

European University Association

Institutional Evaluation Report of

**Mendel University of
Agriculture and Forestry
Brno, Czech Republic**

EUA Reviewers' Report

November 2005

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Introduction

Following two successful conferences on the theme of Quality and Evaluation, the Committee of the CRE (now EUA, the Association of European Universities) decided in 1993 to offer its member universities, which today number 775 in 45 countries, the possibility of being reviewed so that their strengths and weaknesses in the area of institutional and quality management might be assessed. EUA evaluations are peer reviews. They serve university leaders as a tool to assist them in their efforts to improve their management and to promote the universities' capacity for change. The cornerstone of a review is a university's self-evaluation, which allows the university staff, as a team, to understand their institution's strengths and weaknesses. The EUA expects that the growing number of its institutional reviews contribute to the promotion of a culture of quality among its members, and to the dissemination of examples of effective strategic management among the European universities. The EUA does not wish to provide Universities with a blueprint for its development; rather the review process is a consultative and supportive one.

The European University Association Institutional Evaluation Programme began eleven years ago, and has conducted 120 evaluations of higher education institutions in addition to 20 follow-up evaluations in 36 countries world-wide. Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry (MUAF) in Brno is the third university in Brno (after Masaryk University and Brno University of Technology) and the sixth university in the Czech Republic that EUA has been asked to evaluate.

EUA evaluation teams are from the academic community, made up of acting or former rectors and vice-rectors, in addition to a secretary. The Evaluation Team to MUAF also included a student representative from ESIB, the National Unions of Students in Europe. The experience of the Team was very positive in this regard, with the student member providing a student perspective during the interviews both with students and other groups, in addition to contributing his experiences as a student in the field of agriculture.

The members of the EUA Evaluation Team to MUAF were

- Üstün Ergüder, former rector of Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, and now director of the Istanbul Policy Center at Sabanci University, Team chair;
- Bent Schmidt-Nielsen, former Rector of the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Denmark;
- Karol Izydor Wysokinski, former Vice-Rector of M. Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland;
- Nikki Heerens, ESIB and Wageningen University, the Netherlands,
- Christina Rozsnyai, programme officer at the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, Team secretary.

The Team conducted its preliminary visit to MUAF 6-8 March 2005, and the main visit between 16 and 19 November 2005. During the two visits the Team had several discussions with Rector Stanislav Procházka, as well as Martin Janku, who as Vice-Rector for International Affairs and Public Relations acted as the Team's contact person at MUAF. The Team met deans and staff from all four faculties, as well as administrative staff and students. The Team was also given opportunity to meet external partners co-operating with MUAF in various ways, although no one from the Administrative Board (Board of Trustees) was available at this time.

The Evaluation Team appreciated that both visits were superbly organised, and the Team was awarded very generous and kind hospitality. The discussions with the Team were open and constructive. On top of this the University leadership appeared to have a good working relationship with the academic and administrative management team, including the deans.

The EUA Evaluation Team learned that the University's Self-Evaluation Report was the joint effort of a team composed of "teachers, heads of faculties, office workers, and members of the Senate on behalf of the academic community" (Self-Evaluation Report [SER] p.3). The Report, following EUA Guidelines, provided the EUA Team with the necessary background to begin its visit and contained both descriptive and analytical information. The few inconsistencies there were could be clarified during the visits. The Team also asked for additional information, which the University readily supplied prior to the main visit.

MUAF cites its reason for requesting the EUA evaluation as having implemented a number of changes at the University since the mid-1990s, for which it wanted verification by outside experts. For this purpose, the Faculty of Economy was accredited in 1996 by the European Council for Business Education (ECBE), and has since been re-accredited until 2004. The University participated in a TEMPUS project for "Internal Evaluation Systems at Agri-Universities" (SER p. 3) in 1998. In 2003 MUAF's ECTS and Diploma Supplement were evaluated by an international panel. The EUA review is intended as a full university-wide evaluation with which MUAF wants to gauge its progress in having "in the past five years ... implemented a number of qualitative changes, a marked advancement in virtually all areas of university life" (SER p. 3). It expects that "an external evaluation coupled with quality control would provide an opportunity to check the effectiveness of the implemented changes" (SER p. 3). In addition, Rector Procházka's second and final term ends in November 2005, "and evaluation of the kind provided by the EUA would, among others, serve as a document balancing the advancement process of the university and [set out] possible courses of action for the future" (SER p. 3).

The Evaluation Team trusts that its Report, together with the entire review process, that involved not only the external review but began with the University's self-evaluation and included numerous formal and informal discussions between members of the University themselves, and between them and the Team, will fulfil the leadership's expectations about the EUA evaluation exercise.

The Reviewer's Report was prepared for the University's leadership, who are free to decide on its use. The chair of the Evaluation Team presented the evaluation report to the Rector and members of the senior management of the University on 19 November 2005 as an oral evaluation report. A discussion of the issues described in the Evaluation Report within the University and with other partners could contribute to strengthen the quality culture at MUAF.

The national, regional and institutional context

Brno, the regional capital of South Moravia in the Czech Republic, is home to six universities, more than any other city in the country. The region was a major industrial hub, especially for textiles and engineering, in the former Czechoslovakia. Today, it is looking toward a more modern and diversified profile, for which its educational and research institutions provide a viable foundation. The country's accession to the European Union offers additional economic and political stability for a steady development. The Brno Centre for European Studies,

established in 2002 and including in addition to the city's higher education institutions also the local and regional governments, serves to co-ordinate the universities' educational programmes with partner organisations in Europe and thus to be an active constituent in the European Higher Education Area.

MUAF is one of three agricultural universities and the only one for horticulture in the Czech Republic. Established in 1919 as the University of Agriculture, it was the first university in the field in what was then Czechoslovakia, though the subject was taught on the university level in Brno already in the early 19th century. In 1919, the new University taught commerce and forestry. Commerce was restructured into a Faculty of Agriculture in 1952. In 1959, the University was reorganised with a Faculty of Agronomy and a Faculty of Agricultural Economics in addition to Forestry, and in 1985 the Faculty of Horticulture, unique in the country at the time, was added. In 1995 the institution took on the name Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry, in honour of Gregor Mendel, the "father of genetic research" who lived and worked in Brno. The University operates an arboretum and botanical gardens in Brno, university farms south of the city in Lednice and Zabcice, and a forest to the north, in Krtiny. As a Czech university, MUAF offers bachelor, master and doctoral programmes. It is a state-financed public institution and as such receives a formula-allocated budget through the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. Additional funds come from the National Research Programme and Research and Development grants, primarily the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic and the Grant Agency of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Since its establishment, the University has graduated over 21 thousand students. With the onset of mass education after regime change in 1990, enrolment has doubled, from 3532 students in 1993/94 to 7275 in 2005/05. The University has been eager to modernise in line with the demands not only of the region, as mentioned above, but also with the new demands on agriculture, agricultural education, and higher education in Europe. One of its very visible achievements is its modern Faculty of Business and Economics in the "multi-functional pavilion Q", completed in 2004. The University counts 45 institutes and departments and employs 363 academics, 98 researchers and 333 administrative staff (SER p. 5).

Constraints and institutional norms

In terms of resources

The Team was impressed by the nicely renovated buildings and well kept surroundings of the University, including the impressive natural resources in Brno and Lednice. The University is working on renovating its student facilities. The Team also felt that there was a constructive and collegial atmosphere among the academic staff and leadership. This atmosphere extended to the whole University, including the students the Team met, who were generally satisfied with the quality of their education.

University is to a high extent dependent on government funding. As a public higher education institution defined in the country's Higher Education Act, MUAF, like other universities of its kind, receives state financing according to the rules set down in the State Budget Bill through the Ministry of Youth and Sport. The State Budget Bill describes the formulas, qualitative factors and indicators by which the budget is allocated. This sets the framework for the bulk of the University's income. According to the Self-Evaluation Report, "90% of the University's operations are funded by the state" (p. 11). However, the University has some

leeway in seeking out additional resources, primarily from research and income-generating services.

MUAF is aware of the possibilities of tapping national and European research funds, and is striving to exploit these. According to the *Long-term Plan of educational, scientific, research and other activities of MUAF in Brno for 1999-2005*, "R&D at the university is considered to be the second principal component of activities along with education". The Team heard repeatedly that the academic staff shares the University's vision of itself as a research institution. Many departments are active in various research projects, and have been able to increase their incomes through national and international grants in recent years.

In spite of the fixed external constraints, the Team feels that the University should look into a number of options of raising income via external sources, like selling more services of the University to society, in order to become less dependent on government budget. MUAF has already begun to look into the profitability of its training facilities e.g. in forestry and horticulture, and advisory services, supported by the national government. The Team would encourage the University to continue and expand its efforts in this regard. As an option for the future, and in accordance with world trends, the University should seriously consider increasing its entrepreneurial activities to generate income.

The Team is aware that the internal distribution of funds within the University is also highly regulated on the national level. Nevertheless, the Team is concerned about the formalistic internal distribution of funds and would advise the University to expand the set limits and seek possibilities for financial allocation, if not of the fixed government funds then of additional ones, according to a strategy.

Financial allocation should get away from rigid formulas applicable to all faculties and be applied according to a flexible and strategic basis taking into account evolving and changing conditions, i.e. student numbers, applied vs. basic research, etc. The rigid allocation structure does not give the University freedom to develop strategically and to use funds flexibly for specific needs. The almost automatic allocation of available resources seems to the Team to have resulted in a degree of ossification, whereas a higher degree of creativity in income-generation and distribution could stimulate innovation in education, research and services within the framework of the University's overall strategy. This could be applied not just to improving the infrastructure but e.g. to inviting guest professors to expand options and variety in teaching, and possibly even the course provided in foreign languages.

The University has pinpointed the need to improve conditions at the Horticulture Faculty. The foreseen improvement of the technological infrastructure in Lednice is strongly encouraged. In order to stimulate the appreciation of students and to integrate the research and teaching staff more deeply in the University affairs, plans for closer intellectual and technical collaboration should be considered.

In terms of teaching

Graduate employment is acknowledged as very satisfactory by the alumni, outside players as well as students and other representatives of the University. The Self-Evaluation Report quotes the graduate unemployment rate at only 4% (p.11). MUAF and its Faculties have actively expanded their educational profile in order to address the requirements of modern agriculture, forestry, horticulture and economics. MUAF has introduced a number of new

subjects, such as agro-ecology, landscape engineering, waste management and others in recent years.

At the same time, the Team felt that there is room for improvement in greater co-operation between faculties. Multi- and interdisciplinarity should not be restricted by faculty structures. As science becomes more diversified and fields are splitting and merging, the traditional faculty and departmental structures must be flexible and open to the ever changing needs of the external environment. Interdisciplinary course modules taught by members of various faculties on the one hand, and short classes of special interest reflecting a particular department profile that are open to any student on the other hand, are possibilities to explore. To varying degree, the faculties have initiated and implemented inter-departmental and even inter-faculty courses. Moreover, the MUAF's *Academic Regulations – Study and Examination Rules* sets the legal framework for inter-faculty, and indeed inter-university studies. The Team feels, however, that the University management must address this problem in a strategic way and adopt a less cumbersome structure or methods of co-operation within the University faculties and departments and with outside players.

The University's external partners - many of the ones the Team met were MUAF graduates – were positive about their co-operation with the University. Some provide practical training opportunities for students and absorb MUAF graduates, or participate in teaching courses. This is again an area that could be expanded and strengthened on the central management level and integrated into a proactive strategy.

Students and external partners were happy with quality of education, as were international students. MUAF enjoys a good reputation in the Czech Republic, and is chosen not only for its proximity to home but also because students find the education provision less theoretical than what they considered other universities to be and more convertible in their future workplace.

The Team appreciates the University's reputation. To remain competitive, the Team feels however that interactive, project-oriented teaching methods used by some departments should be more widely adopted. The University has taken initial steps in this direction (SER p. 13), and is encouraged to proceed to make these a more dominant form of educational delivery. This is crucial in the increasingly competitive environment both for the University and its graduates. Team-working skills, project-oriented approaches to stimulate independent problem-solving and proposal-writing skills are necessary supplements for today's graduates together with the theoretical foundations of a field and research competence.

One of the major investments the University has made in recent years, and with it a major step in raising its competitiveness, has been the building up of the Faculty of Business and Economics, which has culminated in the construction of the Pavilion Q. The multi-functional building has expanded the University's classroom and research space in addition to housing the Business and Economics Faculty. The Faculty has greatly expanded and modernised its educational programmes to accommodate the changing needs of the field.

The Team appreciates the enormous efforts the University has put into the modernising the Faculty of Business and Economics and recognises the strategic approach behind it. At the same time, the Team believes that the role of this Faculty within University as an agricultural one is ambiguous. While the market for economics students continues to be substantial, there is also a great competition between the many similar faculties and institutions. Overly

stressing the current “attractiveness” and “marketability” of fields such as business, economics or indeed information sciences may make MUAF less competitive than linking these fields with the University’s chief profiles. One of the main strategic decisions the University has to make is to define the role of this Faculty within the profile of the University as a whole. Focusing on agriculture (forestry, horticulture)-related economics and business could give the University a competitive edge, allowing it to exploit its unique human and material resources. The Team feels that both the University and all its Faculties could profit from a greater co-operation between the Economics and Business Faculty and the other Faculties by providing services as well as graduates in this niche, combining various aspects of business/economics with the agricultural sector, in the country and in the region.

A final point in relation to teaching is the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as implemented by the University. The Team recognises this as a positive initiative in allowing for credit accumulation and mobility. The weakness of the current system is that it reflects only actual class-hour workloads. The Team encourages MUAF to refine the system to reflect actual student workload that incorporates also independent research and study as well as project work.

In terms of research

The University prides itself in its leading role in research, acknowledged by its received grants and accreditation recognition. Fully recognising the developments in their respective fields, the four Faculties have kept up with the scientific developments and changed and expanded their educational provision to meet the changing demands. This is reflected in the research projects listed in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER p.7),

- Regulation of biological and technological processes for competitive multi-functional agriculture
- Regulation of plant growth and development
- Molecular embryology – the key to healthy farm animals
- Sustainable forest and landscape management
- Wood from forests affected by human activities – properties, use and effect on inhabited environment
- Regeneration of monuments of landscape architecture and garden arts
- Forming the structure of agri-food sector and its competitiveness.

The University’s *Long-term plan of educational, scientific, research and other activities of MUAF in Brno for 1999-2005* makes research and development “the second principal component of activities along with education” (SER p. 7). New research places were set up in recent years, such as the Laboratory of Molecular Embryology and the Institute of Forest Ecology, the Gene Bank, and the Departments of Nuclear Methods and of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

The Team strongly supports the University’s continuing awareness of its sector interests and responsibility and commitment to excellence in research. The Team noted in its interviews that focus on applied research seems to be attractive for entering students and employers, which, therefore, may be something the University could incorporate in its strategy and in this way cover the whole range from basic to applied research.

The Team found that a commendable number of PhD students seemed to be involved in the University’s research projects. This, again, may be an area in which the University could

strive to achieve a greater interdisciplinarity also beyond faculty divisions and in line with an overarching University strategy.

The University is to be commended for having set aside money for internal research grants. This, however, should be awarded to promote excellence rather than distributing it according to the national formula. The University earmarks money for internal research to assist young scientists. The internal research grants should not be regarded as a full funding source for a handful of running projects. It should be clear that the purpose of the internal grant is seed money to encourage new projects, to which additional funding sources are sought for continuing projects.

Essential to a research university is its library and the quality and size of its facilities and holdings. Although the Team is aware that library holdings are decentralised into faculties, the Team visited the central library, which it found leaves room for improvement in up-to-date professional literature. Even though the Team heard that a good library is available to students at another university in the city, as a research institution, the availability of a well-built up library is essential for MUAF. This is especially valid if the University would like to increase its internationalisation, because a university library is a mirror of its research strength. The University is urged to consider at the central level how best to build up a central library (including electronic information technology options), perhaps with the incorporation of the individual faculty and departmental holdings. The Team realises that this would require additional resources and facilities. As a first step, the holdings of the different libraries could be entered into a central computerised catalogue accessible to every University member and in the long term, with the proper security provisions, to external users. The advantages of a central library would be a systematically managed collection, wider accessibility also across faculty boundaries, and a rationalisation of resources in the long-term.

In terms of organisation

The Higher Education Acts of 1990 and 1998, and the 2001 Amendment have both reinforced the independence of Czech universities and strengthened their institutional identities by, among others, giving universities the right to control its properties and seek individual sources of financing. Still, like in many similar higher education institutions in the region, the sense of identity of MUAF's constituents continues to be with its respective faculties, rather than the University as such. This is in many ways not negative, since it allows for a bottom-up initiative regarding program design, research projects, places of excellence in course programs and research projects. Furthermore, there seems to be a smooth and collegial co-operation between the central management and the faculties and teaching staff. The Team feels, nonetheless, that the decentralised power structure may impede any motivation for change when and as quickly as external developments require it. The Team recommends that the university structure be opened to allow for a more strategic, University driven management.

It is essential to strike a balance between central leadership and flow of information and initiative from the bottom. Principles of governance, which facilitate leadership within a framework of transparency and participation, should be used as a guideline to rearrange the management paradigm of the University. As everyone at MUAF is clearly aware, a modern university is more than an institution of education and research, it is a social, political and financial player whose influence transcends geographic boundaries and generations. This, together with the limited resources that a state budget can provide for a university today, require centralised, flexible, coherent and capable leadership. The Team has no intention of

holding up an ideal model for university governance, realising fully well that an established university community, and especially one that looks back to many achievements, must find its own way. The Team has found, however, that there is great potential at MUAF for taking a number of centrally driven initiatives. Some of these have already been mentioned above. Yet there is room for further initiatives in financial matters, internationalisation and quality management, some of which will be discussed below.

The Team felt concerned about the proliferation of departments and the duplication of resources. Some faculties are rearranging their departmental structure to streamline it, which the Team finds commendable. However, it feels that central management should play a role in this effort in order to promote interdisciplinary study programs, avoid duplication of efforts and save on overhead.

Managerial problems, such as the fragmented student registration system, could be ameliorated if a central office, rather than individual faculties ran it. That would not only save financial and human resources but also avoid gaps and overlaps as well as inconsistencies in the system's application.

Another centrally managed section could be a well-staffed international office. The University is commended for having appointed an International Projects Officer responsible for seeking out and applying for international projects, tenders, grants, etc. Given the initial success of the undertaking and the timeliness of such an initiative, the Team encourages MUAF to expand this position. There is also potential in enlarging the staff responsible for international affairs. The Team has found that MUAF has already a number of international students, and with the University's objective to expand its profile in this direction the administration of this area will increase. There is potential with an international office to also manage staff mobility, currently dominated by personal initiatives.

The law sets up an Administrative Board to oversee universities' property management and financial issues. Going beyond the remit of the external regulations, MUAF could expand its internal rules to take advantage of this resource. MUAF has recognised this in its Self-Evaluation Report, which the Team would like to reinforce. The Team believes that the experience and influence of the members of its Board offer a good opportunity for MUAF to establish stronger links with society and government on all levels. This opportunity should also be used to integrate external elements into the governance of the University in an organised way. An ongoing interchange about issues relating to the University as a player in society could ensure that members of the University are in touch with the "real world" that extends beyond the professional and scientific limits. In this sense, an involvement of the Board in the affairs of the University would also constitute a quality management tool by providing feedback on the University's reception among outside players.

The capacity for change

The mission

As stated in its mission, MUAF sees itself as "a public university, a centre of excellence in teaching and research, which plays a key role in the scientific, social and economic development of society" (SER p. 5).

The mission should be the heart for the formulation of the University vision for the coming ten years. The mission should not forget to focus also on the profile of the University. The University may aim to continue its historical traditions in the areas of agriculture, forestry, horticulture, and business and economics while striving to advance the fields of its chosen profile by making use of the newest techniques in these sciences and in management. The Team has heard about the long-standing discussion about name of the University. An extensive discussion about the current and long-term profile of MUAF should help the debate move forward.

The Team's primary feeling for the University is that it must work out a clear strategy, taking account of its historical achievements as a recognised, top agricultural and economic research institution in the Czech Republic. It must at the same time consider the changes in the European context and its foreseen place in the world with a given profile. For realising such a strategy, the central leadership must take on a co-ordinating role.

In the Self-Evaluation Report, MUAF has drawn up an *Action Plan* to serve as the basis for its next *Long-term Plan for 2005-2010*. The Team believes that these foundations together with the EUA Evaluation Report offer a good basis for discussing and developing a long-term strategy for the University.

Human resource strategies

Various laws and regulations external to the University govern hiring new academic staff and their promotions to higher positions. In fact, a system of promotion to scientific degrees or titles based on individual attainment of specified scientific achievements is in place on the national level, following historic traditions in much of Central Europe. Academic degrees in turn are prerequisites for advancement within the institution.

The University prides itself for its reputation as an institution with a higher academic standard. The University's staff, students, and external factors, such as accreditation standing, underscore this. The Team recognises, however, that achievement and reputation focus very dominantly on research indicators. The Self-Evaluation Report mentions several times that the average age of MUAF's senior academic staff is too high. The Team found this less of a problem than the structure of hiring and promotions as such. Rather than the quasi-automatic advancement based on purely research achievements, the University should strive to devise a strategy for staff development. The current system holds the danger of "inbreeding", whereby a professor's career advances automatically in a single institution, whereby outside partners are graduates of the institution, and whereby the great majority of the textbooks used in teaching at the University are by members of the University staff. If hiring and promotions were based on strategic need, and with the long-term plan in mind, a flexible and mobile workforce responsive also to didactic advancements and the evaluations of students could gradually be achieved.

With increasingly flexible hiring, MUAF should also begin to attract guest professors. The Team recognises that English language proficiency among staff and students needs to be improved. However it found that the University is taking steps to ameliorate this. Guest professors from neighbouring countries who have a working knowledge of Czech would bring "new blood" into the University. Furthermore, guest professors with English proficiency would advance the chances for language exposure for local students and staff. Mainly, however, new approaches to teaching and learning would enrich the University and raise its competitiveness.

A player in society and student services

The University is looking toward internationalisation. It is increasing its participation in European research projects, in providing English programs and attracting foreign students. This should be promoted on all levels and in all Faculties within the University strategic plan.

The Team commends the University on the development of the highly professional web page based on the utilisation of the university information system. The Team realises that the system is not yet complete, but would like to point out that access to information on everything from curriculum to services is limited, even though the information is supposed to be on the website.

Students noted repeatedly that they do not get enough assistance with their day-to-day problems. The more detailed website, especially when it is fully developed, should contribute to alleviating this problem. Additionally, an active student advisory department, together with the career office foreseen in the Self-Evaluation Report, would be helpful. Students may be tapped as a resource in staffing this department.

The Team found student involvement in student affairs to be low, and believes that both students and the University as a whole would profit from greater student participation. This pertains to day-to-day matters as much as governance via nationally regulated representation in University bodies, which seems to function in a very formalistic manner. In order to promote the communication between MUAF and students, the University should stimulate and facilitate the establishment of a cross-linking student organisation. If approached by students, the European Student Organisation ESIB could assist in this regard. In this way, the student representation system could be developed to be more effective in providing a link with University management.

The Team heard that students in Lednice feel a certain amount of isolation from the Brno campus. The feasibility of a shuttle bus service to the train station there or even to Brno could be explored to ease this problem.

The informal links the University has established with external players is commendable and should be institutionalised to exploit the advantages of these contacts with regard to experience, influence and financial sources. The Team felt that the “outside players” provided excellent sources for practical training for students and their placement in jobs after graduation. The Team also appreciated that the outside players delivered great value for the University in providing outside teaching sources. Their practical, hands-on experience certainly adds a much-needed flavour in terms of teaching to academic programmes. On the other hand the Team felt unclear what the external partners contribute to the University as a whole.

The practice, also mentioned by MUAF’s external partners, of tracking alumni with periodic questionnaires is excellent. The University should capitalise on the opportunity to involve external partners in playing an active role for promoting the University. We sense that there is an opportunity for external partners to incorporate their positive inclinations (see the discussion on the Administrative Board in section *In terms of organisation* above). The feeling of ownership shown by external stakeholders should be stimulated.

Internationalisation

The recent employment of an International Projects officer, and the possible expansion of the position, has been discussed in the section *In terms of organisation*.

The University has identified the need for increased internationalisation in its Self-Evaluation Report and in discussions. The Team recommends that its plan should explore niches in the international market with which the University could attract foreign students, guest professors, and grants focusing on an identified set of fields. Steps should be taken to make the University's research achievements internationally more visible. Relations with existing partners could be tapped further, and new partnerships should be sought to enhance internationalisation. Membership of the Czech Republic in the European Union would also facilitate the exploration of additional EU funding sources.

Internationalisation is more and more evident at the University. The number of courses taught in English, and the number of foreign students has increased even between the Team's two visits. But, a weak student-centred service framework and less than adequate information accessibility poses a hindrance in this development. The University should consider all the aspects of attracting and then serving foreign students in a coherent way. Provision of good services would help attract international students, which could also be a source of income for the University.

In terms of quality management

The University's Self-Evaluation Report is indicative of the fractured and ad hoc nature of quality management at MUAF. As mentioned in the *Introduction*, the compilation of a Self-Evaluation Report and the process that leads to it are a key quality management tool. The University is commendable for the dialogue it has organised for the process, involving a broad spectrum of players. At the same time, the Team felt that rank and file was not extensively involved in discussion of the Report. While the Team found the Report very informative and both self-critical and forward-looking in many respects. At the same time it felt that the Report reflects a lack of coherence, not just in style but also in content, that a central quality management office would have provided in the final editing. It should be noted, nevertheless, that the Self-Evaluation Report contains very many emerging initiatives that the Team also saw and recommends in its Evaluation Report. The University sees many possibilities for future development that the Team can only underline.

The setting up of a quality management system that runs through the whole University and involves all players in a coherent way would ensure the continual quality development of the University not just in its research achievements but in all other aspects of a modern university. A number of actions have been and continue to be taken on various levels of the University to monitor quality (SER p. 20-22). The Team urges MUAF to set up a university-level quality management system that incorporates these initiatives on the one hand, but one that also bears responsibility in enforcing necessary measures and in ensuring feedback and improvement of identified weaknesses. Despite the fact that there are numerous quality measures undertaken at various levels of the University, this is scattered. The University should consider institutionalising its approach to quality management in a coherent and strategic way. The Team found, for example, that evaluation forms only go to respective teachers and deans, but are not followed up on, at least in the minds of the students.

Questionnaires to alumni are an excellent initiative. The University should take advantage of their alumni as a source for external contacts, potential student training and employment

places, additional funding for specific projects, and reinforcing “corporate identity” with MUAF.

Conclusion and recommendations

For better overview, the Team’s main recommendations are summed up in the following.

In terms of academic leadership

- continue to strive for excellence in teaching and research in line with MUAF’s profile and strategy
- strive for greater interdisciplinarity beyond faculty divisions
- strive to devise a strategy for staff development, basing hiring and promotions on strategic need to achieve a flexible and mobile workforce responsive to educational advancements and the evaluations of students
- award internal research grants to promote excellence and encourage new projects
- build up a central library with a systematically managed collection
- interactive, project-oriented teaching methods used by some departments should be more widely adopted
- refine the ECTS system to reflect actual student workloads incorporating also independent study, research and project work
- explore niches in the international market with which to attract foreign students, guest professors, and grants focusing on an identified set of fields

In terms of strategic management and capacity for change

- open the University structure to allow for a more strategic, University driven management, striking a balance between central leadership and flow of information and initiative from the bottom, to avoid duplication of resources, but especially to facilitate change when necessary
- focus the mission also on the profile of the University
- enable greater co-operation between faculties, whereby faculty structures do not restrict multi- and interdisciplinarity, adopt a less cumbersome structure or methods of co-operation within the University faculties and departments and with outside stakeholders
- define the role of the Economics and Business Faculty within the profile of the University as a whole by focusing on agriculture (forestry, horticulture)-related economics and business
- look into a number of options of raising income via external sources, selling the services of the University to society, in order to become less dependent on the government budget
- apply financial allocations according to a flexible and strategic considerations to stimulate innovation in education, research and services within the framework of the University’s overall strategy
- set up a university-level quality management system that runs through the whole University and involves all players in a coherent way, that incorporates the existing initiatives, and bears responsibility in enforcing necessary measures and in ensuring feedback and improvement of identified weaknesses
- implement planned improvement of conditions at the Horticulture Faculty
- expand central, University departments/offices and services, including the student registration system, an international office, an active student assistant department for foreign and local students, in addition to quality management
- establish links with society and government on all levels via the Administrative Board
- integrate the external elements into the governance of the University in an organised way

- continue to expand the information on the website
- stimulate the establishment of a cross-linking student organisation, where student representation would provide a more effective link with University management
- take advantage of alumni as a source for external contacts, potential student training and placement, and additional funding for specific projects. This would also help reinforce “corporate identity” with MUAF

The Team would once again like to thank Rector Procházka and all the members of MUAF for their open and constructive contribution to the outcome of this Report. The University is urged to make its Self-Evaluation Report together with the EUA Team’s Report publicly available to its current and prospective constituency, and indeed use it as a marketing tool also externally.