



Háskólinn
á Akureyri
University
of Akureyri

ANNUAL
QUALITY REPORT

JUNE
2026

CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	3
1. INTRODUCTION	4
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.....	4
2. PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS IWR....	7
2.1 ALIGNMENT BETWEEN SCHOOL STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY	7
2.2 PROGRAMME ORGANISATION AND OVERSIGHT	8
2.3 FLEXIBLE LEARNING MODEL.....	9
2.4 DISTANCE AND ON-CAMPUS ACTIVITIES	9
2.5 FLEXIBLE LEARNING MODALITIES AND STAFF WORKLOAD	9
2.6 STUDENT COMMUNITY	11
2.7 EVIDENCE-BASED QUALITY ENHANCEMENT	12
2.8 THE “HOW” OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT	13
2.9 EXPANSION OF DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES	14
2.10 TRAINING OF DOCTORAL SUPERVISORS	14
2.11 INTERNATIONALISATION	15
2.12 BUDGETING OF NEW PROGRAMMES	16
3. COMMISSIONED REVIEW	17
3.1 DEVELOPING A MORE FORMAL STUDY PLAN	17
3.2 MANDATORY SKILLS COURSES	17
3.3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE PHD PROGRAMME	17
4. INTERNAL QUALITY REVIEWS	18
THEMES FROM ANNUAL MONITORING	19
UPCOMING INTERNAL REVIEWS	20
INTERNAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH MANAGEMENT	20



LIST OF ACRONYMS

DQHR	Director of Quality and Human Resources
CTL	Center of Teaching and Learning and IT
IWR	Institution-Wide Review
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
QEF3	Quality Enhancement Framework 3
UNAK	University of Akureyri

1. INTRODUCTION

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Following approximately two years of negotiations, merger discussions with Bifröst University were officially discontinued in October 2025.

In November 2025, the Rector engaged external consultants to assist with an evaluation of the university's support and administrative structure. Following this review, preparations for changes to the organisational structure of the university's support units were announced in March 2026. These changes will take effect August 1, 2026, and involve restructuring the two existing support divisions into four separate departments, a process which entails several management changes. The new organisational structure is intended to simplify lines of communication and better support the university's strategic priorities.

Approximately a year after mould was first discovered in some of the university's facilities, most

staff have returned to their regular workspaces following extensive remediation efforts. However, mould has recently been detected in another university building, creating renewed uncertainty and disruption for staff and management. The university is continuing to monitor the situation closely and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of both staff and students.

A new quality handbook was introduced on the university's internal website. It was developed in accordance with QEF3, with a strong emphasis on user-friendliness and ensuring that all quality-related documents are accessible in one central location for both staff and students. Work is currently underway to identify a system that can manage document version control while simultaneously allowing documents to be published on the university's internal web platform.



This Annual Quality Report reviews progress made in response to recommendations from previous quality reviews, outlines ongoing quality enhancement initiatives, evaluation processes, and presents planned quality enhancement priorities and projects for the upcoming academic year.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

A new policy on the responsible use of AI was implemented in 2025. As noted in the previous report, an agreement was signed for the use of Scite, which provides smart citations, access to extensive databases, and analytical tools that support research activities and development of critical thinking in teaching and academic work. As part of the implementation process, Scite is providing targeted support through workshops, training sessions and professional development courses for academic staff.

Scite includes an AI-powered assistant integrated with OpenAI and Anthropic that enables users to obtain responses based exclusively on peer-reviewed and documented sources, thereby enhancing accuracy and reliability while reducing the risk of misleading or fabricated outputs associated with general-purpose large language model tools. Since the appointment of an AI specialist within the

university, surveys have been conducted among staff members as part of an initiative to assess the impact of the role and related developments. The survey has now been administered on three occasions, and the results are expected to provide valuable insights into the effects of having dedicated expertise in AI within the university.

INNOVATION

The University of Akureyri hired a project manager for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in 2025, which created increased opportunities for staff, students and the community. In light of this, it was decided to extend the appointment, and the position is now called Innovation Manager. The position has strengthened the role of the University as one of the focal points in the innovation ecosystem of North Iceland, where the university brings together knowledge, initiative, business and support systems to create increased social and economic impacts.



There is now close collaboration with Drift EA, an NGO dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship and innovation in northern, where the Innovation Manager is actively involved in strengthening the innovation ecosystem in North Iceland. Collaboration with other supporting partners, such as *Hraðið* Innovation Centre in Húsavík, has also increased, and the University of Akureyri has thus strengthened its connections with entrepreneurs and innovation support systems across Northern Iceland.

During 2025, emphasis has been placed on targeted support for entrepreneurs within the university and in the region. The University has also been working

on its first intellectual property policy, which is an important part of building a clearer infrastructure for innovation, application of knowledge and development of ideas that arise from the university's teaching, research and community-related work. UNAK also took an active part in establishing *Snjallræði*, the country's first university accelerator, in collaboration with Reykjavík University and the University of Iceland. International connections are also being developed with the goal of financing and developing a model for universities in more dispersed areas on how to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurial skills in their operations.



2. PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS IWR

All areas for improvement highlighted in the last IWR have been addressed and the focus now is on implementation, monitoring progress, and refining actions as needed. Below is a summary of progress thus far.

2.1 ALIGNMENT BETWEEN SCHOOL STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY

RECOMMENDATION

In developing the next phase strategy, the University should give careful consideration to alignment between new school structures and institutional strategic vision and goals.

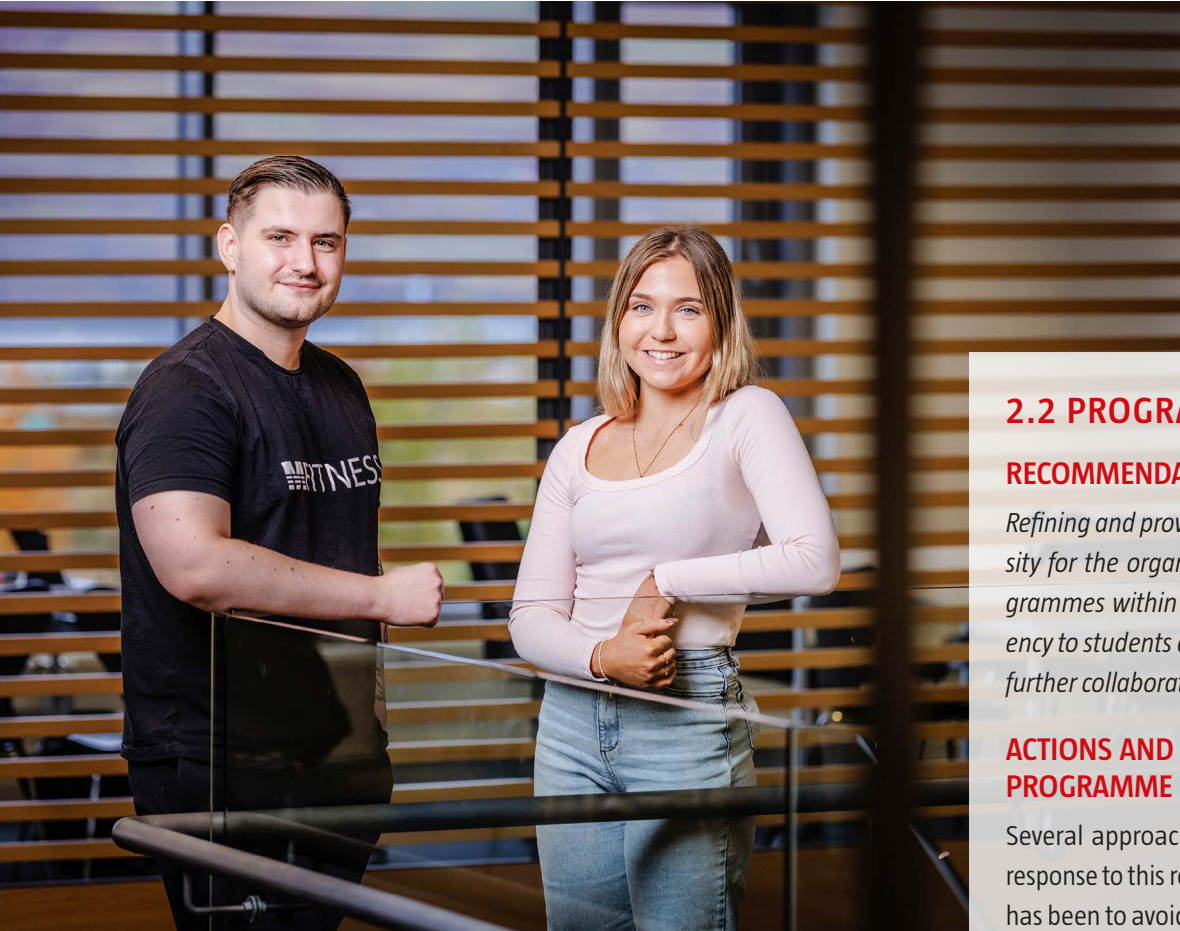
ACTIONS AND PROGRESS, STRATEGY

All units of the university have been actively involved in implementation of the institutional strategy during this reporting period. Support services completed structured goal-setting processes based on an impact model framework, ensuring clearer expected outcomes and contribution to the university's long-term strategic objectives. These objectives are now also monitored through dashboards accessible to all managers,

providing real-time visibility of progress and supporting more data-informed decision-making across the university.

In addition, the templates for faculties' quality reports have been revised to include a section requiring them to explicitly demonstrate how their activities align with the strategy. Parallel to this, specific quality reporting templates have been developed for support services, requiring them to address a set of comparable questions regarding strategic alignment, performance, and impact.

Various initiatives have also been undertaken within individual schools and faculties to better align their activities, priorities, and development projects with the institutional strategy and



its strategic objectives. These developments are intended to strengthen consistency in reporting and to enhance the university's ability to monitor and evaluate strategic implementation across all parts of the institution.

Overall, the implementation of these measures is progressing well and is contributing to a more coherent and strategically aligned approach across the university.

2.2 PROGRAMME ORGANISATION AND OVERSIGHT

RECOMMENDATION

Refining and providing clarity across the University for the organisation and oversight of programmes within schools will provide transparency to students and staff, as well as facilitating further collaboration and increased efficiencies.

ACTIONS AND PROGRESS, PROGRAMME OVERSIGHT

Several approaches have been considered in response to this recommendation. A key priority has been to avoid adding to the already significant administrative workload, while identifying a solution that aligns with existing structures and the governance responsibilities of faculties. All faculties are preparing for upcoming periodic reviews, and it has therefore been considered beneficial to align the implementation of strengthened programme oversight structures with these review processes. As part of this work, faculties will define who holds oversight responsibility for each programme within the

faculty, such as the Head of Faculty or Programme Director, based on the already clarified scope and content of the role. This is expected to provide a more coherent framework for clarifying responsibilities, strengthening oversight practices, and embedding programme-level quality assurance more systematically across the university.

Considerable improvements have already been made in relation to the revision and clarification of academic processes. These include clearer timelines and responsibilities for updates to curricula and course catalogues, improved procedures for responding to course evaluations, and strengthened support processes for applications relating to new study programmes. Emphasis has also been placed on the role of finance and analytics functions in programme development and review.



All areas for improvement highlighted in the last IWR have been addressed and the focus now is on implementation, monitoring progress, and refining actions as needed. Below is a summary of progress thus far.

2.3 FLEXIBLE LEARNING MODEL

2.4 DISTANCE AND ON-CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

2.5 FLEXIBLE LEARNING MODALITIES AND STAFF WORKLOAD

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further clarity on and consistency of the Flexible Learning model and its requirements will promote student-centred learning and unify experiences for students and external stakeholders.

The University is urged to optimise the blend of distance and on-campus activities in its programmes and ensure that expectations for each are communicated to students in a clear and timely fashion

Developing clearer structures and guidelines for Flexible Learning modalities across programmes will provide an opportunity to systematically document staff workload, and in turn ensure appropriate levels of contribution from full-time and sessional staff across the University.

ACTIONS AND PROGRESS

Faculties have reviewed the information provided to prospective students to clarify how studies are organised within the Flexible Learning model.

However, the student information system used by Icelandic universities, *Ugla*, does not fully support the university's specific study arrangements, making it difficult to present the model in sufficient detail. To address this, the university has focused on providing clearer information on programme webpages and during the admissions process, helping prospective students better understand what to expect before beginning their studies.

This work has been complemented by measures aimed at improving the student experience once studies have begun. The university has sought to improve the quality and consistency of on-site study sessions by developing guidelines for teachers. These guidelines support teachers in planning purposeful on-campus activities and in clarifying the role of such sessions within each course. In addition, teachers provide students with information at the beginning of the semester, through course plans, about the planned structure of teaching and learning activities



for the semester. Student satisfaction with on-site study sessions is monitored through course evaluations, and follow-up support is provided where results fall below the benchmark approved by the Quality Council.

The university has taken steps to strengthen oversight of teaching arrangements, including regular monitoring of the proportion and contribution of sessional staff, with the aim of supporting an appropriate balance of teaching responsibilities across programmes. It is hoped that increased clarity around the Flexible Learning model will also help reduce uncertainty and workload pressures by supporting teachers

in understanding their role more clearly and knowing where to seek guidance and support when needed.

Like many other workplaces, particularly within the public sector, the university has experienced increased levels of stress and sick leave among staff in recent years. While this reflects a broader societal trend rather than a challenge unique to the university, the institution recognises the importance of responding proactively and supporting staff wellbeing. Measures such as wellbeing services, supportive absence follow-up practices, and ongoing monitoring of staff welfare have therefore remained an important priority.



2.6 STUDENT COMMUNITY

RECOMMENDATION

Creating an effective on-campus sense of community with appropriate activities, without ignoring or disadvantaging distance-only students, is a matter that requires some urgency.

ACTIONS AND PROGRESS

The role of the Project Manager for the Learning Community has been established for two years, long enough allow for the position to have a meaningful impact and allow for its evaluation. The position has devel-

oped rapidly, with a strong emphasis on building and strengthening the learning community through close collaboration with academic faculties, the Student Association, and support services across the university. One of the key priorities of the role has been the continued development of the Student Pulse initiative, a project launched by UNAK in 2020 with the aim of strengthening student feedback mechanisms and thereby enhancing the quality of education. Survey results indicate that, since the introduction of the Student Pulse initiative, both students' perception of

having opportunities to express their views and their perception that feedback is acted upon have increased by approximately 20%.

In addition, the role includes providing guidance and support, as well as taking an active part in promotional activities and university events. The position has now become a visible and important point of contact within UNAK, with increasing responsibilities and continued development anticipated.



2.7 EVIDENCE-BASED QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

RECOMMENDATION

The University should continue implementation and further development of systematic, evidence-based approaches to inform quality enhancement, in particular for the use of data dashboards to inform quality assurance processes and enhancement activities.

ACTIONS AND PROGRESS

The University has continued to strengthen its use of data and evidence-based decision-making, now embedded in the new strategic framework. Recent work has focused on consolidating and presenting data in a more systematic and user-oriented way, including through dashboards and reporting templates tailored to the needs of different stakeholder groups.

Heads of Faculties are supported by the Quality and Human Resources Team in interpreting and responding to key performance data through regular consultations and structured reporting processes. This ongoing dialogue has led to more targeted quality enhancement actions within and across faculties, including benchmarking activities, improved procedures for responding to course evaluation results, and the development of new working practices. Performance thresholds and benchmarks have also been defined for key quality indicators in the University's quality dashboard, supporting a more systematic approach to monitoring and improvement.

Overall, the use of dashboards and key quality indicators is developing well and is being continuously improved through structured dialogue with faculties and departments.



2.8 THE “HOW” OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

RECOMMENDATION

Providing additional information, that is clear and consistent, on the “how” of teaching, learning and assessment would benefit both students and staff.

ACTIONS AND PROGRESS

Given the university’s blended learning environment, where teaching and learning take place both on campus and at a distance, digital competence is an important prerequisite for high-quality teaching. The university has therefore developed a document outlining expectations regarding teachers’ digital competence, as well as key principles for teaching methods and assessment. The document is used in induction meetings with new

academic staff, and current teachers are also offered a self-assessment tool to help them reflect on their own competence and identify potential development needs. Further developments have been made in strengthening quality assurance processes related to teaching and learning. A new procedure for responding to course evaluation results was recently approved by the Quality Council as mentioned in chapter 2.6. Under this process, courses are expected to achieve a minimum student evaluation score of 6. Where this benchmark is not met, academic staff are offered targeted support and guidance through follow-up discussions with the Quality and Human Resources team.

In addition, three specific quality indicators have been

defined in relation to on-site study sessions, workload, and the clarity of course structure in the learning management system. Staff members will automatically receive tailored resources and support materials linked to the relevant indicator when results fall below the defined target.

Work has also been undertaken to harmonise institutional procedures for grade registration in Ugla. Previously, different approaches were used across the university when recording failing grades. The newly approved guidelines aim to ensure greater consistency in the assessment and recording of student achievement across all faculties and departments.



2.9 EXPANSION OF DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES

RECOMMENDATION

The University has been well served by its cautious approach to accepting its first doctoral students but is encouraged to expand the doctoral programmes as additional external funding becomes available.

ACTIONS AND PROGRESS

The University of Akureyri will award two

funded doctoral student positions in the autumn semester, with the application deadline in June. Three positions will be awarded in 2027. The positions are structured as 25% teaching and 75% research an arrangement which extends the doctoral study period from three to four years, allowing students to combine academic teaching responsibilities with their research training.

2.10 TRAINING OF DOCTORAL SUPERVISORS

RECOMMENDATION

Training of doctoral supervisors has begun and needs, in the view of the Team, to be rolled out across all programmes.

ACTIONS AND PROGRESS, TRAINING OF DOCTORAL SUPERVISORS

Benchmarking, both nationally and internationally, has informed the university's approach to the training of doctoral supervisors. This indicates that mandatory supervisor training is not common practice in many comparable institutions. The university has therefore focused on developing a varied training offer for doctoral supervisors rather than making participation compulsory at this stage. Funding secured from the Ministry has enabled the university to invite domestic and international experts to deliver specialised training courses, thereby strengthening support for supervisors and contributing to the ongoing development of the doctoral education.



2.11 INTERNATIONALISATION

RECOMMENDATION

The University is strongly encouraged to expand internationalisation opportunities for teaching, research and involvement for students, faculty and staff.

ACTIONS AND PROGRESS, INTERNATIONALISATION

The university has experienced growth in incoming student mobility in recent years, and staff mobility has also increased. These developments indicate that recent efforts to strengthen international opportunities are beginning to have a positive effect. Further growth is expected through the university's active participation and strong engagement in Erasmus+ projects.

The university has systematically supported faculties in building international networks for the purpose of

applying for research funding through international funding mechanisms. This has included encouraging academic staff to participate in COST Actions with support from the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís), as well as promoting Nordic and Arctic networking grants. These measures have contributed to increased activity and new funding awards, including from Horizon, NORDFORSK, Biodivera+, Nordic Council of Ministers, Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic, the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) and the University of the Arctic. In addition, new Research Collaboration webpages have been developed to promote relevant research areas and strengthen connections with European and Nordic partners, including in preparation for upcoming EEA and Norway Grant opportunities.



2.12 BUDGETING OF NEW PROGRAMMES

RECOMMENDATION

The University is urged to create clearer rules for budgeting new programmes and programme changes that acknowledge teaching workload and quality standards. These rules would be clear on the ideal contribution of sessional staff to teaching loads at individual programme level.

ACTIONS AND PROGRESS, CLEARER BUDGETING OF PROGRAMMES

Templates have been developed for both new study programme proposals and for estimating the financial implications of such proposals. These measures are already providing greater clarity in the budgeting process, particularly in relation to the long-term financial implications of new programmes, staffing requirements for teaching, and potential increased demands on support services.



3. COMMISSIONED REVIEW

In 2024, the university underwent an external review as part of its application for authorisation to award doctoral degrees in Education and Psychology. The review panel issued three recommendations at the institutional level, and updates on the progress made in response to these recommendations are outlined below. More specific recommendations directed at individual faculties are being addressed within the respective faculties through ongoing and constructive development processes.

3.1 DEVELOPING A MORE FORMAL STUDY PLAN RECOMMENDATION

Consider developing a more formal study plan for each PhD student, explicitly reflecting how they will meet the knowledge, competences and skills outlined in the NQF at doctoral level.

Development of a more formal study plan for PhD students has been underway during the past year. Drafts have now been prepared, explicitly reflecting the knowledge, competences, and skills outlined in the National quality framework at doctoral level, and feedback is currently being gathered from relevant stakeholders before further implementation.

3.3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE PHD PROGRAMME

Plans to establish a tailored and systematic process for monitoring and evaluating the PhD programme are being developed collaboratively by the Doctoral Studies Council and Quality Council. An initial planning meeting has taken place between the Doctoral Studies Council, Director of Quality and Human Resources, and the Quality Project Manager. The

3.2 MANDATORY SKILLS COURSES

The establishment of mandatory skills courses for PhD students, including topics such as research ethics and academic writing, has been widely discussed, with differing perspectives emerging regarding if the courses should be mandatory or not. Nevertheless, several important steps have already been taken. The university currently offers four courses specifically tailored to doctoral students, and there are ongoing discussion and growing support for making one of these courses mandatory as part of doctoral studies.

next steps involve further developing the framework and identifying appropriate methods and indicators for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

4. INTERNAL QUALITY REVIEWS

In terms of internal quality assurance, the university's primary focus during this academic year has been on annual monitoring processes and preparation for upcoming periodic reviews scheduled next year. Systematic annual monitoring continues to support faculties in strengthening their quality practices and building a solid foundation for future review processes. The approach remains human-centred and practical, with ongoing support, dialogue, and training provided throughout the academic year.

SUPPORT SERVICES: PARTICIPATING UNITS

Library and Information Services	Continuing Education Centre
Financial, Staff and Administrative Section	Centre for Teaching, Learning and IT (KHA)
Student Counselling Services	Student Registry
Real Estate and Operations	International Office
University of Akureyri Research Centre (RHA)	Marketing and Public Relations
Quality and HR	Center for Doctoral Studies
School Office of Health, Business and Natural Sciences	
School Office of Humanities and Social Sciences	

ANNUAL MONITORING: PARTICIPATING FACULTIES

Faculty of Business Administration	Faculty of Education
Faculty of Natural Resource Sciences	Faculty of Law
Faculty of Nursing	Faculty of Psychology
Faculty of Occupational Therapy	Faculty of Social Sciences

During this academic year, particular emphasis has been placed on implementation of quality monitoring processes within administrative and support services. Annual quality reports for these units have now been introduced, with a strong focus on self-evaluation, the use of benchmarking indicators, and clearer alignment with the university's strategic priorities. All units are expected to submit their first reports in June. The reports will subsequently be analysed thematically, followed by a joint meeting with managers across the university where examples of best practice and shared learning points will be discussed and exchanged.



THEMES FROM ANNUAL MONITORING

The annual quality reports reveal several common themes across faculties and departments. A particularly positive trend is the increased focus on discussions relating to teaching methods, student learning experiences, and alignment with qualification frameworks. There is a strong overall commitment to continuous improvement and reflective practice across the institution. At the same time, the reports highlight several ongoing challenges. One recurring issue concerns the follow-up and completion of actions from previous quality reviews. To address this, increased support has been provided to faculties, including the introduction of a shared template to help track and manage actions in one central location. The reports also point to a further challenge related to the steady increase in student numbers in recent years and the difficulty of recruiting academic staff at a pace that fully reflects this growth.

Examples of best practice are shared at the annual academic leadership meeting as part of the university's ongoing benchlearning activities. This year, the selected examples illustrated how faculties and departments use evidence and structured follow-up to support continuous improvement. The Faculty of Education presented its systematic use of strategies, while the Faculty of Occupational Therapy shared its analysis of grading patterns and ongoing work to ensure more consistent responses to student feedback on assessment. The Department of Psychology presented its approach to analysing and following up on staff and student survey results, demonstrating how such evidence is used to inform further quality enhancement.



UPCOMING INTERNAL REVIEWS

All faculties will undertake periodic reviews of their study programmes during the next academic year, and as part of this process, benchmarking exercises will be conducted towards selected international universities.

PERIODIC REVIEW: PARTICIPATING FACULTIES

Faculty of Business Administration	Faculty of Education
Faculty of Natural Resource Sciences	Faculty of Law
Faculty of Nursing	Faculty of Psychology
Faculty of Occupational Therapy	Faculty of Social Sciences

Administrative and support services will continue their ongoing quality work. In addition, selected aspects of the institutional self-evaluation process will be discussed further within faculties and administrative units as part of the university's continued quality enhancement efforts.

INTERNAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH MANAGEMENT

Over the past academic year focus has continued to be placed on building pre- and post-award services. Numerous events and workshops on the different aspects of research and grant applications were offered, ranging from building research groups to preparing a grant budget and applying for a grant. In lieu of doing the planned survey on satisfaction with existing research

services, it was decided to delay the survey and start with a more focused work on identifying gaps in pre- and post-award services. This will entail working with groups from relevant support services and academia to identify and work to address the most relevant gaps over the upcoming year.

The process to evaluate the research impact of UNAK has not yet been agreed upon, and while consensus regarding the approach to adopt is not yet agreed upon, we are confident that we significant strides will be made in the Fall semester with planned meetings and discussions amongst relevant stakeholders.

