

Accreditation Report

Social Science

University of Akureyri

Expert Committee Report

January 2008

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
1.1 The Expert Committee.....	2
1.2 Terms of Reference.....	2
1.3 Working Method and the process	3
1.4 Short Evaluation of the Work Process	4
2. Objectives and roles.....	5
Conclusion:	8
Recommendations:.....	8
3. Administration and organisation.....	9
Conclusion:	13
Recommendations:.....	13
4. Organisation of teaching and research.....	14
Conclusion:	17
Recommendations:.....	17
5. Personnel qualifications requirements	18
Conclusion:	20
Recommendations:.....	20
6. Admission requirements and student rights and obligations	21
Conclusion:	24
Recommendation:	24
7. Teacher and student facilities and services.....	24
Conclusion:	26
Recommendation:	26
8. Internal quality system.....	26
Conclusion:	31
Recommendation:	31
9. Description of study according to learning outcomes.....	31
Conclusion:	34
10. Finances	35
Conclusion:	36
11. Summary of findings and recommendations	37
Recommendation	39
 Signatures of the Accreditation Committee for Higher Education Institutions in the field of Social Science in Iceland 2007.....	 40
 Appendix I: Agenda for the committee’s visit to Akureyri 28 and 29 September	 41
Appendix II: List of Documents Received	43

1. Introduction

1.1 The Expert Committee

- Dr. Christian Thune, Past Executive Director of the Danish Evaluation Institute, Denmark (chair).
- Prof. Dr. Jürgen Kohler, Universität Greifswald, Germany.
- Dr. Frank Quinault, Director of Learning and Teaching Quality, University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

- Dr. Eiríkur Smári Sigurðarson, Head of Division for Science and Innovation, The Icelandic Centre for Research – RANNIS, Reykjavik, Iceland (Liaison Officer).

1.2 Terms of Reference

The Accreditation Committee was appointed to carry out a review of the social science at five different universities in Iceland: Iceland University of Education, University of Akureyri, University of Bifröst, University of Iceland and Reykjavik University respectively. The review was carried out according to Article 3 of Higher Education Institution Act (HEI), no. 63/2006. Rules no. 1067/2006 give the following instructions to the committee:

“The committee of experts shall provide the Minister of Education, Science and Culture with a report that outlines the results of the evaluation of items a to i,¹ paragraph 3, article 2 of the Rules, based on the application and information provide by Higher Education Institutions in Iceland (HEIs) in accordance with article 2, in addition to evaluation of the following factors:

1. Academic knowledge and competence of HEI within the relevant field of study and subdivisions thereof, pertaining to the quality of teaching and research, academic facilities, dissemination of knowledge and connection to community.
2. The support structure of the HEI for; the academic community, teachers and experts in the relevant field of study and the education and training of students.

¹ Items a to i referred to above are: *a. Objectives and Roles; b. Administration and Organisation; c. Organisation of teaching and research; d. Personnel qualifications requirements; e. Admission requirements and student rights and obligations; f. Teacher and student facilities and services; g. Internal quality system; h. Description of study according to learning outcomes; i. Finances.*

3. Special attention shall be paid to the strengths of the fields of study and the subdivisions thereof, with reference to course plans, particularly in relevance to links to undergraduate and graduate studies and towards other appropriate fields of study.
4. Academic standard of the field of study and subdivision thereof, in national and international context. Regard shall be taken of i.e. national and international cooperation between HEI and other institutions.

Should the conclusions of the committee be not to recommend accreditation then it shall provide a detailed report of any failure on the part of the HEI to fulfil the regulations according to article 2 or any recommendations for reparations that the HEIs must undertake before accreditation for that particular field of study can be awarded. In receipt of such report, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture will afford the HEI a specific extension to make any amendments needed. The amendments will be evaluated by the expert committee in question, who will provide the Minister of Education, Science and Culture with a report detailing the aptness of the amendments. Final decision regarding accreditation will be announced to the HEI.”

1.3 Working Method and the process

An English translation of the accreditation application was made available to the Accreditation Committee (hereafter “the panel”) at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture’s extranet (<http://ytri.stjr.is>) on 10 September 2007. The application had a number of appendices; all of them translated into English (see Appendix 2).

The Accreditation Committee (hereafter the panel) visited The University of Akureyri (hereafter UNAK or the University) from midday 28th September to midday 29th September 2007. The panel met University and Faculty leadership, administrative staff, teachers and students. All meetings took place in an open and constructive atmosphere. Before the visit the panel studied the application for accreditation (hereafter the application). This is a relatively brief document amounting to less than 10.000 words in total. As a consequence the annexes following the application have been in most respects the basis for the impressions and perspectives with which the panel approached the visit. The documentation in the annexes was of varying quality in terms of structure and presentation. For example the individual contributions from the three involved faculties would have benefited from a shared format and structure. The documentation on internal quality assurance was informative and helpful. It must be added that the University website is very transparent and well structured which made the task easier, when the panel had to access the website in order to get information on programmes, curricula and learning outcomes which was not included in the application proper.

The panel takes note that the University leadership characterised the application process as useful and instrumental in linking teachers and administration, but also that it was acknowledged at the same time that knowledge and co-ownership of the application was probably not universal among university staff and especially not among students.

After circulating drafts by email the panel agreed on a final draft in December 2007. Chapters 2 to 10 were sent to the University of Akureyri for corrections of factual mistakes and misinterpretations on Wednesday 12 December 2007. The university replied on 21 December making some specific comments which have been taken into account and corrections have been made accordingly.

1.4 Short Evaluation of the Work Process

The expert committee found the work process very rewarding in terms of experiencing Icelandic university culture and working with the concept and goals of the present quality assurance system for higher education launched by the Ministry. The committee wishes to state its sincere appreciation of its working relationship with the University of Akureyri and the four other universities involved. All demonstrated the basic academic qualities of openness and frankness, enabling discussions during the site visits to focus not only on the strengths but also in some cases on the weaker points of their social science programmes. The universities have, in most respects, made a sincere and credible effort to produce the documentation needed to show that their programmes comply with the quality criteria defined by legislation. However, it would have been easier for the committee to review the five universities in a consistent and comparable manner had they been given more detailed guidance as to the form and content of the requisite documentation.

The expert committee has, during the whole working process, been given excellent help by Rannis staff members Eiríkur Smári Sigurðarson and Magnús Lyngdal Magnússon.

These two have been instrumental not only in making practical arrangements smooth and comfortable for committee members, but also as effective interpreters of Icelandic traditions and the culture of higher education learning. During the recent demanding period of finalising and editing the reports the three committee members have further learned to value Eiríkur's and Magnús's constructive and patient professional attitude.

2. Objectives and roles

The University of Akureyri (UNAK) is located in the town of Akureyri, which with a population of 17.000 is the administrative, transportation and commercial centre of Northern Iceland and due to UNAK now also the higher learning and research centre. UNAK was established in 1987 and grew from a faculty of health sciences in 1987 to include by 2007 faculties of teacher education (from 1993), law and social sciences (from 2003) and a merged faculty of business administration and natural sciences from (2006). The three later faculties all have programmes of social science within the scope of this accreditation. The number of staff totals now 180. The number of students has grown correspondingly from 503 in 1998 to 1.402 in 2007. Business administration and natural science have 455 students, Education 392, Health sciences 302 and Law and Social Sciences 253. However, a very distinguishing characteristic of the student population is that one third is distance students.

UNAK has a strong local position with in offering higher education in Northern Iceland. As one of the deans said during the visit, "industry went out and the University came in". Considering the size of the Akureyri region it is impressive that almost half of UNAK's graduates live and work in the region compared with a quarter in the Reykjavik area. No doubt UNAK has been a significant mover of development in Northern Iceland. One example is that the number of trained teachers has gone up very significantly in the Akureyri area and now numbers app. 90 percent.

Thus UNAK is at the same time a relatively new university, a relatively small university and the only Icelandic university placed at a significant distance from Reykjavik.

All three dimensions are recognisable in the role and objectives of UNAK and must be considered in the consideration of compliance with article 2 of the HEI Act.

UNAK documents its compliance with article 2 by presenting primarily the strategy documents of the University and of the three faculties, business administration, education, and law and social sciences and the agreement made in 2004 by the Ministry of Education and UNAK for a three year period that was later extended to 2008. According to the agreement UNAK must especially strengthen research and postgraduate teaching.

Another focus of the agreement is to guarantee the quality of studies and degrees so that they correspond to the values and criteria that are accepted in Europe, i.e. participate actively and effectively in the Bologna process. At the same time UNAK is expected to fulfil a Northern role for instance within the “Northern Research Forum” and the network “Arctic University”. UNAK must further according to the agreement consult and collaborate with other Icelandic higher education institutions with the aim of utilising as well as possible the personnel and materials available.

Following this UNAK is no doubt right in underlining its impact on regional development. UNAK provides an opportunity for students to study in their home region and following this a rough majority of UNAK’s graduates find employment in the region. It brings new knowledge and ideas into the region and links regional development to international projects and programmes.

At the time of accreditation UNAK had just completed the work on general policy and strategy for the period 2007-2011. This process must also be seen in the context of the institutional assessment of UNAK that took place in 2005 at the initiative of the Ministry of Education and conducted by IMG Consultants. This assessment was in many respects positive, but also contained a number of recommendations on which the Ministry invited UNAK to follow up. One of these recommendations stressed the importance for UNAK to develop effectively a comprehensive policy for the whole University and to allow

access and direct participation of the most important and principally interested parties. As a consequence a comprehensive policy making effort was set in motion. It involved all levels of UNAK and resulted in strategies at the level of the university and of the three faculties.

The Rector states in his address preceding the University strategy that “the strategy formation ... is to be regarded as the property of the entire academic community in Akureyri”. This view was partly corroborated in meetings with teachers and students. The panel’s impression from the visit is therefore that in the faculties, among staff and students co-ownership with the policy process had been partly experienced even if less so by the students. However, now when the strategies are formally in place, the implementation is by all groups considered to be the next and potentially difficult phase.

Another important strategic priority is internationalisation of research and teaching. The University has established extensive contacts and agreements on co-operation. National co-operation is perhaps less visible. Exchange of teachers/researchers is increasing. Student exchanges on the other hand are not overly impressive. In 2006-2007 only a modest amount of student exchanges took place.

The panel heard during the visit that staff realised that co-operation is needed both within and without the University. As one staff member put it, “UNAK does not have critical mass, but we have critical networking capacity.”

The panel supports this concept of benchmarking through co-operation, but at the same time the University could benefit from a more focused approach to co-operation with international universities, so that UNAK identifies a smaller number of universities which may in one dimension or another set a credible benchmark for this University.

The faculty strategies vary in format and in content, but all have a strong focus on research and on international co-operation. The faculty strategies would though have benefited from higher level of consistency in structure or reflections on overall strategy.

UNAK has in place since 2002 an equal rights plan from 2002 and a committee on equal rights produces an annual report. The plan seems adequate and female staff members are visible at all organisational levels below that of the Rector.

Conclusion:

The panel received through the documentation and the site visit a convincing impression of UNAK's awareness of its role as a new university and not least of the regional implications. Evident was also the awareness that as a small university a corresponding effort must be made to achieve credibility towards students and stakeholders in terms of the quality of teaching and research. The panel is therefore satisfied that UNAK is in compliance with the requirements of Article 2 of the HEI Act.

Recommendations:

UNAK has several important focal points for its strategies, reflecting the agreement with the Ministry and spanning from internationalisation to increased priority on research. However, for a small university with in principle limited resources and a certain lack of critical mass it could prove difficult to advance over such a relatively broad front as is outlined in the strategies. UNAK should consider carefully whether the strategic process should include priorities or phases, where one or two objectives are given a high priority. Perhaps UNAK would benefit from profiling in strategic terms even more the challenges of the regional role and of the size of the university.

The documentation indicates a very satisfactory level of international of exchange and project sharing at staff level, but at the same time the exchange rate for students stands very low. UNAK is therefore recommended to increase the number of students on international exchange programmes.

UNAK has a very strong record role in distance learning. Therefore it is surprising that the visions and challenges connected with a strong distance learning effort are not more

visible in the strategic documents. UNAK is recommended to give more evidence at the strategic level to its work on distance learning, including development of methodologies and techniques, special activities and counselling for distant learners and implications for staff.

3. Administration and organisation

In accordance with the University Law the application states that the University Council wields supreme decisive authority within the University and is in charge of matters concerning the University in general and shapes a comprehensive policy for it. The University Council also contributes to and organizes supervision of and co-operation amongst faculties and their communications with parties outside the university including co-operation with other schools and research institutes. The Rector of the University is appointed by the Ministry on the basis of the nomination of the Council.

The University Council meets once every month. The Rector chairs and the other members are one representative appointed by the Minister of Education, two representatives of permanent teachers and only one representative of the students. It must be noted that there is no representative of the large number of part time or sessional teachers.

A Management Board is set up under the authority of the Rector and supervises co-ordination of daily operations of the University. The Management Board meets at least once a month and consists of the Rector, Faculty Deans and the Managing Director of the University Office.

Further a Quality Council has as members the Rector, Faculty Deans, the Managing Director (i.e. the Management Board) , the Director of Quality Management, a representative from the staff and the students. The role of the Quality Council will also be discussed below in the section on quality assurance.

The Quality Council meets at least once a month and has a very broad remit to

- assume responsibility for the implementation of the quality management system
- ensure that the University always satisfies the external requirements made concerning quality in its operations
- increase interest in quality matters within the University
- serve as a forum for discussions and decision making on University quality matters
- promote improvements and the development of teaching and assessment within the University
- approve, exercise supervision and ensure regular revision of study programmes and degrees
- guard the quality of research within the University
- collect, assess and react to the information about University operations concerning quality
- take a stand on important changes in University operations that may affect the quality of its operations
- discuss preparations and the implementation of self-assessment, an external assessment of the University and ensure follow-up

Finally the University Office holds meetings once a month and a seat there is held by the Managing Director, the Directors of the service units and the Director of Quality Management.

The application does not mention the University meeting which according to article 12 in the UNAK law is a consultative venue for the representatives of the University's central administration, faculties, the university office as well as those who represent students and staff. The meeting shall provide a context for professional debate and academic strategy formation within the University. The University Council may seek the opinion of the university meeting on all aspects of the operation of the University and its faculties. The

meeting is considered competent to pass motions with regard to matters that the University Council decides to refer to it specifically.

In the application is the statement “that governing of the University is in Rector’s hands as well as the University Council’s and the Faculties’.” It is tempting to pursue this formulation and question what hand is doing exactly what and in what formal and real relationship of authority. Evidently the University Council is at the top of the organisational hierarchy, but it is puzzling that no deans are members. They on the other hand form the substantial part of the administrative board. A division of formal responsibilities and real tasks seems to be in place between the University Council as an overarching board-like body on the one hand and executive administrative bodies such as Rector’s office, Management Board and the Quality Council at the other hand. The fact the Rector chairs all these bodies does on the other hand indeed point towards the key role of this position. This was also the impression of the panel during the visit.

The organisation of the three faculties is in the application far from presented within a shared structure and outline even if they are basically organised according to the UNAK law’s article 14 so that each faculty is administered by its faculty meeting and dean of the faculty.

Deans are appointed by the Rector after consultation with the University Council and the Faculty in question and the Dean is, on behalf of the faculty meeting, the chief administrator with regard to the operation of the faculty in question and it is the dean who leads strategy formation within the faculty.

Deans are supported in their administration of the faculties by faculty councils. Meetings of the Faculty Council will be held on a fortnightly basis throughout the school year. Members of the Faculty Council are the faculty dean, department heads, and two representatives of students.

However, the faculty meetings constitute the highest decision-making authority within each faculty.

The faculty meeting is responsible for overall policy formation within the university, but deals at the same time with the most important aspects of the operation of each faculty, and, together with the Dean, assumes responsibility for ensuring that each faculty is operated in accordance with law and regulations. Members are the dean of the faculty, all tenured staff and one representative of temporary teaching staff and of students respectively.

Faculty meetings are at a minimum two per semester. The formal position of the Faculty meeting is very strong, but on the other hand it seems a relevant question how this very inclusive entity may function in a manner operational enough to provide the mandate for the Dean who commands the operational level of the faculty. This situation in a sense parallels the relationship between the University Council and the Rector who commands the operational level of the university. It could seem an implication of the law that it invites the University as a whole and the individual faculties to organise themselves in relation to two organisational strategies, one more traditional giving decisive authority to broadly composed democratic bodies such as the University Council and the Faculty meetings, and another model providing the authority and decision-making competences to the university leadership of the Rector and faculty leadership of the deans.

A number of other organs and meeting fora are also in place. There are Departmental meetings which function at the departmental level parallel to those of the Faculty Council at the faculty level.

Teachers' Meetings are an informal forum at the departmental level for consultation and co-ordination regarding teaching and curriculum development. The Assessment Committee evaluates transfer credits, handles requests for exemptions from faculty rules, makes decisions in controversial cases regarding students, and makes decisions concerning the admission of new students. The Appointment Committee coordinates and

confirms the departments' requests for advertised positions within the faculty, and formulates requests to the University administration for permission to advertise.

For a small university with a total staff of 180 in permanent positions the organisation is very elaborate. The panel learned from staff members that it is very time consuming to sit on boards, councils and committees, but that on the other hand the resulting degree of co-ownership with University processes was appreciated. Another issue is how to combine top down leadership and unified governance with faculty freedom of operation and academic freedom for individual teachers and researchers.

Similarly the large contingent of part time or sessional teachers is not very visible apart from one representative in the faculty meeting. The point was raised by University leadership that the sheer volume of sessional teachers, 378 in social sciences, makes it difficult to integrate them in a meaningful manner in the policy and political processes.

Similarly the effective role and weight of student representatives seem unclear. The panel got the impression that students found their interests better served by using the informal contact possible in a small university placed by itself, than by membership of formal policy organs.

Conclusion:

The panel finds that UNAK has in place organisation and management that complies with articles 15 and 16 in the HEI Act.

Recommendations:

The University should check its organisation in view of the need firstly to make levels and lines of authority more clearly visible, secondly to be sure that there are no unnecessary duplications of political and administrative roles and functions among the various councils and committees.

The University should also look carefully into the manner in which top down leadership and unified governance may be combined with faculty freedom.

The university could benefit from surveying the students at regular intervals in order to secure knowledge on the extent to which students consider themselves to be acknowledged participants in the political and administrative process.

4. Organisation of teaching and research

UNAK presents in its application a broad range of documents on organisation of research and teaching. The panel would have welcomed a more structured and transparent presentation.

The panel visited a number of centres, such as the Research Institute (RHA), the Vilhjalmur Stefansson's Institute for arctic studies, and the School Development Centre.

The panel received a strong impression of the ongoing efforts to build a stimulating research environment. An increased focus on research is an important element in the agreement with the Ministry and of the follow up on the IMG review. Thus UNAK is moving from the original status of an institution with little research towards the status of a university with a strong and internationally competitive research profile.

Research is performed in individual faculties and in the research institutes or centres, predominantly the UNAK Research Institute. The panel met clear signs that this process is well under way so that research activity has increased in recent years, that more international research projects are set up, that more staff members are involved in research, and that there is an increasing volume of published research results.

The panel found it difficult to get a precise idea on the one hand of the extent to which research is conducted in projects or on an individual basis and on the other hand the extent to which research is tied in with the strategic research goals of the departments. But the panel got the impression that some researchers are resistant to collaboration in

research with colleagues and point to the priority on academic freedom set by the Ministry and also the University.

The focus on research strategies is so strongly articulated that it leads to the question of the balance or priority between teaching and research. One teacher stated to the panel that some researchers are so narrowly involved in their own research that it may detract from their general teaching, precisely because in a small faculty the teachers need to cover ground in their teaching that must by implication be much broader than their respective research focus.

For example it is very positive that the Faculty of Education organises not only seminars where the academic staff presents their research, but offers also assistance to those staff members that are “less advanced in research.” But it is of course a matter for concern if some staff members of this faculty are not active in research or, as the panel was told, still in the process of finishing their Master’s Degree.

In the Faculty of Business research activity has increased in recent years, there are more international research projects and all in all more staff members are involved in research with a corresponding growth in publications. The same goes for the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law which is achieving a stronger research profile in terms of the number of active researchers, international peer-reviewed publications, international collaboration and research funding.

Productive researchers have the possibility of reducing their teaching load and the number of staff applying for and receiving sabbaticals for research is growing significantly. The financial support for sabbaticals has increased in recent years. Teachers may apply for sabbaticals and the expectation is half a year sabbatical every three years. This is in international perspective a favourable cycle.

This development is no doubt positive for the University especially if care is taken that the best researchers do not become less visible as teachers of the students. A constructive

element is that students to a considerable extent are invited to take part in Faculty research projects and this is seen as an advantage for the small University in contrast to a bigger university such as University of Iceland, where there is thought to be a greater distance between teachers and students.

Sessional teachers that are full professors from universities abroad may in many cases act as catalysts for research and act help the University in adjusting its international benchmarks for the quality of research.

The University works evidently also, partly by means of the system for assessment of teaching for salary purposes to ensure the necessary flexibility required to deal with an altered teaching environment by using different methods of teaching and it is positive that in the development of distance teaching methodological differentiation is visible.

The Faculty of Business presents a relevant document on its efforts to provide teaching to international standards. The faculties of education and of law and social sciences present extensive specifications on their co-operation with other national and international universities regarding research and grants from competitive funds.

A substantial part of the documentation presents the guidelines for final projects and instructions for Master's Degree theses. The guidelines are very elaborate, but indicate a serious attitude towards the need for a disciplined approach towards these crucial study elements. The panel learned from the meeting with students that several had experienced advice and support in writing a master's thesis as being extraordinarily good.

The rules of the faculty of law and social sciences on continuous evaluation provide a good example of a system that makes it possible for a teachers as well as individual students to keep up with their own progress in their studies and make improvements where needed. Though again the rules must be characterised as elaborated to an extent that borders on the slightly bureaucratic.

In three out of four University faculties, special study committees operate, i.e. in the health science, education and business and science faculties, whereas in the faculty of law and social sciences the faculty meeting functions as the study committee.

On the University website may be found the curriculum for each programme so that students may acquaint themselves with the implications of their planned studies. The course catalogue, on the other hand, discloses the courses taught during a specified academic year and it includes more detailed information on the courses of each semester. The University must be complimented for the extent to which students may through the website obtain very elaborate information on programmes and courses. It is further very positive that the University has established the rule that the entire course catalogue for all the years of study shall be available before students begin their studies and it is not to be changed, except in cases of extreme urgency and after consultation with students and subject to their approval.

Distance teaching is as a rule not directed at individual students. Groups of distance learners meet at eight Learning Centres around Iceland where the physical and learning facilities for distance learning are provided. The Centres are linked to UNAK via TC_P/IP protocol, optical fibre or leased line. The distance learners are required to be on the UNAK campus twice each term. Interestingly enough their drop-out rate is no higher than for on-site students. Part of the explanation seems to be that the students are usually older and more committed.

Conclusion:

The panel is satisfied that the organisation of teaching and research is organised in a manner that comply with the objectives of the HEI Act and to Paragraph 3 of Article 2..

Recommendations:

At the strategic level the University emphasises the importance of building up a strong research base. However, it is important that the University takes at the same time steps to

assure staff and students that the implication is not less priority on teaching, but that teaching and research have an equal priority and mutually must support each other.

In the same vein the University should take care that those mechanisms for strengthening research do not detract at the same time from the quality of teaching.

5. Personnel qualifications requirements

The application includes a document on Rules on the Work of the Evaluation Committee, Appointments and Advancement of University Teaching Staff at the University of Akureyri. This document sets out in very elaborate detail the procedures which apply to new appointments of Lecturers/Specialists, Senior Lecturers and Professors at the University of Akureyri and – significantly – their career advancement.

It is very positive that at the levels of permanent teachers the procedures are designed to assure that appointments meet the relevant requirements in terms of teaching and research qualifications. The testing of qualifications is the task of the three members Evaluation Committee appointed by the rector on the basis of recommendations from the University Council (two members) and the Ministry of Education (one member). The Rector appoints all teachers of the University. The Evaluation Committee shall decide by a majority whether an applicant's qualifications in terms of teaching, research and administration give satisfactory evidence of competences for the advertised position.

This seems to be a credible framework for appointments of qualified staff even if the procedure reads as bordering on the bureaucratic. The processing of applications for academic positions is presented in a document with a total of no less than 25 individual procedural steps.

The panel's understanding is that the procedure focuses on teaching as well as research qualifications. So qualifications confirmed by the respective points system carry in principle an equal weight.

Obviously the current strategic priority on research must be reflected in the appointments procedure. However, it should be noted that publications in peer reviewed international journals are not required as evidence of research. Although there is a reference to publication by “respected publishing houses”, this does not normally in an international context carry nearly the weight of peer reviewed articles. It is also a little unusual that it is “permissible to take into account work on research that is in progress although the conclusions are not available, provided that the applicant describes their nature and volume and explains their status.”

The documentation makes evident that application processes should in principle be based on open advertisements, but on the contrary in most cases promotions take place, because full-time faculty members at the rank of lecturer or senior lecturer can apply for promotion without their positions being advertised.

Promotions must be in compliance with the rules on performance set by the University Council. A request for such advancement must be treated in the same manner as applications for new positions and are processed by the Evaluation Committee.

The panel notes also that the Evaluation Committee may in special circumstances make stricter or laxer demands, if it sees grounds to do so. The panel understands that among such reasons for flexibility could be the wish to attract applications from industry, but at stake here is the credibility of staff positions that should be connected with transparent research and teaching qualifications. The panel notes also that it is permissible to waive the rules on minimum research points in instances where the staff member concerned has held the post of Dean of Faculty, provided that substantial administrative requirements, including requirements on co-ordinating research within his own faculty have diminished his/her possibilities of conducting independent research. This exception rule is understandable if the focus is on non-professors to accept the appointment as dean, but the risk is that this position may become unfairly interpreted as a path to a professorship also for those who do not have the necessary research qualifications.

The University has a clear focus on the need for career development and training of staff. All staff members have once a year career development dialogues with their administrative heads. The staff member's work and expectations are open for a discussion that leads to an assessment of the need for instruction and training in teaching techniques, information technology or other issues. In the same way newly appointed members of the teaching staff are obliged to attend relevant courses of this kind. It is not evident from the documentation whether this requirement covers also part time teachers.

It is not completely clear from the application to which extent these courses are fully in place and what are the levels of attendance from teachers. A teaching committee must be responsible, but is seemingly not yet in place.

The large group of sessional teachers does not figure very prominently as a theme in the application documents. The group is diversified and includes local graduates, guest or part time teachers from the higher education institutions in the Reykjavik area and not least from abroad. The latter are in many cases full professors. In some respects the level of teachers attracted to part time positions in UNAK increases therefore positively the ratio of teachers with Doctoral Degrees.

Conclusion:

The panel considers the personnel qualifications requirements to be in compliance with articles 17 and 18 of the HEI Act.

Recommendations:

The panel recognises the argument for the University advancement system to be to encourage academic staff to be active and successful in their work and thus improve the quality of teaching and research within the University of Akureyri. On the other hand if it is the University's ambition to become a strong recognised university at the national and

international level, open advertisements must be given a priority and UNAK staff encouraged to compete on even terms with outside applicants.

The University is encouraged to give a priority to the requirement that application committees shall take into account the qualifications required of applicants for comparable positions by respected scientific institutes in this country and abroad.

Part time teachers carry proportionally a significant part of the teaching and introductory courses in teaching techniques should be obligatory for this staff group, perhaps with the exception of those who are established in teaching positions in other universities.

6. Admission requirements and student rights and obligations

Students are admitted to UNAK in accordance with the HEI Act Article 19 according to which students can be registered for studies that have completed the secondary school final examination or its equivalent. A University is also authorised to enrol students, who are equally qualified in terms of maturity and knowledge, according to the assessment of the university concerned.

The University Council has the final power of decision with regard to student intake. The Council can also restrict the number of students commencing their studies at faculties of the university in accordance with regulations it may impose. The panel has not been presented with data on the rejection rate of applicants or on the relevant recruitment patterns.

The application lists the following specific rules and criteria for acceptance:

Law, M.L.

The condition for being accepted to study for a Master's Degree in law (M.L.) is a B.A. Degree from the University of Akureyri or a comparable degree and the general mark should at least be 7 out of 10 (or a comparable mark on

another scale). Students who do not fulfil these conditions can apply for places on the M.L. program and the applications will be considered separately by the faculty.

Education, M.Ed. and Dipl.Ed.

Those who have completed a valid degree within the field of teaching, training, education, child care or other comparable line of study have a right to apply for a place in the Master's Program.

Degrees from the Icelandic Institute for Pre-School Teachers, University of Iceland, University of Akureyri, Sport Teachers' Institute, Icelandic University of Education, The Icelandic College of Education and other institutions that offer comparable education. A student has to have one year's practical experience in the fields mentioned above before or after she completed her studies. Students can apply to undertake part of their studies at other universities in Iceland or abroad.

Post Graduate Certificate of Education

The intake of students into the program and the number of ECTS units they are required to complete is regulated by the Law protecting the name and the occupational rights of primary school teachers, secondary school teachers and headmasters no. 86/1998.

Upon completion of these studies the students apply for permit to work as teachers to the ministry of education in accordance with the law. Starting in the academic year 2007-2008 two courses are on offer for PGCE. One is for those who have finished a baccalaureate degree (B.A., B.S. or comparable) or a further degree. This line of study is at master's level, 30 or 60 ECTS units. The other one, 30 ECTS units, is at baccalaureate level and is open for those who have not completed a baccalaureate degree. The completion of this line of study gives you the right to teach in secondary schools depending on other

conditions being fulfilled. It can also give the right to teach in a primary school if the applicant for permit has a five years' teaching experience in primary schools.

Business Administration, M.S.

It is a general requirement that applicants have completed a B.S. Degree in business studies at an accredited university with a first class degree. Work related experience is important in the selection process.

From an international comparative perspective it is striking that the average age of the student group is in this university as in other Icelandic universities very high and in the late twenties. Many students are even thirty and many have families and extensive previous work experience.

Teachers as well as students pointed to the maturity of students as a positive implication, but on the other hand the University has a drop out rate that is in principle worrying. Therefore it is to the University's credit that there is distinct focus on measures to identify drop outs and a conscious effort to reduce the numbers.

The Quality Council examines statistics on dropout rates once every semester and proposes remedial action, if it is deemed necessary. The student counselling service carries a primary responsibility in this respect. The introduction of new students is well organised by means amongst others of a "student success week". But there is also a focus on guidance during studies especially concerning improved work procedures in studies, so that regular courses are given on study technique and examination anxiety.

Rules on the rights and obligations of students have not been formally passed yet by the University Council, but the panel understands that they are in preparation. A draft of the code of conduct for students is in place, as are Rules on the Penalties for Plagiarism.

Conclusion:

The panel finds that procedures and requirements for admission of students comply with article 19 of the HEI Act. However, the University Council has not at the time of accreditation issued a regulation about students' rights and obligations. As a consequence the board of appeal is not yet established to deal with students' complaints as is stipulated in article 20 in the HEI Act. The panel expects the University to take immediate steps to finalise this process now in preparation.

Recommendation:

The University should work towards fulfilling the expectations of the European Standards and Guidelines to have in place credible and transparent information on student progression and success rates, employability of graduates, profile of the student population.

7. Teacher and student facilities and services

The University of Akureyri has an attractive location on a hillside above the small town of Akureyri. It covers 12.393 square meters in four main buildings. These are well proportioned and the general outlay pleasing.

The University Office attends to all services to students and teachers. The University Office was created after the organisational changes in spring of 2006, when all services to students and employees were consolidated under the direction of a managing Director.

The classrooms have adequate sizes and the technical equipment seems to be up to date, not least in the rooms for distance education.

The University offer good facilities for its students in terms of reading rooms, computer rooms and group work rooms. And importantly students have round-the-clock access to the facilities.

The staff of the Computer and Media Centre provides customer service for the computer system and the service consists in assistance and counselling to students and employees concerning hardware (in offices and classrooms) and software of the University. Students have access to computer services in University facilities. Additionally, there is a wireless network throughout the entire University so that students can connect with the Internet and send assignments to the University printers. However, beyond an initial quota of 200 prints, students have to pay for their prints whereas teachers have a free quota.

Specifically concerning distance education agreements have been made with the continuing education centres/knowledge centres in other parts of Iceland, specifying the facilities that should be provided for distance learners in each locality.

The library is relatively well stocked with app. 50.000 library volumes in place. But it shares the challenge of a new university to build up from scratch the necessary volume of books and journals so that it will reflect the academic disciplines of the University, while at the same time achieving the right balance between textbooks and research volumes.

Students expressed their general satisfaction with the library and its services, but expressed the hope that books and journals in stock would increase in numbers.

Therefore it is positive that the library takes care to provide its users with electronic access to information and sources relating to study, teaching and research such as databases and electronic periodicals. In this context it should be noted that UNAK students and faculty have access to most international first- and second-tier peer reviewed journals through the a national website www.hvar.is. The panel notes also that the Library is conscious of the special needs of the distance students and the eight learning centres.

The Media Centre commands a variety of video equipment and editing computers and software.

Conclusion:

The panel is satisfied that services and facilities provided for students and teachers meet standards that ensure that the University can fulfil its role and objectives.

Recommendation:

Developments in information technology and web-based learning make not only teachers, but also students highly dependent on access to printers and copy machines. The University should therefore consider providing not only teachers, but also students with free access to these facilities so that the students are not restricted by quota arrangements.

8. Internal quality system

One of the conclusions of the Ministry of Education after the previously mentioned IMG assessment in 2005 was the lack of a policy on quality and the need to introduce a comprehensive quality system.

Subsequently UNAK decided to hire a full-time Director of Quality Management and to set up a Quality Management System, which was approved by the University Council on May 25 2007, and covers all activities of the university, teaching, research, governance, support and institutes. The Quality Management System was commissioned by the Quality Council, whose membership includes the rector, who at the same time chairs the Council, faculty deans, managing director, director of quality management, one representative of employees and one representative of students. The very important point must therefore be made that the new quality system is exactly that, i.e. new, and that implementation of the system is at the time of the accreditation only in an initial phase.

Thus the Quality Council will by spring 2008:

- Devise a 3-year plan for the internal assessment of quality units.

- Emphasise internal customers and process efficiency.
- Monitor dropout rates each semester.
- Take into account the needs of society in planning degrees and course offerings.
- Monitor and ensure the periodic review courses of study and degrees.
- Establish a forum for training, coordination and collaboration within the university.
- Make advice on the development of curriculum and courses available.
- Offer assessment training to teachers.
- Use a system of incentives to reward its staff for their performance.
- Ensure that all managers in the university will conduct professional development interviews with their staff annually.
- Offer induction sessions for new members of staff.
- Emphasise the quantity and quality of research projects and the place of research-related postgraduate studies.
- Ensure quality inspections and follow-up.
- Collect key statistics and publish quality-related information.

It is of course very positive that the future role of the Quality Council covers important issues of quality.

But at the same time the system stands as overall very comprehensive and detailed. Nearly all relevant quality dimensions will be covered by the activities of the Quality Council. One consequence is the administrative and organisational demands involved in what is still a relatively small organisation. It would perhaps have been advisable to introduce the new system in stages based on previously decided priorities. For instance the system is presented as founded on quality units that are provided with aims and defined outcomes. It is evident from the text that quality units are identical with faculties and/or departments, but if so, it is not visible in the strategy documents from the faculties that they perceive themselves in this role.

The system is presented as being in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The precise compliance with the European Standards, however, is not made evident in the presentation of the system. The same is the case with the linkage of the quality system with the EFQM approach. It is by many, including this panel, considered an open question whether the EFQM approach is applicable to higher education institutions. One problem in this context may be that this model tends to focus on organisation and process and less on content and further that it tends also to result in a top-down approach so that the lower levels, i.e. teachers and students do not achieve the necessary involvement. Still it is the ambition of the Quality Management System that “all people within the University, students and employees are responsible for the quality of its operations and have defined roles in the plan of operations that aims at constant quality improvement”.

UNAK may be able to override these problems and certainly the plans for the quality system are presented with energy and enthusiasm. But they are still plans or very early in the operational stage. In the future the Quality Council will set a 3-year plan for internal self-assessment in light of and in accordance with the plans of the Ministry of Education. However, this panel has not had the opportunity to acquaint itself with examples of self-assessments, even if the University’s administration and quality council were the first to undergo self assessment.

It must be added that besides the quality management system based on the EFQM Excellence Model, further additional “appropriate features” will be obtained from total quality management (TQM) and the ISO 9000 series of standards. This is a very inclusive approach to available quality assurance frameworks and the result may well be a considerable overload in terms of available human resources for internal quality assurance in the University.

Consultation by the administration with students is conducted on a formal basis. The rector holds monthly meetings with the Student Union, the managing director, the director of quality management and section directors. At the meetings there is an agenda

submitted by students and issues are resolved either at meetings or during interim periods between meetings. But the panel understood from the interview with students that their focus as a group was less on the formal mechanisms in place than on the occasions for informal contacts and dialogue with leadership and teachers offered by a small university.

Suggestions on improvements and complaints are an important contribution to quality management and students have an important role to play in this respect. They are encouraged to submit suggestions and complaints to the director of quality management, who processes them and seeks solutions. The same applies to university employees.

However, the means through which UNAK assures quality of teaching, research and outcomes are perhaps the most important dimension of the internal quality assurance system.

UNAK has in this respect set itself high aims. The University should “be able to compete with respected universities in terms of study offer, teaching methods, research activity, transfer of knowledge and operations” and the contents of teaching and the teaching methods must be in accordance with international practices of the best universities. The same ambition is indicated when the Faculty of Business states in its strategy that the quality of its teaching and research must equal that of comparable faculties abroad.

The panel raised in its meetings with leadership, teachers and students the question how the University may feel confident that these quality aims are indeed met.

Leadership and teachers pointed to the many international contacts that implied that UNAK teachers had occasion to compare quality of own programmes and teaching with that in international universities. And vice versa that frequent visitors from international universities provided the same opportunities. The surveys of alumni and employers served the same purpose.

Overall the most operational mechanism for feedback on quality of teaching was by teachers and students indicated to be the systematic assessments of teaching that has hitherto been conducted by means of a survey among students at the end of each semester. The panel listened to views on teaching assessments from teachers and students that varied considerably.

Teachers argued that teaching assessments tend mostly to be about the performance during teaching, course materials, etc, but not about learning outcomes. Response rates of about 55 percent did not add credibility to the feedback from students. The questionnaires are designed centrally by administration and high level of sophistication and complication may be one explanation of the low student reply rate. Follow up is primarily the discussion at the beginning of each course where the teacher discusses with the dean the student feedback from previous courses.

Teaching assessment results are also included in career development dialogues between teachers and deans. The latter report in writing to the quality management director after the interviews on the action and/or improvements that have been decided and how they are to be followed up in order to ensure their success.

Students focused on the extent of follow up on their feedback. The point was made that no follow up for instance in regard to teaching in business led to low reply rates. In the other faculties students had the impression that in some cases teachers had not had their contracts renewed as a consequence of consistently bad feedback from students.

On this background it is positive that the University will promote more measures in teaching assessment and offer teachers methods of assessment that give them latitude for improvement of the courses while they are being taught. The goal is to ensure more active participation and more acceptances by the students, when they see a direct benefit in participating in the assessment, if it results in immediate improvement.

Conclusion:

The panel is satisfied that UNAK's internal quality assurance system is in accordance with articles 11 and 12 of the HEI Act.

Recommendation:

UNAK should consider a more lean approach to internal quality assurance at least in the initial phases of setting up the system, where it is crucial that the system is not perceived as overly ambitious and broad in its scope by staff and students and where the potential value added of such a broadly conceived effort may be questioned.

9. Description of study according to learning outcomes

A full list of programmes and degrees offered at UNAK does not follow the application. However, the following outline can be gathered from the documentation and especially from the University web site, which provides a very precise and informative breakdown on the individual programmes.

Study lines are offered for Baccalaureate Degrees (level 1) and Master's Degrees (level 2). Students can also complete shorter lines of study with diplomas at both levels (see a list of degrees). The students of the University of Akureyri have graduated with a Diploma Supplement from the year 2005.

A full time study for a baccalaureate degree is usually a three year course of study (180 ECTS) or a four year course of study (240 ECTS). A full time study for a Master's Degree is usually a two year course (120 ECTS). It is possible to complete an M.S. Degree in business studies in one and a half years (90 ECTS). A full time student's work is defined as 30 ECTS a term, 60 ECTS a year. Credits can only be obtained for those courses that students complete successfully.

The faculty of law and social sciences offers a three year university programme of study (180 ECTS credits) leading to a B.A. Degree in the following subjects:

- Psychology
- Media Studies
- Social and Economic Development
- Social Studies
- Modern Studies
- Law

Also offered are a five year programme of study leading to a certification in law. It is divided between three years of study for a B.A. Degree and a two year programme of studies in law at the Master's Degree level.

Students interested in studying more than one subject can take the three year, 180 ECTS credit course, in a major subject of study (120 ECTS) and a minor subject of study (60 ECTS), or a 240 ECTS B.A. Degree in two major subjects.

The Faculty of Education offers the possibility of study aimed at teaching at the secondary level in an advanced programme of study and study programmes aimed at teaching at primary and lower secondary school and pre-school levels. The faculty also operates a school development programme. Students graduating in the programmes of study for primary and lower secondary school and pre-school levels receive a B.Ed. Degree (180 ECTS). The advanced programme of study offers a 15 or 30 (30 or 60 ECTS) credit diploma degree, a 60 (120 ECTS) credit M.Ed. Degree and studies in teaching for certification, as a teacher, which is either 15 or 30 (30 or 60 ECTS) credits.

- Primary and Lower Secondary Education (180 ECTS)
- Pre-school Education (180 ECTS)
- Post Graduate Certificate of Education (30 ECTS)
- Post Graduate Certificate of Education (60 ECTS)

- Dipl.Ed. in Education (30 ECTS)
- Dipl.Ed. in Education (60 ECTS)
- M.Ed. Master of Education (120 ECTS)
- Certificate of Education, Undergraduate Diploma (30 ECTS)
- Certificate of Education, Undergraduate Diploma (60 ECTS)

The Faculty of Business offers a full time course in business studies of a three-year duration leading to a degree of B.Sc. in Business Administration. The programme is divided into four specialized paths of study; finance, marketing, administration and tourism. A total of 23 courses (138 ECTS) constitute a common core shared by all specializations. There are 3 (18 ECTS) specialist courses within each track of study, 2 optional modules (12 ECTS) and a final dissertation (12 ECTS) making up a total of 180 ECTS.

The Master's studies in Business Administration comprise a programme of 90 ECTS. It is possible to complete an MSc programme of 120 ECTS by writing a more comprehensive final dissertation, or 60 ECTS. Two specializations will be on offer: International finance and banking and Management in an international business environment.

- Business Administration.- Travel and Tourism
- Business Administration – Finance
- Business Administration – Marketing
- Business Administration – Management
- M.Sc. Degree in Business Administration – International Finance and Banking
- M.Sc. Degree in Business Administration – Management in an International Business Environment

On the University website may be found information on each course in the course catalogue and on the supervisory teachers, assessment and readings in the course

concerned and what language is being used. The curriculum and course catalogue are also available on the web of the university both in Icelandic and English.

Finally on the University website the learning outcomes for each programme are presented in a somewhat brief format, but still indicating basic formal compliance with the National Qualifications Framework.

During the visit the panel discussed with leadership, teachers and students the extent to which learning outcomes did actually qualify for the relevant job markets. The panel was told that the University has surveyed alumni and the response had been very positive. Out of 1.400 surveyed only 2 had been without employment. Those surveyed were satisfied with the jobs they had and they rated their university learning highly in terms of how they could apply theoretical knowledge to – particularly pleasing as UNAK has traditionally been a vocational university. The University leadership considered it relevant to survey employees, but had not yet done so.

However, the National Qualifications Framework states clearly the responsibility of the universities to set up internal evaluation systems that lead to regular and public reporting on how they ensure that the study programmes offered meet with the National Qualifications Framework. The planning for such an effort is not evident in the application. Neither is it evident for the panel how the Ministry plans the announced external evaluations of the universities to assess whether they fulfil the National Qualifications Framework.

Conclusion:

The panel is satisfied that all the programmes that it was asked to accredit are indeed producing Learning Outcomes that accord with the National Qualifications Framework, as required by Article 5 of the HEI Act. However, the panel views in principle the implementation in the context of UNAK of the two combined activities, internal and

external evaluations, as the precondition for a credible assessment of the extent to which the University fulfils the National Qualifications Framework.

10. Finances

According to the Application UNAK has established as its strategic goal, until the year 2011, to achieve increased financial and administrative freedom. It is not clear from the documented overview of finances how far the University is from this goal. But it is positive that UNAK acknowledges that the attainment of these objectives depends on a simple and efficient organisation, a good flow of information, improved planning and follow-up of plans including increased efficiency of operations.

UNAK documents a financial statement according to which UNAK's operations in the year 2006 generated a loss of ISK 15,302 thousand. According to the Balance Sheet, the assets of UNAK amounted to ISK 168,644 thousand, liabilities amounted to ISK 505,327 thousand, and its equity was negative by ISK 336,683 thousand at year-end 2006.

In accordance with Article 23 of the University Law an open annual general meeting is held where UNAK finances and plan of operations are presented and the annual financial statement and a report on finances are published in annual reports.

Faculty deans and directors are individually responsible for the preparation of such a financial plan for their particular operating units and for submitting it to the managing director and the director of the financial, staff and administrative section, who combine them in a plan of operations for UNAK as a whole. They then submit it for approval to the Management Board and the University Council and seek the approval of the Ministry of Education. The principal objective of UNAK is to have the plan of operations for the following calendar year completed and approved by the University Council and the Ministry of Education before the end of the preceding year. The panel has not had the opportunity to acquaint itself with a financial plan of operations.

Conclusion:

The panel is not prepared to take upon itself the role of an auditor of the finances of UNAK, but it feels confident that the financial status of this University makes it possible to fulfil its obligations according to Chapter VIII of the HEI Act.

11. Summary of findings and recommendations

The panel was also asked to summarise its findings by reaching a judgement in respect of each of four broad areas, as follows below.

a. Academic knowledge and competence of the HEI in the relevant field of study and subdivisions thereof, pertaining to the quality of teaching and research, academic facilities, dissemination of knowledge and connection to community.

The quality of teaching and research education, business, social sciences and law is at and in some cases above satisfactory levels. For a comparatively new university UNAK has come far in terms of academic knowledge and competences. The panel has noted especially the focus on the ambitious research strategies of the three faculties under accreditation. Leadership, staff and students share a high degree of motivation to advance UNAK as a bid for a strong regional university. Dialogue and interaction with the local community, schools, business and industry, have a noteworthy priority on part of UNAK. The academic facilities are fit for purpose.

b. The support structure of the HEI for the academic community, teachers and experts in the relevant field of study and the education and training of students.

Both staff and students are well-supported. Considering the high proportion of distance students UNAK must be recognised for the facilities it offers these and for the cooperation with the regional learning centres.

c. Special attention shall be paid to the strengths of the fields of study and the subdivisions thereof, with reference to course plans, particularly in connection with links between undergraduate and graduate studies and towards other appropriate fields of study.

Neither the time available to the panel during its visit nor the documentation available to it in advance was sufficient to judge the strength of each and every programme. What can be said, however, is that no deficiencies were detected and that the university adopts an innovative approach to planning and developments of courses.

d. Academic standard of the field of study and subdivisions thereof, in a national and international context. Notice shall be taken of national and international cooperation between HEI and other institutions.

UNAK is aware of the necessity to establish and benchmark itself in an international academic context. In this effort the university is helped by the growth in international experiences of staff and to a slightly lesser extent students. UNAK is also aware of the potential risk in an Icelandic context of becoming academically too isolated in relation to the other universities in Reykjavik and its vicinity. Therefore it is positive that UNAK has interaction with the other universities in terms of cooperation or interchange of staff. UNAK has a problem with its critical mass in terms of staff and resources. However, this should not be considered an obstacle to stronger national and even international cooperation, but an incitement in this direction.

Recommendation

The committee recommends the accreditation of the field of social science in the University of Akureyri.

**Signatures of the Accreditation Committee for Higher Education
Institutions in the field of Social Science in Iceland 2007**

Dr. Christian Thune

Past Executive Director of the Danish Evaluation Institute, Denmark (chair)

Prof. Dr. Jürgen Kohler

Universität Greifswald, Germany

Dr. Frank Quinault

Director of Learning and Teaching Quality, University of St. Andrews, Scotland

Appendix I: Agenda for the committee's visit to Akureyri 28 and 29 September

Friday 28th September

12:30 – 13:30

A meeting over a light lunch with the University Council.

Present: Members of the University Council: Thorsteinn Gunnarsson Rector, Baldur Guðnason Managing Director of Eimskip / Representative of the Minister of Education, Finnur Friðriksson Adjunct / Representative of the Teachers, Hjálmar Stefán Brynjólfsson Representative of the Students, Sólveig Ása Árnadóttir Lecturer / Representative of the Teachers.

Other present: Sigrún Magnúsdóttir Director of Quality Management, Úlfar Hauksson Director, Finance and Campus Administration, Laufey Sigurðardóttir Rector's Secretary and Birgir Guðmundsson, head of dept. of Social Science.

13:35 – 14:00

A visit to the University of Akureyri's Research Institute (RHA) and the Icelandic Tourist Institution. Brief introduction to research and the Research Institution's support to the social sciences at the University. Also a presentation of the role of the Icelandic Tourist Institution and its ties to the social sciences at the University of Akureyri.

Present: Jón Ingi Benediktsson Director of the Research Institute and Guðrún Rósa Þórsteinsdóttir director of research coordination.

14:00 -14:30

A visit to the Vilhjálmur Stefánsson's Institute. Introduction to research and Arctic studies at the Institution and its ties to the University of Akureyri and its role in international cooperation in the field.

Present: Níels Einarsson, director, Jón Haukur Ingimundarson, specialist, Joan Nymand, specialist.

14:45 -15:15

Coffee at the cafeteria at the Amtsbókasafn in Akureyri (City library). A brief introduction to the role and services of the library with respect to staff and students of social sciences at the University.

Present: Hólmkell Hreinsson, director of the Amtsbókasafn

15:30 - 16:00

A visit to the Þingvallastræti-building of the University. An introduction to the work of the School Development Center of the University and its relation to the teaching and research in education at the University.

Present: Trausti Þorseinsson, director of the School Development Center, Kristín Aðalsteinsdóttir dean of the Faculty of Education and Rúnar Sigþórsson, Associate Professor.

16:10 -17:00

Back to Sólborg Campus for a visit to the University library and Media Center.

A brief account of the resources and services of the library as well as the services of the Media Centre.

Present: Astrid Magnúsdóttir, acting director of information services, Erlendur Steinar Friðriksson project manager of distance learning.

18:30 – 19:00

A meeting at the KEA hotel, ground floor meeting room with deans and directors of study - lines. After the meeting, an informal dinner in an adjacent room with opportunity for further questions. End of dinner no later than 20:30.

Present: Þorsteinn Gunnarsson, rector, Sigurður Kristinsson, dean of Social Science and Law, Ingi Rúnar Eðvarðsson, vice dean of Business and Science; Kristín Aðalsteinsdóttir, dean of Education, Birgir Guðmundsson, head of dept. of Social Sciences, Páll Björnsson, head of dept. of Modern Studies, Timothy Murphy, head of dept. Law (Undergraduate), Ágúst Þór Árnason, project manager Social Sciences and Law, Bjarni Hjarðar, dean of Business, Halldóra Haraldsdóttir, head of dept. of Preschools, María Steingrímisdóttir, head of dept. of Elementary schools and Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson head of graduate studies in Education.

Saturday 29th September

10:00 – 10:30

A small meeting with three teachers' representatives in the field of social sciences on the scope and nature of research in their respective fields.

Present: Kjartan Ólafsson, lector, Law and Social Science, Ingi Rúnar Eðvarðsson, professor, Business, Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson, professor, Education.

10:30 -11:30

A larger meeting with representatives of teachers, but now of different fields and faculties: Education, Business and Law and social science.

Present: Representatives of academic staff, permanent staff and part time staff. Halldóra Hjálmarsdóttir, Helgi Gestsson, Finnur Friðriksson, Rósa Júlíusdóttir, Rúna Sigþórsson, Jóan Nymand, Hjalti Jóhannsson, Kjartan Ólafsson, Ingólfur Jóhannesson, Birgir Guðmundsson, Fjóra Jónsdóttir, Ágúst Árnason, Garret Barden, Kristín Guðmundsdóttir, Ingi Rúnar Eðvaldson og Jón Haukur Ingimundarson.

11:30- 12:30

Meeting with representatives of students: undergraduate, graduate students and former students.

Present: Students from all relevant faculties and in different stages of their studies. Also some graduates from the University of Akureyri.

Appendix II: List of Documents Received

1. Higher Education Act 63/2006 (draft translation).
2. Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions according to Article 3 of Higher Education Institution Act, No. 63/2006 (draft translation).
3. National Qualification Framework Iceland (draft translation).
4. Checklist on structure and approach on Expert Committee report and recommendations.

5. Application for Accreditation unak SS
6. Agreement between the Ministry
7. Environmental Policy
8. Equal Rights Plan
9. Faculty of Business and Sciences Strategy
10. Faculty of Education Strategy
11. Faculty of Law and Social Sciences Strategy
12. UNAK Strategy
13. Study Programmes and Statistics
14. Supporting and co-operating institutions
15. Assessment of Teaching Agreement
16. Contract on Academic Study Programmes
17. FBS Academic competence
18. FBS Codes for the faculty of business
19. FBS Guidelines regarding Final Projects
20. FBS Regulations for masters degree
21. FE Academic Competence
22. FE M.Ed. Thesis
23. FE Research
24. FE Rules on Final Projects
25. FE Study Assessment Committee
26. FSS Academic Competence
27. FSS Code of Conduct Students
28. FSS Continuous Evaluation
29. FSS Ethical Standards Teachers
30. FSS Language Policy
31. FSS Rules on Final Projects
32. Research Leaves 2000-2008
33. Evaluation Committee
34. Processing Applications
35. Rules on Exemptions from Advertisements
36. Soc Academic Staff 2006-2007
37. Code of Conduct Students-Draft
38. Rules of Penalties for Plagiarism
39. Facilities

40. Facilities and Services
41. Media Centre and Computers
42. IMG Assessment
43. Letter of the Minister on IMG Assessment
44. Letter to the Ministry from Rector Jan 2006
45. Quality Management System
46. Status of reactions to IMG May 2007
47. UNAK Teaching Assessment
48. UNAK Financial Statement 2006