

# **Amendment to the Report on the Internal Evaluation of the Quality of Educational, Creative and Related Activities at the UHK for the Year 2023**



**The amendment to internal quality evaluation report for the year 2023 was:**

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University of Hradec Králové

Rokitanského 62,

500 03 Hradec Králové

Czech Republic

[www.uhk.cz](http://www.uhk.cz)

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# 1 Introduction

Pursuant to Act No. 111/1998 Coll., the Act on Higher Education Institutions and on Amendments and Supplements to Other Acts, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the "*Act on Higher Education Institutions*"), a higher education institution is obliged to prepare a report on the internal evaluation of the quality of educational, creative and related activities (hereinafter referred to as the "*internal evaluation report*") and to update it annually with an amendment describing changes in quality and management measures. The University of Hradec Králové (UHK) has prepared its second internal evaluation report in 2023, for the period 2018-2022. The objective of this amendment is to present quality assurance and evaluation at the UHK for the year 2023.

The amendment elucidates the main changes made to the quality assurance and evaluation system, which are mainly contained in relevant managing acts or organisational frameworks. It introduces the activities of the UHK Internal Evaluation Board (IEB), which is a key body in the quality assurance and evaluation system. The amendment also provides a summary of the course of the internal quality evaluation at the University of Hradec Králové in 2023 in all three fundamental areas, i.e. educational activities, creative activities and related activities. Furthermore, the amendment encompasses the accreditation applications that were evaluated by the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAB). It also provides a summary of the changes implemented at the UHK in response to the recommendations of the international evaluation conducted through the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP), which is affiliated to the European University Association (EUA), and which were communicated to the evaluation team through a report submitted in 2023. The amendment also addresses further evaluation and UHK's involvement in questionnaire surveys. Furthermore, the position of the UHK in international university rankings is included.

## 2 Quality assurance and internal evaluation system

### 2.1 Internal regulations and managing acts

In 2023, no amendments were made to the internal regulations pertaining to the quality assurance and internal evaluation system. However, amendments were made to certain managing acts.

With effect from 1 April 2023, the University of Hradec Králové (UHK) issued new *Rules for the Internal Governance of the University of Hradec Králové*, which, among other things, modified the definition of the responsibilities of Vice-Rectors. The quality assurance agenda, which was previously the responsibility of the Vice-Rector for Strategy and Development, has been assumed by the Vice-Rector for Studies (now Vice-Rector for Studies and Quality). This was accompanied by changes in organisational and administrative arrangements, with the division of the Quality and Strategy Office into two separate units, namely the Quality Office and the Strategy and Development Office. The Quality Office, which consists of a single person, now reports to the Vice-Rector for Studies and Quality. This change was linked to the development and growth of some of the agendas that fall under the Vice-Rector for Strategy and Development and was implemented mainly for capacity reasons, with the intention of enabling him to fully devote himself to the activities entrusted to him. In addition, further conceptual changes will be required in relation to these organisational changes. It is necessary to establish how quality assurance is to be defined and ensured in all areas, including clarification of the division of responsibilities and the means of communication between the vice-rector and the Quality Office under her and other vice-rectors and departments under them. Similarly, it is necessary to determine how the link between quality assurance and strategy will continue to be ensured so that the symbiosis in the quality assurance and evaluation system that has been in place to date is not disrupted by the division of the original office into two separate offices. Other changes introduced by the new Rules for the Internal Governance are based in part on the results of a staff and process audit of the rectorate units, which was carried out at the UHK in 2022.

The *Career system and regular evaluation of academic staff at the University of Hradec Králové* have been slightly modified to include not only support for medium- and long-term mobility, which is important for meeting accreditation and habilitation standards, but also support for short-term mobility as part of career development. Mobility has been defined as physical, combined and virtual. The development of pedagogical competences has been added to the Personal Assessment Form and the Career Development Plan for Academic Staff, which is an annex to the Career Regulations, so that academic staff can indicate this in their plans.

The new *Rules of Procedure of the International Advisory Board of the University of Hradec Králové* have been in force since 1 January 2023, which, based on previous experience, have slightly modified some settings in the functioning of this body. These included, for example,

partial adjustments in the definition of activities, a change in the frequency of meetings (from two to one a year), etc.

A new document at the UHK is the *Gender Equality Plan of the University of Hradec Králové for the period 2023–2025*, which was created to transform the institutional environment with a focus on equal opportunities. Through the Gender Equality Plan (GEP), the UHK is committed to creating an environment that is in line with the principles of openness, transparency and fairness. The changes implemented can thus lead to the creation of a better working and learning environment. The development of the institutional environment is also part of the UHK's commitment to the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, as well as part of the UHK Strategic Plan 2021. The GEP covers five areas: work-life balance and organisational structure; gender balance in leadership and decision-making; gender equality in recruitment and promotion; integration of the gender dimension in research and education content; and measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment. A regular assessment of the implementation of the GEP for the previous calendar year will be carried out against the monitoring indicators as part of the collection of statistical data for the annual report. The resulting report will be presented to the Academic Senate.

The Rector's Decree No.08/2023 Organisation of the Comprehensive Evaluation of Study Programmes has adopted, in accordance with the internal regulation, the organisational rules for the comprehensive evaluation of study programmes and has implemented the whole process (see subsection 3.1.4).

Some new managing acts related to quality assurance have been issued in the area of creative activities. These include Rector's Decree No. 6/2023 *Definition of Postdoctoral Positions at the UHK*, which enshrined postdoctoral positions in the UHK's rules, the purpose of which is, among other things, to strengthen university research teams, develop new research topics, strengthen the scientific performance of the UHK, contribute to the internationalisation of scientific activities, and thus strengthen the UHK's excellence in science and research. Further Rector's decrees (No. 12/2023 and No. 20/2023) then announced competitions for postdoctoral positions for the years 2024–2026.

The Vice-Chancellor's Instruction No. 1/2023 *Rules for the Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest in Procedures to Attain Associate and Full Professorship* sets out the principles for the avoidance of conflicts of interest for the bodies and persons involved in the procedures to attain associate and full professorship.

Vice-Rector's Instruction No. 2/2023 *Determination of Prestigious Publishing Houses at the UHK* is related to ensuring the quality of the outputs of creative activities, as it determines which publishing houses the UHK perceives as prestigious and therefore takes into account in the internal distribution of funds (e.g. for the purpose of distributing the so-called quality bonus or funds earmarked for the long-term conceptual development of a research organisation) and in the filling of scientific research positions at the UHK.

The Vice-Rector's Instruction No. 6/2023 *Supervisor's Standards of the UHK* aims at the quality of doctoral studies and establishes the rights and obligations of supervisors of doctoral students. Among other things, the managing act sets out the prerequisites for the performance of the position of supervisor, supervisor competences, supervisor training, supervisor evaluation, principles of supervision, measures for conflicts of interest, etc.

Vice-Rector's Instruction No. 9/2023 *Open Access Publishing* is intended to help ensure the quality of the results of creative activity. It has been issued, inter alia, to ensure compliance with ethical and scientific standards in the selection of publication media. This guideline encourages researchers and academics to select reputable open access journals and publishers that meet the standards of quality and integrity of scholarly publications. The aim is also to disseminate the results of research and development more widely, which may contribute to a higher number of citations received by such publications. The citation rate is reflected in the evaluation criteria, e.g. for procedures to attain associate and full professorship or in accreditation materials. The UHK does not support publishing in predatory journals or publishing houses that do not sufficiently comply with ethical and scientific standards.

The Vice-Rector's Instruction No. 4/2023 *Support for the Mobility of Staff and Doctoral Students at the UHK* summarises the support for the mobility of all UHK staff and doctoral students. It aims to contribute to the implementation of mobility at all levels of the university and to broaden the acquisition of foreign experience, thus contributing not only to the development of the internationalisation of the UHK, but also to the personal and qualification development of all groups of employees.

## **2.2 Strategic materials**

Strategic, conceptual and other documents are also part of the quality assurance and internal evaluation system of the UHK. In 2023, the University adopted and published a new document called the *Strategy of Research Organisation*, the preparation of which began in 2021. It is a document that follows the Strategic Plan of the University of Hradec Králové from 2021, which was adopted by the university in 2021 and is a key strategic document that outlines the long-term strategy of the university for ten years. The Strategy of Research Organisation elaborates on the key issues related to the activities of the UHK as a research organisation, which are outlined in the Strategic Plan, and sets more specific goals to be achieved in the medium term, i.e. by the end of 2025. During the preparation, the Strategy of Research Organization was also adapted based on the recommendations of the IEP-EUA evaluation team. It was discussed by the Rector's Board, the Internal Evaluation Board and the Research Board before publication.

The Research Organisation Strategy includes chapters setting out objectives and actions in the areas of research management and funding, research evaluation strategies and methods,

human resources management, development of early career researchers, internationalisation of science and research and development of technology transfer.

In 2023, preparations were also underway for the *Communication Strategy of the University of Hradec Králové 2023+*, which was discussed by the Rector's Board in December and whose release is targeted for the beginning of 2024. Based on the university's mission and vision, this strategy defines the target groups for internal and external communication of the University of Hradec Králové and the methods of communication. The document will be updated at regular intervals, typically once a year, through an implementation plan and its implementation will be continuously evaluated.

### **2.3 Activities of the UHK Internal Evaluation Board**

The UHK Internal Evaluation Board (IEB) is the body responsible for guaranteeing the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation. One change in the composition of the UHK IEB was observed during the year, with the resignation of a student representative in October. For the remainder of the year, until the relatively time-consuming process of appointing a new member was completed, the Board had eleven of its member seats filled.

In 2023, a total of eight meetings of the UHK IEB were held (18 January, 15 March, 19 April, 17 May, 21 June, 20 September, 18 October and 15 November).

In addition to the already standard content, such as the approval of accreditation applications, the discussion of substantive plans for accreditation and information on changes in the study programmes, this year the UHK IEB dealt with a comprehensive evaluation of study programmes (see more in subsection 3.1.4). A report on the internal evaluation was prepared and discussed by the UHK IEB. Furthermore, the UHK IEB considered the results of feedback on educational activities from students, PhD students and those who have terminated their studies without graduating. The UHK IEB also discussed the Strategy of Research Organisation and the Progress Report, which the UHK submitted to the IEP-EUA to inform them of the implementation of the evaluation team's recommendations.

In 2023, the UHK participated in a project under the Centralized Development Programme called IEB-PDO: Internal Evaluation Boards - Practice, Development and Organisation. Analysis of current practices and further development of the work of Internal Evaluation Boards. The objective of the project, which was conducted in collaboration with 15 universities, was to analyse the existing activities of internal evaluation boards and to propose recommendations for their further development. Thus, thanks to this project, the activities of the UHK IEB were analysed in detail and feedback on their activities was obtained from the members of the UHK IEB, representatives of the management of the faculties and guarantors of study programmes. All of this, together with the identified good practice at other universities, led to the formulation of methodological recommendations for the development of the functioning of the UHK IEB, which it would be desirable to reflect in the future in changes to the internal regulations and organizational settings of the UHK IEB.

The recommendations are formulated in the areas of composition and membership of the UHK IEB, its competence, organisation of meetings, resources and tools, background, communication and quality culture. They include, for example, a proposal to increase the number of members and the involvement of external members, the involvement of the UHK IEB in the process of approving microcredentials, strengthening the digitisation of document preparation and circulation, ensuring representation for the organisation of the UHK IEB activities, the introduction of regular meetings of study programme guarantors with the UHK IEB leadership and secretary, and so forth.



## **3 Internal quality evaluation**

### **3.1 Educational activities**

#### **3.1.1 Feedback on the teaching of subjects**

From the academic year 2020/2021, a unified university evaluation of the teaching of individual subjects by their students takes place at the UHK each semester. The evaluation is conducted in Czech and English via the STAG information system. The results of the subject evaluations are initially discussed by the faculties, which prepare faculty reports that serve as the foundation for a university report on the results each semester. This report also provides a summary of the main measures taken. The report is then submitted to the Rector's Board, the Internal Evaluation Board and the Academic Senate, after which it is made available to members of the academic community via the website.

For the winter semester of the academic year 2022/2023, feedback on the teaching of subjects in STAG was collected electronically via IS/STAG between 5 December 2022 and 18 December 2022. The evaluation was completed in spring 2023. For the summer semester of the academic year 2022/2023, feedback could be completed between 24 April 2023 and 21 May 2023, the evaluation would then take place after the holidays during the autumn months.

In 2023, a comprehensive evaluation of the method of evaluating educational activities at the UHK over the previous three years was conducted. In addition, the participation of students in the evaluation was analysed in detail, leading to two significant findings. Firstly, there was a clear distinction in participation between the winter and summer semesters, with consistently higher rates observed during the winter semester. The disparity in return rates between the winter and summer terms is likely attributable to the graduates of the study programmes. The second finding is that participation rates differ across faculties. The reasons for the relatively low participation of students were also sought. These included distrust factors (distrust in anonymity, distrust in the meaning of the process and that feedback is dealt with), fear of possible sanctions and negative experiences, organisational settings (length of the questionnaire, deadline for completion, communication methods, motivation to participate). Based on the analysis of these causes, four recommendations were formulated with a view to further developing acquisition of student feedback on teaching:

- 1) In collaboration between lecturers and students, look for further ways to increase students' interest in feedback on subject teaching and to reinforce their confidence in the evaluation process. These activities should aim at consolidating the existence of a cultivated university environment in which both the evaluators and the evaluated recognise the value of the evaluation process in ensuring the quality of teaching.

- 2) Strengthen the involvement of students in discussing the results of evaluations at faculties and their departments, e.g. by creating study programme boards with student participation to discuss the results, submitting the results and measures to faculty academic senates, etc.
- 3) Increase regular communication regarding student evaluation of teaching. Make more use of social media to communicate not only the opportunity to complete evaluations, but also evaluation settings, results, etc.
- 4) Supplement the student subject evaluation system with other formalized ways of getting feedback from students. For example, qualitative feedback collection held within individual degree programmes, particularly those with smaller enrolments, is suggested. Introduce ways for students to provide feedback on examinations.

### **3.1.2 Evaluation of doctoral studies**

In 2023, further evaluation of educational activities by students of doctoral study programmes was carried out, as stipulated by Rector's Decree No. 15/2021 Evaluation of Educational Activities by Students of Doctoral Degree Programmes. The feedback was collected from 24 April to 21 May 2023 through a questionnaire in MS Forms, which was available in two language versions (Czech and English). A total of 187 PhD students were contacted and 87 questionnaires were submitted (81 of which were in Czech and 6 were in English). The response rate at the UHK was 46.5% (in 2021 it was 46.6%), while at the individual faculties the response rate ranged between 44.4% and 50%, so there were no significant differences in the response rate between the faculties. The evaluation encompassed the organisation of doctoral studies and the facilities within the studies, the obligations set within the doctoral studies and the creative activity and publication of its results. The questionnaire was the same as in 2021. Compared to the previous evaluation, the evaluation in 2023 was somewhat more critical.

At the university level, the following five measures are linked to the results of the evaluation: the first is to continue to provide university-wide educational activities for doctoral students, focusing in particular on publishing the results of creative activity (including consideration of the social sciences and humanities), on writing applications for research grants/projects or international scholarships, and to expand the range of educational activities focusing on other topics (e.g. development of pedagogical competences).

The second measure is to intensify the use of platforms for sharing good practice between faculties and study programmes, in particular by introducing regular meetings of supervisors of all doctoral study programmes.

The third measure is to look for ways to increase funding for doctoral scholarships so as to improve the financial conditions of doctoral students so that they can devote more time to fulfilling their study-related requirements and complete their studies on time.

The fourth measure is to introduce training for supervisors according to the discussed and approved framework of the UHK Supervisor's Standards.

The fifth measure is to actively seek financial resources to strengthen the central professional, organisational and administrative facilities for improving the quality of doctoral studies at the UHK.

### **3.1.3 Dropout rate**

In 2023, the University continued to systematically obtain feedback from students who dropped out or failed to meet the conditions set out in the Code of Studies and Examination for continuing their studies. This process has been ongoing throughout the year, with the students concerned being automatically notified via the STAG information system of the opportunity to complete a short questionnaire after leaving their studies.

A total of 275 respondents completed the questionnaire in 2023, 76 fewer than in the previous year. The number of respondents has been on a downward trend, with the lowest participation in the existence of the survey, with the exception of the first year in which the pilot testing occurred and during which the survey was not run for a full year. Among the outputs in STAG, there is no record of the number of students contacted, so the return rate of the survey cannot be calculated.

The largest number of respondents was from the Faculty of Education (98), followed by respondents from the Faculty of Informatics and Management (79), the Philosophical Faculty (52), the Faculty of Science (41) and those enrolled outside the faculty (5) (i.e., those studying at the formerly independent Institute of Social Work, now provided by the Philosophical Faculty). The majority of respondents were enrolled in the full-time form (170), while 105 respondents were enrolled in the combined form. Most of the respondents studied bachelor's degree (211), followed by follow-up master's degree (40), master's degree (17) and doctoral degree (7).

The results indicated that the five factors most frequently cited by respondents in the context of the termination of their studies were: time demands of study and its combination with personal and professional life; family, health or other personal reasons; other reasons; unmet expectations from the chosen study programme and excessive content demands of the study. The order and frequency of mentioning the different influences varied according to the type of study form, according to the type of study and at each faculty. The findings build on the results of last year's survey, where the order of the most frequently cited influences was similar, and the reported frequency was comparable, with the exception of the excessive content demands of the study, which 45% of respondents agreed with (strongly or rather) in 2022 and 36% in 2023.

Thus, the UHK should focus its university-wide efforts towards enhancing the success rate of studies on what has already been identified in previous years. These include the organisation of studies (especially in the combined form), their greater flexibility and the search for

additional opportunities to facilitate the combination of studies with students' personal and professional lives and other activities. Another measure is to continue to develop the activities and services of the counselling centre and to raise students' awareness of its offer, so that students have adequate support in overcoming any barriers to completing their studies resulting from their health, family or personal situation.

Finally, it is a matter of finding ways to make applicants more familiar with the content of study programmes and careers, as well as expanding the offer of guidance for selecting an appropriate study programme. In this context, it can be mentioned that in January 2023, a special quiz on study opportunities at the UHK was newly launched on the UHK [mojeuhk.cz](http://mojeuhk.cz) website, which helps applicants to generate the ideal study programme offered by the university for them in a short time on the basis of simple questions. The launch of the quiz was preceded by a questionnaire survey and focus groups with students.

#### **3.1.4 Comprehensive evaluation of study programmes**

The process of comprehensive evaluation of study programmes is determined by the internal regulation Rules of the System of Quality Assurance and Internal Quality Evaluation of the University of Hradec Králové, which is followed by a governing act (Rector's Decree No.08/2023 Organisation of the Comprehensive Evaluation of Study Programmes) specifying the organisational details of these processes. The comprehensive evaluation is initiated by the UHK IEB at least once during the period of validity of the accreditation. The resolution initiating the comprehensive evaluation of a study programme also establishes a working group for the evaluation of the study programme. The working group is composed of at least three members and is typically headed by a rapporteur from among the members of the UHK IEB, in addition to two external evaluators working at other universities or in practice. One working group may be established for more than one study programme, e.g. for a bachelor's degree programme and a related master's degree programme, for a study programme taught in Czech and a foreign language, etc. The basis for the evaluation is a self-evaluation report on the study programme submitted by the guarantor of the relevant study programme, which is discussed at a joint meeting of the working group, the guarantor of the study programme and other faculty representatives. The working group prepares a draft report on the evaluation of the study programme, whose annex are the minutes of the joint meeting of the working group and the representatives of the faculty. The faculty may provide comments on the draft. The draft study programme evaluation report (including any comments from the Dean) is included for approval at the next possible meeting of the UHK IEB, after which a summary of the results is published on the UHK IEB website. Study programmes accredited for ten years are evaluated approximately halfway through their implementation; study programmes accredited for five years are evaluated in this way before an application for extension of accreditation is submitted.

In the spring of 2023, the UHK IEB initiated the comprehensive evaluation of a total of 13 study programmes and established five working groups for them; in the autumn of 2023, it started the comprehensive evaluation of another 11 study programmes, seven working

groups were established. Due to the time-consuming nature of the evaluation processes and the dates of the meetings of the UHK IEB, the first results of the evaluation were not approved by the board until the beginning of 2024.

### **3.1.5 Evaluation of lifelong learning programmes**

According to the internal regulations, the evaluation of lifelong learning programmes typically comprises feedback from participants and graduates, as well as monitoring and evaluation of data collected mainly in the preparation of the annual report on the activities of the UHK and the opinion of the faculty implementing the lifelong learning programme. From 2023 onwards, the University's system for collecting feedback from participants in lifelong learning programmes was recommended for use and a common questionnaire was shared, which was prepared in collaboration with the faculties and discussed by the Internal Evaluation Board. Although a university-wide feedback collection method and questionnaire are available, their use remains voluntary and comprehensive results are not available, thus cannot be centrally collected and evaluated. This is primarily due to the fact that these regulations for obtaining feedback from participants in lifelong learning programmes lack the backing of an organisational managing act.

### **3.1.6 Graduate feedback**

Following the questionnaire survey of graduates of the UHK that took place in 2022 and the focus group that took place at the end of 2022, a comprehensive analysis of the results of the feedback from graduates was carried out in the first months of 2023 and recommendations were also formulated for the needs of the UHK in various areas related to the feedback provided.

The recommendations included, for example, improvements to internships and placements (offering more opportunities for internships and placements, providing students with credits for participation), greater integration of theory and practice, monitoring the quality of teaching and courses, strengthening support for students during unusual conditions (such as the covid-19 pandemic), ensuring consistent assessment of final theses, introducing effective procedures for dealing with student complaints and developing soft skills. Some of the recommendations addressed the inclusion, ethical infrastructure and wellbeing, graduates' contact with the UHK, improving communication, coordination of activities in preparing graduates for the labour market, the regular monitoring and evaluation of the success of students' preparation for the labour market, etc.

The UHK should build on this survey by setting up a systematic university-wide approach to obtaining feedback from graduates.

## **3.2 Creative activities**

At the UHK, the outputs of creative activities, projects, the success of project submissions are evaluated as well as university programmes to support science and research, which represent

one of the tools for the development of creative activities at the UHK. In 2023, only one of these programmes, the Postdoc programme, was implemented, in the framework of which the activities of each postdoctoral fellow were continuously evaluated by an evaluation committee. The overall evaluation of the programme was not conducted, as its continuous implementation demonstrated a clear benefit for the university, and therefore another competition was launched in 2023 to fill postdoctoral positions for the years 2024 to 2026.

As part of the evaluation of the output of creative activity, the number of publications on Web of Science, in the SCOPUS database, the publication outputs of the UHK achieved in international cooperation, the number of scientific projects and the volume of their funding, as well as indicators of knowledge transfer are monitored. At the university level, the creative activity of the faculties in 2023 was evaluated, among other things, within the framework of the internal allocation of funds intended for the long-term conceptual development of the research organisation, which considers the achieved outputs of the faculties. Similarly, the so-called quality premium is part of the budgeting of the UHK and also includes criteria from the field of creative activity.

Further evaluation then takes place at the individual faculties within the framework of the criteria selected by them.

### **3.2.1 Benchmarking**

Benchmarking of project and publication activities according to the impact factor is carried out at the UHK from 2021 regularly at the end of each year, namely in November. The objective of this benchmarking is to find out how the UHK stands in project and publication activities according to the impact factor in comparison with other universities in the Czech Republic. During the benchmarking in 2023 it was found that the position of the UHK among other universities in the Czech Republic in the number of projects implemented is declining. In 2023, the UHK ranked 18th out of 22 universities in the Czech Republic (in 2022 the UHK ranked 17th, in 2021 16th). In the comparison of publications according to the impact factor, the UHK ranked 4th in comparison with 13 other universities in the Czech Republic. The UHK has held its position in comparison with these universities since 2018 in 5th place, however in 2023 it managed to take 4th place in this comparison.

### **3.2.2 Analysis of the project submission process at the UHK**

In order to assess the process of submitting research project applications and to set rules that could streamline and simplify the process, an audit in this area was carried out in November 2023. The audit encompassed an examination of the project submission process at the UHK, encompassing both the types of projects and the potential providers, the competencies of the involved professional departments, the definition of responsibilities, the analysis of existing and forthcoming internal regulations and managing acts aimed at setting rules in this area, and the process of approving and signing relevant documents. The findings of the audit will be integrated into the draft internal norm, which is scheduled for issue in the first quarter of 2024.

### **3.2.3 International Advisory Board**

The International Advisory Board (IAB), which is an advisory body comprising international experts, has been working since January 2023 with a modified composition – three members continue from the previous term, two members have been newly appointed. On 27 February 2023, an initial online meeting of the IAB with the university management was held to introduce the new members and introduce the UHK to the new members, as well as to present the vision for the future functioning of this advisory body.

On 30 October 2023, a further online meeting of the IAB was held, focusing on the following topics: supervisor standards and follow-up obligations for PhD students, open science – Open Access funding system, current challenges in the strategic management of universities (especially artificial intelligence) and ways of making study programmes at the UHK more attractive.

The IAB's recommendations included, for example, mandatory attendance at training sessions for new supervisors and regular updates for experienced supervisors to ensure their familiarity with current procedures and regulations, the establishment of a co-supervisor position or the establishment of a doctoral school to facilitate coordination and sharing of best practices between different doctoral programmes. In the field of open science, recommendations were made, among others, to encourage faculty to promote Open Access publishing based on the quality of publications. In the area of curricula, recommendations included, for example, the need to learn about current and future labour market requirements and to actively engage with industry and professionals. The flexibility of curricula, the inclusion of innovative teaching methods, technologies and interactive elements and the emphasis on the development of soft skills are also important.

## **3.3 Related activities**

### **3.3.1 Evaluation of employees**

In 2023, a regular annual evaluation of academic staff was conducted, as well as an evaluation of non-academic staff, which encompasses all other employees of the university, i.e. technical and administrative employees, labourers, auxiliary or servicing staff or researchers who are not involved in teaching activities.

### **3.3.2 Digitisation**

In the context of the university's priorities which include streamlining processes, their electronisation and digitisation, and reducing the administrative burden, an internal inquiry of the university's digitisation needs was launched in May 2023. The primary objective was to define and summarize the digitisation requirements and then to set priorities for their implementation. In June, the collection of requirements from faculties and university-wide departments was conducted, followed by the systematisation and refinement of the requirements based on the survey. This defined a fundamental matrix of digitisation domains

(administration, security, economics, human resources, studies, science, research and creative activities and other processes). The output was then summarised and presented to the management of the UHK (the Rector's Board), which decided on the basis of the input to prioritise the implementation of the sub-tasks in the area of digitisation.

In the context of digitisation, for instance, students have already been able to submit selected types of applications (according to the legislation in force) electronically to the relevant study departments within the faculties. Furthermore, an analysis of the circulation of contracts at the UHK has been conducted with the objective of establishing a process for the circulation of these documents as part of the computerisation of their approval, signing and subsequent storage in the file service.

### **3.3.3 Internationalisation of the university environment**

The UHK paid attention to the evaluation of the internationalisation of its environment in the context of the satisfaction of foreign employees. The data collection among foreign employees was conducted in December 2022 and January 2023, after which the results of the survey were analysed and measures were taken to further develop the facilities for foreign staff.

The questionnaire was distributed to 90 employees and 30% of them provided feedback. The results of the questionnaire survey indicated that the respondents were satisfied with the facilities and environment of the workplace, the HR agenda, communication with colleagues, work-life balance, workload, salary and employee benefits. The mentor/supervisor who helped with settling in and adapting to the UHK environment proved to be beneficial.

The majority of respondents rated communication with the authorities in obtaining a residence permit as the most problematic aspect. According to the feedback from the respondents, it is clear that the assistance provided by the UHK staff in this process significantly mitigates the negative impression of the environment, the actions of officials and language barriers. When foreign staff were accommodated in the dormitories, they reported experiencing language barrier/misunderstanding when communicating with the dormitory staff. They would also appreciate improved accommodation facilities for staff in the dormitories.

Some of the more critically rated phenomena experienced by foreign employees when starting employment or staying in the country are beyond the university's direct control, however, by knowing the experiences of its foreign employees, the university will be better prepared to inform and assist newly arrived employees.

The measures taken as a result of this evaluation relate in particular to strengthening the support of foreign workers by UHK staff. Emphasis will continue to be placed on strengthening the language competences of the UHK staff who interact with foreign workers (e.g. reception staff, international office). In order to reduce the language barrier, the UHK



organises Czech language courses for foreign workers, with two study groups commencing in September 2023.

In December 2023, a questionnaire survey was conducted among foreign students focusing on their wellbeing and barriers to studying. The results will be evaluated in 2024, at which point actions will also be developed in response.

## **4 Accreditations granted by NAB**

In relation to the evaluation of the quality of educational activities, the opinions of the evaluators of the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAB) in the assessment of applications for accreditation of study programmes and applications for accreditation of procedures to attain associate and full professorship and the decisions of the Board of the National Accreditation Bureau in the matter of granting accreditation can be considered as key external feedback.

As the process of reviewing accreditation applications takes several months and can occur across different calendar years, the 2023 amendment includes study programmes and procedures for which the UHK received a decision on the outcome of the accreditation procedure in 2023.

In 2023, the UHK received accreditation decisions from the NAB for four study programmes, of which accreditation was granted once for five years and three times for ten years. Of these newly accredited study programmes, three are taught in the Czech language and one in English. In the case of six study programmes, the accreditation was prolonged, in five cases for five years and in one case for ten years. Five study programmes were prolonged at the request of the UHK solely to enable students to complete their studies. In respect of eight study programmes that have been granted or prolonged accreditation in 2023, the accreditation authority requires a monitoring report during their implementation.

In 2023, the UHK received decisions on the granting of accreditation for the procedures to attain full professorship for two fields of study (for one field the accreditation was granted for a period of ten years, for the other for five years), in one instance, a monitoring report was requested.

## **5 Information on further evaluation of the UHK**

### **5.1 International evaluation of the IEP-EUA**

In the years 2021-2022, the UHK underwent an external evaluation process within the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP), which is associated to the European University Association (EUA). The UHK opted for an evaluation focusing mainly on research and the management of research results, however, the evaluation was comprehensive and encompassed the entirety of university activities, including management and decision-making processes, teaching and learning, quality assurance, the fulfilment of the third mission, and internationalisation. The IEP evaluation does not apply external criteria, but takes as its starting point the mission and objectives of the institution being evaluated. It identifies good practice and offers recommendations for improvement.

The final evaluation report was received by the UHK in August 2022 and, in accordance with the IEP-EUA rules, the UHK submitted a progress report to the evaluators after approximately one year (in September 2023) summarising the implementation of the recommendations contained in the evaluation report.

The IEP evaluation team responded to the progress report in November 2023 with a commentary commending the clear and comprehensive progress report and in particular the careful consideration and actions that the UHK had taken to further improve its structure and operations and wishing the university success in this ongoing process.

The UHK received a total of 26 recommendations, some of which are already being implemented, some of which are planned to be implemented in the future, and in the case of some, the implementation of which is of a longer-term nature, the university has postponed the adoption of some major decisions due to the approaching end of the term of office of the current university management. Discussion on the implementation of some of the recommendations will therefore continue in the future.

Among the recommendations that have already been or are being implemented, the strengthening of cooperation between the university and faculty levels of management and the strengthening of cooperation between management and administrative staff can be mentioned. In most of the agendas, meetings between members of the university management and faculties are held in the presence of relevant representatives of the organisational and administrative apparatus.

A twice-yearly meeting between the university management and all senior staff (i.e. heads of departments) has been introduced within the Rector's Office. This contributes to the deepening of mutual awareness and also to the strengthening of synergies within the central management level.

The Strategy of Research Organisation (see subchapter 2.2) has been finalised and published and has been modified on the basis of the recommendations of the evaluation team - a

chapter on the development of technology transfer has been added to the strategy, while the chapter on sustainability has been removed from the Strategy of Research Organisation and a separate sustainability strategy will be prepared.

The University has selected six foreign universities for strategic partnerships. The selection of strategic partners was based on the disciplinary proximity and interconnection in both educational and research activities. At the same time, care was taken to ensure that such disciplinary links in research and education included all four faculties.

The UHK has once again joined the preparation of the Erasmus+ application for the European University Alliance and submitted a joint project in January 2023. Cooperation within the Alliance is continuously developed and deepened, with regular consortium meetings involving representatives of the UHK. Furthermore, the UHK has adopted an internal programme to support further cooperation with foreign partners within the European University Alliance in 2023.

## **5.2 Involvement of the UHK in surveys**

In 2023, the UHK continued its involvement in the EUROGRADUATE 2022 survey, which constituted the second phase of the European pilot survey of university graduates. Seventeen countries are participating in the survey, including the Czech Republic, where the survey is being conducted by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education. The aim of the survey was to determine the employability of graduates and the evaluation of the education they received and to compare data from the countries participating in the survey. Questionnaires were distributed to graduates from the academic years 2016/2017 to 2020/2021 of Bachelor, Master and Doctoral programmes. Data collection was completed on 5 March 2023. The UHK does not have results for its graduates.

## **5.3 HR Award**

In 2021, the UHK successfully completed its efforts to obtain the HR Excellence in Research (HR Award), which is awarded by the European Commission in the field of human resources. With this award, the UHK has confirmed its ongoing commitment to the continuous strengthening and improvement of the conditions pertaining to human resources management in accordance with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. As of 30 November 2023, the two-year implementation phase of the Action Plan for the period December 2021 to November 2023 has concluded for the UHK. Due to personnel changes associated with the termination of the HR Manager at the UHK, the opportunity was taken to extend the deadline for the submission of the so-called Internal Review that assesses progress over the past two years and describes the current status. The initial deadline for submission has been extended by two months to 30 January 2024.

## **5.4 UHK in international comparison**

International comparisons of the UHK with other higher education institutions are offered by various rankings, which are often an important marketing tool and play a role, for example, in attracting foreign students or partner institutions abroad. The UHK pays considerable attention to its position in relevant rankings. In its adopted strategy, the university sets as one of its objectives the pursuit of the best possible ranking in international university rankings. In accordance with its internal regulations, the UHK also incorporates international university quality rankings into its quality evaluation.

The UHK continues to be represented in one of the most prestigious rankings, which is the QS World University Rankings. UHK's position for 2024 (published in 2023) is a shared 1001st-1200th place. This is a drop from the previous year; the university was previously ranked a shared 801st-1000th. In comparison to previous years, the assessors have introduced three new criteria: employment outcomes, international research network and sustainability.

The QS EECA University Rankings have now been replaced by the QS Europe rankings, in which the UHK is ranked 398th for 2024 (published in 2023), with 688 universities assessed. Of the 17 Czech universities represented, the UHK is the tenth highest ranked.

In the THE World University Rankings 2024 (published in 2023), the UHK was ranked in the shared position 1201st-1500th, maintaining the same position despite the increased number of participating universities. THE also prepares several rankings by subject focus, in which the UHK is placed in THE by subject for 2024: Computer Science, THE by subject: Life Science, THE by subject: Physical Science.

Additionally, the UHK is represented in the ranking that assesses the sustainable approach of universities to the environment (UI GreenMetric). In the 2023 ranking, the UHK is ranked 486th out of a total of 1,183 institutions. Compared to last year, this is an improvement; in the previous year, the UHK was ranked 582nd and the number of institutions represented was lower (1,050).

## **6 Conclusion**

The objective of this amendment to the internal evaluation report is to present the main changes achieved in 2023 in quality and management measures at the UHK. One of the key developments in this period in this area was a change in the set of responsibilities of members of the UHK management and an organisational change in the professional background for activities in the quality assurance and internal evaluation system. The Vice-Rector for Studies and Quality has assumed responsibility for the quality assurance agenda, and the one-person Quality Office, which was established following the separation of the Quality and Strategy Office that had existed since 2019, is now under her authority.

In 2023, some new managing acts or strategic and other documents related to quality assurance activities were issued. As in previous years, feedback was an important part of the evaluation process this year, especially from students in all types of study programmes and participants in educational activities (evaluation of subject teaching, evaluation of doctoral studies, questionnaire to map the causes of dropout, participants in lifelong learning programmes), and partly also from staff members.

A new process was implemented in 2023 within the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation of educational activities: the comprehensive evaluation of study programmes, for which the time is right in the current year, as the first programmes accredited by the NAU have been running for several academic years and can thus already be subject to comprehensive evaluation.

The university also completed the IEP-EUA international evaluation process during the year under review, presenting to the evaluators how it has implemented the recommendations formulated by them and how it plans to continue to implement them. Furthermore, it evaluated the activities of the UHK IEB so far and prepared methodological recommendations for its further development, took further steps to maintain the prestigious HR Award, organised two meetings of its international advisory body IAB and continued other activities related to quality assurance and internal quality assessment.