



1st Progress Review Conference of the Universities participating in the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme

PRE-EVENT QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIwersytet Wrocławski / UNIVERSITY OF WROCLAW

- 1) **What evidence can be provided for early cultural change within the university, following selection in the first round of IDUB (e.g. acceptance of an enhanced and widely held ambition to perform cutting edge research)? Which measures have been undertaken to date for creating, supporting and maintaining an atmosphere and attitude of change and positive development throughout the institution?**

The result of the rectorial election is the proof of support given by the students and employees to the proposed change in work culture. The academic community elected Professor Przemyslaw Wiszewski, the head of the team preparing the IDUB project, as the rector for 2020-2024 term of office. In his programme he emphasised that the goal of his term shall be an in-depth revision of the functioning of the UWr (transparent, strategically-oriented University management, increasing the quality of research and teaching). The fact that the majority of the academic community supported this vision of change proves that this direction is widely accepted.

New administrative structures reinforcing the system of strategic and process management have started their operation. The Office for Strategy, Management Control and Process Management conducts the analyses of changes in the University structure and management in terms of their compliance with the University’s strategy. Instead of the two centers of financial management (Bursar’s Office and Financial Planning and Analysis Department), one department, managed by the Chief Financial Officer, was created. Cooperation with the University Council has provided valuable support for the transformation. The members of the Council are strong supporters of the strategic shift within the University and transfer management know-how from business to the university environment.

In order to build a positive attitude towards the change the IDUB Steering Committee conducted an extensive campaign promoting the objectives of the Project. Particular emphasis was put on the opportunities available for the employees making the most academic progress, the importance of interdisciplinary research and focus on the sustainable development of the UWr. A wide circle of research and teaching staff members was included in the implementation of individual tasks (over 100 employees developed the rules and regulations for competitions within IDUB project).

2) How is the implementation of the plan proposed by the university being governed? Who are the leaders of the implementation process? What are the measures for internal monitoring of progress in implementation of the plans?

The Rector of the UWr is the project manager for IDUB. The implementation management is the responsibility of the Rector's Representative who manages the work of the Steering Committee.

The development of the rules and regulations for competitions and calls for applications were entrusted to the teams appointed by the Rector. They included 5 to 7 representatives of different scientific disciplines present at the University, a representative of the Steering Committee, and a member of the rector authorities. The team members had to develop extensive knowledge about the project objectives in order to devise documents that were consistent with them.

Simultaneously, they were getting familiarised with the specifics of the functioning of different disciplines from various academic areas present at the UWr. This led to a natural selection of about 100 local change leaders, whose role was to introduce the IDUB Project to their colleagues. As a consequence of the accumulated experiences, and the results of the work of interdisciplinary working groups in particular, the flow of information and the effectiveness of change management in the institution have improved significantly.

Between November and December of 2019 a detailed road map for implementation was prepared, including milestones and their concrete products serving for project's evaluation. They also allow for the assessment of the correctness of adopted implementation methods and the effectiveness of the implemented changes.

3) What measures has the university undertaken to disseminate and promote the plan among the academic community?

The transparent presentation of the Project to the University employees is regarded as the key condition for the successful transformations of the UWr. The full contents of the Project were provided to all staff members in order to give them the opportunity to get acquainted with the planned changes.

The main objectives of the Project and Priority Research Areas were presented at the University's official website. The crucial elements of the campaign were the meetings of the Rector's Representative with the members of faculties and institutes. They allowed to explain components of the Project in face-to-face conversations and to provide insight into the project's influence over the activity of research teams.

In the second phase, due to the limits imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, communication via social media was preferred. A teleconference between the Rector's Representative and all interested staff members, students and PhD students was organised as part of other on-line activities

4) What are the main measures taken by the university to improve the quality of university governance and management, including quality-enhancing organizational changes?

In accordance with the Project schedule, the teams consisting of the UWr staff members devised the documents which shall serve for the introduction of organisational changes. They developed the procedure of employee evaluation which puts particular emphasis on tutoring and support provided for research and teaching activities carried out by the employees. They also prepared guidelines for the evaluation of the management staff members, identifying as their criteria the actions for the implementation of the UWr's strategy.

The implementation of the new recruitment procedure for research and research-teaching staff members was prepared and launched (the process of standardisation of recruitment procedures and the work on the increase of their transparency and objectivity in candidates' evaluation have begun). The selecting committee, apart from the representatives of the employing unit, shall include the employees of units specialising in different scientific areas.

In respect of the improvement of key administrative processes a decision on the establishment of a central Office for Project Services has been made. Project supervisors who are going to work there shall provide support for project managers at application and implementation stages. The Strategy of the UWr for the years 2021-2030 was adopted. It clearly identifies the mission, values, vision, strategic and operational objectives consistent with the principles of the IDUB programme.

5) What are the main administrative measures taken by the university in the Priority Research Areas (POBs) including focusing and integration of research teams? What additional sources of research funding dedicated to POBs have been secured to date following success in the IDUB competition?

The Priority Research Areas included approx. 20 percent of all researchers employed at the UWr. At the same time, the goal of the Project was the University's sustainable growth. The solution to this apparent contradiction lies in encouraging the consolidation of research efforts around specific topics and openness to developing new, quality research.

The rules and regulations for each of the key calls for applications organised under the IDUB programme include the provision rewarding those who conduct research within one of the PRAs. This reward is conditional upon the involvement in research under a PRA, as evidenced by scientific publications, and the identification of the connection between the research promoted in the call for applications and the same PRA.

In competitions priority is given to initiatives bringing together researches involved in the PRAs. For example, in the call for applications to Scientific Apparatus Fund for the purchase of valuable scientific equipment the applications which were supported by the largest number of research teams involved in the PRAs were rewarded. They had to not only prove their connection with a PRA, but also clearly justify their willingness to share the apparatus in the future.

Preparations are underway to announce a call for applications for the purchase of scientific apparatus of the value of up to 125 000 EUR from the Rector's financial reserve, dedicated primarily to the researchers working in the PRAs.

6) What consideration has been given to inter-institutional collaborations within Poland to enhance, for example, research that crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries? What progress has been made regarding establishment of a federation or merging with other institutions from the region, especially in case of universities which received relevant recommendations?

The Wrocław Biotechnology Centre, formerly the Leading National Research Centre (KNOW), bringing together scientists from UWr, Wrocław University of Science and Technology and Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, continues its operations.

Research on gene therapies in skin cancers treatment is conducted in cooperation with the Wrocław Medical University and the Lower Silesian Oncology Centre. Close collaboration in research is continued with the units of the Polish Academy of Sciences, for example, with the Centre for the Studies of Late Antiquity and Early Medieval Culture or the Institute of Low Temperature and Structure Research. In both those cases the research is focused on one specific issue (for instance, on the cultural shift in Europe caused by the expansion of new religious beliefs or the production and testing of materials with new physical properties), going well beyond the borders of a given discipline (archaeology, history, literary studies, cultural studies or chemistry and physics).

The UWr is also cooperating with the Łukasiewicz Research Network – PORT Polish Centre for Technology Development. Talks with the Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Wrocław Medical University and the Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, aimed at the pursuit of common research policies, are currently underway. The new term of office in all those higher schools means that the talks can become more specific only after that date.

7) What measures have been undertaken to identify, train, and support the next generation of international-quality researchers? How implementation of the IDUB plan contributed to enhancement of doctoral training, including recruitment to doctoral schools?

Under the IDUB Project there has been published a call for applications for the financial support of the research projects carried out by PhD students, particularly those involving international activity. Participation in international competitions and calls for applications and conferences is rewarded, but primary focus is put on the participation in international research teams. In this way the young scientists get the opportunity to anchor their practice in research carried out abroad.

The call for applications Research Excellence Incubators is currently open under IDUB. In each of the incubators employing at least two young researchers not affiliated with the University of Wrocław, especially those conducting their scientific studies to date abroad, is an essential condition. This gives rise to hope for the employment of researchers whose experiences may accelerate the rate of the internationalisation of those teams which have not yet developed appropriate standards for international cooperation. There have been devised rules and regulations for the funding of the visits of foreign researchers, who shall be obliged to conduct classes for PhD students. An element of the competition is rewarding the researchers who thanks to their experience – and connections with the UWr research teams – will be able to develop a series of classes forming a didactically cohesive course. Its aim shall be to familiarise the PhD students with latest research trends and to facilitate cooperation between them and leading scientists from outside the UWr.

The awareness of the direction of the changes listed in the IDUB project and in the new development strategy has prompted the heads of the colleges of the UWr Doctoral School to prepare an application for STER programme under NAWA. Its aim is to increase the internationalisation rate of doctoral schools.

8) What progress has been made to date in implementing human resources development programmes and in recruitment of researchers (whether Polish citizens or not) from universities outside Poland?

Two basic processes have been devised and prepared for implementation to date: employee evaluation and recruitment. In both cases the changes should bring about greater process transparency and professional development of current employees and result in the employment of highly qualified new scientists. The requirements for building teams by the managers of the Research Excellence Incubators are similar, particularly those referring to the young researchers co-creating those groups.

An additional element reinforcing the culture of quality among the employees is the development of the salary system. There has been devised a competition-based system for increasing salaries. Another source of financial support shall be dedicated to the scientists who in a given year had a one-off, significant achievement – received external funding for their research or published

a paper which greatly impacted global science. A separate financial support programme shall be dedicated to the academic teachers whose high-quality research is closely connected with the academic advancement in their students' scientific practice.

A study tour programme allowing the University lecturers to visit the best foreign institutions in order to establish cooperation with scientific partners is ready for implementation. However, due to the epidemic it needs to be adapted to the new challenges.

9) What specific steps have been taken and what progress in implementation of the plan has been made to date to enhance international engagement (e.g. research collaborations with foreign universities or research institutes)?

The calls for applications supporting scientific collaboration through funding the visits of foreign researchers and study tours of the University's academics are ready for implementation. A section supervising and supporting the UWr researchers in their efforts to apply for external funding for projects conducted in collaboration with foreign colleagues is going to become a part of the Office for Project Services. There have been secured funds for the UWr's own contribution if the applications for NAWA Chair programme, which have been prepared by the UWr academics, turn out to be successful. It shall allow to employ renown foreign scientists conducting research simultaneously at their home universities abroad. Saxony government has provided support for establishing the Max Born Institute, in collaboration with the Dresden University of Technology and the Wroclaw University of Science and Technology. It shall be a centre for quantum physics and luminescent materials research (PRA New Materials).

Having regard to the investment into the youngest scientists (students and PhD students), there have been devised the rules and regulations for grants serving to cover the costs of their active participation in international scientific conferences or research visits to foreign universities (up to 4 weeks), whose result shall be publications or applications for grants financed by external institutions and for co-financing the organisation of international workshops and schools.

10) What kind of changes has the university initiated in the education system on undergraduate and graduate level?

In accordance with the IDUB Project there has been developed the first specialised five-year degree programme aimed at educating highly qualified experts in medical biotechnology. We are currently testing a flexible two-year MA programme in computer science. In order to attract the best candidates, we have created a scholarship system for first-year students with the highest recruitment scores. In the upcoming years we are planning to gradually phase out the degree programmes which have been too weakly connected with research. The introduction of compulsory classes in English in each degree programme is underway. There has been implemented a scholarship programme for first-year students, rewarding 100 best candidates with highest secondary school final exam scores, and those who were the laureates of the most prestigious thematic contests.

11) The worldwide impact of measures and limitations introduced as a consequence of the COVID19 pandemic should be taken into account in the implementation planning, and institutions should be driven by the will to maintain strategic development as planned. The good use of digital means of communication has a crucial role to play. Thus, universities should see to it that they are up to this challenge. What actions have been taken by your university in order to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic on the implementation of the university development strategy?

During the lockdown the Steering Committee and the teams preparing the rules and regulations for calls for applications worked remotely. The meetings were organised by way of videoconference. As the result we have reached the majority of the planned milestones. However, we have encountered obstacles in activities relating to international exchange. It applies particularly to the experimental disciplines of science. For that reason it is more likely that we shall emphasise the strengthening of collaboration with the leading universities in close vicinity (Berlin, Dresden, Prague, Brno, Vienna, Innsbruck). The proximity results in similar epidemiological conditions and allows to swiftly react to any changes in them. Another benefit is the opportunity to build an international research cluster with great potential. Travel disturbances affect particularly the experimental scientists using advanced apparatus in foreign laboratories. It is therefore essential to develop our own apparatus base and to share it with all other Wroclaw universities. This policy would be a good rationale for conducting collaborative research by various higher schools of Wroclaw. The researchers representing the humanities have been cut off from foreign libraries for the same reason. To offset the impact of those limitations we have been dynamically developing the programme for the purchase of remote access to leading publication databases. 25 percent of the annual costs shall be covered from the IDUB sources, and 75 percent from the Rector's funds. The greatest current challenge is to maintain close contacts with global academic life. For that purpose we are planning to turn one of the University buildings into the International Research and Innovation Centre. It would house flats for approx. 60 foreign scientists, who would be provided with suitable accommodation and the opportunity to work with their Wroclaw colleagues.