

University of Warsaw

Assessment report in the first competition under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme

1st criterion - substantive quality of an application:

- a) the quality of a SWOT analysis with respect to the objectives referred to in paragraph 4 of Communication from the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 26 March 2019 on the first competition under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme, including the quality of the analysis used to identify priority research areas;
- b) conciseness and concreteness of the SWOT analysis and the plan;
- c) relevance of the identification of the specific objectives referred to in paragraph 6(2)(a) and paragraph 8 of Communication from the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 26 March 2019 on the first competition under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme in relation to the SWOT analysis results;
- d) appropriateness of the indicators chosen to describe the university’s potential and to measure the extent of the objectives’ attainment;

Substantiation

a) The SWOT analysis meets the requirements stated in paragraph 4. Moreover, it is in line with a series of strategic plans since 2012 (on infrastructure, organizational culture, management and leadership, more intense external relations and improved quality of teaching & learning) with the motto: One University, shared vision, openness, breaking internal walls. This context adds substance to the present analysis and plan. As to the 5 selected priority research areas, they are based on a sound analysis (building on existing resources, leveraging strengths and focusing on relevant, internationally recognized challenges).

b) The analysis and the plan are well structured and in all aspects relevant to the further development of UW as a research university. The present strengths are well presented and documented (good research performance, well connected internationally, promising potential, modern research infrastructure, excellent location). The analysis lists a number of organizational flaws (no good support system for research (data), no good HR policy, inefficient structure of the organization, weak internal communication and networking, poor preparation for more intense international networking) that are taken up in the present plan. There is no doubt that UW knows from experience what good research of international stature is and requires. Strong research leadership and more connected organizational structures will contribute to expanding present

successes by including other groups of relatively lower quality output and impact. The interview produced convincing support to these expectations.

c) The objectives identified are relevant to the plan and meet the requirements.

d) The indicators chosen are relevant and their level attainable. They clearly demonstrate that UW knows what it is undertaking from earlier strategic endeavors.

2nd criterion - relevance of assumed objectives to enhancing the international significance of the university's activity:

a) **the extent to which specific objectives contribute to attaining the objectives referred to in paragraph 4 of Communication from the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 26 March 2019 on the first competition under the "Excellence Initiative – Research University" programme;**

b) **sustainability of specific objectives after the plan implementation period, taking into account, in particular, actions to be carried out in 2026.**

Substantiation

a) The specific objectives chosen by UW are without exception relevant to the objectives of paragraph 4. They are all one way or another connected to the overarching theme of enhancing the university's research performance. Many of them are developmental in the sense that they are meant to tutor and stimulate young researchers and incentivize researchers to be more productive and internationally active. The priority research areas are to function as the main carriers of change and development in the domains of teaching quality, research management, international presence, organizational culture and human resources.

b) UW has a keen sense of timing. It doesn't make overoptimistic claims for the short run. The plan foresees the setting up of a Steering Committee and a Leadership Team in view of the 2026 evaluation and follow-up. In addition, a number of specific budgets have already been marked to ensure continuity of IDUW actions.

3rd criterion - adequacy of described actions to the assumed objectives:

a) **appropriateness of the actions selected, including actions of ground-breaking and innovative nature, in the context of the specific objectives' implementation;**

b) **feasibility of the activities given the university's potential and budget;**

Substantiation

a) The plan foresees no less than 70 actions, partly generic, partly focused on specific research activities. No wonder UW plans to develop its research management and introduce a dedicated management structure to oversee the implementation. In general these actions make sense. The

preparation process itself (involving hundreds) as well as the openers and collaborative spirit university leadership is promoting will no doubt be instrumental in reaching the goals set.

b) UW's planned actions are feasible given its commitment, its potential and the budgets available. Hiring for key roles in the development process foreseen will not always be easy and deserves special attention.

4th criterion - potential of the university in terms of:

- a) the impact of the university's research activity on the development of world science, especially in priority research areas;**
- b) research collaboration with research institutions of high international reputation, especially in priority research areas;**
- c) the quality of education provision for students and doctoral training, especially in fields of study and disciplines of science related to priority research areas;**
- d) the solutions deployed for the professional development of the university's staff, especially young scientists;**
- e) the quality of university governance and management;**
- f) other specific objectives to raise the international significance of the university's activities if these objectives have been determined in the plan.**

Substantiation

a) UW is already well connected internationally, enjoys a good reputation and is the recipient of highly respected international grants. The present plan builds on this. The priority research areas are well chosen and internationally relevant. Young research talent will be supported to become internationally well connected scientists. As a consequence the contribution of UW to world science will gradually have more impact.

b) In comparison to other Polish universities UW already is collaborating with international partners at a good level. The present plan will strengthen and expand this performance. It demonstrates a smart approach to this. New partnerships do not fall from heaven. Being an attractive partner with good resources and appealing conditions will invite more collaborations. The projects that UW is planning will certainly have a positive impact.

c) A special feature of UW is that it already has a policy and a strategy in place to enhance teaching quality. The present plan stresses the interactions with research, especially in priority areas, leading to new programs and study tracks. The 4 doctoral schools are a solid structure. UW will also work with schools to stimulate young talent.

d) A mentorship for post-docs, a mobility program and an already existing internal grant system are among the measures UW takes to enhance the professional development of its (young) staff. Career support will be keen on creating equal opportunities.

e) Relying on its long term strategic plans for 2012-2026 for a university wide improvement of its organizational culture and management the present plan adds a number of actions to upgrade IT and other support services for research and introduces new levels of research management.

f) A specific feature of UW's strategy is a closer and more structural collaboration with the Medical University of Warsaw. This is in line with developments elsewhere and potentially highly beneficial for scientific performance.

Summary of assessment

UW is one of the flagship universities of Poland. It is well recognized internationally, and well networked both in terms of individual scholars and institutional relations. It is a strong candidate for acceptance and support under the present policy. The alignment of the present plan with earlier and wider strategic optimization plans deserves special mention. This considerably adds weight and trust. Its size and scope in combination with its location are important assets. Given the constant risk of brain drain (as the SWOT analysis noted) enhancing the attractions of UW as a scientific hot spot will serve wider policy goals of the country. The selection process of priority research areas and the way UW foresees its further development (with a strong role for leadership and a keen eye for interdisciplinary bridges) are convincing steps towards enhancing the status of UW as a research university. Finally it should be noted that UW has been using the opportunities the new law gives them, i.a. by creating a University Council, with a substantial fraction of members from abroad, and by resetting its internal funding system. The panel recommends to:

- Keep a strong focus on the strategy and ensure delivery against the objectives identified.
- Continue to explore merger with Medical University.

Total score

36.5 / 40

Recommendation

Positive

Position on the ranking list of positively assessed applications

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