

Accreditation report

Institutional Accreditation at the

Charisma University

Turks and Caicos Islands (British West Indies)

I Procedure

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Standing Expert Committee: Standing expert committee “System Accreditation”

Attendance by ACQUIN office: Dr. Alexander Rudolph

Decisions of the Accreditation Commission: 24 September 2019, 24 March 2020

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Date of the report: 10 September 2019

The evaluation report of the peer group is based on the self-evaluation report of the HEI and extensive discussions with the head of the HEI, staff representatives and students.

The basis for the assessment is first of all part 1 of the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG). Further, the evaluation is based on criteria for the institutional accreditation of non-state higher education institution of the *German Council of Science and Humanities* (GSC) („Guidelines for the accreditation of non-state higher education institutions“ Section B.IV).

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II Introduction

1 The Higher Education System of Turks and Caicos Islands

The Turks and Caicos Islands (in the following: TCI) are two groups of islands separated by a deep-water channel, lying southeast of the Bahamas and north of Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and some 575 miles from Miami. TCI holds a ministerial system of government, and Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of State, represented locally by a United Kingdom appointed Governor. The education systems throughout the area (British West Indies) are based on the British model of formal education.

The educational system of TCI dates back to the immediate post-emancipation period in the early 1840s. For more than a century, a primary focus of the government was to provide primary education for all members of the population. Whilst one of the primary goals remain tight budgetary control and improved public financial management, the Government of TCI is moving to address education and the empowerment of its people in order to address inequalities and raise the performance, productivity, and the output of both the economy and society. In particular, education, including technical and vocational education, and enhancing the country resources to match the growing demands of society and the economy, represents one of the priorities for the TCI Development Strategy 2013 – 2017. The current Education Sector Plan 2018 – 2022 of the TCI's government consequently lies its focus on the progression and development of (Pre-)Primary and secondary education, while in the field of tertiary education technical and vocational education and training is of interest.

The Ministry of Education is the Government entity responsible for the management, administration, and a provider of quality educational initiatives in TCI. The Education system in TCI is governed by the Education Ordinance, which is the legal instrument that gives recognition to three stages of public education – Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. Tertiary education is governed by the Community College Ordinance (1994) and the Universities and Colleges Ordinance. The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Community College is a quasi-government/statutory body and has campuses on both Grand Turk and Providenciales. Several higher education institutions offer their training programmes, among them for instance a branch of the University of the West Indies, a public university system established to serve the higher education needs of the residents of 17 English-speaking countries and territories in the Caribbean. The other (around five) providers of higher education are private institutions.

2 Short profile of Charisma University

Established in 2011 Charisma University (in the following: Charisma University) is a private, non-profit institution recognized by the TCI's Ministry of Education as a degree-granting institution for

associate's degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and the doctorate along with Certificate programs.

Since all offered training programmes are designed as distance learning programmes, Charisma University offers their programmes online all around the world. Therefore, the actual facilities and staff needed on site in TCI are of minor scope; lecturers can reside all over the world, for example from North and South America over the Caribbean area and Africa to Australia.

The offered study programmes are located in the six departments School of Business, School of Education, School of Philosophy and Religion, School of Psychology and Behavioral Science, School of Law and School of Health Sciences.

The word "charisma", which is derived from ancient Greek, as part of the university's name should refer to an extraordinary power, such as the ability to work miracles, granted by the Holy Spirit. According to the self-statement, individuals coming to Charisma University shall receive an "extraordinary power" to learn and to develop oneself in cooperation with the Creator. Hence, Charisma University describes itself as committed to enhancing the intellectual, personal, and professional growth of the students, which should be accomplished by providing low tuition, a challenging curriculum, a highly qualified faculty, and strong academic support.

Funded by tuition fees, enrolled students pay a course fee for each Credit they attend within their programme. The charges start with 175,- US-Dollars for bachelor's degree credits, 205,- \$ for master's degree credits and end up with 310,- \$ for Doctoral degree credits. The overall costs of an Associate Degree consisting of 20 classes and 60 credits are 11.400,- \$, while a bachelor's degree with 40 classes and 120 credits sums up to 22.800,- \$. For a master's degree with 14 classes and 40 credits a total amount of 9.955,- \$ has to be paid (including a thesis fee of 1.200,- \$). A doctoral degree amounts altogether to 26.875,- \$ showing 25 classes with overall 75 credits, while the dissertation fee is 2.500,- \$. TCI residents are given a discount (all data status 2019).

III Institutional Evaluation

Preliminary note

This report is based on the self-assessment report submitted by Charisma University, the site visit on TCI and documents which have been drawn up or revised as a result of the site visit.

1 Institutional Profile and Strategy (GSC IV.1, ESG 1.1)

In the self-assessment report for accreditation procedure as well as in other documents Charisma University publishes the following *University Mission Statement*: “Charisma University offers an American style education and is committed to molding and training students to become highly skilled professionals in their industry. The graduates are competent, caring, and qualified professionals who exceed the requirements of their professions, as well as those of their families and communities.”

In several documents, the university attaches great importance to a high quality level of education with a student-centred orientation. Charisma University expresses the aim to provide opportunities for studies for individuals, regardless of their origin. The university emphasises its commitment to providing affordable higher education services and resources to audiences around the world where there may be barriers to learning. “The University seeks to help citizens of developing countries, to advance their education and to empower them for leadership roles in their own countries.” Charisma University declares the wish to promote research of the faculty members. However, research is not mentioned in the University Mission Statement. It does not seem to be of decisive importance for the development of the university (see also chapter five). Nevertheless, the mission statement provided for the site visit did not contain any topics relating to the selection of areas for educational programmes. Furthermore, a real long-term strategic plan could not be presented to the expert group at this time. According to the self-report “the strategic plans are relatively short-term, being applicable on a yearly basis.” As stated in the Faculty Handbook, the Board of Directors, which is responsible for the management and control of the university, also develops business and strategic plans. The university leaders stated that the accreditation of Charisma University would be an essential step for the development of the university. In their view, accreditation would increase the number of applicants and provide the basis for strategic plans in a new dimension.

Some of the strategic objectives initially mentioned in the self-report did not coincide with the objectives mentioned in the discussions with the expert group – for instance, with respect to expansion strategies, target groups and scholarships or diversity policies.

Reacting on the discussions with the expert group Charisma University set up a full scales strategic planning process which resulted in the university’s strategy planning for the time period from

2020 to 2025. The planning conceives ten distinct strategic goals which sum up to a concise and comprehensive institutional strategy. The different strategic goals refer to the university's organizational structure, its effective competition for attracting students, academic affairs, infrastructural issues as well as staff recruitment. The strategic planning at university level is backed by detailed policies in the different areas which set up a detailed and comprehensive framework of strategic aims and which are able to guide the further development of Charisma University in a proper way. The detailed policies will be discussed below in the following chapters.

2 Governance, Organization and Administration (GSC IV.2, ESG 1.1, 1.2)

Responsibilities, decision-making processes and decision-making competencies are not clearly described. During the site visit the impression arose that members of Charisma University know their role themselves, although an officially formulated basic structure of the organizational structure was lacking at this time. With 779 students in 2019 (self-report page 16) the administration currently consisted of 17 persons in responsible positions (Founder, President, CAO, CFO, Dean or similar).

During the site visit remained unclear how the coordination takes place within the organization and which communication channels are used. The peers were able to observe that exchanges on TCI obviously took place at least in exceptional cases. Though, Charisma University lacked a process handbook or formal basic rules to which all members of the organization can refer. Nevertheless, the expert group was able to meet very committed members of staff. Due to the short-term nature of the contracts (professors and lecturers only have fixed-term contracts; permanent positions are hardly to be found), a high fluctuation rate can be assumed. Statements made by current employees also support this assumption, as questions about the self-report were also answered to the effect that "the predecessor" had handled this in this way. It therefore remains unclear how knowledge transfer will be ensured and how knowledge management will take place. Charisma University did not hold a statute which regulates the rights and duties of the members and members of the committees as well as the procedural principles for the central organs and departments. During the discussions during the site visit it became very clear again and again that all participants would like to refer to such a basic order because a clearly regulated description of responsibilities is missing. As a part of the comprehensive strategic process after the site visit Charisma University drafted an organizational governance policy and brought it into effect. By these basic organizational rules of the university, the roles, rights, and duties of all university members are constituted as well as the structure of the university and the chain of commands defined. It has to be evaluated positively that this basic document addresses the top management of the university, the central university administration and the structure of the faculties. The chain of command is furthermore visualized by an adequate organigram comprising the chain of responsible positions.

In addition to the organigram, Charisma university was able to clarify how a position can be taken and how responsible management positions are filled. The human resources policy of the university sets up the procedures, aims, means and steps by which positions are given and how continuous professional development is fostered.

The freedom of research and teaching is at least basically to be guaranteed. In particular, this is of relevance for the part-time lecturers employed in teaching: The university influences research and teaching in such a way that old material from previous lecturers is used for new courses and can be supplemented by the lecturers – but only in a certain scope. At least this was not regarded as restrictive for the lecturers in the discussions.

Since lecturers only work part-time at the university and are only employed and remunerated when a course is booked by a student, the financing concept seems stable, but certainly not designed for a large number of students (see also chapter 6.2).

3 Teaching and Learning (GSC IV.4, ESG 1.3, 1.4)

Charisma University as a distance learning university offers a broad spectrum of study programs, at present (status of 2019) nine bachelor's degree programmes, twenty-two master's degree programmes and nine doctoral e-learning programmes in the fields of business, education, law, psychology, philosophy, religion and health science.

The curricula of the study programs are described in an online available document; this so-called "Catalog" gives detailed information about the objectives of the programs, the curricula and the learning outcomes of the courses.

The choice of courses offered by the university does not specifically reflect a sharp profile or focus of the university but comprises a variety of academic fields. A common characteristic of the offered programs is certainly the suitability for online education. An administrative guideline was drawn up for the establishment of new courses of study at the university. The guideline fixes the duties and responsibilities of the Provost and Chief Academic officer, the Program Director, the Dean, the IQAS (Internal Quality Assurance System) Team, the Governing Board and the University President/CEO. Apart from resource-related arguments, the guideline, however, does not contain any content specifications corresponding to a university profile. The development of new study programmes should therefore follow a defined concept.

A typical bachelor's programme comprises 40 courses with three credits each and requires a total of 120 credits including general education courses to an extent of 51 credits. The total credits required for master programs are in between 36-54 including a thesis with 12 credits. The doctoral programmes (PhD, Ed.D. and PsyD) require between 63 and 90 credits. They include several courses before starting the dissertation.

The courses have generally a duration of eight weeks. Courses are offered in four lecture periods per year. All courses are based on the online platform "Moodle". The online courses are asynchronous and presented in a written form only. While the eight-week period new output is weekly offered, which enables the students to take permanently part in a discussion board activity. Students are required to give weekly answers to the questions. The communication between the instructors and students is even in written form only. Instructors assess students each week through assignments, exams, and quizzes.

The online courses are made available to the lecturers by the university, in doing so they have only a limited right within a narrow framework to implement changes of the syllabi or to modify respectively update the contents of each module. During the site visit the peers questioned if the modules are revised regularly and if Charisma University successfully updates its programs regularly. Thus, the university clarified its procedures by a precise module updating plan which defines the process and sets up goals for module development. Particularly a well-designed check list for modules will prove useful for the further development.

The description and the discussions during the site visit led basically overall to a sufficient assessment of curricula, the admission requirements, the grading system, the workload, and the graduation requirements. Students are generally informed about academic policies and all (administrative) aspects of studying and the study programs in detail by a comprehensive student handbook. In addition to that, and in order to facilitate compatibility and transparency graduates should be provided – along with the academic transcript – with a transparent and comprehensive record of their achievements (for instance based on the diploma supplement template developed by the Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO).

The comparison of the curricula shows a reasonable degree of interlinkage. Besides the common general education in the bachelor's courses, the interlinkage concerns mainly core courses or elective courses, albeit the number of programmes does currently not correspond to the number of students enrolled: 317 undergraduate students are enrolled in nine bachelor's programs, 275 graduate students in 22 master's programmes. In five bachelor's programs the total number of students is lower than ten. In most courses, the number of students is in the range between two and three. Such a number would be unacceptable for universities with on-campus courses. For the online courses, the need of resources is different. The lecturers at Charisma University are independent contractors and therefore not employees. The payment to the lecturers for a course depends on the number of participating students (see also chapter 6.2).

The lecturers of the courses are persons mostly working at universities in other countries, which makes teaching at Charisma University predominantly a side job – the more so because contracts are entered for the duration of eight weeks only. The "Adjunct Faculty Position Description", a

document of the university administration, formulates the minimum requirements for the appointment of lecturers as follows: "Terminal Degree in subject being taught from an accredited university. Or, at least 18 credits in subject matter being taught." The same minimum requirement is set for supervisors of theses and dissertations. Especially for the advisors of dissertation these formal minimum requirements seem not sufficient.

If one considers the didactic means that are used at Charisma University, then these seem basically suitable for distance learning. The procedure of an eight-week online course could exemplarily be well illustrated during the site visit. Whether each individual study programmes meet the requirements of a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree could not be checked within the framework of this procedure.

However, during the site visit it was at first unclear how the quality control is carried out bindingly, especially due to the high proportion of PhD-students. Here, too, an organizational governance policy – already mentioned in the second chapter – was distinctly missing, which now can be referred to and which can ensure now that the individual programmes meet certain minimum requirements.

4 Student Support/Student Services (GSC IV.4, ESG 1.3, 1.4)

Charisma University offers a professional and adequate support for their students. This includes not only the organizational and administrative part but also the accessibility of the teachers and assistance with technical issues. The interviewed students explicitly appreciated this accessibility and the short-term feedback on questions. In addition, Charisma University stated that it will develop further student-services by corresponding demand. In the discussions with the students, the expert group did not identify any currently missing areas. During the further growth process, however, Charisma University should take care to consider appropriate organizational redundancies as a back-up in order to be able to guarantee service quality at a high level like now.

Although the support of the students is currently supervised very closely, Charisma University can achieve a further professionalization and relieving the registrar by basically developing ideal-typical program-plans and timetables.

Not conclusively self-explanatory exemplified are the selection procedure of the students as well as the university-sided support (with internal lecturers) of the dissertations. For this, the expert group suggests clarifying these points more clearly for all students (for example in the student handbook).

When considering the facilities, the expert group focused on Charisma University's online services and resources, which form the central learning location. Besides several offices the premises on site provide a few rooms which could be used for meetings or, if applicable, for teaching. Students

appreciate the technical support as well as the professional supervision. The expert group is pleased to note that the lecturers are offered training opportunities in the field of e-learning and that these are also in demand by the lecturers. On site mentioned ideas for a possible change from the current Moodle-based teaching and learning platform to another system were noted with great interest by the expert group, which agrees with the responsible persons that this is a complex process.

The successful implementation of few but sufficient teaching and learning rooms with enriched materials and tools for discussions was shown to the expert group on site.

The expert group was somewhat surprised by Charisma University's scholarship program. At the moment this only consists at best in residents receiving a 50 % discount of the fees. The expert group suggests that the university should initiate fundraising activities involving the countries of origin of the students more strongly than before in order to offer their students real scholarships. From the point of view of the expert group, this measure will also help the university to get more visible and increase the number of students.

5 Research (GSC IV.5, ESG 1.8, 1.9)

Although Charisma University clearly focuses on teaching, its self-report on institutional accreditation occasionally indicates that the university also expects lecturers and students to carry out research projects and publish academic papers. In almost the same wording, the university points out four times in the report that “With excellence at the heart of our goals, the university is intent on utilizing and optimizing research in the fields of business, technology, legal studies, and education for the advancement of its students, faculty, and services” (p. 21, 35, 40, 137).

According to the report, faculty members “are required to engage in research activities” (p. 142) and “are evaluated on efforts to engage with the broader professional community, such as through peer-reviewed publications, conducting presentations at seminars and conferences, writing reviews on academic books and scholarly manuscripts, as well as attaining leadership positions in professional organizations.” (p. 136)

Therefore, teaching staffs “typically engage in scholarly initiatives, community and civic service, research endeavours, and other salient administrative duties apart from their classroom teaching assignments” (p. 21). They conduct research on a “variety of topics related to social innovation” (p. 28) and are involved “in different research work including empirical studies, article review, systematic reviews, and meta-analysis” (p. 135). The university also expects students to carry out academic studies (p. 28). These quotes, however, are largely to be understood as normative assertions, not as realities.

Aside from the research-concentrations mentioned above (“business, technology, legal studies, education”) and few general remarks, the university neither elaborated the integration of research into the university's strategy and profile, nor provided any detailed research agenda. The new “Charisma University 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan” addressees explicitly scholarly and research activities in an own goal. This strategic goal includes updating research budgets international networking and regular reviews.

However, the university's past productivity in terms of third-party funded research, visiting researchers, research collaborations, presentations at scientific conferences, etc. remains unclear. After all, the expert group received a list of references written or co-authored by faculty members. In total, the list refers to 70 persons, but only 16 of them have provided information on their contributions. If this list is correct and complete, the vast majority of faculty members have not produced a scientific oeuvre. Moreover, the contributions range from classic scientific articles and books to reports published in relatively unknown sources and even teaching materials. Taken together, the university has a faculty base that has largely not yet satisfyingly carried out academic research and / or gathered extensive publication experience.

An analysis of the university structure reveals the reasons for this situation: All faculty members are not full-time employees and therefore paid primarily for teaching duties and administrative functions (see section 6). Nevertheless, the self-report claims that the university “provides funding for its faculty members to engage in professional and research activities [...]. The research budget per year is 120,000 USD” (p. 141). However, according to the financial forecast dated July 7, 2019, the university budget does not include any expenditure for research purposes.

Against this background, the current structure of encouraging and supporting research does not appear to be effective. In conjunction with the lack of fulltime staff, “Charisma's research release program”, which is equivalent to a three-credit course release, is apparently not sufficient, as it may only be used every four years. As a young university, master's theses and dissertations could initially serve as starting points for drawing up a research agenda. However, this requires guidelines on how research and study programmes can be closely linked with each other.

The university has established a “Centre for Advanced Research and Innovation (CARI)”, which “supports and conducts researches, holds seminars and workshops, and offers training courses on research methodologies. It also maintains links and establishes networks with similar centres, institutes and organizations. The Centre provides facilities for higher research in various areas of Humanities, Social Science and Technology disciplines” (p. 138). Apart from these claims, the centre still has to prove its relevance and effectivity, as it has not yet produced any results, such as linking Charisma University with other higher education institutions, companies or research

associations. Finally, it is noteworthy that the university calls the Centre an "independent organization under the auspices of the Charisma University" (p. 138), which sounds contradictory from a managerial point of view.

6 Resources (GSC IV.6, IV.3, ESG 1.5, 1.6)

6.1 Human resources

According to the self-report, the university employs "76 fulltime academic staff" and "30 non-academic staff" (p. 16). Elsewhere in the report, the university has provided different figures, namely "104 staff for teaching and 28 Administrative Staff members" (p. 142). The list of teaching staff per study program requested by the evaluators includes even 332 names. However, since the majority of these persons teach in several programs, duplicate entries must be deleted. That leaves 104 names, but it remains still unclear who currently has a contract and who does not.

Contrary to the self-report, which states that "Charisma University does not currently employ temporary staff" (p. 145), university representatives explained during the site visit, that the entire teaching staff as well as almost all administrative officials, such as provost, deans, or library director, are employed on a temporary base as part-time staff. This seems problematic because the strategic management of a university presupposes that administrative staff, in particular managers, fill full-time positions over a longer period of time (see section 2). Apparently, the university employs only about five permanent staff who all are residing on TCI.

Lecturers usually receive a part-time contract for one year or even less, with their remuneration solely depending on teaching activities, i.e. on the number of seminars taken on and the number of students participating in the respective seminars. It appears that there are no clauses requiring faculty members to fulfil a certain teaching obligation. Most lecturers teach just one or two seminars per year. They are encouraged to take on research tasks, too; however, participation in research projects and scientific publications is not particularly rewarded, which contributes to the fact that research at the university is hardly developed (see section 5). Besides that, the appointment of the lecturers seems astonishing short dated: It happens in fact three weeks before the course starts. This should be revised and sooner announced. Charisma University has already revised its Human Resources and hiring policy and has set up clear procedures that meet standards of an academic institution. Nevertheless, it still remains unclear what time in advanced lecturers are appointed.

Based on the list of publication activities of faculty members as well as oral information, an ambivalent picture emerges with regard to the qualifications of lecturers: Some of them hold similar positions at other universities, e.g. in the USA, and have gained sufficient academic experience. However, a relatively large number of lecturers have published scientifically on a comparatively

small scale. Though, in order to foster research activities Charisma University revised its hiring policy as mentioned above and clarified requirements of academic positions e.g. dissertation supervisors by giving detailed descriptions of the respective positions. Furthermore, the policy also provides for personnel development by rolling out a variety of measures like detailed onboarding processes, a mentoring program and funding research activities. Each school will set up its own Development Plan under this scheme.

At the time of the site visit, the university did run only a small number of continuing education courses for lecturers. However, there is basically a differentiated and merit-based selection system for recruitment of academic staff.

It can be concluded that by refraining from hiring permanent lecturers, the university applies a cost-effective human resources strategy and tries to reach a sustainable development of the university at the same time. Though, the relatively low level of research and publication activity leaves space for further development.

6.2 Financial Resources

According to Charisma University's report, tuition fees, donations and fund-raising contribute to its revenue. However, a two-page financial report made available during the site visit states that all income in the last three years comes exclusively from tuition fees. With regard to the professionalism of financial management, it is noteworthy that the figures in both reports differ slightly. The presented figures show that the university has solid financial results and liquidity despite a relatively low number of students. As a result, the university would be in a position to finance additional permanent staff, for example. Nevertheless, how the high surpluses are to be used could not be conclusively clarified. The only point raised during the talks on this subject was that a financial reserve should be built up first. As there is no detailed university development plan to date, it is not surprising that there is also no investment planning.

Since the entire turnover of the university over the last three years comes from tuition fees, it is helpful to look at some of the details. Tuition fees do not differ according to subjects, but according to the desired degree and the respective number of credits. However, Charisma University has provided only limited information, which would allow a detailed analysis of the contribution of the different courses to the overall budget. For example, it remains unclear whether the list of students provided by the university includes both enrolled students and alumni.

Despite this slipup, some courses can be regarded as particularly strong in terms of turnover, as more than 50 students have graduated in these courses or are still enrolled. The overview lists 86 students in Ph.D. Business Administration for the year 2019; 64 in Bachelor of Business Administration online; 56 in Bachelor of Education; 53 in Bachelor in Computer Engineering; 52 in Ph.D. in Cyber Security Administration; and 51 in HND conversion to BS/BA. On the other hand, the list

reveals that in 31 study programs less than ten students are registered. For stabilizing and further increasing of number of students, Charisma University follows a newly developed marketing strategy which is based on advanced measures of online marketing in order to attract students from further world regions.

In general, this overview indicates that the university is following an extremely cost-effective strategy. As with all institutions of higher education, the largest expenditure item is the payroll. Since, however, there are few permanent employees working for the university, faculty members are paid primarily according to their teaching performance and neither a campus nor buildings have to be maintained, the total expenditure is relatively low. Against this background, Charisma University has a sustainable planning with regard to its financial resources. However, the overview also shows that the university has not funded any research in the past three years, underscoring the low importance the university is giving to research, despite different assertions.

In order to economize as much as possible, the university has set clear rules for the payment of lecturers. Teaching fees are based on the number of students attending the seminar.

Furthermore, university managers, such as the provost or the deans, must initially reckon with very low fee payments, which, however, rise with increasing length of employment. Lecturers and staff negotiate the level of income as well as salary increases directly with the founder of the university, who apparently decides at his own discretion.

Overall, the financial management of the university does not appear to be professionally organized: There is a Chief Financial Officer, but apparently no finance department, which is unusual even at a small university. It seems that the founder of Charisma University releases all payments himself, which would drastically limit the freedom and authority of the university leadership. However, the financial planning of the university is conservative and thus quite sustainable, although there is no convincing strategy to increase the number of students and thus the income in the long term. Essentially, the university leaders build their growth plans primarily on the positive effect of an institutional accreditation. As one of the site visits results' a more solid and detailed annual financial plan was developed and put into effect. Nevertheless, especially aspects like funding beside of student fees, advertising and marketing expenses or a research budget should be more explicitly considered in the future.

6.3 Facilities and Equipment

The above-mentioned low-budget strategy is also clearly visible in the (lack of) facilities and equipment. In other words, the current facilities meet infrastructural requirements of higher education institutions in a minimalist way.

Neither there is a campus, nor does the university have its own buildings. In Providenciales (TCI) the university has leased a small office floor, which provides work desks, especially for the registrar, as well as a meeting room.

Instead of a library, the university is a member of the “Library and Information Resources Network” (LIRN), which is a consortium of educational institutions that share online access to information resources, including various academic databases.

There are also no laboratories or other equipment available to students, which is not surprising since Charisma University conducts almost all seminars online via Moodle (see section 3).

At this time, university officials consider switching from Moodle to another e-learning platform (see section 4). They mentioned particularly Canvas, which does not seem convincing, since Canvas concentrates its educational offers on the professional development of educators. However, Charisma University has not yet made a final decision in this regard.

7 Quality Assurance (GSC IV.2, ESG 1.1, 1.9, 1.10)

Charisma University has its own Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS), which is described in a handbook (IQAS handbook, version from March 2019). In this handbook, annual program reviews by the IQAS team are foreseen (starting in 2019) to assess the quality in teaching and learning (course contents, instructional methods, internal control systems, etc.). The quality cycle described in the handbook is based on the collection of assessment evidence via a self-study report, the advisory board committee appraisal, the internal response to the recommendations, the development of an implementation plan and the monitoring process of the implementation. The first program reviews are scheduled for summer 2019. The periodic review for each program will then be every five years.

Quality assurance instruments foreseen in the handbook also include external reference sources (including subject benchmarks). The business students take part in the Peregrine process with certain post-tests. A report of the results is posted by the Dean of Assessment in the Center for Teaching and Learning (internal website accessible to all Charisma University members).

Course evaluations and surveys with other stakeholders (alumni, community members, parents of students ...) are carried out on a regular basis and the results are as well published in the above-mentioned Center for Teaching and Learning.

Stakeholders involved are the IQAS Team (appointed by the Chancellor), the Senior Vice President for Internal Quality Systems and the Dean of Assessment (DoA). The Deans are important stakeholders from the side of the faculty and have reported in the interviews about their activities concerning the continuous monitoring and improvement of their programs. The IQAS handbook also refers to the so-called “school deans” as central stakeholder in the area of QA, however these

functions do not exist yet, as most of the structures are still being built up. For this reason, the IQAS team (consisting of the Vice President, the CAO, the DoA and the school deans) has apparently not worked in the described format yet. The interviews with the stakeholders have shown that there is a division of tasks between the Senior Vice President for Internal Quality Systems and the Dean of Assessment, yet their roles and functions are not described transparently in the above-mentioned handbook. Other external stakeholders (alumni, employers, etc.) are included via surveys, see above.

Evaluation results are made available to the respective teaching staff and also the CAO. Students reported that their feedback contributed to improvement of teaching materials and apparently, also decisions related to the suitability of the teaching staff were taken on the basis of student evaluation results. On the university's website, a special "You asked for it" section shall be introduced, which summarizes the results from quality assurance instruments as well as the actions that were taken in response.

Actions are also taken when the results from the Peregrine tests are reviewed and changes / modifications concerning the curriculum are initiated. And on a larger scale, the implementation of improvement measures and their monitoring is foreseen as integral part of the program reviews.

Having external quality assurance (different successful accreditations) is one of the strategic goals of the university, which has been pursued so far. The high quality of online teaching and learning as well as their online support services lies at the core of Charisma University's goals in order to equip the learners adequately and prepare them for a competitive market. In this respect, the above-mentioned quality assurance instruments are in sync with that goal, as continuous improvements are undertaken to enhance Charisma University.

Taking into account the outlined quality assurance procedures, these criteria are all met by Charisma University. However, the description of the quality assurance processes should still be optimized:

The handbook serves as a basis for the Internal Quality Assurance System and the standards used in the IQAS were drafted with regard to the framework by the Council for Higher Education and Accreditation (CHEA).

8 Internationalisation

Due to its own structure offering online education, Charisma University has per se a high internationalization of students and lecturers.

The expert group was unable to identify any explicit strategy for internationalization at the site visit but assumes that it will develop in the future from the emerging emphases of the student's origin in the coming years. To this end, the expert group confirms Charisma University in its efforts

to establish links with other international universities and, in this regard, also recommends the increased exchange of lecturers (for example through common conference visits).

At present, students are already working in an environment in which they usually come from another country than the professor, the university, and the fellow students. The expert group is delighted to note this diversity but reminds the university to deal with the associated intercultural and organizational challenges in the future. The corresponding efforts and measures should therefore be part of the strategic plan and explicitly described as well.

IV Evaluation of the accreditation criteria

Evaluation according to the Standards and Guidelines in the Higher European Area in the actual official version and the criteria for the institutional accreditation of non-state higher education institution of the German Council of Science and Humanities (GSC) („Guidelines for the accreditation of non-state higher education institutions“ Section B.IV):

The ACQUIN assessment criteria for institutional accreditation procedures are as follows:

Institutional Profile and Strategy (Mission and Vision)

The HEI has a clear mission statement in which the institutional profile, strategy, and objectives of the HEI are defined. The mission is consistent and complies with international standards. Academic bodies have adopted the mission, which is publicly available. The HEI has adequate resources to fulfil its mission and strategic planning.

The criterion is fulfilled.

Governance, Organisation, and Administration

Responsibilities, decision-making processes and decision-making competencies are clearly defined and integrated into statutes. Organisation and management structures are adequate to the tasks and objectives of the institution and assure freedom in teaching and learning.

The criterion is fulfilled.

Teaching and Learning

Objectives and content of study programmes are in accordance with the HEI's mission and strategy. Study programmes have an adequate academic standard, are well structured and have an adequate workload. They comply with national legal regulations. The processes of creating and implementing as well as revision of study programmes are clearly defined.

The HEI offers professional support services for students. Support services have adequate staff.

The criterion is fulfilled.

Research

Research activities fit into the mission of the institution. The structure of the HEI and the general conditions support research activities. The teaching workload allows room for research. Recruitment policy should correspond to the research activities and research strategy of the institution.

The criterion is fulfilled.

Resources

The institution has adequate human and financial resources, infrastructure, and equipment to achieve its objectives. The academic staff recruitment process meets academic standards.

The criterion is fulfilled.

Quality Assurance

The institution has adequate quality assurance procedures and mechanisms to ensure that the results of quality assurance procedures are for continuous improvement.

The criterion is fulfilled.

Internationalisation

The HEI has an internationalisation strategy which is consistent with the strategy of the institution. The activities in the area of internationalisation fit into the internationalisation strategy.

The criterion is fulfilled.

V Decision of the ACQUIN Accreditation Commission

At the meeting on 24 September 2019, the Accreditation Commission discussed the institutional accreditation of Charisma University. The accreditation procedure has been suspended at the longest for 18 months.

Charisma University submitted its application for resuming of the procedure in due time. These documents have been forwarded to the Standing Expert Committee in the field of system accreditation with request for examination. The Standing Expert Committee comes to the conclusion that the deficiencies are remedied.

Based on the statement of the Standing Expert Committee, the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN took the following decision at its meeting on 24 March 2020:

Charisma University is for the first time institutionally accredited without conditions. The accreditation is limited until 30 September 2028.

The following recommendation is given for the further development:

- Graduates should be provided with a transparent and comprehensive record of their achievements (for instance based on the diploma supplement template developed by the Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO).