

# **Tomas Bata University**

## *EVALUATION REPORT*

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# 1. Introduction

This report results from the evaluation of Tomas Bata University (TBU), located in the city of Zlin, in south-eastern Moravia, Czech Republic. The assessment took place in 2020, following a request from the Rector of TBU, Professor Ing. Vladimír Sedlařík, and included one visit to its campus in Zlin between 12-14 February, and, due to the pandemic situation, a series of virtual meetings held between 9-17 October following the IEP usual layout.

## 1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme

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The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The distinctive features of IEP are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management.
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

All aspects of the evaluation are guided by four key questions, which are based on a "fitness for (and of) purpose" approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

## *1.2 Tomas Bata University's profile*

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Zlín is a city located in the south-east of Moravia, Czech Republic, on the banks of the river Dřevnice. Although it is a city whose roots go back to the 14th century, its development is mainly due to the shoe factory created in 1894 by the industrialist Tomáš Baťa, and its enormous growth during the First World War period and the years that followed. When the footwear factory was set up, Zlín's population was around 3 000, rising to 37 400 in 1939 (with 22 000 employees working for Baťa's company).

During these years and until World War II, the city of Zlín and the region experienced remarkable growth, benefiting from the strong economic development and the related establishment of administrative institutions and services (hospital, schools, cultural and physical education institutions). Under the communist regime during the post-war era, Zlín reinforced its position as an administrative, economic, educational, and cultural centre of Eastern Moravia. In 1960, the Slovak Technological University established a branch in the city, dedicated to chemical technology and engineering, giving birth in 1969 to the Faculty of Technology, operating as an independent faculty of the Brno University of Technology.

New public facilities were built during the following two decades. With the 1989 revolution and from the 1990s onwards, the city experienced a time of expansion that was reflected in the area of higher education. On 1 January 2001, the Tomas Bata University (TBU) was born, incorporating the Faculty of Management and Economics founded in 1996 and the older Faculty of Technology. At that time, the city of Zlín had become the seat of the Zlín Region.

The demand for higher education graduates triggered by the economic growth of the region led the Tomas Bata University to establish in 2002 the Faculty of Multimedia Communications; in 2006 the Faculty of Applied Informatics; in 2007 the Faculty of Humanities; and finally, in 2009, the Faculty of Logistics and Crisis Management (located in the Uherské Hradiště city, approximately 23 km southwest of Zlín). TBU is currently a comprehensive higher education institution, encompassing such diverse areas as technical sciences, economic sciences, social sciences, art and cultural sciences, and health care, medical and pharmaceutical sciences. TBU is the only public university in the Zlín Region now, which has approximately 550 000 inhabitants.

Other relevant components of the organisational structure of TBU are its six Research Centres. Four of them belong to faculties: the Centre for Polymer Materials (Faculty of Technology), the Centre for Applied Economic Research (Faculty of Management and Economics), the Centre for Security and Information Technologies (Faculty of Applied Informatics), and the Research Centre of the Faculty of Humanities. The remaining two are not included in faculties: the Centre of Polymer Systems and the Footwear Research Centre.

According to the "Annual Activity Report 2019,"<sup>1</sup> TBU offered in that academic year 220 full-time and part-time degree programmes (70 bachelor's degree programmes, 76 master's and follow-up master's degree programmes, and 74 doctoral degree programmes). Of these, the Faculty of Technology administered 53 programmes; the Faculty of Management and Economics, 57; the Faculty of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.utb.cz/en/university/official-board/miscellaneous/annual-reports/>

Multimedia Communications, 20; the Faculty of Applied Informatics, 35; the Faculty of Humanities, 30; and the Faculty of Logistics and Crisis Management, 9. In addition to faculties, 16 doctoral programmes were offered by central TBU's structures (such as the University Institute and the Centre of Polymer Systems).

TBU's educational offer covers a broad spectrum of topics, addressing eight out of the nine broad fields of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-F 2013), the only exception being "agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary." About one-third of those 220 programmes were offered in the field of "engineering, manufacturing and construction" (12 bachelor's, 25 master's, and 36 doctoral degree programmes); 22% in the field of "business, administration and law" (15 bachelor's, 16 master's, and 18 doctoral degree programmes); and 16% in the field of "information and communication technologies" (13 bachelor's, 12 master's, and 10 doctoral degree programmes). The least represented educational fields are "services" with four bachelor's and three master's, and "natural sciences, mathematics and statistics" with two master's degree programmes.

In 2019, 61 degree programmes were accredited in a foreign language (English), most at PhD level (35 programmes), but also 17 master's and 9 bachelor's programmes. In addition, four double-degree programmes were carried out in cooperation with foreign higher education institutions (one bachelor's, one master's, and two doctoral degree programmes).

In 2019, around 9 000 students were enrolled in accredited study programmes at the six faculties of TBU. About 67,5% were bachelor's students, 28% follow-up master's and master's students, and 4,5% PhD students. Part-time students represent around 36% of the total. The Faculty of Management and Economics and the Faculty of Humanities have the highest number of students enrolled, between 1 900 and 2 000. The Faculty of Logistics and Crisis Management has the lowest quantity of students enrolled, around 1 000.

For demographic reasons, the number of national students is declining since 2011–2012 (more than 13 000 students were enrolled in that academic year). On the contrary, the number of international students (mobility and degree) has increased during the last six years. In 2018/19, that number was close to 1 000. According to the "Annual Activity Report 2019," 21% of the 2 337 students that completed their studies were foreigners. It is noteworthy that 40% of the students who completed their PhD were from abroad.

By the end of 2019, the number of employees (head count) working for TBU was 1 015. This figure comprises 514 teaching staff (46 professors, 108 associate professors, 290 senior lecturers, and 23 assistant lecturers), 41% being women. It also includes 30 postdoctoral researchers, as well as 107 researchers and R&D staff. The remaining 367 non-academic workers complete the entire TBU workforce (of the latter, 71% were women).

Except for the Faculty of Logistics and Crisis Management, most of the university facilities are either located in the city centre (e.g., Rectorate, Faculty of Multimedia Communications, Faculty of Technology, University Centre and Library, halls of residence, refectory) or not too far away (e.g., Faculty of Applied Informatics, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Management and Economics). During the first visit, the evaluation team had the opportunity to visit some university buildings and facilities. In general, they are relatively new and well-equipped, providing a learning environment appreciated

by students. The more special case is the library, a very modern building with appealing architecture, equipped with state-of-the-art technology and offering excellent working conditions.

Tomas Bata University, a young mid-sized public university in the Czech Republic, aims to consolidate its leading position in the Zlín region and align its education offer with society's evolving needs. In light of the recently established priorities of higher education in the Czech Republic, another fundamental axis of TBU's new leadership strategy is the promotion of selected areas of R&D and creative activities, aspiring to enhance the university's reputation and recognition, both nationally and internationally. Several initiatives were taken to stimulate a qualitative and quantitative increase in research. The increase in high-quality scientific output already shows the first effects of that strategy.

### *1.3 The evaluation process*

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The institutional evaluation process of Tomas Bata University started in April 2019 with the registration for the IEP programme. With this decision, the rector, Professor Ing. Vladimír Sedlařík, who took office at the end of 2018, was looking for an improvement-oriented assessment. The rector expected that this exercise would support the university in meeting its objectives and complying with international requirements in higher education. It should be noted that during the self-assessment exercise, the period covered by the 2016-2020 strategic plan was coming to an end and that the university's leadership was actively developing a new strategic framework.

To proceed with the IEP exercise, TBU established a self-evaluating team responsible for producing the self-evaluation report (SER). It consisted of the Vice-Rectors, the Vice-Deans for Quality Management and Science and Research, the Director of the Technology Transfer Centre responsible for preparing strategic TBU materials, and the Chairperson of the Student Chamber as the student member of the Internal Evaluation Board of the university. According to the SER (p. 1), "the self-evaluation report aims to map the state of implementation of strategic TBU activities in recent years and to identify opportunities for their further development, especially with regard to the long-term mission and goals of the university by 2025, or 2030."

Tomas Bata University provided the self-evaluation report to the IEP evaluation team (hereafter referred to as team) in mid-January 2020. The SER is an informative document, describing in detail the organisational structure, main processes, and activities of the university. The SER was discussed with people other than the self-evaluation team, namely academic and non-academic staff involved in the university's management. However, through the meetings, the team observed that the SER was not widely disseminated and analysed by all levels and actors of the institution, including students.

The SER provides sufficient information to acquire a good understanding of the university's functioning and its ambitions. A positive aspect is that several topics requiring further development, or issues needing improvement or attention, are pointed out at the end of all the sections. However, the report is moderately analytical and self-reflexive. The SER concludes with a SWOT analysis that aims to be a basis for reflection in the specification of the new strategic planning period (2021-2025). The team thinks that SWOT analysis is a very relevant and informative part of SER, although it does not always seem entirely consistent with the content of the report.

The first visit of the team to the TBU took place between 12-14 February 2020. Due to the pandemic situation, the second visit, initially scheduled for May 2020 and later for September, had to be cancelled. Finally, it was agreed to replace the second visit with a series of virtual meetings held between 9-17 October, with the participation of academic and non-academic staff and managers from various university structures, as well as students. After the first visit, the team was provided with additional information on the faculties' management structure, electronic questionnaires for evaluating the quality of teaching and programmes, course descriptions, and indicators on part-time and full-time students and academic staff.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Georg Schulz, Rector of the University of Music and Performing Arts, Graz, Austria, team Chair.
- Lučka Lorber, former Vice-Rector for Quality Development of the University of Maribor, expert of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, member of the International Advisory Board of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (IAB HAC), Slovenia.
- Anja Oskamp, former Rector magnificus of the Open University of the Netherlands, The Netherlands.
- Albert Gili Moreno, master's student at the Open University of Catalonia, Student Expert of the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya), and of the European Students' Union QA Pool, Spain.
- José Sarsfield Cabral, member of the Board of the Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES), former Pro-Rector of the University of Porto, Portugal, team coordinator.

The team is grateful to the rector of the university, Professor Vladimír Sedlařík, for the kind and friendly way it was received and treated. The productive manner and the atmosphere of openness in which the meetings took place also deserves to be praised. Special thanks to the Vice-Rector Jan Kalenda and his staff for the smooth, kind and perfect way they organised the first visit and all the meetings, and for the practical assistance provided to the team whenever requested. In particular, the effort made to run the virtual meetings was outstanding, making it possible to overcome almost all the obstacles created by an unusual and challenging situation.

## 2. Governance and institutional decision-making

### 2.1 Mission, Vision and Strategy

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"Erudire et Creare/Educate and Create" is the emblematic statement used by TBU to express its mission. Over time, this mission was deployed in visions that have been adopted in long-term development plans. For instance, the 2016–2020 strategic plan defined the vision of TBU as the aim to become "an educational and science-research institution closely linked to the business and the development of activities characteristic of an Entrepreneurial University." The objectives of the strategic plan 2016-2020<sup>2</sup> closely followed what was stated in the vision and were inspired by and aligned with the "Education Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic until 2020" (SER, p.7).

Although the strategic plan for 2021-2025 is not yet concluded, the new university leadership reshaped the former vision, stating that in the next period 2021-2025, TBU should seek to "implement internationally recognised study and research programs with a significant link to the needs of society." Again, this vision is in line with the recent "Innovation Strategy of the Czech Republic for 2019–2030" set up by the government. Following the evolution of the vision, the new strategic objectives will be adjusted accordingly.

Concerning the implementation of the strategic plans, TBU follows an appropriate procedure. The procedure starts with the analysis and discussion of relevant documents, such as annual activity and management reports by the central governance and management bodies, leading to the definition of a Strategy Implementation Plan for each year, specifying priorities, quantifying targets, and defining performance indicators. The team noted that the Strategy Implementation Plan also stipulates the activities that are required to implement the strategy. For example, the 2020 plan sets out which degree programmes should be proposed for accreditation and which accredited programmes should be put into operation. Concerning R&D and creative activities, the plan defines what actions should be carried out to increase the number of indexed publications and citations. The funding sources for the investment projects are also included in the document.

Each year, an Activity Report is produced, providing detailed information on the fulfilment of the priority tasks set out in the Strategy Implementation Plan of the previous year. The Annual Reports, which are publicly available on the university's website, include many additional elements that describe in reasonable detail other relevant aspects of TBU's activities. They are excellent working documents for the management of the university and an essential contribution to the accountability of TBU that deserves to be praised.

The team was told that the strategic plan for the period 2021-2025 will be discussed and approved very soon. Citing Appendix 3 of the Strategic Implementation Plan for 2020 about the research sphere, the university leadership intends to focus its 2021-2025 strategic priorities on "the systematic increase in the quality, effectiveness and international dimension of R&D and creative activities." TBU also wants to strengthen its position in education and become a leader in the Zlín Region. The university seeks to focus, for example, on staff development, building an open and positive organisational

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.utb.cz/en/university/official-board/miscellaneous/strategic-plan/>



culture, and supporting educational initiatives associated with creative industries, engineering, and industries related to the 4.0 paradigm.

The team believes that TBU has a well-established set of strategic planning and control practices, encompassing annual implementation plans, targets, defined actions, and assessment. Nevertheless, throughout the various meetings, the team realised that not all academic community members share the university's strategic objectives.

*Therefore, the team recommends that TBU's leadership involves all university components in building the strategy and ensures that it results from a broad internal reflection on TBU's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. This includes creating a sense of ownership of the strategy by all institution components and ensuring that its implementation is widely shared and supported.*

The heterogeneity and significant separation of TBU's organisational components, that have a high degree of autonomy, impede the fulfilment of that task. Given that the strategic process at TBU already follows the characteristic cycle of a quality improvement methodology (planning, execution, verification, and action), associating quality culture with strategic development and implementation will be advantageous. *Therefore, the team recommends that TBU integrates "strategy" with "quality" so that different stakeholders see both as being strongly interconnected rather than separate issues.*

## *2.2 Governance and decision making*

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At the central level, the self-governing academic bodies of the Tomas Bata University are the Rector, the Academic Senate, the Scientific Board, the Internal Evaluation Board (in place since 2017, comprising fifteen members, five of them external), and finally the International Board (established in 2019, including six distinguished external academics). Two other management bodies are the Bursar and the Board of Governors. This last non-executive body, composed of relevant external personalities, approves annual budgets and strategic plans, expresses its position on the yearly reports and authorises essential financial decisions such as the transfer of property rights and real estate transactions.

In addition, there are two advisory bodies: the University Management Board (consisting of the Rector, Vice-Rectors, Bursar, Director of Marketing and Communications, Chairperson of the Academic Senate and the Head of Human Resources), and Rector's Advisory Council composed of 26 members (Vice-Rectors, Bursar, Chairperson of the Academic Senate, Deans of Faculties, Director of Marketing and Communications, Head of Human Resources, Data Protection Officer Ombudsman, Chairperson of the Student Chamber of the Academic Senate, Director of the TBU Library, Director of the Halls of Residence and Refectory, and the Director of the Research Centre CEBIA-TECH).

The structure, composition, and powers of the governing bodies of TBU follow the provisions of the Czech Republic Higher Education Act and are reflected in the University Statute. Also, individual statutes of other TBU management bodies provide a detailed specification of all aspects about these bodies' election, appointment, powers, competencies, responsibilities, and functioning. Internal standards and regulations complete the normative structure of the University.

The second layer of TBU's management structure is comprised of faculties. Each faculty has a Dean (assisted by Vice-Deans), an Academic Senate and a Scientific Board. The powers, competencies, and responsibilities of each faculty's governing bodies and executives are defined in their own statutes and regulations. In turn, faculties are divided into departments, managed by the respective head, who is assisted by administrative and technical support structures. Four out of the six faculties include one research centre.

The coordination of the TBU's activities belongs to the rector and vice-rectors (the rectorate). Typically, a vice-rector and the respective vice-deans are in charge of a specific area (for example, Vice-Rector for Pedagogical Activities and Vice-Deans for Study Affairs). The team noted that the relations between various management bodies, particularly between those at the central level and those at the faculty level, are highly regulated. According to the SER (p. 5) "TBU's internal regulations and the relevant TBU internal standards stipulate the relationship between, for example, the Vice-Rectors and the Deans, the relationship between the Bursar and the Secretaries of the Faculties and the directors of other TBU components. The TBU internal standards issued by the Rector also determine the interrelationship of the individual executives of the University and its components, who form the University's management structure".

Despite all these regulations and standards, the SWOT analysis presented in the SER (pp. 34-35) indicates some fragmentation in the decision-making processes of the university. It considered as a risk the "difficult coordination and harmonisation of interests of different parts of the TBU within its strategy", and as a weakness the "significant separation of individual organisational parts of components decreasing the ability to cooperate within faculties and within the whole university." Also considered a weakness was the "insufficiently developed internal communication system."

The team recognises the significant separation of TBU's organisational structure components, notably faculties, that have a high degree of autonomy. This is combined with a much formalised system, burdened by bureaucracy, and the heterogeneous development of faculties. All these facts hinder the adoption of common strategic objectives, the capacity for change, and the decision-making processes.

While the team is aware that many of those problems are related to heavy and rigid national legislation, it believes that there are aspects that can be improved. Therefore, *the team recommends that the connections between the numerous executive boards and steering groups at the TBU be reviewed and more effective communication for change be established.*

The administrative and bureaucratic workload was repeatedly mentioned in the meetings involving academic and administrative staff as a negative factor for the university's management and productivity. To reduce this workload, *the team recommends that TBU continues to develop digitalised administrative processes, thereby simplifying the access, visibility, and usability of its information systems, and making them more "user friendly" for the academic community. Also, we recommend that, when appropriate, the need for the bureaucratic burden be clearly communicated to staff.*

It should be noted that during the visit in February and the virtual meetings in October, the team met and spoke with highly committed teaching staff and found a service-oriented attitude among the administrative staff. These facts are to be commended. On the other hand, the team noted a lack of management skills in some academic and non-academic staff in charge of managerial positions.

Therefore, *the team recommends that TBU establish an academic leadership course and a leadership course for non-academic management.*

Students are represented in a large share of TBU's governing and management bodies. For example, 12 students are members of the Academic Senate (which includes 36 seats), one of them being its deputy chairman. The chair of the student representatives in the Academic Senate is a member of the Rector's Advisory Council, and another one sits on the Internal Evaluation Council. The TBU Disciplinary Committee includes students, as well as the Disciplinary Committees of Faculties (comprising six members, half of whom are students). At the faculty level, students are also members of the Scholarship Committees and have a strong representation in the academic senates, typically four or five members while the academic staff have five or six representatives (plus the chairperson).

However, through the meetings, the team detected a significant communication gap between the students and their formal representatives. This communication gap also exists in formal communication between students and other institutional bodies or representatives. What prevails is an informal communication approach that works well at the faculty level and makes teachers, services and leaders available to students. While this is positive, *the team recommends encouraging students (representatives and non-representatives) to use formal mechanisms to express their concerns and needs, thus developing a more systematic approach to student participation.*

### 3. Quality culture

TBU's quality system is in the process of development and consolidation. Several relevant actions have recently been completed or are under implementation to strengthen both the quality assurance system's structure and procedures. The university's leadership has assumed the strategic importance of "quality," which is reinforced by the external evaluation/accreditation of study programmes and the upcoming evaluation of the TBU's scientific performance.

The Internal Evaluation Board (IEB) was established in 2017. This body plays a key role in defining and supervising the quality assurance of the educational processes, particularly in managing the external accreditation procedures of study programmes and their internal evaluation. According to criteria suited to their specific scientific area, all programmes are evaluated by the IEB at least once every five years. The IEB includes one student, eight academics representing all faculties, and five external representatives (four of them from other Czech universities). The IEB is also responsible for issuing the "Internal Evaluation Report," which is annually updated. This instrument is used to assess and monitor the overall quality of education, R&D, and creative activities (SER, p.15).

Another critical initiative to structure and support quality assurance at TBU took place in 2019 when the Vice Rectorate of Quality Management and the Department of Strategic Development were established. This last body (directed by the rector) is responsible for defining the quality strategy of TBU and its objectives. The Vice-Rector of Quality Management is in charge of executing this strategy and defining the conceptual and organisational outlines and procedures to support quality development and enhancement. At the faculty level, the quality policy and procedures are ensured by vice-deans (or equivalent).

The quality system's architecture is based on the University Statute and a set of internal rules and directives (which are in line with the higher education laws of the Czech Republic). A relevant directive issued by the rector, and adopted by the Senate in July 2019, is the "Rules Governing the System of Quality Assurance of Educational, R&D, Creative and Related Activities and Internal Evaluation of Educational, R&D, Creative and Related Activities."<sup>3</sup> This document sets out the fundamental provisions and principles of the quality assurance system and internal evaluation guidelines. It defines the responsibilities and activities of the various TBU bodies in the quality assurance system, including the role of faculties. Other relevant rules and rector's directives complete the internal legislative framework as regards quality (e.g., "Rules of Procedure of the Internal Evaluation Board" and the "Rules for the Evaluation of Study Programmes").

Undoubtedly, the university has set up a quality assurance management structure supported by bodies and a broad set of standards and rules. Overall, the above provisions are heading in the right direction. Many of them have already passed the project stage and are now implemented. However, there is a gap between the planning and the practice of a real and effective quality culture, partly justified because the quality system is very recent. In fact, through the meetings, the team could perceive that the risk of association between "quality" and "bureaucracy" is tangible. In other words,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.utb.cz/mdocs-posts/rules-governing-the-system-of-quality-assurance-of-educational-rd-creative-and-related-activities-and-internal-evaluation-of-quality-of-educational-rd-creative-and-related-activities-at/>

in general, a culture of benchmarking and continuous improvement is not yet fully established among TBU's academic staff.

This problem is recognised in the SER (p. 17) when it states that TBU needs to "institutionalise the quality management culture in the form of evaluation and feedback as a common part of the university's agenda," and the need "to transfer the system of ensuring quality from the Rectorate level to the components so that there is more effective cooperation between the Rectorate and the components."

Overcoming these difficulties requires a change of attitudes and mentalities, time, and perseverance. As a starting initiative, *the team recommends that TBU management encourage an open discussion on quality culture with broad participation and transparency. The Self Evaluation Report, and especially the SWOT analysis, are useful tools for starting to discuss quality. Both are not known enough among the university community (students, academic and non-academic staff).*

From an operational perspective, the quality system's management relies on the monitoring of a comprehensive set of indicators. These indicators are organised into four modules dedicated to the educational activities (including indicators to capture the perspective of internal and external customers) and one module for R&D and creative activities.

The indicators' values are stored in the university's information system as they are updated and can be accessed by managers, academic staff, and students. An essential set of those indicators is obtained through electronic questionnaires addressed to students, former students, and employers. Using the information system, students evaluate each course's quality of teaching at the end of the semester through online surveys, scoring a set of ten questions on a scale of 1 to 5. Students can add comments and suggestions.

From the meetings, it is not evident to the team that the students were aware of the consequences of their evaluations. In this respect, *the team recommends that steps be taken to ensure that students understand that the results of these questionnaires are used for improvement and that by providing feedback they are engaged in quality work. To this end, the team recommends that TBU use the surveys' results and establish panel discussions with students about the evaluation of courses and study programs as a preparation for students to fill in the assessment surveys.*

TBU's leadership is aware of the importance of information sharing and feedback. The SER (p. 17) states that in the coming years, TBU has "to set up and implement in the TBU management system mechanisms to take into account feedback from the past quality surveys." As in the students' case, *the team recommends that TBU make visible for everyone contributing to data what use has been made of these data.*

Since 2019, TBU is implementing a new performance evaluation scheme for academic staff. Although still at an early stage, the team thinks that it is a very positive and promising initiative. The procedure is based on a two-year "career plan" established for each academic staff member, according to which their performance is assessed annually, resulting in so-called "work points." This assessment is based on performance indicators and an interview conducted by his/her hierarchic superior (e.g., supervisors, department heads, deans). The evaluations may have consequences. For example, two

negative assessments allow the rector to take appropriate action. On the other hand, positive results can generate extra pay and furthering of career development.

There is a positive expectation regarding this assessment system's benefits, which seems to have been well received by the academic staff. However, during the meetings, the team was told that the system is relatively inflexible. This occurs because most evaluation criteria are quantitative and automatically assigned through indicators (such as the teaching hours or the number of scientific articles produced). Also, the weights assigned to the evaluation dimensions are prefixed, and there is limited scope for qualitative judgment.

Performance evaluation of academic staff is an area still under development. Despite that, *the team recommends that the individual assessment system (career plan and work points) be fine-tuned and calibrated regularly to accommodate diverse academic staff profiles.*

One area of concern to which the team has been made aware is the lack of preparation of the evaluators for those functions. To overcome this obstacle, *the team recommends that those responsible for assessing academic staff's performance receive specific training to strengthen their evaluation skills.*

The team considers that the leadership of the university believes in the strategic value of quality and has already moulded the administrative and regulatory structure for the TBU's quality assurance system. However, there is still a lack of widespread adherence of its staff to the principles and practices that shape a quality culture. The search for continuous improvement must become part of daily life at TBU. *The team recommends that improvement methodologies based on evidence and indicators be promoted and established at all TBU structure levels.*

Finally, TBU aims to align its quality system with relevant international standards, notably "with the principles formulated in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)" (SER, p. 15). However, during the meetings, the team observed a rather limited awareness and knowledge of those standards among academic staff and even managers. To establish an internationally recognised and accepted quality culture, *the team recommends that TBU align its overall quality system with the ESG.*

## 4. Management of research and use of research results

Research at TBU is governed centrally by the Vice-Rector for Research, Development, and Creative Activities and by the Scientific Board of the university. At the faculty level, this area is managed by faculties' Scientific Boards and by vice-deans, conducting, among others, evaluation tasks, assistance to research projects, and implementation of doctoral programmes. Other relevant elements of the research structure are the heads of research centres affiliated with the university and those belonging to faculties. The International Board of TBU (only established in 2019) is also expected to play an important role in the R&D domain by providing recommendations.

The scientific activity of TBU is carried out within faculties, departments, and research centres (belonging to the university and faculties). Recognising that the "low scientific and publishing activities of some organisational parts/faculties" (SER, p. 35) is one of its weaknesses, TBU's leadership is firmly committed to promoting the quantitative and qualitative improvement of the scientific production and creative activities of its academic staff. Accordingly, to "increase in the quality, effectiveness, and international dimension of R&D and creative activities"<sup>4</sup> was proposed as a central strategic objective for 2021-2025.

To this end, some initiatives have already been implemented. For example, in 2019 was established the internal evaluation scheme for R&D and creative activities through the "Directive on the Quality Assurance System" (mentioned above). Guidelines and procedures for such an assessment have been defined there, including how to communicate the R&D results. Accordingly, current TBU's "Quality System Monitoring" module for R&D and artistic activities includes five performance indicators (updated once a year), such as comparing TBU results with other national HEIs, the number of publications, and research and technology transfer projects.

Another initiative is the new evaluation system for academic staff (working points), which the team considers a useful tool for encouraging high-quality research. The team noted that the annual evaluation procedure of academic staff deals with the R&D dimension through the valuation of indicators. Among others, those indicators include the number of articles in journals indexed in renowned databases (e.g., Web of Science and Scopus), the number of citations, or the number of outputs of artistic activities (evaluated according to an appropriate methodology).

On the other hand, the university has created incentives for career development, encouraging or rewarding scientific production (such as the number of publications, funding obtained for research, national and international research projects). The incentives include, for example, additional salary, travel expenses, congress fees, and the possibility of teaching load reduction. Despite this, in meetings with teaching staff, it was often pointed out that the teaching load was excessive. This problem may be hampering research-oriented staff from dedicating enough time to high-quality research. Therefore, *the team recommends that the teaching load be appropriately balanced and adjusted to the teachers' profiles.*

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<sup>4</sup> Appendix 3 to the Implementation Plan of the Strategic Plan for Educational, R&D and Creative Activities of Tomas Bata University in Zlín (pp. 2-3)

Doctoral programmes are another relevant source of scientific production and talent recruitment. Considering its size, TBU has many PhD programmes in place (74 in the academic year 2019/20), showing good potential. However, with few exceptions, the critical mass of qualified human resources in each scientific area is small. The team concluded that the university makes little use of multidisciplinary projects and that internal collaboration is weak. This is acknowledged in Appendix 3 of the Strategy Implementation Plan for 2020, where an objective is set to "create conditions for the establishment of project interfaculty research teams with the aim of increasing the potential and the number of outputs of R&D and creative activities." *The team recommends that critical mass be achieved by combining forces from different groups into well-chosen research programmes.*

TBU is also attempting to expand and diversify R&D funding sources, namely applying to national and European funds for science and research. Another relevant course of action adopted by the rectorate is the creation of funds for strategic development, which the team believes to be an excellent tool to foster interdisciplinary research and to connect people. Accordingly, *the team recommends that TBU encourage initiatives to promote multidisciplinary projects in research and education, for example, by using the strategic funds created by the rectorate.*

Advanced consulting activities, research and development projects with industry and other institutions, together with the commercialisation of scientific results, are different ways that TBU is exploring to increase applied research and diversify funding sources. The team acknowledges the central role and potential that TBU's research centres have in this area. The team finds the research centres praiseworthy for having enough projects to finance the living costs of (international) PhD students, giving them a good start to their academic career and notes that the research centres are seen as one strength of the university (SER, p.35).

In addition to all the above, *the team recommends that the importance of R&D for the university's reputation, both for research and education, be clearly communicated. Research and education are intertwined. TBU should take pride in, value, and publicise its achievements in research and creative activities.*

The leadership of the university recognises that TBU has a low number of skilled personnel, particularly in the positions of associate professor and professor, which is a key factor in increasing the relevance, value, and volume of the R&D output. The Strategy Implementation Plan for 2020 includes supporting student participation in R&D and creative activities and "recruiting young researchers to be employed during the implementation of projects (postdoctoral employees) as prospective human resources." The team considers both actions relevant to the future development of research at the university and *recommends that TBU involve more graduate students in research and promote the next generation of researchers.*

Within the framework of initiatives undertaken by research support bodies in the Czech Republic, the university is involved in research projects jointly with other national partner institutions. The university aims to increase this type of collaboration. On the other hand, the participation of TBU researchers in international projects, or cooperation with foreign R&D institutions, is still limited and concentrated in some research centres. *The team recommends that TBU increase its efforts to have more national and international collaboration since that might expand visibility and potential for high-quality research.*



Despite what is previously stated, the team recognises that, in recent years, the university has implemented a commendable policy and a wide range of actions to promote and improve TBU's scientific output, which are already producing positive results. Moreover, the leadership of TBU is aware of the weaknesses or limitations of the university in the field of R&D and the most critical actions needed to boost relevant and high-quality research activities.

## 5. Teaching and learning

As already mentioned, TBU offers a wide range of full-time and part-time bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes. Despite that, a priority objective in education for the year 2020<sup>5</sup> was to prepare proposals and the accreditation of new degree programmes and to implement those already approved by the Internal Evaluation Board. Internally, the process of launching new degree programmes follows a procedure which is governed by a broad and detailed range of directives and rules (SER, p.19). Externally, degree programmes are accredited by the National Office for Higher Education Accreditation.

In 2019 TBU received the "Institutional Accreditation" in four fields of education (Chemistry, Food Sciences, Economics and Arts). Being an indicator of the quality of the institution, it allows the university to have a higher degree of autonomy in developing new degree programmes (in the specified educational fields). Naturally, "the objective for the next period is to extend the current institutional accreditation to other areas of education" (SER, p. 18).

However, the SWOT analysis included in SER (p. 35) indicates that one of TBU's weaknesses for obtaining accreditation of degree programmes is the "lack of qualified academic staff at the level of associate professors and professors". To extend institutional accreditation, TBU needs to encourage the academic career progression of its staff, specifically by promoting their pedagogical development. Note that to "support the education of the academic staff with the aim of enhancing the quality of their teaching competences" was one of the goals of the Strategy Implementation Plan for 2020.

Some faculties carry out actions to support the development of pedagogical skills of their academic staff. The team noticed that this practice was not widespread, nor was it usual for the younger teaching staff. *The team recommends that TBU establish training in pedagogical methods obligatory for doctoral students and other starting teachers and strongly encourage the entire academic teaching community to share good practices and new teaching methods.*

Pedagogy is even more relevant in the present situation where the pressure for scientific improvement (through external evaluation and rankings) leads to a stronger emphasis on the scientific production of academic staff, eventually at the expense of pedagogical innovation. The SER devotes one of its sections to the Student-Centred Learning (SCL) approach (pp. 18-19). It is claimed that "the teaching method includes all forms, including modern ones, using the available infrastructure and equipment", namely the Moodle platform. Despite this, the team observed that, in general, TBU's academic staff and students were not familiar with both the concept and practices of SCL, as stated in the current version of the ESG. *The team recommends that TBU promote the knowledge and implementation of the Student-Centred Learning concept and practices.*

However, TBU has already taken some steps in the right direction. For example, the description of all the courses is available in the information system (accessible to students), and include, among others, the topics "Course content", "Learning outcomes", "Learning activities and teaching methods", and "Assessment methods and criteria". In the syllabuses of TBU's study programmes there is a gradual increase in topics for which the learning process requires students to take an active role, like

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<sup>5</sup> Implementation Plan of the Strategic Plan for Educational, R&D and Creative Activities of Tomas Bata University in Zlín for 2020 (pp. 1-4)

"entrepreneurship" and "ICT skills" (SER p. 18). Additionally, the COVID-19 situation led to the development of blended and distance learning, putting more emphasis on the role of students in the learning process. *The team recommends that TBU evaluate if there are some changes that could be permanent and useful in the post-pandemic situation.*

A positive pedagogical initiative of the university is to encourage undergraduate and graduate students to participate in R&D and creative activities. This is done in many ways, including supporting the participation of students in individual and collective research projects, internships, scientific conferences for students, and scientific competitions. Many of these activities are sponsored by a TBU body, the Internal Grant Agency. *The team recommends that TBU keep encouraging undergraduate and graduate students to participate in research and creative activities.*

During the meetings, the team was made aware of a problem associated with programmes' guarantors, who by law must be highly qualified academics responsible to create relevant curricula. Among other duties, guarantors are responsible for the strategic development of the study programme and ensuring its quality. This includes keeping the syllabuses of the courses up to date, and the teaching methods appropriate to the respective subject-field, as well as proposing modifications of curricula. All this, together with teaching and research activities, represents a burden that can negatively affect the performance of guarantors. *The team recommends that TBU make the function of programme guarantor more collegial by creating an informal advisory body for each programme that includes main internal and external stakeholders.*

Lifelong Learning activities are managed at the central level by a vice-rector. Lifelong Learning courses are run by the rectorate, by research centres, or directly by faculties (the latter being responsible for most of the initiatives). Excluding the activity conducted in this area by the University of the Third Age, in 2019 TBU carried out 190 Lifelong Learning courses, of which 15 were "vocational" (with more than 100 lessons), and the remaining 175 "hobby courses" (the great majority not exceeding 15 lessons). However, Lifelong Learning is considered underdeveloped, and a weakness in the SWOT analysis of the SER (p. 35). The team also believes that this activity is still below TBU's potential. Not surprisingly, one of the objectives of the university is to increase the offer of this type of education. Accordingly, *the team recommends that TBU define a strategy for Lifelong Learning.*

Finally, a relevant initiative undertaken in 2019 by the rectorate that deserves to be praised, is the promotion of interdisciplinary degree programmes in mechanical engineering, materials and technology. This activity is supported by strategic money and envisages cooperation between faculties, research centres and regional companies. It offsets the already mentioned limited networking between university components, and the "low degree of flexibility in curriculum design", one of the weaknesses highlighted in the SWOT analysis of the SER.

## 6. Service to society

For TBU, the concept of "service to society" corresponds to that of "third role" (or "third mission") of universities, and includes the "promotion, popularisation of science and research, awareness-raising and cooperation with partners at local, national and international levels from the part of employers, the public administration and the non-profit sector" (SER, p. 26). It should be highlighted that the university is engaged in active cooperation with the public sector and administration authorities of the Zlín region dedicated to the strategic and economic development.

Since 2008, TBU has a specific unit — the Technology Transfer Centre (CTT) — whose mission is to transfer to the economy the applied knowledge produced at the university. The CTT, which is integrated into the University Institute, acts as an interface between companies (and other institutions) and TBU's academic and research staff, providing advice and seeking partnerships for research and development projects. It plays a particularly important role in addressing and supporting intellectual and industrial property and patent issues. The SER (p. 35) states that the "centralised system for the protection and commercialisation of intellectual property" is a strength that can be better exploited in the future. *The team recommends that TBU enhance the visibility of the Technology Transfer Centre, improving the reputation of the university.*

In 2005, in a 50% partnership with the Zlín Region, TBU created the Technology Innovation Centre, a business incubator and a technology park. Devoted to helping start-ups and promoting market innovations, the centre placed an emphasis on new business areas and new technologies, providing TBU staff and students with opportunities and potential to convert their creativity, knowledge, and research results into economic value.

The Job Centre is another positive asset of TBU, promoting partnerships with companies and other employers in the region. The centre conducts career counselling for students and graduates, seeks and selects employment, matches job offers with suitable candidates, and organises workshops and courses (e.g., English). The Job Centre manages an internet portal that collects and discloses job or internship proposals for TBU students and graduates.

The SER mentions other modalities of cooperation with the economic community. Examples of such cooperation are: the participation of distinguished professionals from industry and other sectors of activity in the educational process (e.g., in classes and seminars); TBU's contribution to the establishment of significant industrial clusters in the region; and its participation in others. While the team believes that the university places great importance on networking and cooperation with industry and employers, it *recommends that TBU maintain contact with regional industry and other organisations, and involve them in building institution strategy and educational programmes, as they are important stakeholders.*

In 2019 about 1 700 participants attended one or more of the Lifelong Learning courses available at the "University of the Third Age", both in Zlín and in the TBU's branches of Uherské Hradiště, Vsetín and Kroměříž. The number of available courses is high and covers a broad range of topics, ranging from English or Computer Science to Cultural History. Despite this positive outcome and following on from that already mentioned in the previous section, *the team recommends that TBU develop a Lifelong Learning strategy as service to society, in addition to a means of income diversification.*

At the central level or in the faculties, TBU conducts several activities aimed at primary and secondary education students. Included (among others) are: science lectures for secondary school students by TBU experts, study visits, scientific competitions and lectures, discussions with scientists, and events such as the "University Week" (organised by the Faculty of Technology), and the "Junior University" (a holiday event directed at children aged 4–17 and carried out by the Faculty of Humanities).

The team is convinced that TBU takes the issue of service to society very seriously. Since 2018/2019, the assessment system of academic staff has begun assigning "work points" to contributions to the "third role", gathering the necessary feedback "to find out whether the goals in the area of the third role are fulfilled" (SER, p. 26). Even so, *the team recommends that TBU give more importance to service to society in the performance assessment of academic staff.*

Although some initiatives to support gender equality among TBU employees had already been implemented, in 2019 the rector presented the directive "Principles of Gender Policy at TBU in Zlín" for adoption in 2020. The more relevant of those initiatives is the nursery school, which can accommodate up to 61 children from the age of two, helping TBU staff and students with young children to coordinate their family and working life. The university offers other aids, such as flexible working hours, part-time work, and unpaid leave in addition to annual vacations. Despite all this, *the team recommends that TBU develop a gender-balanced strategy to enhance diversity.* This may also influence society and future generations.

## 7. Internationalisation

Internationalisation, or more specifically, developing a "natural international environment" (SER, p. 7), is a common topic in TBU's various strategic plans, broken down into several objectives and initiatives. It is, undoubtedly, a priority area for the governance and operational management of the university, reflected in the current management structure through the Vice-Rector for Internationalisation, "backed up by a five-member staff of the TBU International Office" (SER, p. 32).

At the faculty level, there are local international offices responsible for operational aspects. It should be noted that, in 2019, benefiting from an initiative organised by the Czech higher education authorities, TBU hosted a panel of international experts who helped define strategic objectives in this area for the following three years (SER, p.29).

Increasing the international dimension of research and creative activities is a priority path of TBU's internationalisation policy. On the one hand, both faculties and research centres are integrating their research infrastructures into international research networks, intensifying cooperation and participation in research projects with international partners. On the other hand, TBU is hosting more foreign researchers (e.g., postdoctoral students) to work on their own R&D projects. Also, it is stimulating and supporting its researchers and academic staff to join international research activities by encouraging them to apply for research grants funded by international organisations (e.g., EU scientific grants), and, in exceptional cases, allowing them to stay for long periods in foreign institutions.

One other topic to which TBU devotes a substantial part of its internationalisation efforts is student and staff exchange mobility. The mobility of academic and non-academic staff is supported mainly by the Erasmus+ program, but there are other options available. In 2019, 355 academics benefited from an outgoing scholarship, while the number of incoming academics was 80.

TBU "encourages students to use mobility programs to gain experience at institutions abroad" (SER, p. 29), and has a vast number of mobility agreements with foreign Institutions. According to the SER (p. 29), TBU has "almost 500 agreements with the Higher Education Institution from more than 60 countries". Despite this, and although growing, the number of students benefiting from mobility is still relatively low (in 2019, 403 outgoing and 355 incoming). To improve mobility figures, TBU wants to simplify the recognition of studies attended abroad, and to increase international cooperation in education (in 2019, only four joint double-degree programmes with foreign institutions were active). The incoming of international visitors to TBU is also promoted through the annual offer of a wide range of two-week summer courses, attended by students from all over the world.

With respect to mobility, *the team recommends that TBU not only develop more joint degree programmes with international partner institutions but also focus on active and good quality mobility agreements, being more selective in choosing countries and international partners. Besides, the team recommends that TBU motivate and support incoming and outgoing international mobility of students, academic and professional staff, for example by encouraging these activities in the evaluation of academic and non-academic staff, and informing students about how a stay abroad will enrich their life and career.*

The use of the intended learning outcomes is a critical element not only for the implementation of student-centred learning and teaching methodology but also for ensuring external confidence in the educational process of an institution. Learning outcomes are included in the description of courses available in the TBU information system, and TBU's proposals for accreditation of new degree programmes include learning outcomes according to the National Qualification Framework for Higher Education. Despite what has already been done, *the team recommends that learning outcomes be fully implemented and understood by all teachers, as they are crucial for the recognition of courses completed abroad.*

One of the difficulties that TBU faces in the field of mobility is the command of English. Though "from the very beginning, TBU manifested itself as a bilingual (Czech/English) university" (SER, p. 29), a considerable proportion of the academic staff, non-academic staff, and students are not fluent in English. The university is trying to overcome this obstacle, for example, by providing the academic staff with a free-of-charge English course taught by the Faculty of Humanities. *The team recommends that TBU improve as much as possible the command and use of English across the university. This must also include non-academic staff and the provision of incentives for teaching in English.*

Doctoral programmes carried out at the institutional level by research centres or by faculties are also contributing to improving the internationalisation of TBU. Most of the current doctoral programmes are taught in English or, at least, are open to English-speaking candidates. Despite that, however, the number of international PhD students is still modest. One reason for this may be the "insufficient accommodation facilities for foreign and non-regional pedagogical and research workers coming to TBU", a weakness identified in the SWOT analysis (SER, p. 35). Another reason is likely to be financial constraints, particularly in the case of PhD students whose grant only applies in the first year and are not involved in projects in research centres. *The team recommends that TBU find solutions to assure that PhD international students can afford the cost of living in Zlin when the allowance is limited or reduced after the first year of stay.*

## 8. Conclusion

The leadership of the Tomas Bata University has a clear vision about the future of the institution, a well-defined strategy, and a strong determination to introduce changes to raise the institution to a higher level of quality and recognition. Its vision is not only about consolidating TBU's strong position in the Zlín region but also about improving its reputation, both nationally and internationally. Two of the main strategic objectives are: stimulating the qualitative and quantitative increase of R&D and creative activities, especially in selected areas; and adjusting and aligning the educational supply of TBU with the needs of the region and the country.

The university has some characteristics favourable to carrying out the intended change and enhancement. TBU benefits from a young, well prepared and determined leadership, areas of excellence in research, committed teaching staff, administrative staff with a service-oriented attitude, and, in general, modern facilities. Moreover, TBU's relationship with local and regional employers and authorities is excellent and fruitful.

However, some factors make change difficult. TBU is a comprehensive university, covering a wide range of areas, whose faculties have a deep-rooted tradition of autonomy and independence, and show a very heterogeneous degree of development and size. These factors are associated with a quality culture still requiring development, and extensive and very prescriptive legislation in place, neither of which facilitates change.

Despite these difficulties, the team noted that results of the changes recently introduced by the university management are already emerging. The team is confident that the improvement process will continue and wishes TBU success in achieving its goals soon.

### 8.1 Summary of the recommendations

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*With regard to governance and institutional decision making:*

- TBU's leadership should involve all university components in building the strategy and ensure that it results from a broad internal reflection on TBU's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. This includes creating a sense of ownership of the strategy by all institution components and ensuring that its implementation is widely shared and supported.
- TBU should integrate "strategy" with "quality" so that different stakeholders see both as being strongly interconnected rather than separate issues.
- TBU should review the connections between the numerous executive boards and steering groups, and more effective communication for change should be established.
- TBU should continue to develop digitalised administrative processes, thereby simplifying the access, visibility, and usability of its information systems, and making them more "user friendly" for the academic community. Also, we recommend that, when appropriate, the need for the bureaucratic burden be clearly communicated to staff.
- TBU should establish an academic leadership course and a leadership course for non-academic management.



- TBU should encourage students (representatives and non-representatives) to use formal mechanisms to express their concerns and needs, thus developing a more systematic approach to student participation.

*With regard to quality culture:*

- TBU management should encourage an open discussion on quality culture with broad participation and transparency. The Self Evaluation Report, and especially the SWOT analysis, are useful tools for starting to discuss quality. Both are not known enough among the university community (students, academic and non-academic staff).
- TBU should take steps to ensure that students understand that the results of their questionnaires are used for improvement and that by providing feedback, they are engaged in quality work.
- TBU should use the surveys' results and should establish panel discussions with students about the evaluation of courses and study programs as a preparation for students to fill in the assessment surveys.
- TBU should make visible for everyone contributing to data what use has been made of these data.
- The individual assessment system (career plan and work points) should be fine-tuned and calibrated regularly to accommodate diverse academic staff profiles.
- Those responsible for assessing academic staff's performance should receive specific training to strengthen their evaluation skills.
- Improvement methodologies based on evidence and indicators should be promoted and established at all TBU structure levels.
- TBU should align its overall quality system with the ESG.

*With regard to the management of research and use of research results:*

- The teaching load should be appropriately balanced and adjusted to the teachers' profiles.
- Critical mass should be achieved by combining forces from different groups into limited and well-chosen research programmes.
- TBU should encourage initiatives to promote multidisciplinary projects in research and education, for example, by using the strategic funds created by the rectorate.
- The importance of R&D for the university's reputation, both for research and education, should be clearly communicated. Research and education are intertwined. TBU should take pride in, value, and publicise the things already achieved in research and creative activities.
- TBU should involve more graduate students in research and promote the next generation of researchers.
- TBU should increase its efforts to have more national and international collaboration since that might expand visibility and potential for high-quality research.

*With regard to teaching and learning:*

- TBU should establish training in pedagogical methods obligatory for doctoral students and other starting teachers and strongly encourage the entire academic teaching community to share good practices in new teaching methods.
- TBU should promote the knowledge and implementation of the Student-Centred Learning concept and practices.
- TBU should evaluate if there are some changes that could be permanent and useful in the post-pandemic situation.
- TBU should keep encouraging undergraduate and graduate students to participate in research and creative activities.
- TBU should make the function of programme guarantor more collegial by creating an informal advisory body for each programme that includes main internal and external stakeholders.
- TBU should define a strategy for Lifelong Learning.

*With regard to service to society:*

- TBU should enhance the visibility of the Technology Transfer Centre, improving the reputation of the university.
- TBU should maintain contact with regional industry and other organisations, and involve them in building institution strategy and educational programmes, as they are important stakeholders.
- TBU should develop a Lifelong Learning strategy as service to society, in addition to a means of income diversification.
- TBU should give more importance to service to society in the performance assessment of academic staff.
- TBU should develop a gender-balanced strategy to enhance diversity.

*With regard to internationalisation:*

- TBU should not only develop more joint degree programmes with international partner institutions but also focus on active and good quality mobility agreements, being more selective in choosing countries and international partners.
- TBU should motivate and support incoming and outgoing international mobility of students, academic and professional staff, for example by encouraging these activities in the evaluation of academic and non-academic staff, and by informing students about how a stay abroad will enrich their life and career.
- Learning outcomes should be fully implemented and understood by all teachers, as they are crucial for the recognition of courses completed abroad.

- TBU should improve as much as possible the command and use of English across the University. This must also include non-academic staff and the provision of incentives for teaching in English.
- TBU should find solutions to assure that PhD international students can afford the cost of living in Zlin when the allowance is limited or reduced after the first year of stay.