



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

PRE-EVENT QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu / ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ

- 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 cultural change at AMU has been powerful, following internal governance and management reforms started with the implementation of the new Statute. AMU started the IDUB project in the midst of sweeping institutional changes, leading to a new university structure. Internal debates, held within new institutional units (new Schools, new faculties), were built around a new ministerial list of disciplines and a new national evaluation of research activities expected for 2022. They coincided in time with the beginning of IDUB.

Three factors played their roles: a radical internal institutional restructuring started in October 2019, a research evaluation exercise (linked to the IDUB status), and the IDUB program with its planned, fully-funded activities. An attitude of participation in sweeping change processes has been maintained since winning the IDUB competition at several levels: institutional leadership and major governance bodies; faculty level; central administration level; and the level of individual scientists, grouped around POBs and beyond. Numerous meetings about IDUB, international research collaboration, and globally indexed publications were held. The rationales behind the transparency and competition in access to IDUB funding, specific indicators, and 45 detailed actions as defined in the contract with the Ministry were explained, leading to increasing interest in subsequent calls for proposals.

The critical point in the promotion of IDUB at AMU was that the project in its various actions (1-45) is open to the majority of scientists. Calls for proposals were directed to major beneficiaries, maintaining the attitude of change, with direct and indirect benefits for all: high profile scientists and their teams, young scientists beginning their careers, doctoral students, the doctoral school and its disciplinary doctoral schools, POBs' management teams, and central administration involved in reform processes.

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?

Governance and management structures are simplified. The project management team includes six persons: five persons responsible for each of the five major objectives (research; collaboration; education; professional development; university governance) and AMU rector as the team leader. Two deputy leaders are responsible for research and internationalization. This team collaborates closely with five POB leaders. The leaders of the implementation process come from the central university administration and the field level of POBs. The team is in charge of the changes at the AMU level and strategic decisions. POB leaders take responsibility for all POB-level competitions.

Within POBs, committees were formed to discuss the shape of changes and to advise on the funding decisions. The first calls (Action 1; Action 6; Action 7; Action 34; Action 13; Action 8), according to Section D of the proposal as a part of the AMU-Ministry contract, were launched in April-July, with two largest calls (Action 7; Action 9: "Support for the most research-prolific senior staff and junior staff" ready to be launched in September 2020).

The monitoring of progress consisted of the measures suggested in the application: dates of applications and decisions; funding requested and granted; progress in rulebook preparation for particular actions, testing the IT cloud computing infrastructure serving IDUB needs. A list of high priority and medium priority calls and actions was discussed and accepted.

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

The academic community was involved in the preparation of IDUB in a participatory manner. Consequently, the 45 actions envisaged in the proposal were known to POBs and the wider academic community: actually, POBs were created in collaboration with faculty deans. When AMU became an IDUB winner, a large-scale promotion started. A kick-off meeting on November 27, 2019 was an official launching of the IDUB program: it included Minister Jarosław Gowin and top ministerial officials and the rationales, intentions, 45 individual actions, and the access to funding available in IDUB were explained. The conference was available on-line.

Between November 2019 and March 2020, four articles explaining IDUB and authored by the IDUB management team were published in an official AMU journal, with a circulation of 5,000 copies. About 20 faculty-level debates about IDUB opportunities were organized, as well as meetings about IDUB calls for proposals.

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

The changes adopted by AMU in 2020, following the implementation of IDUB, remain aligned with the profound changes introduced in the AMU Statute. The governance and management structure of AMU in 2019-2020 has been significantly strengthened, the decision-making powers have been transferred from faculties over to the Rector and Vice-Rectors. The Rector is now fully responsible for making the most important strategic decisions, in collaboration with the university council and the senate. The electoral procedure for managerial positions has also been significantly trimmed down and simplified: new deans will be elected in September 2020. A new rector, Professor Bogumiła Kaniewska, was elected in June 2020.

The AMU Doctoral School opened on October 1, 2019 and currently enrolls about 150 doctoral students. The School is a novel organizational unit as its activities span across the whole university.

The ongoing efforts closely link objectives from Areas 3-5 (education; professional development; management) with key objectives from Areas 1-2: contributing to international science and collaboration in research. By design, objectives from Areas 3-5 are intended to support the achievement of objectives from Areas 1-2, the core of IDUB. Especially important is also the opening of a new Project Support Center: a major administrative unit with a staff of 20 and several sections, focused on ongoing grants and new grant applications, in line with IDUB proposal.

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 bulk of IDUB actions are directed at POBs as the main implementation sites. Consequently, a balance is being maintained between strategic actions as described in Section D of the application, to be implemented across the whole university, and actions implemented in POBs only. POBs at AMU are interdisciplinary (4) and monodisciplinary (1), belonging to the total of 33 ASJC disciplines and scattered across a number of faculties. A major administrative issue was POBs cutting across faculties, and POB leaders working with more than one dean.

There have been integration processes in several POBs, especially those which have been located in faculties reorganizing their internal structure (Faculty of Physics, Mathematics, the various faculties in Social Sciences and the Humanities). POBs are able to apply for funding to develop strategic international research collaboration with their international partners and to seek funding for newly employed or returning scientists as part of their new research teams. POBs are seeking interdisciplinary collaboration opportunities within their POBs and across them, and examples come from Faculty of Biology, Faculty of Geography, and Faculty of Chemistry, with a new research focus on polar studies in the field of environmental protection, combined with a new interdisciplinary study program in Bio-Geo-Hazards. POBs applied or are preparing to apply in 2020 for several hundreds research grants, especially from the National Science Center.

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 IDUB project assumes the strengthening of both international, national and regional collaboration in research. AMU has been heavily collaborating with its Polish partners, from Poznan and beyond. Poznan is an academic city with a number of potential collaboration partners within the city; ongoing partnerships, especially as viewed through the SciVal database collaboration module and grant agreements, include specifically the Polish Academy of Sciences, University of Economics, University of Medicine, University of Agriculture, and Poznan University of Technology. Collaborations go beyond publications and include joint research grant applications; large-scale collaboration with other Poznan-located universities is performed in the NanoBioMed Center (AMU, University of Medicine, and Poznan University of Technology) and in the WCZT (Center for Advanced Technologies). IDUB has a number of actions which can be used to fund this intra-city collaboration, as well as to strengthen the collaboration with other Polish universities.

However, the major premise behind IDUB is that AMU increases its international collaboration potential while becoming an internationalized research university, with the additional assistance of IDUB funding. The federation of AMU with other Poznan-located universities was not mentioned either in the IDUB proposal or in its international assessment; however, some future options are considered.

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?

The overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on IDUB at AMU has been significant; specifically, the three major lines of support – Action 5 and Action 9 (the bonuses for carefully selected next generation of scientists with international potential), as well as Action 12, the establishment and

further development of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences and the Humanities (IAS) – are slightly delayed. IDUB was built around the concept of a separate track of opportunities for most promising, international-quality researchers, based on a highly competitive basis (with about 100 million PLN). This support scheme is starting in September and the IDUB management team and POB leaders spent huge amount of time on the methodology to identify those international research leaders, capable of establishing their own research groups within IDUB and with its support.

Actions 5 and 9 are the major investment in about 400-500 international-quality scientists until 2026. The identification procedures were tested on the whole population of AMU scientists and the selection procedures have been carefully crafted: for each POB, the rules have been defined. IAS (Action 12), an especially innovative concept, is starting its operation together with the selection of its first 40 fellows in fall 2020. Here the potential of interdisciplinary collaboration and international training is very high, and the fellows will be selected through a transparent procedure, from a pool of over 1,000 academics in social sciences and the humanities.

IDUB has been specifically focused on AMU Doctoral School (Action 13), with a number of calls for proposals and other funding opportunities open to doctoral students, School, and its disciplinary units, in strict accordance with the actions proposed in the application. The revised curricula for the School will be prepared in collaboration with international partners and funded through Action 13 designed specifically for its internationalization.

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?

The actions related to the implementation of human resources development programs and the recruitment of international researchers – and specifically Action 4 (“Support for talent management”, and its AMUHoming section), Action 5 and Action 9 (bonuses for seniors and juniors), Action 1 (AMU Excellence Visiting Postdoctoral Researchers and Professors) as well as several other supporting actions – have been at the various stages: from implementation and first calls for proposals (Action 1), to being fully prepared for a September call for proposals (Action 5 and 9), to introductory conceptual work (Action 4). Different stages result from relatively modest interest in all physical mobility programs. The interest in coming to AMU under the pandemic is limited; but also the interest in leaving AMU is also limited.

Under present uncertain conditions, institutional plans to recruit international staff have slowed down, even though the support mechanisms are ready. AMU applies for externally-funded positions such as NAWA Visiting Professorships and, routinely, positions within a wide array of NCN-funded research grants (especially doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers). The newly created Schools have been forming committees for the preparation of the periodical assessment of academic faculty (e.g. POB 5 HUMSOC); this is also the case in faculties. Also mentoring programs for young scientists preparing their first grant applications have started (POB 1 and POB 2).

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)?

International research collaboration is at the core of IDUB at AMU. All major actions directed at collaboration have been started or prepared to be launched: visits of renowned foreign researchers (Action 1), support for high-priority international research cooperation within individual POBs (Action 3), support for talent management (Action 4), support for participation of researchers and doctoral students in prestigious international conferences (Action 6), support for international junior and senior exchange mobility programs (Action 7), as well as support for the internationalization of Doctoral School (Action 13). They are currently either being implemented, with 4-6 deadlines a year to submit proposals, or at conceptual and technical stages in which the documentation and IT infrastructure for the implementation is being prepared or tested. Overall, the support for publications in prestigious journals and books in prestigious publishing houses has also been started (Action 8), with considerable success.

However, no agreements within the “high priority international research collaboration” within POBs have been signed so far. The timing for international collaboration other than in online modes is not supportive. AMU has been closed since March 2020, and also the majority of AMU partners and potential partners have been closed. Consequently, research collaboration based on international mobility has not expanded with IDUB funding as expected.

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

There are several specific Actions directed to the education system: the expansion of educational offer of Doctoral School (Action 37), training teaching staff in new, engaging teaching methods (Action 33), study@research support package (Action 34), joint study programs with European partners (Action 36), exceptional talents involved in research from first-cycle education (Action 39), dropout prevention (Action 40), and changes in master’s programs (Action 41). Most of them have not been implemented so far due to pandemic restrictions. An online mode of operation of AMU does not allow to reasonably consider the implementation of these actions before the university is open. The online provision at all study levels is expected to last during the 2020-2021 academic year. However, the IDUB team continues conceptual work, expected to be especially fruitful with a new generation of deans and deputy deans for education to be elected by the end of September 2020.

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?

The challenge of the pandemic to the implementation of IDUB at AMU is a major one. Generally, all national and international mobility activities envisaged in the plan have substantially slowed down. For obvious reasons, funding for international mobility may be used for other internationalization-related goals which do not require international travel.

The IDUB team is considering various options how to proceed best; however, there are too many unknowns to come to more than tentative conclusions. Also all education-related activities need to be trimmed now that students do not return to AMU earlier than in October 2021. These two limitations have important implications for IDUB and its strategic goals. For instance, more time for research, in some, especially non-experimental areas, may lead to more international research publications (so that funding for proof-reading in Action 8 and related support mechanisms may be more important than expected).

The IDUB team supports the idea of fast track/no paper work in all IDUB-related document flows. Under the pandemic, and the effective closure of AMU and its premises, digital means of communication and document flows are critically important. The communication and education platform (Action 18) has been implemented in an accelerated manner. The platform enables easy real-time remote communication within research groups. University meetings (from faculties to schools to the senate) are all in a digital format; also the IDUB team successfully uses new communication technologies in promoting IDUB and in its daily operations.

Despite the pandemic, however, publication- related indicators have been powerfully on the rise, and some of them have reached the levels expected for 2022-2024: for instance, publications in top decile and publications in top decile of journals have been substantially higher than originally assumed. AMU has also been very successful in research grant applications, in both numbers and funding received.