's qualifications, without at the same time diminishing the commendably high standards that the Law Faculty sets for its master's students. It would encourage the Law Schools to engage in meaningful and vigorous discussions on how this might best be achieved in the immediate future.

The Law Faculty has adopted its own rules on tuition, teaching methods and study criteria with clear objectives on the quality of teaching and study and what measurements are applied. These include comprehensive rules on programme organisation and assessment. They set out clearly what students must do in order to complete their studies successfully. Their content is in line with international standards.

*Orator*, the Law Students' Association, is located in the Lögberg building. The association safeguards the interests of law students, organises an active social life in the faculty and provides students with diverse service. The *Student Council* represents all students at

the university and deals with matters concerning their interests vis-à-vis the university authorities, public authorities and other bodies who have influence on University policy. The office of the Student Council operates the *Student Rights Office*, which acts as a representative for any students claiming to have suffered injustice within the academic community. The Student Council issues the Student Card, which is an ID and discount card for students.

The Faculty rules address the rights of students who feel aggrieved with individual assessments or decisions affecting their progression. There is also a procedure through which students can raise concerns about teaching quality either directly or through class representatives. These arrangements are in line with international standards. The impression acquired on the site visit is that students feel generally that they can raise grievances effectively and that they will be heard.

#### **II.2.f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students (UI)**

The Faculty is situated in its own building, Lögberg, that houses student teaching rooms as well as common rooms for both BA and MA students. Furthermore, the Faculty has access to various student facilities in other university buildings, Gimli, Oddi, Háskólatorg and in the main building where students can gather on round tables for interaction and debate on student assignments. The Faculty has fully integrated the PhD students into the activities of the general staff. Thus PhD students share the same common room with full-time staff members on the fourth floor of the Faculty Building. Furthermore, PhD students have the right to take part in faculty meetings and are also invited to all extra-curricular activities.

In recent years the Faculty of Law has concentrated on improvements to classrooms and equipment, students' social facilities, and access to on-line publications and databases. After opening the Háskólatorg building on 1 December 2007 all second year teaching takes place in spacious and well-equipped classrooms in the Háskólatorg building; some first year teaching also takes place there, though the largest groups are taught in well situated and equipped classrooms in Háskólabíó (the University Cinema) and in Stakkahlíð. There are new computer rooms and reading areas for students in the Háskólatorg and Gimli buildings. All classrooms in the Lögberg building have been updated with new seating and computer links, the library has been extended, and in 2007 Lögbergsdómur, a custom-made court room used to train law students in court proceedings, was opened in the Lögberg building. For students on doctoral programmes, the faculty offers good facilities for up to four students in a large, closed office in the Lögberg building, providing them with secluded conditions in which to work, on the same floor as the Law Faculty library. New combined facilities for doctoral candidates from all faculties within the School of Social Sciences are also available to them in Gimli, a new building linked to Lögberg.

The School of Social Sciences operates an information and service desk in Gimli, staffed by three personnel working as 2.6 full-time equivalent units, to handle students' general queries relating to their studies at the School. It serves as a two-way administrative hub for students and tutors to submit and receive assignments. There are pigeon-holes for teaching and other staff, and a general photocopying and scanning service is available for faculty members. After the Háskólatorg building was built, all student services were moved there, and it now houses the Office of International

Education, the Registration Office, the Student Counselling and Career Centre, University Computing Service User Support, the Icelandic Student Association (which runs the canteen *Háma* and the Student Book Shop), the University of Iceland Student Council, and a service desk for all these bodies. An important service is also provided by the Faculty Administrative Officer and two personnel in the Law Faculty office, answering large numbers of enquiries from students for example regarding study arrangements and course registration.

The facilities and services provided for staff rank favourably with those in comparable universities elsewhere. Staff offices and the common room are of a high standard. Access to electronic and information technology resources is advanced. Administrative support services at Faculty and School levels are excellent. Financial resources and support are also available internally for research projects; and these can be used to recruit assistance from postgraduate students. Teaching quality support is available through the University Teaching Centre and the Social Science School's teaching committee. Comment is made earlier in this report at II.2.d (Competence Requirements of Personnel) on further initiatives that might be taken on teaching quality support.

The facilities and services provided to students are generally in line with international standards. Classrooms are comfortable and fit for purpose and are equipped with all the necessary teaching technologies. Each desk is wired for laptop connection and students have easy access to electronic resources and databases. The library is small but appears to hold hard copies of all primary Icelandic law materials and journals and has an impressive range of textbooks. Holdings of foreign, European and international primary materials

and journals are below international standards, but that is increasingly less of a problem due to the expanding availability of this material electronically. The library also has access to 12 on-line legal databases. This compares very favourably with international standards. The students and teachers benefit from professional law librarian and support staff of international standard.

The impression gained on the site visit is that the students have appropriate access to study, computer and printing facilities. The same applies to catering facilities. One aspect of student facilities that causes concern is the location for the teaching of courses taken by all first years in the first semester. It is understood that because of the very large size of such classes they cannot be accommodated within the standard university facilities. Instead they are taught in a location some distance from the main university campus. This is unsatisfactory in itself as it means that these students are being marginalised from their peers and the general Law School community at the very start of their career as law students; i.e. at the time when it is most important for them to feel part of that distinctive community. It is even more problematic given that one of the courses in question is largely responsible for the exceptionally high drop out rate in first year. The Law Faculty must address this issue as a priority. Some means must be found to integrate these students more fully into the Law School community and so provide them with all of the supports necessary to enhance their successful progression.

### **II.2.g. Internal Quality Management System (UI)**

The Law School benefits from the University quality management systems for teaching and research. Teaching evaluations are conducted through the medium of anonymous student questionnaires for each course. Summarised findings of each evaluation are sent to the supervisory tutor of the relevant course, the individual tutors and the Head of Faculty. These are useful for individual tutors to engage in self-improvement. They also enable the Head of Faculty to identify localised problems and to address them by taking the necessary remedial action by way of advice, support, referral to appropriate courses or re-allocation. There is evidence that these questionnaires have had some beneficial effects in practice. As a general concept they do reflect best international practice. Generally, however, it would appear that they are not fulfilling their potential in the Law Faculty due to the exceptionally low rate of returns. It seems that this can be attributed to the length and complexity of the questionnaires, coupled with the fact that students are asked to complete a separate one for each tutor on a course. Given the exceptionally heavy reliance on part-time tutors, this can amount in some cases to four or five questionnaires for a single course and, and even more were reported by students at the site visit.

Action is needed to bring the student questionnaires into line with international standards in law schools. The questionnaires need to be designed specifically with the distinctive requirements of law teaching in mind. They also need to be shortened and simplified and administered no later than half way through the course. Some means must be found to get around the problem of multiple questionnaires for each course. While this might best be achieved

through a radical reduction in the use of part-time tutors and a commensurate expansion in the use of full-time tutors, it will be necessary to devise an interim solution. The Faculty recognizes this problem in the self-evaluation report and states that measures have been taken, questionnaires have been simplified and students have been encouraged to take part in the evaluation process.

Other means mentioned of eliciting information about the quality of study are for example informal discussions between staff and students or their representatives, as well as meetings between the Head of Faculty and student representatives. These discussions have lead to changes in the study programme. Also in recent years the Head of Faculty, the faculty administrative officer and the director of the Institute of Law have invited all graduating LLM students to a working lunch where they are asked to describe their study experience. The faculty has made use of these discussions for quality development.

Informal surveys on how graduates fare after completing studies at the Faculty of Law have shown that graduates are generally pleased with the education they have obtained, the job market is open to them both in the public and private sector, they have been successful on the Bar exam and are excepted for further studies at foreign universities.

Teaching quality in the Law Faculty, and in the University of Iceland as a whole, is supported by the work of the University's Teaching Centre and the School of Social Science's Teaching Committee. Each year the Centre offers a course on teaching techniques and methods for new tutors, but they are not compulsory. Ad hoc courses and programmes on teaching methods and quality are also offered, but it would appear that they do not offer a formal programme and

qualification in teaching at third level. Consideration should be given to making the current course compulsory for all new permanent staff and all staff teaching above a specified minimum number of hours per year. As suggested at II.2.d (Competence Requirements of Personnel) there may be merit in offering a formal programme and qualification. It is understood that the University will be introducing formal teaching quality courses and peer mentoring of teaching. These would be positive developments in line with international best practice.

Unlike the position in some other jurisdictions, such as the United Kingdom and Australia, research evaluation appears to be a matter for each university in Iceland. In the University of Iceland evaluation of research performance is based primarily on an internal assessment of annual self reports from each member of teaching staff. Research points are awarded for publications and other scholarly work in accordance with “internationally recognised criteria and standards”. The results have an effect on salaries and academic advancement and on research funding allocation to the university as a whole and to individual faculties. These annual exercises are supplemented by periodical external quality assessment exercises.

It is not entirely clear how the “internationally recognised criteria and standards” are applied to research and publications in law. It is generally recognised internationally, for example, that ISI journal publications and citations have only a limited application to law. The assessment of quality in law publications demands more individualised treatment and a heavier emphasis on peer review. Ideally, assessment exercises would include input from experienced scholars in law from outside the Law Faculty and, where appropriate, from outside the jurisdiction itself. In a small national jurisdiction



such as Iceland this can present difficulties. Nevertheless, it would be worth exploring the feasibility of including input from one or more experienced legal scholars from outside the Faculty in the annual assessments. There would also be merit in exploring the feasibility of establishing a panel of experienced legal scholars from outside the Faculty (including scholars from outside Iceland) to conduct periodical quality assessments of research output and activity against the latest international standards.

Evaluation of research in the Law Faculty is also delivered indirectly through the general management functions of the Faculty Head, the annual meetings of staff and the activities of the research institutes. Although less formal, there can be no doubt that they make a valuable contribution; as evidenced by the commendably high rate of publications from the permanent Law Faculty staff. As suggested earlier at II.2.b (Administration and Organisation), there may be merit in giving more formal structure to this input by establishing a Faculty Research Committee.

It is also worth noting the University's scheme for honouring 3 individuals each year who have excelled in teaching, research or other duties on behalf of the University. Such schemes are in line with international best practice and can make a positive contribution to the achievement of excellence in teaching and research.

#### **II.2.h. Description of Learning Outcomes (UI)**

The Faculty of Law has adopted comprehensive and detailed statements of the learning outcomes for each of its programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level. These set out clearly: the scope and objectives of the programme; and the knowledge, ability

and skills that the student should acquire. The latter include: knowledge and understanding, intellectual skills, practical skills, communications skills and information literacy and learning skills. The shape and content of these statements are generally in line with international standards in these matters. The substance of the “knowledge and understanding component” in the both the BA and Mag. Jur. reflects certain choices that have been made by the Law Faculty. As noted earlier at II.2.c (Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and the Rights and Duties of Students), this can result in the programmes being associated with a relatively narrow constituency. Nevertheless, the descriptions of learning outcomes are in line with international standards for programmes with that particular focus.

#### **II.2.i. Finances (UI)**

The University of Iceland is a public university. As such it does not charge student fees and is almost entirely dependant on a subvention from the state. It would appear from the documentation provided that the Law Faculty’s budget is determined largely on the basis of student numbers and the quality of research output from Law Faculty staff, with some private commercial sponsorship for tutorial positions in specific specialist fields. Up until the budget cuts of 2009-2010 the Law Faculty has enjoyed significant growth in capital and revenue resources, as reflected in developments in Lögberg and Gimli buildings and constituent facilities for tutors and students. The current and future outlook, however, is much more challenging. It would appear that existing development plans are effectively frozen.

The university's allocation model works harshly against the Law Faculty. Law students are grouped in the bottom category of a seven tiered hierarchy of tuition costs. Inevitably, this constrains the development of more small group teaching and one to one interactions between staff and students. It must be said however, that this is a common problem for law schools. On the plus side, the increased student intake and increased staff research output has boosted actual income to the Law Faculty in the past few years. Unfortunately, this has not translated into a decrease in reliance on part-time tutors and a commensurate increase in the complement of full-time tenured staff.

#### **II.2.j. Summary of Findings (UI)**

##### *a. Role and Objectives*

The Faculty sees its primary role as providing an excellent legal education that will equip students to work as legal practitioners in Iceland and enhance their international mobility.

The ambition and standards that the Law Faculty has set itself are appropriate and in line with international standards.

##### *b. Administration and Organisation*

The Faculty's administration and organisation structures are generally in line with standard practice for comparable Law Schools in other countries. The impression gained on the site visit is that they are working satisfactorily within the Law Faculty. There was also concrete evidence that the Law Faculty's integration with the School

of Social Sciences is working smoothly and beneficially for both parties.

*c. Structure of Teaching and Research*

The Faculty's combination of a core Bologna compliant law programme, specialist master's programmes, structured PhD programme, interdisciplinary programmes and service teaching is consistent with international standards.

The composition of the BA degree encompasses internationally recognised core requirements for a law degree.

The number and range of courses at master's level are most impressive and easily satisfy international standards among comparable Law Schools.

In its delivery of the master's component the Law Faculty aims to combine serving the needs of the Icelandic community with international engagement. While commendable in itself, the Faculty may be interpreting the former in a manner that entails an unnecessarily narrow view of the needs of the Icelandic community.

The specialist master's programmes on Natural Resources Law and International Environmental Law and on Tax Law and Accounting are excellent niche and outward-looking programmes which reflect distinctive Icelandic strengths.

The Law Faculty's PhD record is disappointing. The numbers being recruited and graduated are low by international standards.

Class teaching requirements at undergraduate and master's level appear to be in line with the international Bologna requirements.

Generally, there would also appear to be a satisfactory balance between lecture and discussion methods in line with international standards.

Reliance on part-time teachers is a significant, persistent, excessive and problematic feature of law teaching at the University of Iceland. Urgent and decisive action is required to start bringing the Law Faculty back into line with international standards in this area. A plan needs to be drawn up to convert substantial numbers of these part-time positions into full-time positions on a rolling basis over the next 5 years.

The excessive staff-student ratio in the Law Faculty is grossly in excess of international standards.

The quality of law teaching among the permanent tutors would appear generally to be high and in line with international standards. There are concerns that some of the tutors are overloaded, with adverse consequences for the quality of their teaching.

Some student concerns were expressed that some of the part-time staff were relying too heavily on reading from their powerpoint slides in class. This confirms the need for more resources and attention to be devoted to providing training and supports for, and supervision of, the part-time staff.

The Law Faculty is broadening its range of assessment methods in line with international standards. There is room for further progress in the use of coursework assessment and computers in exams.

It would appear that the Law Faculty does not generally use external assessors in overseeing standards and equity in the annual student assessments across its programmes.

Support structures for research activity and evaluation structures for research output reflect some of the standards of best international practice. There is room for improvement in, for example, the development of a distinct Law Faculty research policy and strategy.

The Law Faculty has consistently been one of the top performers in points total across the University in recent years. Most of the standard teaching texts on Icelandic law are authored by these tutors.

Actual research productivity in the Law Faculty is less impressive when viewed in the context of its overall size (as measured by student numbers and the full total of tenured staff and part-time lecturers).

The profile in attracting research funding is disappointing. While there have been a few significant individual successes in recent years the overall picture is poor by international standards. There is little persuasive evidence that the Law Faculty has a clear strategy and infrastructure to improve this situation. However, it has been reported that plans are being made in cooperation with The Law Institute that aim to support research and attract research funding.

The Law Faculty's support for student engagement in staff research activity is in line with international standards.

#### *d. Competence Requirements of Personnel*

The Law Faculty has been generally successful at recruiting and retaining suitable tenured staff with international ranking profiles and/or relevant domestic experience. The impression gained on the

site visit is that they are generally regarded as highly competent teachers.

The general qualifications profile of tenured staff is not always in line with international standards.

The formal appointments process for permanent positions in the Law Faculty is broadly in line with international best practice, but there is no provision for the appointments panel to include a professor from another university law school.

The formal appointments process for permanent staff does not apply to part-time staff in appointments of less than one year. Given the excessive reliance on part-time lecturers in the Law Faculty, this is a matter of some concern.

There is no provision for teaching staff to have or to take a formal qualification in transferable third-level teaching methods and skills. Also, there is no dedicated design and delivery of a regular programme of continuing education on teaching methods, technologies and philosophy for Law Faculty staff.

*e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students*

The Law Faculty has a very high intake of students of widely divergent abilities in first year.

Relative to international standards the Faculty has a very high drop out rate among students in first year. The failure rate in General Legal Theory with Overview of Legal History, which students must pass, is particularly problematic.

The Law Faculty has taken an internal decision that the BA law degrees from the other three Law Schools are not sufficiently equivalent, in terms of core subject coverage and the number of classes taken, to be acceptable for admission to its master's degree.

There is scope for greater inter-change between the Icelandic Law Schools at master's level on the basis of mutual recognition of each other's qualifications, without at the same time diminishing the commendably high standards that the UI Law Faculty sets for its master's students.

The Law Faculty's rules on tuition, teaching methods and study criteria, and its objectives on the quality and measurement of teaching and study, are in line with international standards.

The Faculty rules on the rights of students who feel aggrieved with individual assessments or decisions affecting their progression are in line with international standards. It seems that students feel generally that they can raise grievances effectively and that they will be heard.

*f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students*

The facilities and services provided for staff rank favourably with those in comparable universities elsewhere.

The facilities and services provided to students are generally in line with international standards.

Common rooms and other facilities for students to meet to discuss group project work are provided, as well as facilities for student bodies such as the Student Law Society to meet to discuss the organisation of events.



The current practice whereby courses taken by all first years are taught off campus is unsatisfactory.

*g. Internal Quality Management System*

Evaluation of teaching quality is conducted primarily on the basis of anonymous student questionnaires for each course.

Generally, it would appear that the questionnaires are not fulfilling their potential in the Law Faculty due to the exceptionally low rate of returns. A significant contributory factor is the length and complexity of the questionnaires, coupled with the fact that students are asked to complete a separate one for each tutor on a course.

The University's Teaching Centre offers a course on teaching techniques and methods for new tutors, but it is not compulsory. Ad hoc courses and programmes on teaching methods and quality are also offered.

Evaluation of research performance is based primarily on an internal assessment of annual self reports from each member of teaching staff. These annual exercises are supplemented by periodical external quality assessment exercises.

It is not entirely clear how the "internationally recognised criteria and standards" are applied to research and publications in law.

Research evaluation is also delivered indirectly through the general management functions of the Law Faculty Head, the annual meetings of staff and the activities of the research institutes. Although less formal, there can be no doubt that they make a valuable contribution; as evidenced by the commendably high rate of publications from the permanent Law Faculty staff.

*h. Description of Learning Outcomes*

The Faculty of Law has adopted comprehensive and detailed statements of the learning outcomes for each of its programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The substance of the “knowledge and understanding component” in both the BA and Mag. Jur. reflects certain choices that have been made by the Law Faculty. This can result in the programmes being associated with a relatively narrow constituency. Nevertheless, the descriptions of learning outcomes are in line with international standards for programmes with that particular focus.

*i. Finances*

As a public university, the University of Iceland is almost entirely dependant on subvention from the state. Up until the budget cuts of 2009-2010 the Law Faculty has enjoyed significant growth in capital and revenue resources, as reflected in developments in Lögberg and Gimli buildings and constituent facilities for tutors and students. The current and future outlook, however, is much more challenging.

The university’s allocation model generally works harshly against the Law Faculty. However, the increased student intake and increased staff research output has boosted actual income to the Law Faculty in the past few years.

## **II.2.k. Recommendation (UI)**

### *a. Role and Objectives*

The Faculty needs to be more proactive and imaginative in responding to the changed domestic and international environments.

The Faculty's mission statement should include reference to internal, as well as external, cooperation. It would also benefit from a more explicit and substantive expression of how the Faculty sees itself and its future development in legal education in Iceland, the EEA and the international community generally.

### *b. Administration and Organisation*

The Faculty should consider the establishment of an internal research committee to develop and monitor Faculty research policy on collective strategy, priorities and targets in matters such as: publications, projects, external funding, external networks and recruitment and supervision of doctoral students.

The Faculty should consider expanding the remit of the Library Committee to include an explicit reference to the development and implementation of policy on matters such as the role of the library and how it can best serve the needs of actual and potential users in a world of rapidly changing laws, technologies, pedagogy, research needs and lifestyles.

*c. Structure of Teaching and Research*

The Faculty should consider a facility for elective choices in the BA degree, including electives such as: Human Rights; Environmental Law; Welfare Law; and a full course in International Law.

The Faculty needs to take a more proactive role to the development of the PhD programme, including, for example, the delivery of tailored courses; and harnessing the potential of the various research institutes and other Icelandic Law Schools in a cooperative relationship.

Urgent and decisive action is required to start bringing the Law Faculty back into line with international standards in the balance between full-time and part-time teacher numbers. A plan needs to be drawn up to convert substantial numbers of the part-time positions into full-time positions on a rolling basis over the next 5 years.

Decisive and urgent action is required to start pushing the staff-student ratio back in the direction of international standards.

Consideration should be given to further development in the range of coursework assessment methods and the use of computers in exams.

Serious consideration should be given to the issue of how an element of regular external oversight might be introduced to the annual student assessments in each of the programmes.

In addition to the establishment of a research committee (see above) the Faculty should consider the establishment of a distinct unit with a specific remit to: identify domestic and external sources of research funding in the public and private sectors; to lead the

development of the skills necessary to submit applications successfully; to support individuals and groups in the submission of applications and in the project management of the funds awarded; and to oversee performance and quality in the completion of research projects.

*d. Competence Requirements of Personnel*

Appointments panels for tenured staff should include an expert in the subject area from another university where one is available.

There is a need to introduce greater transparency and independent quality checks into the appointment of part-time lecturers. This is a necessity if the Law Faculty is to continue to rely excessively on these part-time positions.

The University should introduce a programme leading to a formal qualification in transferable third-level teaching methods and skills. This programme should be compulsory for all new tenured appointees who do not already have it or an equivalent. The University/Faculty should offer a regular programme of continuing education on teaching methods, technologies and philosophy for Law Faculty staff. These should be compulsory for all permanent staff, and for part-time lecturers as appropriate.

*e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students*

The Law Faculty needs to consider initiatives to bring the exceptionally high dropout rate in first year back within the scope of international standards. In particular, it should re-consider how it

manages teaching and assessment on the *General Legal Theory with Overview of Legal History* course. Additionally or alternatively, it should consider the possibility of an entrance exam that would be taken consequent on a short intensive introductory course offered over the summer preceding admission.

The Law Faculty should engage in meaningful and vigorous discussions with the other Law Schools on how they might achieve greater cooperation in mutual admission of each other's graduates.

*f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students*

The Law Faculty must, as a priority, address the current practice whereby courses taken by all first years are taught off campus. Some means must be found to integrate these students more fully into the Law School community and so provide them with all of the supports necessary to enhance their successful progression.

*g. Internal Quality Management System*

Action is needed to bring the student questionnaires into line with international standards in law schools. In particular, they need to be shortened and simplified and administered no later than half way through the course. Some means must be found to get around the problem of multiple questionnaires for each course.

Consideration should be given to making the current teaching course offered by the University's Teaching Centre compulsory for all new permanent staff and all staff teaching above a specified minimum number of hours per year.

The Law Faculty should explore the feasibility of including input from one or more experienced legal scholars from outside the Faculty in the annual research assessments. There would also be merit in exploring the feasibility of establishing a panel of experienced legal scholars from outside the Faculty (including scholars from outside Iceland) to conduct periodical quality assessments of research output and activity against the latest international standards.

*h. Description of Learning Outcomes*

No recommendations.

*i. Finances*

No recommendations.

### **II.3. Bifröst University (BU)**

Bifröst University (BU) can trace its origins back to the Cooperative School in Reykjavik 1918, but its emergence as a university is much more recent. It is managed as a private non-profit institution located in a self contained community in volcanic lava terrain about 1.5 hours drive from Reykjavik. The nearest town is just over 30 kilometres away. The University student population reflects a more mature age profile as it attracts a significant number of students who have opted to pursue a third level education after spending some years in employment or other pursuits. Many of the students have families who live with them at the University. The student population of about 600, a portion of which are distance learning students, is very small in international terms. The University is also distinctive in having only three Faculties: Business, Law and Social Sciences.

It is important to say that while the self-evaluation report was very useful, it did not always contain sufficient detailed information on many salient matters essential for a comprehensive assessment. The time available during the site visit was too short to acquire or pursue most of these matters. Another matter of concern was the fact that the students were generally absent from campus on the day of the Expert Panel visit, since it happened to be scheduled on a Wednesday and regular classes are generally not taught on Wednesdays. It would have been helpful to see the University in fully functioning mode.



### **II.3.a. Role and Objectives (BU)**

The objective of BU is creation of knowledge through research, and the dissemination of knowledge through teaching, on campus and through distance learning, for the benefit of students, the community at large and the economy. It aims to provide a high level of service in teaching, research and services to students, teachers and other staff and first class facilities and to employ the newest technologies both in on-site teaching and distance learning.

The Faculty of Law sees its distinctive role as providing an alternative to the professionally focused law programmes traditionally offered in Law School. To this end it has developed its programmes to target the broader needs of the business community and wider society, while at the same time serving the needs of those students who wish to practise law. Its fundamental objective is to provide a practical and theoretical preparation for a broad range of specialist management work, especially in the legal and financial aspects of running a company. Emphasis is also placed on strengthening students' initiative, decision-making skills, flexibility and capacity to address real-life problems in national and international contexts.

The self assessment report indicates that the Faculty strives to achieve its objectives through its pedagogical approach and its selection of staff. It is apparent from other parts of the document that the former places a heavy emphasis on "realistic assignments", group work, and presentation and communication skills. Similarly, in the latter, there is an emphasis on appointing staff with a background in practice in the field. Given the overall objectives of the Law Faculty, a surprising omission is compulsory provision for practical work experience in a business environment. It is noted, however, that an initiative is planned for both the undergraduate

and ML programmes. It is reported that from last fall students can apply for admission to an internship.

These aims, objectives and roles are commendable, in so far as they go. They reflect very real needs within society which need to be addressed by University Law Schools. It is unusual, but by no means rare, for a Law School to focus primarily on them.

It is part of the University's policy to develop vigorous research in the field of social sciences, focusing on the Icelandic and international economic and business sector. The policy also states that the university places emphasis on the full research freedom of academic staff, and encourages them to engage in research. As further discussed below (chapter II. 3. C. Research) the university has, with the aim of enhancing staff's possibilities for research, introduced a system of rewards, whereby members of the teaching staff receive a fee for publishing papers in the university's peer reviewed online journal, the Bifröst Journal of Social Science. The faculty also hosts the peer reviewed journal, Grábrók, inter alia in order to encourage teaching staff to publish and thus to enhance the faculty's research activity. Through these means teaching staff have been actively encouraged to pursue more research, and this has led to increased research activity among the faculty staff. Research is supported through the Bifröst University Research Institute and several research centres, including the Centre for Labour Law and Equal Rights, which is based in the Faculty of Law and has been involved in a number of research projects and related activities. Projects undertaken by the Centre include legal consultancy, preparation of legal opinions and parliamentary bills, international collaboration and organisation of conferences. The Centre holds an annual Labour Law Day, and it is responsible for the Icelandic Equality Index. Recent

projects include participation in an interdisciplinary project of the International Finance Corporation on Gender and Corporate Social Responsibility. The centre encourages students to contribute to specific projects, and a number of students, mainly on master's programmes at the Faculty of Law, have provided assistance and received training at the Centre.

There is a concern, however, that the Faculty's approach is overly vocational in its emphasis on reflecting and serving the practical needs of the business community. In a University this needs to be balanced with a comparable emphasis on research aimed at enhancing knowledge in the field. Equally, while there is an acknowledgement of the importance of external academic networks and collaboration with other Law Schools at home and abroad, there is no sense in which this has been a central part of the School's activities in practice.

It is also worth noting that the Faculty's description of its role and objectives is not underpinned by a clearly expressed Mission Statement. Equally, while the self-evaluation report presents useful and informative material on the Faculty's teaching and research activities and structures, this is not underpinned by clear and detailed policy statements addressing aims, objectives, methods, priorities etc. The same can be said for how the Faculty sees its contribution to the student experience, the community and external collaboration. On the other hand, the report does present a clear and commendable equality policy which would appear to be working very successfully.

There may be a mismatch between the mission, focus and expressed methods of the Faculty (and University) and its location. The benefits of the location pointed out by the University include that

transportation to the city is quick and easy, the emphasis on group work and general student cooperation can be easier in a campus environment than it would be in more urban settings, small private institutions are often located outside of cities and towns and this situation could be exploited for the benefit of the experience the school aims at creating. Still, it is not at all clear why it is appropriate or convenient to take students out to a relatively isolated environment to provide them with a practice and vocationally oriented programme aimed at preparing them for leadership roles in the national and international business communities. It seems that these aims and objectives would be more appropriate to a location in a larger town. This would make it easier to integrate personnel and experience from legal and business practice into the programmes and life of the Faculty to the benefit of the students. Equally, it would enhance prospects of realistic work experience for students as part of the programmes. The Faculty's current location is more conducive to a focus on subjects such as: environmental protection; food production and processing; tourism; and rural communities.

### **II.3.b. Administration and Organisation (BU)**

Bifröst University is run as a higher education institution under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in accordance with the Higher Education Institution Act No. 63/2006 and regulations set in accordance with and supplementary to this Act.

Founded in 2001, the Law Faculty had in 2009 206 students, 117 in the BSc programme and 89 in the Master's programmes. The vast

majority of the BSc students were full-time students, 70 out of the 117, but in the Master's programmes only 28 out of 89 were full-time students.<sup>12</sup> The Faculty has eight tenured staff in the equivalent of seven full-time posts. These are complemented by the engagement of a significant number of part-time tutors from business and legal practice. The Dean is answerable to the Rector for the management of the Faculty. Central oversight is also provided through the work of the University's Board, Council and Quality Board, and the Director of the University's Teaching Division. The University's Research Institute provides support to research, the leadership of research lies with the Deans. Within the Faculty academic matters are decided by the Dean in consultation with the Faculty meetings. This is standard international practice. While various responsibilities are reported to be delegated to individuals in the faculty, such as the responsibility to oversee the program in tax administration, there is little evidence of a middle management within the Faculty. To some extent this might be explained by the relatively small size of the Faculty. Nevertheless, best practice is to delegate specific responsibilities to individuals such as: director of research; director of teaching quality; director of undergraduate studies, director of postgraduate studies; director of work placement etc; supported where necessary by committees. Despite the Faculty's relatively small size, there is merit in following this practice.

There is no evidence of middle management linkages between the Law School and the other two Faculties. This is especially surprising in the case of the Business Faculty, given that the primary undergraduate programme offered by the Law Faculty is a joint

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<sup>12</sup> Table 2.12.3 of the self-evaluation Report.

programme with Business. The management and development of this programme should be overseen by an inter-Faculty committee.

Five independent Research Centres are located at BU. Thereof the Centre for Labour Law and Equal Rights is based within the Faculty of Law. It is operated independently of the Research Institute, but receives administrative support from it, as well as support in preparing grant applications etc. The impression acquired on the site visit was that this Centre was essentially run by a single member of Faculty with an accomplished research record in the field. The Centre encourages students to contribute to specific projects, and a number of students, mainly on master's programmes at the Faculty of Law, have provided assistance and received training at the Centre.

There is undergraduate and postgraduate student representation at Faculty meetings which meet about once every three weeks. This is in line with international standards.

The University Meeting is a forum for cooperation between students, faculty and administrators.

### **II.3.c. Structure of Teaching and Research (BU)**

#### *Teaching*

The primary undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered in the Faculty would appear broadly to reflect the Bologna model. The three year undergraduate course leads to a BSc in Business Law (180 ECTS), which can be followed by a two year postgraduate programme leading to an ML degree (120 ECTS). In addition the Faculty offers an MA in Tax Law and an LLM in European Business and Corporate Law. A teaching plan is drafted by the Dean in consultation with the academic services manager. It shall be

completed six months before the next school year and is supposed to include for example course name, number of credits in ECTS, dates of the course, intended number of students. The teaching plan must be available to teachers and students on the university website. Course plan entails more detailed information of syllabi and the structure of teaching.

#### *BA*

A distinctive feature of the undergraduate programme is that it is effectively a joint law and business programme rather than a pure law programme. This is in line with the Faculty's objective of serving the wider needs of business and society. The programme is expressly aimed at providing "a practical and theoretical preparation for a broad range of specialist and management work, placing emphasis on students gaining a solid knowledge of legal and financial aspects of running a company." The law component accounts for 90-126 credits while the business component accounts for at least 42 credits. Combined law and business degrees are relatively common at undergraduate level and are particularly well-suited to students who are aiming to use their legal knowledge and skills primarily in the business world, in preference to legal practice. Typically, such programmes will embrace a selection of core legal subjects, a selection of core business subjects and a number of linking subjects. The compulsory law subjects offered in the Business Law programme reflect a number of core law subjects and, such as general legal theory I, general legal theory II, methodology, law of obligations, contract law, property/mortgage law, labour law, company law, constitutional law, competition law, capital market law, international commercial law, introduction to European law, tort law and tax law

and tax accounting and a number of more specialist business law subjects. For the most part the selection is reasonable, although it might have been preferable to include criminal law, human rights and a module on substantive European Law (in addition to the introductory module) in place of some of the more specialised business law subjects (e.g. Capital markets law and Tax law and accounting). Similarly, in the compulsory business subjects there might be some merit in replacing Practical mathematics with Business organisation/administration. There does not appear to be any linkage modules, but perhaps that is addressed through the credits allocated to electives, term assignments etc which are a particularly commendable dimension to the programme.

Although the panel has not had sight of course syllabi or teaching plans, it has no reason to believe that the subjects offered are not covered to appropriate international standards.

An important omission from the programme is provision for a sustained period of work experience in a business environment. Given the express aims of the programme, together with the overall objectives of the Faculty of Law, it is reasonable to expect that such experience would be a prominent feature. The self-evaluation does make reference to an intention to introduce special courses of on the job placements of three to four weeks on the masters' programmes. While such an initiative may have merit in the MA in Tax Law and the LLM in European Business and Corporate Law, there may be even greater merit in introducing it as part of the BSc Business Law programme. Moreover, three to four week periods are too short. Consideration should be given to paid placements of six months made up of a taught semester and summer combined.



It would appear that there is provision for study abroad on the BSc programme and that about half of the students take advantage of it. This fits in with the objective of developing an international dimension to the programmes in the Faculty. It needs to be enhanced by expanding the opportunities to attract international exchange students to the BSc by teaching a number of modules through English.

Given the fact that a substantive portion of the BSc programme is delivered by another Faculty, it is vital that it is overseen by a joint committee from both Faculties.

#### *ML*

The ML degree is taught exclusively from within the Law Faculty. It is recognised for the purposes of the Bar course and to sit the bar admission test. To be admitted to the programme, applicants must have the BSc in Business Law (with at least 120 credits in law) or a law degree or equivalent qualification. Courses on core subjects are obligatory and comprise of civil procedure, criminal law, laws on enforcement procedures, constitutional law, law and legal methods, family law, philosophy of law, history of law, international tax law I, criminal law, law of obligation II, administration law II, proprietary law II, introduction to advocacy; six courses of elective subjects are also offered. For the most part, the list of compulsory modules is acceptable by international standards, although given the programme's focus on preparing students for work as attorneys, there is an argument for swapping some of the more specialised compulsory subjects (e.g. International tax law) with more mainstream subjects such as: Succession law, European law, Human rights and International law. Insofar as these subjects are not

included in the BSc programme, they should be included here. The list of electives seems limited and highly specialised. While that may be understandable given the relatively small number of students, it is disappointing that they are not more attorney focused. During the site visit the Expert Panel heard some student concerns about the limited range of electives, and that some of them are not always offered. The inclusion of a dissertation is compulsory for graduation from the Law Faculty, both in the BS and the ML programmes. This is commendable and meets international standards.

The MA in tax law looks like an exciting initiative that fits in very well with the business and practical relevance niche that the Law Faculty is aiming to occupy. It is offered on a distance learning basis over two years. While the subjects covered are generally appropriate by international standards, they are open to the criticism of being too heavily weighted in favour of the tax and business, as distinct from the tax law, dimension. Also, since it is unusual to see 'Introduction to law' included as a core subject on a law masters' programme, the University has explained that law students who enter the program need not take the introductory law course and are therefore required to choose a different subject. Tax specialists who enter the program with a different undergraduate degree however have to take this course. Perhaps, there is still room for fine tuning on this programme. In particular, it needs to be decided whether it is aimed primarily at tax specialists or at lawyers with a tax specialisation.

The new LLM in European Business and Corporate Law is also an exciting new initiative that fits in very well with the Faculty's chosen specialisation. It is targeted at law graduates and practising attorneys and is offered on a part-time basis over two years. The fact that it is taught through English should enhance its potential to contribute to

the development of the Faculty's international networking and collaboration. It incorporates an attractive mix of subjects which are generally in accord with international standards; but notable omissions are European social policy law and European criminal law. It must also be said that some of the modules are (or should be) offered on the BSc and a question arises whether they are appropriate for a masters' degree. Consideration should be given to offering some of the other modules on the ML.

As with the Business Law programme, the panel has not had sight of course syllabi or teaching plans for the masters' programmes. Nevertheless, apart from the concern over the inclusion of a few undergraduate type subjects, it has no reason to believe that the subjects offered are not covered to appropriate international standards.

An attractive feature of the MA and the LLM is their capacity to raise the profile of the Law Faculty nationally and internationally.

#### *PhD*

It would appear that the Faculty does not yet offer a doctoral programme. It is important that the Faculty is able to develop this capacity in the foreseeable future if it is to secure its claim to university status.

#### *Structure and methods*

The programmes are designed and delivered in accordance with the general University standards. The process for formulating and disseminating course descriptions and teaching plans is excellent. It combines the expertise of the teacher with oversight from the Dean

and Director of Teaching Division. The detailed breakdown of teaching plans and the fact that they are published on the University website are particularly commendable. The procedure for regular review of courses would also appear to be in line with international standards.

Class teaching requirements at undergraduate and masters' level appear to be in line with the international Bologna requirements. Generally, there would also appear to be a satisfactory balance between lecture and discussion methods in line with international standards. Indeed, there is a commendable emphasis on small group teaching and one to one tutorials. A particularly attractive and distinctive feature is the manner in which assignments are used to promote teamwork and problem solving. This, and the general emphasis on developing presentation skills, creativity and practical real life projects, are wholly in line with the overall objectives of the Law Faculty and its individual programmes.

It would appear that appropriate use is made of the latest teaching methods, electronic packages and information technologies to enhance the teaching experience in line with international standards. There may still be scope for greater use to be made of technology to access and interact with resources and facilities (e.g. individual lectures, conferencing and programmes) elsewhere in Iceland and abroad.

The Faculty engages part-time tutors from the legal profession, public administration, the private business sector etc to discharge some of its teaching responsibilities. This is in line with standard international practice and brings many advantages; most notably variety, expertise and a tangible connection with practice. Given the Faculty's emphasis on preparing its students for the practical

business world, the part-time tutors are a particularly valuable resource at BU. The disadvantage, of course, is that it is difficult to integrate the part-time tutor into the general life of the University to contribute to research and ongoing student engagement. This risk is magnified in BU on account of its location. The Expert Panel was not provided with numbers of part-time tutors relative to tenured staff, so it is difficult to make a judgement on their role and contribution. The impression gained on the site visit is that with the exception of one or two, they have very little to offer beyond their basic teaching commitment.

The Expert Panel has not been given precise figures on staff student ratios. It is possible that it is in the region of 1:20 to 1:30. This is on the high side relative to international standards. Nevertheless, on the Expert Panel visit it did not get a sense that there was a serious problem of staff being overwhelmed by the number of students; or of students being disadvantaged through lack of access to staff.

Assessment methods are in line with international standards. They are conducted in accordance with University regulations and incorporate a mix of end of year examinations, continuous assessment, oral and written examinations and a final year project. Students normally have access to study materials and the use of laptop computers. As noted earlier, group assignments are a valuable mode of assessment.

The teaching staff on each course are responsible for their own assessments. This is normal international practice. Equally, however, it is international practice for standards to be overseen by external examiners. There is no evidence that this is regular practice at the Faculty, except in the case of a defense of master's thesis at the end of the ML programme, one internal and one external examiner must

participate in the assessment. Given the small size of the Faculty, together with its location, the need for external oversight as a rule would seem vital.

On the figures that the Expert Panel has been given it would appear that progression and graduation rates compare well with those in other Icelandic law schools. The self-evaluation report actually claims that the vast majority of the BSc students graduate within the three years. It must also be said, however, that there is evidence of a significant drop in BSc graduations in 2009. There is also evidence that a significant proportion of masters' students take more than two years to complete. While the overall figures must be interpreted against the background that the student body is heavily weighted towards an older age group with family responsibilities, more attention needs to be given to why the graduation rates seem to fluctuate widely; it should be noted that the cause may be attributed to the economic downfall.

### *Research*

The BU Research Institute is an independent research and consultancy institution operated by the University. Its role is to promote research activities within the University. Research centres included in the operation of the University work in limited fields; their work is funded by revenues that they generate themselves. It is stated that the University is systematically developing its research activities, with a particular focus on the Icelandic and international economic and business sector, a development in which the Faculty of Law has taken full part. A meeting of all faculty members is the forum where research policy, output etc. are discussed. It is also pointed out that in evaluating research activity within the faculty the

relatively small staff size of the faculty has to be taken into account and the percentage research component in each teacher's terms of employment. The areas of research undertaken reflect the specialist subjects and teaching duties of individual tenured members of staff and the faculty has set itself the goal of integrating staff research better into the teaching. To this end tenured contract staff are expected to spend a significant portion of their time on research (40% for professors, 35% for associate professors and 25% for assistant professors) and a fee is paid for publications in the University's online journal *Bifröst Journal of Social Science*. The Faculty also hosts a journal, *Grábrók* which provides an outlet for staff publications. There are also financial supports for conference attendance. Research is supported by the Research Institute and other research centres, especially the Centre for Labour Law and Equal Rights, which is based in the Faculty of Law and has been involved in a number of research projects and related activities. It would appear that at least some masters' students have participated in the research and work of the Centre, and in the research work of individual staff members. The Centre's work has included contributions to a number of large-scale interdisciplinary projects carried out in collaboration with various bodies in Iceland and elsewhere. Another area of interest is tax law, which has figured prominently in both teaching and research at the university from the outset. Other areas of research include constitutional law, administrative law and legal sources. Certain research projects have been financed by outside grants, notably in the areas of labour law and equal rights issues.

The self-evaluation report does not provide data on staff publications and research output. Impressions gained on the site visit

are that the Faculty as a whole is not managing to maintain international standards for research output generally or with respect to a business law specialisation. While there is evidence of success in generating external research project funding, this would appear to be limited and ad hoc. While there is evidence of publications in nationally respected journals and other outlets, there would appear to be a distinct under-achievement in internationally ranking publications. This is a matter of concern, given the strong international dimension to the Faculty's chosen specialisation. While it is accepted that all tenured staff are research active and that this generally feeds in to their teaching, there is little concrete evidence of research led teaching.

To some extent the weaknesses in research output might be attributed to the small size of the Faculty and its heavy reliance on part-time tutors who have busy practices and business activities outside the University. A more fundamental problem may be an excessive focus on a vocational education aimed at preparing students for business. This needs to be complemented with an equal commitment to developing knowledge in the business law field, imparting that knowledge to the students and equipping them with the skills to continue contributing to that knowledge in diverse capacities in their future careers. To this end the Faculty management needs to play a leadership role in placing research and publications in national and international ranking outlets at the forefront of what the Faculty does and stands for. It needs to develop and maintain a reputation as the leading Icelandic knowledge base and centre of research excellence for business law, taxation and European/international business law. The University can support this endeavour by switching its reward scheme to



external peer reviewed journals and instituting an annual award for research excellence. In addition it needs to introduce a scheme where at least one Faculty member is abroad every year on a research sabbatical tied to a clear programme of research aimed at producing international ranking publications. Another useful initiative would be a scheme whereby an international scholar would be invited to spend a month at the Faculty giving a few seminars and working on a joint publication with staff. An annual or biennial international conference could also prove attractive if designed to take advantage of some of the singular selling points of the Icelandic environment. Overall, the Faculty needs to achieve and sustain a significantly higher profile in international ranking publications and research activities in business law than it is currently achieving.

#### **II.3.d. Competence Requirements of Personnel (BU)**

There are eight tenured positions with a total FTE of 6.75. This is small by international standards. More than half of these do not have a qualification beyond the Cand. juris. degree. This profile is unacceptably below international standards. According to the self-evaluation report the emphasis on appointments is placed on “appointing people with a broad knowledge base and connections with the scholarly base, *inter alia* through personal participation in work in the relevant field.” This is not appropriate for university standard. At the very least the appointments policy should require a postgraduate qualification and evidence of actual contribution, or potential to contribute, to scholarship and teaching at the highest level. The preference for a business specialisation and/or practical experience can be added to that if necessary or qualify as an exception. The Expert Panel has not been provided with individual

CVs of current tenured staff, so the Expert Panel is not in a position to say whether their qualifications' profile is adequately offset by other experience and skills, or whether they understate their achievements in teaching and scholarship. Nevertheless, the Expert Panel was very impressed by the dedication, motivation, commitment and energy exuded by those members of staff (tenured and part-time) whom the Expert Panel met on its visit.

Applications for appointments are evaluated by a permanent evaluation committee with three members who are not affiliated with Bifröst and based on a detailed and transparent points system. According to BU regulation only those who have completed a university master's degree or the equivalent may be nominated to evaluation committee, applicants for professor shall normally have obtained a PhD. degree. The evaluation of staff for promotion undergoes the same process. Commendably this has a significant weighting towards research and academic qualifications.

Very little information has been provided on part-time tutors. The impression gained on the site visit is that there is a heavy reliance on such staff and that they come from a business and/or practice background. The Expert Panel has not been provided with any further information on their selection or appointments process or on their qualifications. It would be a matter of concern if these matters were not regulated transparently to ensure appropriately high standards and suitability in the appointments.

Formal staff teacher training takes the form of an induction meeting with the Dean who explains the University's policies and regulations, and the provision of written materials on "Instructions for Teachers". At the beginning of each year, staff are also offered a course introducing the Learning Management System and other aspects of

teaching at the University. Personnel interviews are held regularly with tenured teaching staff to review each teacher's performance and his or her experience of the work. All of this is useful and necessary, but it could be improved in line with international best practice. At the very least the introductory course should be made compulsory for all new staff, including part-time staff. There also needs to be provision of regular short courses and internal review sessions on new teaching technologies and evolving best practice. A Director of Teaching should be appointed within the Faculty with responsibility for promoting best practice. There may also be merit in the Icelandic universities collaborating to develop and deliver a formal third level teaching qualification which at least all new tenured appointees would be expected to take on a part-time basis. More attention needs to be given to oversight of quality, and supports for, part-time teaching staff.

### **II.3.e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students (BU)**

The average annual intake on to the BSc programme is between 40 and 45, with signs of significant decline in recent years. These figures are low by international standards, but not unusual for a specialist programme. The average annual graduation rate is about 35.

The admission requirement for the BSc is upper secondary school graduation or equivalent. BU offers a one year preparatory program for students who do not fulfil this requirement. The self-evaluation report does not say whether any additional selection criteria or process applies. A distinctive feature of the intake is the fact that it is heavily weighted towards an older age profile. Recent school leavers

(and students who have been in academia since leaving school) would appear to make up a small proportion of the annual intake. The vast majority of students are coming to the programme having spent a considerable time outside the formal education system. Many of them dropped out of their education at an earlier stage because of various reasons and are now seeking to give it a second chance. Inevitably, these students present issues for admissions over and above those presented by students who have recently graduated from a high school or upper secondary school. Nevertheless, the self-evaluation report offers very little insight into the criteria and process for admission, beyond saying that many enter “via the preparatory department, having earned vocational qualifications and having been on the labour market for some years”. The preparatory department accepts students to the one year preparatory program who have finished two thirds or three fourths of the regular upper secondary school curriculum or have vocational qualifications. Thereafter they can be admitted for study at the University. It seems that a conscious effort is made to ensure an appropriate gender balance in the intake, but it is not clear how this is achieved.

The first year drop out rate, and the overall graduation rate is broadly within international standards. It is reported that the Faculty makes a conscious effort not to accept new students unless they are expected to succeed, and are conscious of the faculty's commitment to providing every student with exactly the services he or she needs. Nevertheless, it is not clear from the self-evaluation report whether the Faculty has a strategy for keeping intake and progression rates under review with a link to the development and refinement of its admissions criteria.

As shown in Table 2.12.9 of the self-evaluation report, the vast majority of graduates in 2004 and 2005 were awarded class I degrees (27 out of 28 in 2004 and 25 out of 26 in 2005, the remaining one each year graduating with class II degrees). This profile is unusual by international standards. In 2006 the vast majority of graduates from the BSc programme were awarded class III degrees (27 out of 33, the remaining 6 graduating with class II degrees). This is equally unusual by international standards and reflects an abrupt swing from the previous two years. Since then, according to the table in the self-evaluation report, the spread of awards is closer to international standards, although they are all bunched exclusively in class I and class II. Surprisingly, no distinctions were awarded in any of the 5 years recorded in the self-evaluation report. Overall, these results confirm the need for external involvement in oversight and accreditation of results and standards.

After a slow start the combined average annual intake to the masters' programmes has picked up to the point where it is equivalent to the annual BSc intake, according to Tables 2.12.4-2.12.6 in the self-evaluation report. The figures for graduation seem understated relative to intake (Tables 2.12.7-12.9). It is not clear what the reason for this is as the recorded drop out figures are low (Tables 2.12.11- 2.12.13).

The admissions criteria for the ML are the BSc in Business Law (with at least 120 credits in law and an overall Class I), a BA in law or equivalent. For the other masters' programmes, the admissions requirements are a BA or BSc degree or equivalent. These criteria are appropriate. The vast majority of awards over the five years to 2009 are class I, with the remainder being class II. This would not be unusual for masters' degrees by international standards.

Nevertheless, it is surprising that there have been no distinctions or class III awards.

As noted above under Teaching (see II.3.c.), the self-evaluation report sets out the details of how subject content, detailed teaching plans, requirements for progression etc. are compiled and communicated to the students. This satisfies best international practice.

The students have one representative from the undergraduate programme and one from the combined masters' programmes at Faculty meetings. The students also have one representative on the Quality Board. This provides an opportunity to raise concerns about teaching and other collective grievances. It would appear, however, that it does not extend to complaints about the teaching of individual courses. The self-evaluation report does not provide details of any other complaints or grievance mechanism. The impression gained during the site visit is that the small and close-knit environment is such that students have easy and direct access to staff to address any concerns or grievances that they may have. While there is merit in that, it is not sufficient in itself. There needs to be a formal mechanism through which complaints can be lodged about the teaching of individual courses and through which individual students can challenge actions and decisions directly affecting them, in accordance with the general University legislation no 63/2006, Article 20. In the Quality Handbook annexed to the self-evaluation report there is a mention of the student's right to appeal a decision of examination evaluation, but this procedure needs to be displayed prominently in materials provided to the students and on the University's internal website.

### **II.3.f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students (BU)**

The facilities and services provided for teaching staff by the Division of Teaching, educational/vocational counsellors, and other services rank favourably with those in comparable universities elsewhere. Teaching staff of BU have office facilities on the Bifröst campus. In addition, they have access to facilities in Reykjavík at Skeifan 8 and at the Reykjavík Academy. Staff offices and the common room are of a high standard in terms of space. Access to electronic and IT-resources is advanced. The Panel was less impressed with the structure, internal layout and appearance of the University buildings.

Administrative support services are excellent. Apart from payments per publication, there was no clear evidence of central University financial support to recruit students as research assistants. Similarly, it is not clear whether the research institute/centres are providing meaningful material support for the development of individual staff research activities. There are limited supports at Faculty and central University levels for development of teaching quality, but there is still room to develop these to international standards.

The facilities and services provided to students compare reasonably with international standards in some respects, but not in others. There are several large classrooms, as well as smaller classrooms, assignment spaces and reading facilities for students. Classrooms are generally fit for purpose and are equipped with all the necessary teaching technologies, including access to electronic resources and databases. The entire campus has wireless Internet, which students can access free of charge. Students have access to computer services, assistance and updates is excellent. There are catering services, sporting facilities, residential accommodation, for both single students and families and children's playground. Educational

and vocational counselling facilities are available to students on campus.

The library is simply too small to qualify as a University law library. There does not appear to be designated space and facilities for student groups to meet, although it is possible that facilities designated primarily for other purposes can also double for student meetings.

As mentioned earlier it was a drawback to the Expert Panel's experience of the site visit that students were generally absent since no regular classes were scheduled for the day, see II.3 above; students seemed even to be absent from the residential accommodation.

### **II.3.g. Internal Quality Management System (BU)**

The University Council chooses a Quality Board each year at the first meeting of the school year. Two representatives are chosen at a meeting of each faculty, one teacher and one student, the chair is then nominated by the Rector. The Quality Board drafts rules about quality standards, quality control and quality evaluation and submits them to the Rector for approval. It is responsible to the Rector and the University Council and submits an annual report. The university's general plan will be publicized in a special document, the Bifröst University Mission Statement, which will discuss the mission of the university, values, policies, goals and organization.

Quality assessment operates at the level of the Faculty and the central University. The primary tool for assessment of teaching quality is the anonymous student questionnaire. Each teacher



receives his or her individual findings. The Dean receives the individual findings, as well as summaries and comparisons prepared by the University Quality Board. Summaries are discussed at meetings of the Faculty and the Quality Board. Where weaknesses are identified, it is the responsibility of the Dean to take remedial action. The Expert Panel has not been provided with results from these questionnaires or equivalent material that would help us evaluate the quality of teaching in the Faculty.

The utility of the questionnaires is undermined by the low rates of return. It seems that since 2009 they are only used on a selective course/teacher basis. This is unsatisfactory. The Faculty must develop and maintain effective evaluation of teaching. To this end the questionnaire needs to be simplified and, if necessary, administered in hard copy at a fixed time during one of the classes in each course. In addition, there is merit in the internal peer review of teaching, and extending the role of external examiners to include comment on strengths and weaknesses of teaching as reflected by course examinations, assessment and student performance. The University should also consider the introduction of an annual teaching award for best practice.

The Quality Board issues rules on quality standards, monitors quality, and is responsible for quality evaluation and management. The Dean of faculty is responsible for quality monitoring within the faculty, and also sits on the university's Quality Board see art. 7 of the university's Regulations. Commendably, there is a University Director of Teaching Division. The Director of Teaching Division receives approved course descriptions and teaching plans from the Dean and is responsible for the publication of those on the university website. The director does not have a role in the evaluation of teaching

quality, since that function resides exclusively with the University Quality Board according to the self-evaluation report.

BU uses a new research evaluation system, which was introduced in 2007.<sup>13</sup> For the majority of teaching staff, a determination has been made regarding the proportion of their work that should comprise research: professors 40%, associate professors 35% and assistant professors 25%. The self-evaluation report is very vague about the mechanisms for monitoring and assessment of research output. The provisions on the payment of a fee for certain publications, and allocation of points for promotion purposes, do not fully meet this need. It is a matter of concern that the report does not include specifics on research output. It has now been reported that each faculty member submits a report of his/her research output every year and is evaluated accordingly by a permanent evaluation committee with three members who are not affiliated with Bifröst.

There is a strong case for periodic external review of the quality of research activity and output in line with best international practice. This is especially important for BU given its relatively small size and isolated location. There is also merit in the University introducing an annual research award to recognise exceptional achievement.

The University has adopted a Code of Ethics and Conduct. An independent Ethics Committee is elected by the University Council to determine whether rules of ethics have been breached. Violation of the Code of Ethics is subject to admonition in the first instance, but can also be subject to dismissal or loss of employment in the event of repeated or serious transgressions.

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix I to the self-evaluation report, system of research points.

### **II.3.h. Description of Learning Outcomes (BU)**

The self-evaluation report identifies the general learning outcomes associated with the Faculty's programmes. These emphasise: initiative, adaptability, flexibility, decision-making and leadership skills, knowledge and training to take on real-life problems, international vision, collaborative and communication skills and a creative and critical mindset. Collectively, these are commendable and ambitious. The report does not complement these generalities with more detailed specifics on each of its programmes. Some of this detail can be deduced from the description of the teaching methods and, in the case of the masters' programmes, from the statement of study objectives. Overall, however, there is a need to be more specific on the learning outcomes for each programme. This is particularly important given that there is a heavy emphasis on inter-disciplinarity in most of the programmes.

While there is a clear correlation between several of the general outcomes and the contents of the programmes and teaching methods, there are also a few notable omissions. The most significant of these is the absence of provision for work experience. It is also notable that they do not expressly mention the capacity to pursue research on legal issues.

### **II.3.i. Finances (BU)**

BU is a private non-profit institution. The self-evaluation report specifies the average cost per student in the Law Faculty, but it does not offer comparisons with costs in other Faculties. Equally, it offers no insights on how the Faculty is resourced from central University funds. No information has been provided on the University's current

financial status or the scope for investment in the development of the Law Faculty and its facilities.

### **II.3.j. Summary of Findings (BU)**

It is important to say that while the self-evaluation report was very useful, it did not always contain sufficient detailed information on many salient matters essential for a comprehensive assessment. The time available during the site visit was too short to acquire or pursue most of these matters. Students were generally absent from campus on the day of the Expert Panel visit. It would have been helpful to see the University in fully functioning mode.

#### *a. Role and Objectives*

BU is a small University located in a relatively isolated environment about one and half hours drive from Reykjavik. It has only three faculties. The Law Faculty is small by international standards. It shares with the University a primary mission to prepare students for positions of leadership in the national and international business communities. To this end most of its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are weighted heavily towards business aspects of law, and reflect a heavy vocational emphasis on addressing the practical needs of the business community. The primary (undergraduate) programme is delivered in association with the Faculty of Business.

Although the Faculty's distinctive role, objectives and offerings serve very real and practical needs, there is a mismatch between its (and

the University's) mission/focus and its location. It seems that study programmes of this nature ideally should be located in a larger town.

*b. Administration and Organisation*

The Faculty's affairs are managed by the Dean, in association with Faculty meetings, complemented and overseen by the Central University administration. There is no clearly recognisable middle management within the Faculty. There is one research centre based in the Law Faculty. This is complemented by a University Research Institute and other Centres based elsewhere in the University. Despite the interdisciplinary nature of the BSc, there is no concrete evidence of a complementary interdisciplinary management process for it.

The Faculty's taught programmes are broadly Bologna compliant. They comprise a BSc in Business Law (taught jointly with the Faculty of Business), a postgraduate ML and masters' programmes in Tax Law and in European and Business and Corporate Law which fit in very nicely with the Faculty's specialisation and current Icelandic needs. With the partial exception of the ML, all of these programmes are aimed specifically at serving the needs of the business community and wider society. This focus is reflected in their constituent subjects and in the teaching and assessment methods which emphasise small group teaching and practical, real life assignments and projects. For the most part the subjects offered on each programme are in line with international standards for comparable programmes, although there is room for improvement. Surprisingly, given the focus of the programme, there is no provision for work experience as an integral part of the BSc in Business Law. It has been reported, however, that an initiative is planned for both

the undergraduate and ML programmes and that students can now apply for admission to an internship. On the other hand, the use of team work on assignments in teaching and assessment is innovative and an example of best international practice.

The process for formulating and disseminating course descriptions and teaching plans is excellent. While appropriate use is made of the latest teaching methods, electronic packages and information technologies to enhance the teaching experience in line with international standards, there may still be room for improvement here. There is little evidence of input from external examiners.

The Expert Panel has not been provided with information on the staff-student ratio. There is a heavy use of part-time tutors from business and legal practice. There is a need to make more progress in integrating them more fully into the life of the Faculty.

The student intake is heavily weighted towards older age groups relative to international standards. Progression and graduation rates are within international standards.

### *c. Structure of Teaching and Research*

The primary undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered in the Faculty would appear broadly to reflect the Bologna model. In addition to BSc in Business Law and a two year postgraduate programme leading to an ML degree, the Faculty offers an MA in Tax Law and an LLM in European Business and Corporate Law. A distinctive feature of the undergraduate programme is that it is effectively a joint law and business programme. The ML degree is taught exclusively from within the Law Faculty.

While the Faculty (and University) is laying more emphasis on the importance of research activity and output, there is still considerable room for improvement on this front. While the Centre for Labour Law and Equal Rights has been involved in a number of research projects and related activities and it would appear that at least some masters' students have participated in the research and work of the Centre, the Expert Panel has not been provided with concrete evidence of a vibrant research culture within the Faculty. Equally, there is no clear evidence of a critical mass of research excellence by international standards.

*d. Competence Requirements of Personnel*

The qualifications profile of staff members is generally below international standards for a University Law School. The Expert Panel has not been provided with more detailed staff CVs for tenured staff. Applications are evaluated by a three members committee with no affiliation with Bifröst. There is a process for inducing newly appointed staff into the teaching methods and general culture of the Faculty. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in this general area.

*e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students*

Annual student intake is relatively small by international standards and weighted towards an older age group. It is not clear whether criteria in addition to secondary school graduation are applied in the selection process. While progression, graduation and levels of award are generally in line with international standards, there are a few

specific exceptions. Representation and grievance procedures for students are generally appropriate to the context, although there is scope to improve information on formal complaints' procedures.

*f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students*

Basic facilities for staff and students are generally adequate (residential facilities for students are excellent). Administrative support services are good. Educational and vocational counselling facilities are available to students on campus. Students and staff can access wireless network anywhere on campus. Library is very small for a university library. The layout and decor of the main building did not impressed the Panel.

*g. Internal Quality Management System*

Quality management is generally appropriate to the size of the Faculty and University. However, there is still room for improvement in teaching evaluation, and especially in research performance.

*h. Description of Learning Outcomes*

On the information provided to us it would appear that overall learning outcomes for the programmes are clearly specified. However, there is a need to specify these in greater detail for each of the programmes and the individual courses.



*i. Finances*

The Expert Panel has no substantive information on the financial circumstances of the University or the Faculty.

**II.3.k. Recommendation (BU)**

There would appear to be a tension between the Law Faculty's current location and its business and practical real life focus.

*a. Role and Objectives*

The statement of role, aims and objectives needs to be underpinned by a formal mission statement, and developed to embrace a more explicit research and knowledge creation focus as well as more emphasis on external academic collaboration with other Law Schools at home and abroad. There also needs to be clear and detailed policy statements addressing aims, objectives, methods, priorities etc on all aspects of the Faculty's activities, including its contribution to the student experience, the community and external collaboration.

*b. Administration and Organisation*

There is a need for a distinct central University research division (equivalent to the teaching division).

The Law Faculty needs to develop a middle management, with particular allocations of responsibility for research, teaching methods, students affairs, programme development, external networks etc.

There is a need for a distinct allocation of responsibility for engagement with the Business Faculty in the administration, delivery and development of the BSc and other matters.

*c. Structure of Teaching and Research*

The core offerings on the BSc should be reviewed with a view to strengthening mainstream law courses (e.g. criminal law, human rights and substantive European law) and to replacing practical mathematics with business organisation/administration.

Consideration should be given to the introduction of a sustained period of work experience as an integral part of the BSc.

Consideration should be given to delivering some courses on the BSc in English in order to attract a larger number of international exchange students onto this programme.

Consideration should be given to introducing more mainstream law subjects to the core and electives of the ML.

The offerings on the LLM European Business and Corporate Law should be expanded to include mainstream and emerging subjects in European law. The inclusion of introductory courses on the masters' programmes should be reviewed for compatibility with international standards.

Multi-media technologies should be used more fully to bring resources and facilities from elsewhere in Iceland and abroad into the classroom.

Strategy on the use of part-time tutors needs to be reviewed with the aim of integrating them more fully into the life of the Faculty.

External examiners must be appointed (at least one to each year of each programme) to oversee and audit standards on syllabus, teaching, assessment and student performance.

Research quality and output must be established prominently as a top priority permeating everything that the Faculty does.

Faculty management must play a leadership role in placing research and publications in national and international ranking outlets at the forefront of what the Faculty does and stands for.

*d. Competence Requirements of Personnel*

Staff must be resourced, facilitated and encouraged to publish regularly in the highest national and international outlets and to secure external research funding. Their success in these matters must be monitored, rewarded and fed directly into the promotions process.

Existing staff must be strongly encouraged and supported in upgrading their qualifications to masters' and doctorate levels (where appropriate).

A formal introductory course on teaching and assessment methods should be compulsory for all new staff appointments.

Regular short courses on teaching and assessment methods and quality should be provided and there should be a requirement for all staff to attend a minimum number over specified regular periods.

Consideration should be given to Icelandic universities collaborating to develop and deliver a formal third level teaching qualification

which at least all new tenured appointees would be expected to take on a part-time basis.

Special attention needs to be given to the oversight of quality of, and supports for, part-time teaching staff.

*e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students*

Specific criteria for the admission of students needs to be transparent and published and kept under review in light of progression and graduation rates.

Procedure of formal mechanism through which complaints can be lodged about the teaching of individual courses and through which individual students can challenge actions and decisions directly affecting them needs to be displayed prominently in materials provided to the students and on the University's internal website.

*f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students*

The Law Library requires substantial investment to bring it up to university standard.

*g. Internal Quality Management System*

The teaching evaluation questionnaire needs to be simplified and, if necessary, administered in hard copy at a fixed time during one of the classes in each course.

Internal peer review of teaching should be introduced.

The role of external examiners should include comment on strengths and weaknesses of teaching as reflected by course examinations, assessment and student performance.

The University should introduce an annual teaching award for best practice.

The division of roles between the Director of Teaching Division and the Quality Board needs to be rationalised and clarified.

A formal mechanism for the annual reporting and recording of research output must be introduced.

Consideration should be given to the introduction of periodic external assessment of the quality of research activity and output.

The University should introduce an annual research award to recognise exceptional achievement.

#### *h. Description of Learning Outcomes*

Detailed learning outcomes should be formulated, published and kept under review for each of the programmes.

#### *i. Finances*

No recommendations.

## **II.4. Reykjavík University (RU)**

In its present form Reykjavík University (RU) came into being on 1 June 2005 with the merger of the Technical University of Iceland and the then existing Reykjavík University. The merger was motivated by a desire to create a dynamic institute of higher education offering a broad range of programmes and with the potential to become a leading player in research and international relations. The origin of the University can be traced to the Computer School of the Commercial College of Iceland (Tölvuskóli Verzlunarskóla Íslands), founded in January 1998. In the autumn of that year the Reykjavík School of Business (Viðskiptaháskólinn í Reykjavík) was established and the Computer School then became one of two Schools of the new institution. In January 2000 the name of the School was changed to Reykjavík University (Háskólinn í Reykjavík). Today there are four academic Schools within the Reykjavík University, the School of Law, the School of Science and Engineering and the School of Computer Science and the School of Business. The Reykjavík University is operated by a private limited company in the ownership of the Iceland Chamber of Commerce Non-Profit-Making Organisation for Business Education (Sjálfseignastofnun Viðskiptaráðs Íslands um viðskiptamenntun, SVÍV), the Federation of Icelandic Industries (Samtök iðnaðarins, SÍ), the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (Samtök atvinnulífsins, SA) and other members of the Icelandic business community.

This background is reflected in the policy and interests of the University. Thus competitiveness has been a recurrent theme in the University's policymaking since 1998, with the primary emphasis on the so-called applied disciplines. Law is seen as an applied science in

this sense, of major importance to business and industry and to society at large. The first students were admitted to the School of Law in autumn 2002. Until then the University of Iceland had been the sole law faculty in the country since teaching in law began in 1908.

#### **II.4.a. Role and Objectives (RU)**

The School of Law has the aim to provide higher education in an academic environment that encourages innovative, critical thinking and dedication to academic methods and it hopes to inspire competitiveness and development and thereby contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in the Icelandic society. It also aims to become the first choice of ambitious students who wish to pursue a university degree in Iceland by providing high quality teaching and elaborate research environment, and thus to act as a model for other forward-looking institutes of higher education both locally and internationally. It states its values to be: high standards, flexibility, enterprise and integrity.

The emergence of the School of Law in autumn 2002 played a significant part in strengthening the University's ties with the business community and society in general. The studies offered by the School of Law are seen to comply well with the University's focus on the working economy and research, and its emphasis on "practical" areas of learning.

The School of Law puts emphases on the importance of a sound grounding in the traditional areas of legal studies. In the view of an environment of rapidly changing industries, technologies and new business practices it also focuses on the relative importance of

individual sub-disciplines within law which constantly need to be reassessed to reflect changes going on in society at large. The RU School of Law was set up in part to respond to such changes in society and legal practice and since its inception the School has sought constantly to adapt to these changes, though without abandoning traditional core areas of study. This objective is to some extent reflected in the undergraduate programme, and further in the courses and options available at master's level. The relative weight given to individual areas of study within the School of Law also takes account of the mission, policy and special status of RU with its parallel emphases on teaching, research and links with business.

The structure of the undergraduate programme aims to provide students with a broad academic base in law and the tools to tackle a wide range of real-life legal tasks. Graduates from the undergraduate programme shall have the foundation and master the methodology to engage in general legal work, not least in the area of the working economy. A further purpose of the undergraduate programme is to lay the foundations for higher studies and specialisation within the field of law.

The objective of the master's degree programme is twofold. Firstly, to train its students in analytical and critical legal thinking and rigorous working practices, and secondly to expand students' basic knowledge of law and take it deeper in specific areas through individually tailored study programmes. Each of these is meant to increase students' ability to tackle a wide range of working tasks. The master's degree has a strong research component, allowing students to opt for a considerable degree of specialisation. In line with the policy of the School and the University as a whole, it is designed to



foster the competitiveness of the Icelandic economy and encourage its students to realise their full personal potential.

The School of Law considers vocational training of students to be an important component of the study program, this takes place both at undergraduate and master's levels through special assignment-based courses, moot trials, local or international competitions, and internship.

From the outset legal research has been an integral part of the School's operations. The School of Law policy on research is formulated by the School's Research Council. According to this policy, the School is expected to carry out legal research for the benefit of legal education and society as a whole. The aim is to create within the School of Law a vibrant and highly regarded centre of research acknowledged for the quality of its work both domestically and abroad. All permanent members of the faculty are expected to engage in research as part of their terms of employment and the School aims to provide its scholars with unrestricted freedom of research and first-class research facilities in an open and creative environment.

As a matter of general policy, faculty in the School of Law provide teaching within their own individual specialist areas. The objective is to ensure, on the one hand, that students gain from their teachers' own particular expertise and, on the other hand, that teachers are provided with the opportunity to present and develop their research and benefit from discussing it with their students. Teachers are expected constantly to review and adapt their teaching material in the light of the findings of their own research and also to adopt an approach to teaching that allows students to build up an insight into the importance of research in the field of law and jurisprudence. This

approach is of particular significance in the master's degree programme which is to a large extent research-based. The School has been granted the right to offer a doctoral programme.

The objectives and standards the Law School has set itself are appropriate and in line with international standards. Competitiveness is a strong component in the self image of the School and the University as a whole. The emphasis on research and international contacts are in tune with expectations made in modern universities.

#### **II.4.b. Administration and Organisation (RU)**

The administration and organisation of the RU is in accordance with regulation on Reykjavík University from 7 June 2007.<sup>14</sup>

The RU being a private institution its highest authority is the Board of Trustees appointed at the annual general meeting of the University's owners. The Rector of the University generally attends its meetings with the right to express opinions and make proposals. The president of the RU Student Organisation can also attend board meetings but without the right to vote. The Board of Trustees is responsible for formulating University policy, considering proposals for the establishment of new Schools, laying down the main structures of the University's operations and handling of its finances. It decides on tuition fees. It also appoints the Rector of the University.

The Rector represents the University, handles its day-to-day management and is answerable to the Board of Trustees. The Rector

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. the Higher Education Institution Act No. 63/2006.

appoints Deans of Schools and other members of the University staff who are answerable directly to him/her.

The Executive Committee of RU is composed of the Rector, who acts as its chair, Deans and other key members of staff as decided by the Rector.

The Deans are in charge of the academic management of their Schools and are answerable to the Rector for operational and financial activities. They are responsible for initiating policy measures within their School and for the appointment of its teaching staff and other departmental personnel. The Dean drafts the School's budget and submits it to the University's Executive Committee for processing as part of the University's overall budget. The Dean has a final say in matters concerning the rights and duties of students. The Dean shall ensure that the management structure of the School is in line with the University policy and that academic members of staff are represented in its administration. On notification to the Executive Committee and after consultation with the Rector, Deans may establish research centres or institutes that operate within their Schools or in collaboration with one or more other Schools.

The individual Schools of the RU are financially independent within the parameters set by the University's income and expenditure plan. In 2008 two academic councils were established within the University, the Curriculum Council and the Research Council, with the function of ensuring input from academic staff in the University's administration. Each council has representatives from the University's academic Schools plus a chairman appointed by the Rector.

The School of Law has about 360 students (out of 2883 in 2009). It currently employs 17 tenured teaching staff: four professors, five associate professors (docents), two assistant professors (lecturers), five specialists and one adjunct in permanent academic positions, plus three members of administrative staff. A permanent faculty member is defined as a teaching member of the faculty on an open-ended contract of employment with three to six months' notice of termination on either part. Applicants are evaluated by a review committee, but the final decision on the granting of academic titles lies with the Dean (see II.4.d). The School also employs a total of around 69 part-time external lecturers from a wide variety of backgrounds in Iceland and from abroad.

There are three academic councils operating within the School of Law: the Academic Affairs Council which monitors study programmes and evaluation procedures, Teaching Development Council, which sets criteria for courses and teaching practice, and the Research Council which oversees the policy of research and research projects, monitors progress and develops evaluation systems. There are three research institutes led by permanent Faculty operating within the School of Law: the European Law Institute, the Research Institute on Natural Resource Law and the Institute for Financial Services Law. Various support services are provided for Faculty and students, these are discussed under II.4.f.

Faculty meetings are a forum for discussions and decisions on academic issues concerning the School of Law, such as its role and vision, the content and structuring of study programmes and academic development in general, assessment, teaching methods and teaching materials, research and quality matters. The Faculty meeting also nominates representatives for councils and committees

and the boards of the School's research institutes. Faculty meetings are chaired by the Dean. All professors, associate professors, assistant professors, specialists and adjuncts of the School of Law and its research institutes have the right to attend faculty meetings. A student representative nominated by *Lögrétta*—the association of RU law students—also has the right to attend. A majority attendance is required. Issues are solved by a majority vote. The meetings are chaired by the Dean

Every semester, the Dean holds consultative meetings with the board of *Lögrétta* as well as with student liaison representatives as required. At the beginning of the academic year, each student class nominates a liaison representative to present their views and requests to the School's administration.

The University Library has stated its objectives and provides services and research assistance on regular bases.

The School of Law aims for maximum efficiency and transparency in all its activities while at the same time securing the participation of academic staff and students in its management. In addition to the more formal organization, there is an emphasis on an easy flow of information between administrators, teachers and students. Students have good access to teachers and administrative staff and every effort is made to keep communication between staff and students on a fairly relaxed and informal basis.

RU's policy on human resources has been in force since 2007. It emphasizes equality by dictating that all matters relating to staff management shall be determined by performance and aptitude and that there shall be no discrimination against individuals on the

grounds of gender, age, race or other extraneous factors. A policy of equal pay is also operated.

The administrative structure of the School of Law is intended to ensure transparency and efficiency. At the end of each academic year the University's dashboard provides statistical data on various factors relating to quality assurance system.

The high number of part time external lecturers (69 part time, 17 tenured) calls for a comment. It is a good practice at all universities to invite visiting scholars and lecturers from the legal profession to give lectures and even courses, and this does generally enrich and widen the experience of the students. On the other hand it is not in compliance with international standards to use external lecturers to a large extent as substitutes for full time staff. The Faculty should therefore seriously consider how it can reduce the number of part time teachers in the coming years. The administration and organisation of the School of Law is in other aspects in accordance with rules and regulations on higher education in Iceland and are generally in line with standard practice for comparable Law Schools in other countries. The impression obtained on the site visit was that the School of Law is considered an important element of the University's role.

#### **II.4.c. Structure of Teaching and Research (RU)**

##### *Teaching*

The School of Law at Reykjavík University follows the Bologna model and offers undergraduate degree BA, and a master degree ML. The School has concluded that for its graduates to be considered qualified to serve in the legal profession (i.e. within the judiciary and

in advocacy) they need to have completed at least 240 ECTS credits in areas of law, or the equivalent of four study years out of five. This means in fact that a master's degree is required for many professional positions and appointments. The structure of the study programme is designed accordingly. Significant changes were initiated to the study programme in the fall of 2008.

### *BA*

Undergraduate studies leading to a BA degree require the student to complete 180 ECTS credits. Normally students will complete 30 ECTS credits per term, or 60 per year. The programme comprises of six semesters covering three years of study. During this time, students take a total of 23 course subjects. Subjects are entirely compulsory during the first five semesters and partly during semester six. According to the School's curriculum for the academic year 2011-2012 traditional core areas of legal studies give 105 ECTS, these are: legal method, legal method II, constitutional law, private law I (contracts and introduction to torts and obligation), private law II (general laws of obligation), private law III (torts), private law IV (property), private law V (project based course), administrative law, civil procedure, family and inheritance law, criminal law (introductory) and criminal procedure. In addition to the traditional core areas of legal studies, the compulsory element includes subjects that the School has defined as the new core areas of law: European law, public international law, company law, intellectual property law, competition law, tax law and securities market. Core studies also include one interdisciplinary courses: Innovation and company formation. In total these courses give 60 ECTS. In their sixth and final semester students have to complete two optional courses total 15

ECTS. In the spring 2011 they were offered these options: enforcement procedure law, law of sales, corporate law, employment law, criminal procedure, accountancy and analysis of company accounts, legal Danish, legal English, legal French, information and technology law. The student may write a thesis (12 ECTS) of 10.000-15.000 words instead of taking two optional courses. From spring 2012 the thesis needs to be 12.500-18.500 words (15ECTS). In line with the University's interdisciplinary outlook students can also choose at this stage to take some of the options offered by other Schools of the University or even courses taught by other university faculties in Iceland or abroad. At the latest two years after the last registration for the first year students shall have completed a minimum of 90 ECTS credits and a minimum of 126 ECTS credits after three years. Students shall have completed their BA degree at the latest four years after the last registration for the first year.

All modules are taught concurrently in the first, third, fifth and sixth semesters. In the second and fourth semesters, three courses are taught concurrently for the first 12 weeks of the semester, concluded by a final examinations; followed by a spring semester which lasts a little over three weeks, during which students are required to work on special projects under the direction of a supervisor. These projects demand a good balance between independent working methods and cooperation and require a thorough grasp of the fields of law already studied.

The undergraduate degree at the RU School of Law is designed with the aim to establish the broadest possible academic foundation for its students' knowledge of the subject and also to train them in identifying solutions to 'real-world' legal assignments. Emphasis is on giving students extensive training in the application of legal



principles to the resolution of authentic work assignments in order to deepen their understanding of the course material and enhancing their skills base. It is difficult to make any firm assertions about the importance of coursework in individual courses as compared to traditional book learning and other elements of study. Some indication of the weighting of practical coursework is perhaps given by an analysis of its part in course-final grading: according to the School's course assessments coursework assignments account for 25-100% of the grades in different courses. In general, the importance ascribed to coursework is greater at master's level than at undergraduate level, reflecting a deliberate policy on the part of the School.

#### *ML*

In order to obtain the degree of Master of Law (ML) from the School of Law at RU the student has to accumulate a total of 120 ECTS credits. The master's programme is organised as a two-year research-linked programme of studies completed with a 30 ECTS-credit master's thesis, at least 25.000 and at most 30.000 words (or optionally a 60 ECTS-credit thesis, between 50.000 and 75.000 words). Under article 6, paragraph 1 of the rules governing master studies at the RU's School of Law, students can gain credits towards their degree from the following course components: Elective subjects, seminars, study abroad (including student exchange programmes), internship, courses taken in subjects other than law and the master's thesis. Students are in all cases permitted to take three years to complete the programme. In exceptional cases a student may take four years to complete the programme on the approval of a School meeting. The master's programme has no

compulsory elements, except that students starting the programme without having previously gained an undergraduate degree in law must take a module in methodology. This course does not carry credits towards the final degree. According to article 2 of the same rules a student, who has completed ML and at least 240 ECTS in legal subjects during his/her BA and ML studies, is considered to have completed legal studies as defined in article 6, sec. 1 of Act No. 77/1998 on Advocates, a degree comparable to that of *candidatus juris*.

The central part of the master's programme consists of elective subjects. A wide choice of courses is offered. The student is required to complete at least 60 ECTS in law courses, but may take 60 ECTS in other subjects at university level. In recent years the faculty has offered around 20 optional courses and seminars each semester. These are meant to give students the chance to deepen their knowledge in the core areas of law and/or broaden their knowledge by choosing from a number of courses in most areas of law. Students in the master programme shall cover a minimum of two years of study and complete the programme not later than three years after starting unless granted a study leave by a Faculty meeting. In exceptional circumstances an additional extension for the completion of studies may be granted.

In line with RU's stated aim of encouraging interdisciplinary studies, the Law School has adopted a policy of opening the master's programme in law to students who have not completed an undergraduate degree in law but hold degrees in other subjects. On completion, these students are not granted a master's degree that allows them to work within the judiciary or advocacy. These students bring a breadth of background and experience to the student body.

This initiative is to be complemented as it encourages interdisciplinary scholarship and broadens the scope of the academic environment. It is of a great importance that these students are from the outset clear on the fact that less than 240 ECTS in law does not qualify them to work in the legal profession.

#### *Vocational training*

In many courses at both undergraduate and master's levels a conscious attempt is made to get students to apply legal principles to a variety of work projects and through this to obtain training for future outside employment. This is done both by introducing elements of project work into book learning and through special assignment-based courses and by moot trials. Students at master's level are also invited to take part in two annual international moot-court competitions. Also worth special mention is the course in Practical Contract Law, in which students receive practical training in the drafting of large-scale international commercial contracts.

Since the introduction of the master's degree, students in the School of Law have been able to opt to include internship in their study programme. Internship is dealt with under Article 13 of the regulations for the master's degree and the School has also established working procedures covering its implementation. Internship has enjoyed great popularity among students and has established itself as an important component of the master's degree course, and has in many cases opened up possibilities of future employment to students after graduation.

### *PhD*

On 14 September 2009 the School of Law of RU was granted a conditional permission by the Icelandic Ministry of Education to offer doctoral studies. The doctoral programme is aimed at educating students for research and teaching posts and other positions that demand high academic levels of knowledge and training. The programme aims to deepen students' scholarly and methodological understanding with the purpose at qualifying them to work independently with a firm grasp of law as an academic discipline.

The Research Council of the School of Law is responsible for supervising the doctoral studies. On the nomination of the Council the Dean of the School of Law appoints a supervisor to advise the student in his/her research work, monitor its quality and track the progress of the studies. A supervisor has to hold a permanent post at RU, hold a PhD degree, be active in the research community and the thesis of the student must pertain to the supervisor's field of expertise. More than one supervisor may be assigned to a student in which case the conditions above may be waived in respect of the assistant supervisors. The student is entitled to up to 30 hours of guidance per semester.

The programme constitutes the equivalent of three years of full-time study and corresponds to 180 ECTS credits of which 30 ECTS credits shall be obtained through participation in courses and/or research seminars that enhance their skills to work on their research and engage in research and teaching in their fields. At the end of the first year the candidate shall submit a final research proposal to be approved by the thesis committee, and shall send a progress report to the Research Council at the end of each following year. As a rule the candidate shall have spent six months at a foreign university.

Before defending his/her thesis the candidate shall give two public lectures or alternatively give a seminar on the thesis or parts thereof. A doctoral thesis shall be an independent, original work constituting a contribution to knowledge in the respective field, and of sufficient scientific value and scope to merit the degree. A doctoral thesis shall be approximately 200-300 pages long. The length of the study may be expected to be four years if the candidate is concurrently engaged in teaching or other work. Candidates should complete their studies no later than five years after enrolment; an exemption may be granted in special circumstances.

The general conclusion of the Expert Panel is that the organization of the study programmes of the School of Law at the University of Reykjavík is in accordance with international standards.

The Law School holds that a unique character of its study programme is the emphasis on extensive training of students in the application of legal principles to the resolution of authentic work assignments. The importance given to vocational training is emphasized by the fact that coursework assignments account for 25-100% of the grades in some courses. At the site visit the importance of project work was emphasized both by teachers and students, it was said to deepen the understanding of students and to be interactive. Former students mentioned however that more attention could be given to legal writing. The importance of vocational training in legal studies is to be recognized; however, it remains somewhat unclear to the Expert Panel how the performance in those exercises is evaluated.

It also was emphasized at the site visit and is commendable that students are encouraged to study partly abroad, The support service of the International Office assists students to this end.

### *Research*

Legal research has been an integral part of the School's operations since its establishment in 2002. The School of Law policy on research is formulated by the School's Research Council. The RU Research Policy was reviewed in 2009. According to it, the School is expected to carry out legal research for the benefit of legal education and society as a whole. The aim is to create within the School of Law a vibrant and highly regarded centre of research acknowledged for the quality of its work both domestically and abroad. All permanent faculty members are expected to engage in research as part of their terms of employment and the School aims to provide its scholars with unrestricted freedom of research and first-class research facilities in an open and creative environment. Every care is taken to arrange teaching duties so as to allow room for individual research. In addition the University's support services provide assistance in raising research funds and supporting research work in various other ways. Members of staff are encouraged to take an active part in the domestic and international scholarly community and to have the results of their work published in a recognised peer-reviewed forum. Since the School was founded, research reports of teaching staff have been posted annually on the School website.

The School's academic standing is evaluated internally with regard to three main factors: (a) proportion of teaching staff holding doctoral degrees; (b) number of publications in peer-reviewed journals; (c) raising of research grants from competitive funds in Iceland and abroad.

In regard to appointments to academic posts, the School of Law gives particular weight to applicants' research records; a successful applicant will be actively engaged in research and have

demonstrated undisputed ability in this area. Teaching staff is expected to make use of their research in their teaching, not only in their own courses but also through collaboration with other academic staff of the School.

A significant element in all studies at the School of Law is that students are made aware of the importance of research in the field of law and that they acquire the knowledge and skills to carry out research. Students are provided with the academic foundation needed to conduct research, and research work under the guidance of teaching staff plays a major part in the master's programme. Students in the School of Law publish a peer-reviewed law journal, *Tímarit Lögréttu*.

Three research institutes operate within the School of Law: the European Law Institute, the Research Institute on Natural Resource Law and the Institute for Financial Services Law. The School also has close links with the RU European Documentation Centre. These institutes are led by permanent faculty members of the School and students have had the opportunity of contributing to some of their research projects. However, the activities of these institutes have been restricted by lack of funding and their organisation and operations are currently under review.

All members of the academic staff in the School of Law are actively engaged in research which covers a wide range of fields. Over the years 2007-2009 the average output of permanent academic staff was 1.9 papers (or equivalent) a year, a considerable proportion of which was published for an international readership (e.g. in 2009, 46% of all publications were in foreign journals). Academic staff in the School of Law also participates in international projects.

The School of Law expects staff to publish their research in a forum with a reputation for quality in Iceland or abroad. In research evaluation particular consideration is given to publications in peer-reviewed academic journals. A few publications of teaching books, based on research of and written by members of staff, have contributed to a pressing need for teaching material in the relevant fields. Teaching staff from the School of Law have also contributed to public debate and in the drafting of legislation on issues within their areas of expertise. The School of Law publishes an annual synopsis of research by teaching staff on the School's website.

School research is financed primarily by grants from the Icelandic Research Fund, NordForsk, EU funds and other competitive funds in Iceland and abroad, in addition to the School's share of the public research subsidy granted the University as a whole. Research in specific fields has also been funded by companies and other institutions.

The School of Law emphasizes the role of research as an important factor both of the permanent faculty's obligations and as a part of the teaching culture of the university. This is in line with good practices of law schools internationally. This policy is also reflected in the relatively high proportion of the teaching staff holding doctoral degrees. It is however the understanding of the Expert Panel that not only is a large number of the teaching staff part time teachers coming from different occupations, but also that many of these supervise student theses. Working experiences may be an important contribution in teaching, however, in regard to supervising a thesis it would be required by international standards that the tutor holds at least as high an academic degree as the student is working at.



The ratio of publication might preferably be higher, but the aim of the faculty is to raise it and the School's research output has increased steadily in recent years, as emerges clearly from the University's annual research evaluation.

When assessing the research productivity of the School of Law staff it should be borne in mind, that this is a young faculty and at the outset much of the faculty's time must have been devoted to constructing and teaching new courses. Thus the School may be given few more years to reach its goal. It is clear that the university is emphasising the importance of research and has in its short existence obtained good results in that field, for example in regard to obtaining grants for and participation in international research projects.

The conclusion is that the quality of teaching and research is broadly consistent with international standards, but improvements can be made. Among the challenges ahead is to increase the number of permanent academic staff and thus strengthen teaching and research in various key areas.

#### **II.4.d. Competence Requirements of Personnel (RU)**

There are 17 permanent academic positions at the School of Law: four professors, five associate professors (docents), two assistant professors (lecturers), five specialists and one adjunct. All of the professors, associate professors and assistant professors hold an LL.M degree or equivalent from a foreign university and five also have a doctorate. The adjunct and three of five specialists also have a master degree, others have completed a cand. jur. from the University of Iceland which is an equivalent to a combined

undergraduate and master degree in law. Further 69 part-time external lecturers from a wide variety of backgrounds teach individual classes or courses.

A standardised process in respect to appointments to academic posts at RU was formally agreed on by the University's Executive Committee in June 2009, but the same process had in fact been in use for some years. Academic posts are advertised, except in exceptional circumstances. Evaluation Committee assesses qualifications of applicants for academic titles (assistant professor, associate professor, professor) as well as in the case of promotion to a higher post, cf. the Higher Education Institution Act No. 63/2006 and Chapter 3 of the RU Regulation. The Evaluation Committee has three members, at least one from outside the university. Only those, who have completed a master's degree or equivalent, can be appointed, and the chairman is supposed to have similar qualifications, or higher, than those being reviewed. The candidate shall provide the evaluation committee with all the documentation relating to his/her career, research and teaching-records, and submit a 2-3 year plan for research. Applicants shall at least have completed a master's degree or have equivalent knowledge and experience as reviewed by the evaluation committee and have demonstrated sufficient achievement in their work to enjoy recognition in the respective field of study. The final decision on the granting of academic titles lies with the Dean.

By tradition, permanent members of academic staff in the School of Law are termed 'specialists' for an indeterminate period after appointment.

This profile of quality requirements of tenured staff and recruitment policy for permanent positions in the School of Law at RU would be

in line with the best international practices; although to raise the proportion of tenured staff and faculty members holding a doctorate is to be recommended. In this connection, however, it has to be kept in mind that until fairly recently it was not the general rule in the legal spectrum in Iceland to go abroad in order to do graduate studies leading to a degree. In that light the academic status at the School of Law of the Reykjavík University is quite promising.

The School employs a total of around 69 part-time external lecturers from a wide variety of backgrounds, mainly from the legal working community in Iceland. These are seen to have provided a valuable contribution to the teaching and play an important role in forming connections between study and the professional practice of law outside the University. Many external lecturers have been with the School since its inception. External lecturers teach either entire courses or parts of courses, often working alongside and under the supervision of permanent faculty. It is standard international practice for law faculties to engage part-time staff from the legal profession, public administration, the private business sector and abroad (e.g. visiting scholars). Typically these will be engaged to bring distinct specialist expertise or outside experience. Such part-time teachers have a valuable and necessary contribution to make to the quality of the student experience. They bring richness diversity, specialist expertise and a practical perspective into the classroom otherwise beyond the reach of the students. Typically, they are seen as a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, full-time staff. Excessive reliance on them can result in: courses being delivered in a disjointed manner, gross disparities in teaching quality within and across courses, less student accessibility than would otherwise be the case with full-time tutors, increased student demands on the full-time

tutors and a mismatch between the staff/student size of a unit and its collective research output.

It is clear that the number of external staff is at present too high in proportion to the number of permanent faculty and the School should make any effort to reverse this situation and may need to be supported in that effect.

There seems to be no formal evaluation of the academic or teaching abilities of part time teachers at the School of Law. They are not given any formal training, but receive informal support, some optional lectures or courses for teachers have been introduced. An effort is made, on the other hand, to ensure that external lecturers are aware of the School's mission and vision for the future and the educational criteria and objectives that the School has set itself, e.g. through effective channelling of information. Given the excessive reliance on part-time lecturers, there is thus a very large body of lecturers delivering a substantial component of the faculty's teaching who have been hired without the control checks associated with the formal process. These are even supervising theses both at undergraduate and graduate level. Special attention should be given to this in respect of the supervision of theses; that the tutor has completed at least the same academic degree as the student is writing for. The dangers associated with this practice hardly need to be stated. If the School of Law is to continue to rely excessively on part-time positions it is desirable to introduce greater transparency and independent quality checks into the appointment of part-time lecturers. There is now an established trend internationally for universities to provide courses in third-level teaching methods and skills leading to formal transferable qualifications for their teaching

staff. Increasingly newly appointed staff are expected to take this qualification and are facilitated in doing so.

The current practices and heavy reliance on the use of part time lecturers is in excess of international standards.

#### **II.4.e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students (RU)**

##### *Admission*

The rules regarding admission requirements at RU, cf. Article 4.4 of the Regulations of Reykjavík University conform with Article 19 of the Act on Higher Education Institution No. 63/2006 which states that students enrolling in Higher Education Institutions must have completed matriculation examination from an upper secondary school (stúdentispróf) or equivalent final examination. Exceptions can be made in the case of students who are seen to possess equivalent level of maturity and knowledge. Admission requirements and study standards are to correspond to those demanded in certified Higher Education Institution within similar fields in other countries. Special additional admission requirements may be set, such as requiring students to pass an entrance examination or an assessment examination. According to the RU regulation the School shall exercise consistency and equality of treatment in the processing of applications.

An Application Committee appointed by the Dean of the School of Law shall discuss all applications submitted for admission to the School and approve them or reject them.<sup>15</sup> When new students

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<sup>15</sup> Rules on processing applications for admission to the RU School of Law.

apply for entering at undergraduate level, consideration is given to the applicant's high school graduation grade, in particular grades in English, Danish, mathematics and Icelandic. Other factors are also taken into account, e.g. participation in social activities, sports, musical studies. They are also given the opportunity to have an interview with officers of the School if they so request. According to statistical data provided around half or less of those who apply are admitted. The dropout level is highest in the first year, an average 40 to 60 students each year which is high and deserves an explanation, but this number was notably less in the year 2009-2010 or 26.

Students at the BA level may register for the second year if they have completed at least 48 ECTS credits with a minimum average grade of 6. Minimum average grade of 6 and at least 96 ECTS credits are required to go on to the third year.

In order to be admitted for studies at master's level students must have completed an undergraduate university degree. In most cases a first grade or higher is required. This condition, however, may be waived in exceptional cases. As stated previously, the master's programme at the School of Law is not restricted to students who have completed an undergraduate degree in law and is open to holders of university degrees in other subjects. In the selection of such applicants, consideration is given to grades and the applicant's reasons for wishing to enrol in the programme. Entrance requirements must be seen to be generally commensurate with the demands made by the programme and priority is given to factors that are felt most likely to provide indications of performance on the programme.

In order to be admitted for doctoral studies at the RU School of Law the candidate must have completed a university master's degree in

law or related field. The student must also have demonstrated outstanding performance in prior studies, and be viewed as capable of showing initiative in the advancement of scientific or professional knowledge. Application and a detailed draft research proposal are to be submitted to the Research Council of the School of Law. The Research Council evaluates the applicant's qualifications and makes a proposal to the Dean. A response to the application shall be given within two months of its submission and rejection thereof shall be reasoned.<sup>16</sup>

A part from a general principle that consistency and equality of treatment shall be exercised when applications are processed and the requirement of graduation (*stúdentspróf*), there seem to be no guidelines on how to evaluate applications. Thus the Application Committee must have a wide discretion. In this context it should be kept in mind that RU is a private university, and also that there are no standardised final examinations across the Icelandic schools. In the light of this fact, the interests of the student population and in order to guarantee equality there may be a good reason to consider introducing an entrance exam or another form of aptitude tests for admittance to the undergraduate program.

Reuquirements for admittance to study for the graduate degrees are broadly in line with international standards.

### *Rights and Duties of Students*

Rights and obligations of students are referred to in Article 5 of the Regulations of Reykjavík University. There it is stated that RU

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. article 5 of the rules of Doctoral studies at the Reykjavík University School of Law programme description.

“observes the guiding principle of objective administration in its dealings with students. Decisions concerning the rights and obligations of students shall, as applicable, keep to the provisions of administrative law and good administrative practices.” Deans of RU’s Schools have the final say in matters concerning students’ rights and obligations cf. also Article 2.4.

The office of the School of Law makes every effort to monitor students’ progress and approach personally students who are experiencing difficulties in their studies. The University intranet (MySchool) provides various ways of accessing individual students’ grades and credits. A student counsellor is available for advice and professional assistance. Requests for re-registration are considered by the Dean and administrative director of the School. A student who fails to fulfil the requirements of the School of Law on study progress can apply for re-registration. Such requests are generally refused. Students whose request for re-registration is agreed forfeit all grades below 6 on registration.

According to Article 5.6 of the General Rules on Study and Examinations a student can file a complaint concerning the grading of a written examination, an external examiner shall then be appointed who’s decision on a grade applies in the case of a disagreement.

Under Article 7.2 of the same rules, a student who fails a final examination can lodge an appeal with the examinations officer who, under the terms of Article 5, shall appoint an independent external examiner. Students can refer other matters relating to teaching and examinations to the Director of Teaching Affairs and Registry, in such cases the Dean has the final say.

Deans decide on penalties for breaches of any rules of the University. Breaches can incur a zero grade (0) for a component of a particular



course, exclusion from the course or expulsion from the University. Instead of the two last-named measures, a Dean can decide to reprimand a student, with or without other sanctions. A student can only once be given a reprimand for the same offence during the time of study.

Students can take their complaints to the Committee of Complaint for University Students under Article 20 of the Higher Education Institutions Act, No. 63/2006, after having exhausted the internal appeal channels of their respective university.

The Code of Ethics of RU is intended to promote standards of conduct among those working within the university, which “is a knowledge community where students, teachers and other employees work together on the acquisition, innovation and dissemination of knowledge. Such a community requires all its members to take moral responsibility for their actions.” An Ethics Committee appointed by the Rector discusses cases pertaining to breaches of the Code of Ethics raised by students or staff. The committee takes a stance, supported by reasons, on whether an offence has been committed and communicates its findings to the parties concerned, the Rector and the relevant Dean. The rulings of the Ethics Committee are final. Actions taken in the event of a breach of the Code of Ethics are determined by the Dean, the managing director or the Rector as applicable.

The Law School has adopted clear rules on study criteria with clear objectives on the quality of teaching and study and what measurements are applied. They set out clearly what students must do in order to complete their studies successfully. Their content is in line with international standards.

Channels are provided for students who have complaints in regard to matters relating to teaching or examinations. A Code of Ethics applies to students and staff. These arrangements are in line with international standards.

#### **II.4.f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students (RU)**

Reykjavík University has recently moved most of its activities to a new impressive university building. Part of it, however, is still under construction and therefore some older locations away from the campus are still in use. On the site visit the Expert Panel learned that first year law students attend some classes at these locations. The University has about 60 teaching rooms, holding from 10 up to 150 students and ranging in size from 50m<sup>2</sup> to 240m<sup>2</sup>. All are equipped with projectors, computers and whiteboards. Many of the classrooms contain 'Smart Screens', where teaching staff can write on a small panel which is projected electronically to a screen on the wall. Lecture halls and teaching rooms are equipped with sound and recording systems for use by teaching staff in the many distance-learning courses offered to students of the University. A state-of-the-art computer system has been installed to control lighting, ventilation and other important functions in all teaching rooms. The IT suites have space for 28-40 and are open to students 24 hours a day. Of particular interest to the School of Law is the "Courtroom", a special teaching room set up with facilities for moot court training.

Working space for the staff of the School of Law is mainly in the form of open-plan spaces and two to four-person offices. This is a temporary arrangement due to the financial downfall which has caused a delay in finishing the new building and various measures

have been introduced to minimise disturbance in working spaces, e.g. through the installation of acoustic resin in ceilings. Staff working in the open space has access to closed offices for research and writing, as well as access to meeting rooms adjacent to the working spaces. External lecturers are provided with facilities in the open working space.

The University attaches great importance to providing its students with a first-class working environment. Students have access to University premises on all sites 24 hours a day, most days of the year. Working facilities are provided for students in reading rooms and in a group-work centre with capacity for 800. Additional workplaces for up to 1.200 students are provided. There are special group-work rooms at several places in the University buildings that students can use for co-operative work and other assignments relating to their studies. Lecture and seminars rooms are free for students to use when not being used for teaching. Students working on course-final assignments are given workspace and access to working facilities within the School according to need.

The study criteria of the School of Law state specifically that students are in many respects responsible for their own studies. However, since its inception in 2002 the School has operated the basic policy that teaching staff and other members of staff shall make every effort to assist students in so far as time and study objectives allow. In this regard, as mentioned earlier, staff/student relations are generally open and informal and students make considerable use of their easy access to teaching staff. Early in their studies students receive special guidance in tackling practical work assignments and this guidance is updated and augmented as they move further on in their studies. Students also receive personal guidance from teachers

or other members of staff in the writing of their BA and ML dissertations.

The University provides several support services for staff and students:

- *Teaching Affairs and Registry*: Acts as the central registry on information on applications, teaching evaluations and student records and is responsible for issuing various certificates, statistical data and reports.
- *Research Services*: Assists on applications for research grants, organises the annual research evaluation, and collates and promotes the University's research results. Its director acts as secretary of the University Research Council.
- *Library and Information Services*: Provides training to students in gathering information, with an emphasis on the use of electronic databases. Assists staff and students in obtaining essential material unavailable at the University library.
- *Central Services*: Attends to the day-to-day interface with students at all the University's reception areas. Assists staff with co-ordinating events such as meetings and conferences. Responsible for travel arrangements, procurement, premises maintenance, etc.
- *IT Services*: Provides staff and students with computing and software user services and manages the University's IT network. The division also holds courses for teaching staff on the use of IT applications in the teaching environment.
- *Finance department*: Handles the University's finances and keeps its accounts. It handles collection of tuition fees and

communication with students arising from this. It assists researchers in collating information on research grants.

- *Marketing, Public Relations and Student Relations*: Organises all matters relating to the general marketing of the University and assists in promoting conferences and other events.
- *Student Services and Careers Services*: Assists students in developing the skills and competence necessary to succeed in work and study through both courses and one-to-one consultation.
- *International Affairs*: Assists students in finding exchange programmes and receives exchange students coming from abroad. Helps staff identify worthwhile exchange programmes abroad and establishes co-operative working relations with university faculties outside Iceland.
- *Human Resources and Quality*: Supports University staff and officers in various matters relating to terms and conditions of employment, career development, salaries, fringe benefits and working environment.
- *Cafeteria*: The cafeteria is shared by RU staff and students and used by all Schools and divisions of the University.

In addition to sharing the RU services listed above, the School of Law employs two full-time office staff, viz. an administrative director and a project manager; they handle all day-to-day contact with students and are available to assist staff in various matters pertaining to the preparation and conduct of teaching and research.

It seems that working facilities for students have been given a priority in a difficult financial situation, which is commendable, and these are first class. However, it must be regretted that first year students have to attend some classes off campus. Working

conditions for staff are not ideal, but will hopefully improve in the years to come.

The Expert Panel met with a few officers from the support services at the site visit. The library is young, it is not a research library, rather it focuses on new material and on electronic sources and on-line services. New students get a course in on-line use. The international Offices assist students to go abroad. The Student Services work closely with the student association and helps students with learning techniques, carrier and job finding, financial matters, etc. The Support services presented gave on the whole a good impression and these are consistent with international standards. It is to be expected that the library will expand in the years to come.

A common room for staff and students is not provided, at least none was presented on the site visit. The role of a common room is important in the international university environment.

#### **II.4.g. Internal Quality Management System (RU)**

##### *Reykjavík University Quality assurance system*

The main elements of the quality assurance system of RU comprise four parts: study and teaching, research, academic staff, and support services. The system was reviewed and documented in its current form in 2009.

*The quality assurance system for study and teaching* covers the content and teaching of all programmes of study at the University, and is thus intended to ensure the quality of education provided by the University through regular assessment, appraisal and monitoring. Emphasis is placed on innovation in teaching, diversity of teaching methods, and assessment of teacher and student performance. Key

processes in the quality assurance system for teaching are the systems for the approval of new study programmes; regular teaching appraisal of all courses taught within the University (twice a semester) accompanied by follow-up support; teacher training and courses for teaching staff; and the compilation of various statistics and metrics relating to studies and teaching.

*Quality assurance in research* builds on the University's annual research evaluation of academic staff. The purpose of the research evaluation is to motivate members of staff to aim as high as possible and thereby strengthen the University's reputation at home and abroad; to stimulate teaching through the introduction of new ideas; and to act as a conduit for new knowledge in business and industry and society at large. Quality assurance in research covers two key processes. Firstly, all academic staff undergoes an annual individual research evaluation. This evaluation has been conducted in the University three times, starting in 2007, and is based on research reports submitted by all members of academic staff. The evaluation is carried out by a five-member committee of specialists from outside Iceland engaged specifically for this task and provides the basis for the distribution of research funding among the Schools of the University. Secondly, it is planned to carry out regular audits of the research and research policies of the different Schools of the University (School evaluation) to be used in policy-making within the Schools and in the implementation of research plans. This evaluation is based on a self-evaluation exercise and external peer review by specialists brought in from abroad. It is understood that this part of the quality assurance system has not as yet taken effect.

*Quality assurance for academic staff:* The quality assurance system for academic staff covers the features that relate to staff recruitment

and selection, career development, and promotion within the University's academic career structure. The aim of the system is to ensure that academic members of staff are able to put into practice the policies of the University as they relate to academic strength, innovation in teaching, close ties with business, industry and the community, and development of the University's international profile. Among the key processes in the quality assurance system for academic staff are the rules on recruitment for academic posts, the processes for evaluation for promotion and the granting of academic titles, the processes for annual staff interviews of academic staff, the rules on sabbaticals, and the rules on continuing education and surveys of staff opinion.

*Quality assurance in support services:* The quality assurance system for support services covers the processes and evaluative procedures that relate to support services for staff and students, including annual opinion surveys on services conducted among staff and students. The most recent surveys indicate that staff and students are generally quite satisfied with the services provided.

*RU Dashboard:* Statistical data on various factors relating to the University's quality assurance system and compliance with University policy are collated at the end of each year on the RU Dashboard to provide performance indicators for each School individually and for the University as a whole.

*The School of Law internal quality assurance.*

The internal quality assurance system of the School of Law is based on the quality assurance system of the University as a whole, as described above. It emphasizes specific procedures if and when new



programmes of study are introduced; teaching evaluations are held twice a semester; teaching staff is provided with training and guidance, including the attendance of teaching mentors; and by monitoring significant statistical data, e.g. in grade distribution between courses.

Teaching evaluations by students are conducted twice a semester, around or before the middle of the semester and at the end. The purpose in having an evaluation in the middle of the semester is to give teaching staff the opportunity to rectify deficiencies while the course is still in progress. Access to the teaching evaluation is restricted to the teacher in question, the Dean, the programme or department director (as applicable), and the officers of the Teaching Affairs and Registry and Human Resources and Quality Assurance. The teaching evaluation is given on the scale 1-5, a score of over 4.0 is viewed as a clear indication of high course quality and high satisfaction levels among students, a score in the range 3.5-4.0 constitutes a good or satisfactory result, 3.0-3.5 calls for attention, and a score of under 3.0 demands serious attention and rectification. Common measures taken in the case of a poor teaching evaluation include intervention from a teaching mentor or in the most serious cases dismissal of the teacher. Overall results (School averages) for teaching evaluations from the various Schools of the University are published regularly on its website. The School of Law has been achieving good results in its teaching evaluations.

The teaching evaluation is seen as an important element in performance appraisal and is discussed at all staff interviews. The allocation of teaching tasks and promotion are based among other things on teaching performance, in the assessment of which the teaching evaluation plays a major part.

In the area of research, the School follows the University's general research-quality procedures, most importantly an annual individual assessment of research quality and results in which each member of staff is graded by an external specialist committee.

The School follows general procedures established within the University to ensure the competence of academic staff, most importantly rules on the recruitment and promotions process and the granting of academic titles, as well as conducting annual staff interviews and ensuring that the rules on sabbaticals and continuing education are clear. Annual interviews of academic staff conducted by the Dean constitute a forum for performance appraisal by officers of the University and feedback to the member of staff in question.

In the last few years, following the appraisal and assessment by foreign specialist committees, the School has received accreditation from the Ministry of Education for the teaching of law and the right to offer doctoral programmes.

The School also participates in the processing of the performance indicators used by the University as a whole that are compiled on the RU Dashboard at the end of each year. The data generated include statistics for each School and for the University as a whole in the following areas, broken down into the University's areas of emphasis: Academic strength, programmes and teaching, links with the working economy, and international university. There are three academic councils operating within the School of Law: The Academic Affairs Council, the Teaching Development Council and the Research Council. Their roles include quality assurance of programmes, teaching and research. Each council is made up of three members of the School staff appointed by a School meeting for a year at a time, with one acting as chair.

Student input into the monitoring of programme quality takes place first and foremost through the School's system of teaching evaluations. In addition, students have a representative at School meetings through the chair of *Lögrétta*, who may express views, make proposals and vote on issues discussed. Internal quality issues feature regularly on the agenda for School meetings. An elected student representative has the role to bring comments and complaints over teaching or other matters related to studies in the School to the notice of either the Dean or Administrative Director or the board of *Lögrétta*.

Research evaluation is performed annually by an external group, this meets international standards and so does the internal quality system of the university as a whole and the Law School.

Students' questionnaires are administered twice a semester, the purpose of which is to make it possible to step in if serious difficulties arise. This is a good practice and important to make the evaluation mid term so that possible flaws may be amended. It came to light at the site visit, that at RU like other universities in Iceland, only a part of students answer the questionnaires. The response rate at mid term is, however, much higher at 60-70%. This fact shows that questionnaires need to be designed specifically with the distinctive course in mind and they need to be clear and short in order to encourage students to participate. The fact that the participation is higher at mid-term suggests that students find it pointless to answer the questionnaire when the course is over. Thus students have to be convinced of the importance of their participation.

The Expert Panel did not get a clear picture of the intensity and quality of optional courses provided in teaching methods. It should be considered, especially in the light of the high number of external

lecturers, to make such courses compulsory both for all new permanent staff and all part time staff teaching above a minimum number of hours per year.

#### **II.4.h. Description of Learning Outcomes (RU)**

##### *Undergraduate*

The self-evaluation report offers a detailed description of learning outcomes which are in shape and content generally in line with international standards. The Law Faculty at RU expects its students on the completion of their BA degree to have broad knowledge and understanding of law, the sources of law and legal methodology and be able to apply his/her knowledge to legal issues in the areas she or he has studied; have an understanding of the role of law in the community and the ethical basis of the field of law; and have understanding of the relationship between law and other academic disciplines. She or he is expected to have an overview over current legislation in major areas of law and have gained considerable practical experience in working with legal matters. She or he is also to be familiar with the relationship between Icelandic and foreign legislation and the globalization of Icelandic business activities as well as the role of Icelandic lawyers in this development.

Having successfully completed the degree course, the student should be qualified to work as a lawyer, to seek employment where university education is required and embark upon studies at master level in law or other subjects as the case may be.

## **ML**

On the completion of ML degree the graduate is expected to have requisite theoretical knowledge and experience in the application of legal methodology to resolve legal issues within all areas of law. The student is expected to have become more aware and more systematic in approach and methodology than a BA graduate, to have participated in seminars relating to research projects and have the ability to conduct scientific research. She or he is to be able to resolve issues within all areas of law on the basis of legal methodology and with reference to all relevant sources of law, ethical values and community impact. The student is also expected to understand the interrelationship between the field of law and other academic disciplines, and the role and impact of the field of law in the community and the social impact of different solutions to legal questions, and to understand the importance of respecting ethical principles in all areas of work within the profession. The student is expected to have a solid understanding of the interrelationship between Icelandic and international law, the globalization of Icelandic businesses and the role of lawyers in that development. An important feature throughout the course is to train the student in reasoning and presentation skills and to show initiative. The graduate should thus be able to communicate his/her knowledge, analysis of issues and results to colleagues, the public and the science community.

The graduate is expected to have acquired sufficient knowledge and training in the application of legal theory as well as independent work methods to be qualified to take up studies towards a doctorate degree. At the end of the ML course the student is qualified to work as an advocate and a judge, provided that the student has previously

completed a BA degree in law. Students who hold first-cycle degrees in subjects other than law are qualified to work as lawyers in the business community. At the end of the ML course, students should be fully prepared to enroll in a doctoral program.

### *PhD*

Following completion of a doctorate degree in law students are expected to have achieved a wide general knowledge of the law as well as a specialist knowledge. In general the doctoral candidates are expected to have deepened and enriched their academic knowledge and practical skills and are expected to have an understanding that their field of study and research within that field is of moral and social relevance, and be aware of the interaction and integration between law and other fields. They are required to observe ethical principles in all aspects of work and have an understanding of the social influence of their field of study and the various resolutions of issues and responsibility with respect to their research and work. They should have adopted a critical attitude to knowledge and be aware of the limits of their knowledge and the knowledge of others, as well as the boundaries of various fields.

Graduates holding a doctoral degree have presented an extensive and important thesis which is suitable for publication in academic publications in Iceland or abroad. There they must have displayed an extensive expertise in a specific area of law. The work shall present an important contribution to the development of and the most current themes in the respective area of law and depict knowledge and understanding of that field. Their research must have withstood the examination and scrutiny of other scholars.

The descriptions of learning outcomes are in shape and content generally in line with international standards in these matters.

#### **II.4.i. Finances (RU)**

RU is financed from three principal sources, and this applies to all of its Schools. Firstly, the University holds a service agreement with the Icelandic government which accounts for around 43% of the School's budget (2009). This is calculated on the basis of a special mathematical model according to which the School receives an educational subsidy from the state based on estimated course costs. The University also receives a general subsidy for research funding which it then allocates between Schools in line with the results of its research assessment of academic staff. In 2009 12% of the School of Law's income derived from the research subsidy. Secondly, there are student fees, which in 2009 accounted for 41% of the School's income. Thirdly, the School generates income from research grants and various service agreements with outside commercial interests. This accounted for 4% of the School's budget for 2009.

The School holds that it is generally acknowledged that the state subsidy for legal education, which is calculated according to a special model, is less than might be considered normal, among other reasons due to changes in recent years in how law is taught, notably the greatly increased element of individual-based instruction and study. It also holds that the defect in the mathematical model is recognised by the educational and financial authorities but that it has not been possible to rectify it owing to, among other things, cuts in funding for higher education. An increase in the state subsidy to education in law is claimed to be one of the most pressing issues facing the School of Law of the RU, especially since the state

educational subsidy is divided within the University on the basis of the mathematical model.

On the site visit it came to light that plans to complete the new housing facilities are on hold at the moment due to cuts in the state budget.

#### **II.4.j. Summary of Findings (RU)**

##### *a. Role and Objectives*

The School of Law at the University of Reykjavík is the second largest law faculty in Iceland. Historically it has a specific focus on the industrial and business environment in society. The aim is, nonetheless, to provide students with a solid general basic education in law of high academic standards. In implementing its programmes the School takes notice of the importance of international relations, an interdisciplinary outlook to learning, critical thinking, vocational training and high standards in research environment both for teachers and students.

The objectives and standards the Law School has set itself are appropriate and in line with international standards. Competitiveness is a strong component in the self image of the School and the University as a whole. The emphasis on research and international contacts are in tune with expectations of modern universities.



*b. Administration and Organisation (RU)*

The Reykjavík University is a private institution that falls under the Icelandic law on higher education institutions and applies international standards.

The School of Law is independent and bears responsibility in respect to teaching, research, granting of degrees, and in finances. Faculty enjoys full academic independence and the environment encourages research. The Dean of the School combines the roles of academic head and executive director. He sits on the Executive Committee which provides a link between the School and the University's highest authority, the Board of Trustees. The Dean meets regularly with students' representatives and has a final say in matters concerning the rights and duties of students.

There are approximately 360 students at the School of Law (2009), 17 tenured teaching staff, 69 part time teachers and 3 administrative staff members. Within the School there are three academic councils and three research institutes and the Faculty is represented in the Curriculum Council and the Research Council of the University.

Faculty meeting decides on all academic issues and objectives concerning the School of Law and is a forum for discussions; it chooses representatives to sit on committees and councils. Everyone belonging to the academic staff and one student representative has a right of attendance, a majority attendance is required. Issues are solved by a majority vote. It is chaired by the Dean.

In addition to the more formal organization of the School, there is an emphasis on an easy flow of information between administrators, teachers and students. A policy on human resources is in force emphasising a general principle of equality; and statistical data is

published every year with the aim to ensure transparency and efficiency.

The extensive use of part time external lecturers as substitutes for full time staff is not in compliance with international standards and they must be replaced by full time teachers in the years to come. The administration and organisation of the School of Law is in other aspects in accordance with rules and regulations on higher education in Iceland and is generally in line with standard practice for comparable Law Schools in other countries. The impression obtained on the site visit was that the School of Law is considered an important element of the University.

### *c. Structure of Teaching and Research*

#### *Teaching*

According to the standards set by the School of Law of RU a student has to complete at least 240 ECTS credits in areas of law in order to qualify to serve in the legal profession. The School of Law's combination of a core Bologna compliant law programme, specialist master's programmes, structured PhD programme, interdisciplinary programmes and service teaching is consistent with international standards.

The BA degree requires the student to complete 180 ECTS credits in a total of 23 course subjects in six semesters—thereof traditional core areas of legal studies give 66 ECTS, a few courses are defined as new core areas of law, these are business related subjects and courses in international and European law. Two interdisciplinary courses are included in the core studies. During the first five semesters, and partly in the sixth, courses are entirely compulsory. In

the sixth semester students are to complete two optional courses of total 15 ECTS, but may write a thesis instead. During the last three weeks of the second and fourth semesters, students are required to work on special projects under the direction of a supervisor.

The ML degree requires the student to complete a total of 120 ECTS credits in a two-year research-linked programme of studies. A central part of the master's programme consists of elective subjects and vocational training; it has no compulsory elements for those who already have obtained an undergraduate degree in law. The programme is completed with a 30 ECTS credit master's thesis. The programme is open to students who do not have an undergraduate degree in law, however, these are granted a different diploma.

The PhD programme is under the supervision and responsibility of the Research Council of the School of Law. The programme constitutes the equivalent of three years of full-time study and corresponds to 180 ECTS credits of which 30 ECTS credits shall be obtained through participation in courses and/or research seminars. A doctoral thesis shall be approximately 200-300 pages long.

Students who hold an undergraduate degree in other subjects than law are accepted to the master's programme of the Law School. Their degree will not allow them to work within the judiciary or in advocacy. This initiative is to be complemented as it encourages interdisciplinary scholarship and broadens the scope of academic environment.

Vocational training at undergraduate and graduate levels is exercised both by introducing elements of project work into book learning and through special assignment-based courses: such as drawing up contracts, basic training in advocacy, drafting summons and briefs

and participating in moot-trials. At the master's level students have been given the opportunity to participate in international moot-court competitions and to include internship in their study program.

At the site visit the importance of project work was emphasized both by teachers and students, it was said to deepen the understanding of students and to be interactive. Former students mentioned, however, that more attention might be given to legal writing. This method of teaching is an important factor in the School's study program, accounting for 25-100% of the grades in some courses, and is to be acclaimed. Nevertheless it was somewhat unclear to the Expert Panel how the performance in those exercises is evaluated.

It also was emphasized at the site visit and is commendable that students are encouraged to complete a part of their studies abroad, to assist them to this end is the support service of the International Office.

The general conclusion of the Expert Panel is that the organization of the study programmes of the School of Law at UR is in accordance with international standards.

### *Research*

The Research Council of the School of Law draws up its research policy. There are three research institutes at the School led by permanent faculty members. Research is one of the primary duties of the permanent faculty members. They have unrestricted freedom of research and are assisted by the University's support services, teaching duties are arranged so as to allow room for individual research.

Strong emphasis is put on research records when applicants to academic posts are evaluated. Five members of the present faculty have a doctoral degree and most of the faculty hold an LLM or equivalent degree. Teachers are expected to apply their research in their teaching and encourage students' awareness of the importance of research and to provide them with the academic foundation needed to conduct research.

Publication in a recognised peer-reviewed forum is encouraged. Over the years 2007-2009 the average output of permanent academic staff was 1.9 papers (or equivalent) a year, almost half of which was published for an international readership. There is an active participation in the international scholarly community. Some research of members of faculty has been revised and published as teaching material. An annual synopsis of research by teaching staff is published on the School's website.

Research has been financed primarily by grants from competitive research funds in Iceland and abroad, and by the School's share of the public research subsidy granted the University as a whole. Research in specific fields has also been funded by companies and other institutions. Nevertheless the activities of the research institutes have been restricted by lack of funding.

Students in the School of Law publish a peer-reviewed law journal, *Tímarit Lögréttu*, in which academic papers are published.

The School of Law emphasizes the role of research as an important factor both of the permanent faculty's obligations and as a part of the teaching culture of the university. This is in line with good practices of law schools internationally. The number of teaching staff holding doctoral degrees is relatively high in the context of law

faculties in Iceland; nevertheless in an international comparison with academic staff of universities this does not score favourably enough. As to the quality of the teaching staff as a whole the large number of part time lecturers that have not undergone an academic evaluation lowers the standards on the international scale.

The aim of the faculty is to raise further the ratio of publication. It is clear that the university is emphasising the importance of research and has in its short existence obtained good results in that field, for example in regard to obtaining grants for and participation in international research projects.

The conclusion is that the quality of teaching and research is broadly consistent with international standards, but improvements can be made. Among the challenges ahead is to increase the number of permanent academic staff and thus strengthen teaching and research in various key areas.

*d. Competence Requirements of Personnel*

The School of Law has approximately 360 students. Permanent academic positions are 17 of which the majority have obtained an LL.M degree abroad in addition to their cand. jur. or masters degree, five have a doctorate. Applicants for academic titles shall at least have completed a master's degree or have an equivalent knowledge and experience; they shall have demonstrated sufficient achievement in their work to enjoy recognition in the respective field of study. Applicants are among other things required to submit a 2-3 year research plan. An evaluation committee is appointed to review applications. The chairman shall have similar qualifications, or higher, than those being reviewed, if possible.

This profile of tenured staff and recruitment policy for permanent positions in the School of Law would be broadly in line with the best international practices, apart from the great number of part time teachers employed without undergoing any quality check.

It appeared from the site visit that the University had introduced some lectures or courses for teachers; however, the Expert Panel was under the impression that this was optional. In the light of the heavy reliance on part time lecturers it may be important to review this process.

*e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students (RU)*

An Application Committee reviews and decides on all applications. By law and the university's regulation a graduation from an upper secondary school or equivalent educational institution is a general admission criterion for the BA program. This condition may be waived in the case of students who possess equivalent level of maturity and knowledge. Other factors are evaluated. A completion of a certain number of ECTS and with a minimum grade is required in order to pass the first two years.

The Application Committee seems to have a wide discretion apart from the requirement of graduation (stúdentsspróf) and a general principle that consistency and equality of treatment shall be exercised when applications are processed. In this context it should be kept in mind that RU is a private university, and also that there are no standardised final examinations across the Icelandic schools.

The Law Faculty spells out clearly what requirements students must meet in order to complete their studies successfully. The drop out

level may call for considerations concerning whether entrance exams should be introduced.

As a rule applicants for studies at master's level must have completed an undergraduate university degree. In most cases a first grade or higher is required. This condition, however, may be waived in exceptional cases. Students with an undergraduate degree in other subjects than law may be admitted, their final qualification will, however, be defined differently from those having majored in law. A master degree is a condition for being admitted for doctoral studies.

The content of rules regarding students' admission and progress are broadly in line with international standards.

Formal channels are provided for students who have complaints in regard to matters relating to teaching or examinations. Students can also present comments and complaints about teaching or other matters through their representatives. These arrangements are in line with international standards.

Students and staff are obliged to honour the Reykjavík University's Code of Ethics. Issues concerning a breach can be raised before the University's Ethics Committee which passes a final ruling on the matter.

*f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students (RU)*

The facilities at the new university campus are impressive and modern. Lecture halls are of a various sizes and are equipped with modern devices for teaching and comfort. One teaching room is set up with facilities for moot trials. Students have access to reading



areas and IT suites 24 hours a day. First year students, however, have to attend some classes off campus, this is regrettable. It was not clear to the Expert Panel whether common room for students and staff is provided.

The working conditions of staff are temporarily cramped. The University renders several support services, from catering to research, for both students and staff. In addition the School of Law has two employees who assist students and faculty. The library focuses new material and on electronic sources and on-line services. An effort is made to assist students and staff in its use. The international Offices assist students to do a part of their studies abroad. The Student Services work closely with the student association and helps students with learning techniques, carrier and job finding, financial matters, etc.

The Support services presented gave a good impression and seem to meet international standards.

*g. Internal Quality Management System (RU)*

The main elements of the internal quality assurance system of RU comprise four parts: study and teaching, research, academic staff, and support services.

At the School of Law teaching evaluations by students are conducted twice a semester and are seen as an important element in performance appraisal of teaching. The midterm survey makes it possible to step in if serious difficulties arise. This is a good practice. It was unravelled at the site visit that only a part of students answer the questionnaires, although participation is better midterm. This fact calls for reevaluation of the presentation of the questionnaires

used. They need to be clear, short and relevant to the course at hand. Students must also be made aware of the importance of their input.

An external specialist committee annually makes an assessment of research quality and results produced by each member of staff. This reconciles with international standards.

There are three academic councils operating within the School of Law the roles of which include quality assurance of programmes, teaching and research.

The School follows general procedures established within the University to ensure the competence of academic staff, most importantly rules on recruitment and promotions process and granting of academic titles. Annual staff interviews are conducted and rules on sabbaticals and continuing education are clear.

Training and guidance is provided for teachers. The Expert Panel did, however, not get a clear picture of the intensity and quality of optional courses provided in teaching methods. It is important to provide teacher training for new permanent staff and all staff teaching above a specified minimum number of hours per year. In the light of the high number of external lecturers this is a pressing matter and reflects on the quality of management.

#### *h. Description of Learning Outcomes*

The School of Law has adopted comprehensive and detailed descriptions of the learning outcomes for each of its programmes at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels. These set out clearly: the scope and objectives of the programmes, and the

knowledge, both practical and theoretical, that the student should acquire. These include among others knowledge and understanding of current law, the sources of law and legal methodology, learning skills and information literacy and also communications skills. The graduate should also have acquired an understanding of the role of law in community, the ethical basis of the field of law; and have an understanding of the relationship between law and other academic disciplines.

The descriptions of learning outcomes are in shape and content generally in line with international standards in these matters.

*i. Finances (RU)*

The Reykjavík University is a private institution but has a service agreement with the State, the School of Law receives therefrom a certain amount which accounts for approximately 43% of its costs. Around 41% of its income comes from student fees. It also receives research subsidy around 12% and finally research grants and various service agreements generate around 4% of the budget.

There is a complaint from the Law School that the subsidy from the state is too low due to a fault in the mathematical model it is based on, and also because of cuts in the state budget due to the financial downfall. The Expert Panel is not in a position to comment on this. On the site visit some students noted problems in respect to the rules of the official student loan fund (LÍN).

#### **II.4.k. Recommendation (RU)**

##### *a. Role and objectives*

Competitiveness is a strong component in the self image of the School and the University as a whole. This is good in itself but it is not quite clear to what extent the competitive factor is internal or external, aimed at society at large or other academic institutions. Although it is obvious that individual law faculties in the country have benefited from the competitive atmosphere resulting from the establishment of new law schools, it is in the opinion of the Expert Panel equally important, especially in such a small society, that the law schools in Iceland engage constructively on a template or mutual recognition of each others degrees. This should not hamper diversity in offerings so long as students are provided with sufficient advance information on each course of study in order to make informed choices.

##### *b. Administration and Organisation (RU)*

It is recommended that the Law Faculty draws up a plan for the purpose of reducing, in the years to come, the extensive number of part time external lecturers.

##### *c. Structure of Teaching and Research*

A variety of courses is offered both in traditional basic legal subjects and in other subjects significant to a modern society and in international context. The lack of a general consensus on which subjects compose the core of legal studies and study requirements, for example in vocational training, makes it, however, difficult to evaluate the study programme as such. It should be kept in mind

that it may be in the best interest of individual students to have the option to be able to move between law faculties at some point in their studies. The School of Law should make an effort to reach an agreement with other faculties to this effect.

Urgent and decisive action is required to start bringing the Law School back into line with international standards in the balance between full-time and part-time teacher numbers. A plan needs to be drawn up to convert substantial numbers of the part-time positions into full-time positions on a rolling basis over the next five years.

A great importance and emphasis is given to the vocational part of teaching. It seems, however, unclear whether there is a general strategy regarding the form and magnitude of this type of teaching and how students' work in these exercises is evaluated. In the self-evaluation report there is for example not much mention of the practice of seminars.

*d. Competence Requirements of Personnel*

It is recommended that the School of Law supports and makes it possible for its faculty members to scale up their academic level. This implies, also, to reduce the number of external teachers who lecture on regular bases. The general rule must be that university teachers, responsible for courses or who teach a substantial amount, undergo an evaluation of their academic qualifications.

*e. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of students*

The School of Law should review its rules on admission in order to ensure greater transparency.

The School of Law is encouraged to engage in meaningful and vigorous discussions with the other Law Schools in the country on how they might achieve greater cooperation in mutual admission of each other's graduates.

*f. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students*

In so far as these are not currently available, the School should provide common room facilities for students and faculty.

It is important for the success and development of first year students to be a full part of the law student community from the outset. It is therefore desirable that they may attend all classes on the main campus, as soon as possible.

It is desirable to improve the working conditions of faculty and staff.

*g. Internal Quality Management System*

A way must be found to make the student questionnaires more efficacious. They need to be shortened and simplified and it is important that students understand the importance of their participation.

Consideration should be given to teaching courses offered to staff. It would be in accordance with modern development to make such courses compulsory both for new tenured academic staff and

external part-time lecturers who teach above a specified minimum number of hours per year.

*h. Description of Learning Outcomes*

No recommendations.

*i. Finances*

No recommendations.

**Part III – General Findings and Recommendation  
Regarding All HEIs**



### **III.1. Summary of Findings (all HEIs)**

This report is an external evaluation of law faculties at four universities in Iceland written on the request of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture with reference to art. 11 of Act no. 63/2006 on Higher Educational Institutions and Rules no. 321/2009 on Quality Control of Teaching and Research in Higher Education.

The structure and activities of all the four universities are based on Act no. 63/2006, the two public universities UNAK and UI also operate pursuant to the Act on Public Universities no. 85/2008. In addition activities and organization of each of the universities are covered by specific rules and regulations adopted on the basis of the aforementioned legislation. The Expert Panel found all the faculties complying with the legal frame in their administration and organization and all follow the international standards in respect to structure of teaching and ECTS credits requirements for a law degree.

The study programmes offered by the four faculties of law are not identical and this enriches the legal academic spectrum. On the other hand this has created difficulties. The Law Faculty of the University of Iceland stands on a firm ground and has been responsible for educating lawyers, judges and other officials for a century. The other three Faculties are all very young and still in development. Today there is not a standardized description of what makes a graduate in law qualified to shoulder the duties of the legal profession, apart from Regulation no. 1095/2005 on a Bar exam graduates have to pass in order to be qualified to work as advocates. As yet no such exam is given to those who seek office in the judiciary or public service. Because of the short period that has passed since the new universities began to graduate students with masters in law, and the

relatively few graduates from UNAK and BU who have registered in the course for the Bar exam, the Expert Panel found that the present statistical information available on the exam did not give a picture clear enough on which to base conclusions; although both attendance and success rate do give some indication and it is clear that UI is until this date in the lead.

The Expert Panel got a strong impression both from the self-evaluation reports and on the site visits that there is a lack of consensus among the four faculties as to the professional standards Icelandic lawyers have to meet, and that they have limited forbearance of each others different educational aims and study programmes. The Expert Panel does not see it as its role to interfere in questions of policy. The Panel would, however, like to point out: that it is important to keep up and aim for the highest standards of legal education; in that respect a dynamic outward looking choice of courses and teaching methods on the one hand, and a study programme founded on traditional basic courses on the other may be equally valuable in their respective aims; that it is the duty of the faculties to meet the interests students have to obtain the best education and that of their choice; that if the four faculties do not reach an agreement on the basic requirements of legal education and cooperation in respect to students' interest of being able to move between universities and obtain those standards, then inevitably the decision on this important matter will move from the universities into the Ministry or to committees designing the Bar exam and in the future presumably judicial education.

All the faculties emphasize the importance of research and all but one run one or more research institutes. The importance of research for the academic environment is recognized, however, the

impression of the Expert Panel was that research has not generally gained the stand of being an integral part of university teaching across all of the Law Schools. To this effect it is important to support research environment and to engage students in research activities. The financial capacity of the universities is a factor here as is clearly displayed by the excessive number of part time teachers at all the faculties. Internal and external quality management systems play an important role in guiding and guarding the standards to be met.

As to the competence requirements of tenured staff, all the universities apply a process intended to secure a high academic profile of new appointees as well as promotion. Nevertheless it is not the general rule that tenured academic staff hold a doctorate, but many have obtained a postgraduate degree. In this respect international standards would not be fully met. As repeatedly mentioned in the report there is an excessive use of external teachers in all the faculties and this fact is bound to have an effect on the average academic status of the respective faculty both regarding teaching and research.

Facilities for students and technical devices are of high standards at all the universities. On the other hand common rooms are not always provided for students and staff, the purpose of which is to provide opportunities for socializing and to encourage informal academic discussions.

The high drop-out rate of first year students both at UI and RU is a concern in respect to the welfare of students which may be wasting valuable time and experience failure as diminishing their self-image.

A common problem at all the universities was little participation of students in the teaching evaluation process. All the law faculties are engaged in discussion on how this process may be improved.

The Expert Panel does not see it as its objective to make comparisons of the four faculties in respect to the points of evaluation recapitulated in the report. This would also be impossible on the bases of the self-evaluation reports because they differ in emphasis and in detail.

A complaint has been raised by some of the faculties that the structure of the report is not in accordance with a letter dated 17 November 2009 from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to the universities. This letter stated that the Ministry would appoint an Expert Panel to undertake an external evaluation of the four faculties and to write a report. In this letter various points are listed on which the faculties are asked to comment or give a description respectively; it is also said that they are free to take up other important issues. The outcome has been that the self-evaluation reports are very different both in the choice of facts stated, detail and in emphasis. This is inevitably reflected in the report.

The Expert Panel was appointed on 6 August 2010 and directed to make its evaluations based on the letter to the universities from 17 November 2009, the self-evaluation reports, respective laws and regulations (special reference is made to art. 11 of Act no. 63/2006 on Higher Educational Institutions and Rules no. 321/2009 on Quality Control of Teaching and Research in Higher Education) and international standards. It was then directed that the report should be structured according to the criteria for internal and external evaluation stated in Article 4 of rules no. 321/2009.

### **III.2. Recommendation (all HEIs)**

As mentioned above the Expert Panel found that the self-evaluation reports were not a good basis for an evaluation such as the one presented here. In its opinion guidelines need to be much clearer and the scope better defined if the purpose is to get an objective holistic picture of legal education in the country.

Until the year 2003 the law faculty of the University of Iceland was the only law school in the country. Students graduated with cand. jur. degree after five to six years of studying. The cand. jur. degree was a requirement for obtaining official posts in the legal profession. The structure of the program at the Law Faculty at the University of Iceland today, the combined BA and Mag. Jur., is aimed at providing similar educational standards as the cand.jur. There are now three more law faculties in the country offering BA and masters programmes and with independent objectives.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has accredited the new law faculties to graduate lawyers without forming a general policy on standards to be met for working as a lawyer in the public sector or setting guidelines in respect of the standards of minimum content of a law degree. It may become necessary to do so if the universities do not manage to come to a mutual understanding.

It must be kept in mind that it is the duty of the individual faculties to guard the interests of students at the same time as the higher academic standards are preserved. It is therefore very important that the four law faculties engage in meaningful and vigorous discussions and try to come to a mutual understanding and an agreement on core subjects and courses requirements; and under what conditions students may be able to move between universities if they desire to

do so. Students with a BA from one university should be admitted into a master programme at another university, given that conditions are met. Among the aims of the Bologna model is to open the possibility for students to such transfer. It is also important that such an agreement is transparent so that students can make an informed choice about their course of study. For that purpose it is in the interest of students to have access to statistic information on the Bar exam. It is therefore recommended that the results from the Bar examination be made public.

Another option is to guide qualifications requirements in the public job market via postgraduate qualification examinations. There is already the Bar examination.<sup>17</sup> A similar course may be organized in respect to position in the judiciary and even in administration.

Research is an essential part of a vibrant academic environment. It is thus important to support publications and make it possible for faculty members to devote a part of their time to research as they are expected to do.

All the universities should make an effort to support their staff in increasing their academic qualifications.

Research evaluation appears to be a matter for each university in Iceland. It might be productive to appoint a panel of experts, preferably with at least one person from outside of Iceland, to evaluate annually the research output at all the universities.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. regulation no. 1095/2005 which requires lawyers to take a special course and pass an examination in order to be applicable as advocates

Course evaluations through students' questionnaires play an important role in quality control. All the faculties should endeavour to find a way to make this process more productive.

An extensive reliance on external part time teachers is a general and significant problem at all the Icelandic universities. This is not satisfactory by international standards and an attempt should be made to reverse this situation by recruiting more tenured staff with academic qualifications.

Consideration should be given to having new and part time teachers take a formal qualification in transferable third-level teaching methods and skills.

### **III.3. Signatures of the Expert Committee**

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Hjördís Björk Hákonardóttir (Chair), Iceland

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Dermot Walsh, Ireland

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Iðunn Hauksdóttir (observer), Iceland



## **Appendices**

## **Appendix I. Site Visit Agendas**

### **Appendix I.1. Agenda of Site Visit to University of Akureyri 6 September 2010**

#### **09:00-09:45 Meeting with the Rector of UNAK, Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and members of the academic and administrative staff**

Present from UNAK: Dr. Stefán B. Sigurðsson, Rector, Dr. Sigurður Kristinsson, Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sigrún Magnúsdóttir, Director of Quality Management, Ólafur Halldórsson, Managing Director, Úlfar Hauksson, Finance Director, Aðalheiður Ámundadóttir, law student and Member of the University Council.

#### **09:50-10:35 Meeting with the Self-Assessment Committee**

Present from UNAK: Dr. Sigurður Kristinsson, Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sigrún Magnúsdóttir, Director of Quality Management, Dr. Timothy Murphy, Professor, Faculty of Law, Dr. Rachael Lorna Johnstone, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, Ágúst Þór Árnason, adjunct, Faculty of Law, Gunnþóra Elín Erlingsdóttir, 1. year graduate law student, Jóna Benný Kristjánsdóttir, 2. year graduate law student, Davíð Birkir Tryggvason, law student.

#### **10:40-11:25 Site visit: Teaching facilities, Classroom visit, Technical Support and Library**

#### **11:30-12:10 Meeting with staff members from the Faculty of Law**

Present from UNAK: Dr. Timothy Murphy, Professor, Faculty of Law, Dr. Rachael Lorna Johnstone, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, Ágúst Þór Árnason, adjunct, Faculty of Law, Árni Pálsson, Adjunct, Faculty of Law, Inga Þöll Þórgnýsdóttir, Adjunct, Faculty of Law, Þorsteinn Hjaltason, Adjunct, Faculty of Law.

#### **12:15-13:15 Lunch**

#### **13:20-14:05 Meeting with students in the B.A.-programme**

#### **14:10-14:55 Meeting with students in the M.L. and Polar Law programmes**

#### **15:00-15:45 Meeting with visiting and part-time teachers**

#### **15:50-17:25 Downtown walk and meeting with alumni and their current employers**

#### **17:30-18:15 Summary session**

## **Appendix I.2. Agenda of Site Visit to University of Iceland 7 September 2010**

### **09:00-09:45 Meeting with the University Authorities**

Present from UI: Kristín Ingólfssdóttir, Rector, Jón Atli Benediktsson, Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs, Guðmundur R. Jónsson, Director of Finance and Operations, Þórður Kristinsson, Director of Academic Affairs, Halldór Jónsson, Director of Research, Magnús D. Baldursson, Managing Director of the Rector's Office and Head of Quality Administration

### **10:00-11:00 Meeting with the Self-Evaluation Group**

Present from UI: Róbert R. Spanó, Professor, Head of the Faculty of Law, Björg Thorarensen, Professor, Chair of the Self-Evaluation Group, Eiríkur Tómasson, Professor, María Thejll, Director of the Law Institute, Alma Möller, Head of Law Faculty Section, School of Social Sciences, Pétur Leifsson, Associate Professor, Chair of the Research and Master's Study Committee, Hrefna Friðriksdóttir, Assistant Professor, Trausti Fannar Valsson, Assistant Professor, Þorkell Andrésson, Student, Nominated by Orator, the Law Students' Association at the Faculty

### **11:05-11:50 Meeting with the Authorities of the School of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Law**

Present from UI: Ólafur Þ. Harðarson, Dean of the School of Social Sciences, Róbert R. Spanó, Professor, Head of the Faculty of Law, Björg Thorarensen, Professor, Chair of the Self-Evaluation Group, Sigurbjörg Aðalsteinsdóttir, Operational Manager of the School of Social Sciences

### **12:00-13:00 Lunch**

### **13:00-13:35 Meeting with Representatives of the Student Body – Undergraduates**

### **13:40-14.15 Meeting with Representatives of the Student Body – Graduates**

### **14.30-15.05 Meeting with Representatives of newly graduated lawyers**

### **15:15-15:50 Tour of the Facilities**

### **16:00-16:45 Meeting with External Stakeholders**

### **16:45-17:30 Meeting of the External Group of Experts**

### **Appendix I.3. Agenda of Site Visit to Bifrost University 8 September 2010**

#### **09:30-10:00 Meeting with the Rector, Dean and members of the academic and administrative staff**

Present from BU: Magnús Árni Magnússon rector, Bryndís Hlöðversdóttir, dean of law faculty, Ingibjörg Guðmundsdóttir, director of academic services, Ingibjörg Þorsteinsdóttir, associate professor, Bárður Örn Gunnarsson, director of operations, Geirlaug Jóhannsdóttir, staff of quality board.

#### **10:00-10:30 Meeting with the Self-Assessment Committee**

Present from BU: Bryndís Hlöðversdóttir, dean, Ástráður Haraldsson, associate professor, Ingibjörg Þorsteinsdóttir, associate professor, Ingvar Christensen, student, member at faculty meetings.

#### **10:30-10:45 Coffee break**

#### **10:45-11:30 Meeting with staff members from the Faculty of Law**

Present from BU: Elín Blöndal, professor, Einar Karl Hallvarðsson, associate professor, Ingibjörg Ingvadóttir, assistant professor, Ástráður Haraldsson, associate professor, Ingibjörg Þorsteinsdóttir, associate professor.

#### **11:45-12:30 Meeting with part-time teachers**

#### **12:30-13:45 Lunch and walk around campus**

#### **13:45-14:15 Meeting with students (BS)**

#### **14:15-14:45 Meeting with students (M.L., M.A.)**

#### **14:45-15:00 Coffee break**

#### **15:00-15:30 Quality Assurance**

Present from BU: Jón Ólafsson, professor and member of quality board, Geirlaug Jóhannsdóttir, staff of the quality board, Ingibjörg Guðmundsdóttir, director of academic services, Guðrún Björg Aðalsteinsdóttir, statistics, Ása Kristín Óskarsdóttir, student, member of quality board.

#### **15:30-16:00 Research and supporting services**

Present from BU: Jón Ólafsson, professor, Sigrún Lilja Einarsdóttir, doctoral student and research assistant, Elín Blöndal, professor and head of the research center for labour law and equal rights, Njörður Sigurjónsson, former head of Bifröst university research institute, Maj Britt Hjördís Briem, graduate studies coordinator, Kristín Ólafsdóttir, international coordinator, Toby Herman, educational counsellor, Andrea Jóhannsdóttir, university librarian.

#### **16:00-16:30 Summary session**

#### **Appendix I.4. Agenda of Site Visit to Reykjavik University 9 September 2010**

**09:00 Meeting with Rector, Ari Kristinn Jónsson, and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Finnur Oddsson**

**09:45 Meeting with self-evaluation committee**

Present on behalf of RU: Thórdur S. Gunnarsson, Dean, School of Law, Professor Sigurdur Tómas Magnússon, School of Law, Assistant Professor Margrét Vala Kristjánsdóttir, School of Law, Administrative Director Jóna K. Kristinsdóttir, School of Law, RU Director of Teaching Affairs and Registry, Steinn Jóhannsson.

**10:30 Coffee break**

**10:45 Meeting with representatives of key support services**

Present on behalf of RU: Director of Library Services, Guðrún Tryggvadóttir, Director of International Office, Margrét Jónsdóttir and Director of Student Services, Sigríður Hulda Jónsdóttir.

**11:30 Internal quality systems and key performance indicators (RU Dashboard)**

Present on behalf of RU: Director of Teaching Affairs and Registry, Steinn Jóhannsson, Director of Research Services, Kristján Kristjánsson.

**12:00 Lunch in the RU cafeteria**

**12:45 Guided tour around the facilities**

**13:15 Meeting with faculty**

Present on behalf of School of Law: Professor Gudmundur Sigurdsson, Professor Ragnhildur Helgadóttir, Associate Professor Adalsteinn E. Jónasson, Associate Professor Thórdís Ingadóttir

**14:15 Meeting with representatives of undergraduate students**

**14:45 Meeting with representatives of graduate students**

**15:15 Coffee Break**

**15:30 Meeting with alumni and representatives from industry / external stakeholders**

**16:15 Final meeting with the Dean, School of Law**

## **Appendix II. Documents Received**

### **Appendix II.1. Documents Received From the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture**

Act on Higher Education Institution No. 63/2006.  
Act on Public Universities no. 85/2008.  
Rules on Accreditation No. 1067/2006.  
Rules No. 321/2009 on Quality Control of Teaching and Research in Higher Education Institutions.

### **Appendix II.2. Documents Received From University of Akureyri**

Legal Education at the University of Akureyri. Self-Assessment Report. Akureyri, 15 February 2010.  
Legal Education at the University of Akureyri. Appendices. Akureyri, 15 February 2010.

### **Appendix II.3. Documents Received From University of Iceland**

University of Iceland. Faculty of Law. Evaluation of Teaching and Study of Law. Self-evaluation Report. Reykjavik, 20 January 2010.  
University of Iceland. Faculty of Law. Evaluation of Teaching and Study of Law. Appendices 3, 12, 13, 20, 21, 23, 24, 27. Reykjavik, 20 January 2010.  
University of Iceland. Faculty of Law. Evaluation of Teaching and Study of Law. Appendix 26. Reykjavik, 20 January 2010.

### **Appendix II.4. Documents Received From Bifröst University**

Bifröst University. Faculty of Law. Self-evaluation report. Bifröst, 15 January 2010.  
Bifröst University. Faculty of Law. Annexes of the report of Faculty of Law at Bifröst University. Bifröst, 15 January 2010.  
Bifröst University. Faculty of Law. Addenda to Self-Evaluation Report dated 15 January 2010. Bifröst, March 2010.  
Bifröst University. Faculty of Law. Quality Handbook. Bifröst, March 2010.

### **Appendix II.5. Documents Received From Reykjavik University**

Reykjavik University. School of Law. Self-evaluation Report. Reykjavik, 3 February 2010.  
Reykjavik University. School of Law. Appendices. Reykjavik, 3 February 2010.