MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
YOUTH AND SPORTS

EVALUATION REPORT FOR EVALUATION OF RESEARCH ORGANIZATION IN THE SEGMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN YEAR 2025

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION NAME: University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER (CRN):60076658

THE LIST OF EVALUATION UNITS IN MODULE 3: 8

CHAIRPERSON OF INTERNATIONAL EVALUATION PANEL

Name and surname: Johan Verreth
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LIST OF INTERNATIONAL EVALUATION PANEL MEMBERS		
Name and surname	**Position in IEP**	**Current position**
Johan Verreth	**Chair**	**Professor Emeritus Aquaculture and Fisheries, Wageningen University & Research, Netherlands**
Luboš Komárek	**Member**	**1) Professor, Institute of Economic Studies, Charles University** **2) Director, External Economic Relations Division, Czech National Bank**
Carmen Fernández Juncal	**Member**	**Professor General Linguistics, University of Salamanca, Spain**
Marit Honerød Hoveid	**Member**	**Professor Pedagogy, Norwegian University of Science and Technology**
Tomáš Opatrný	**Member**	**Professor Physics, Palacky University**
Elisa Uusimäki	**Member**	**Professor Old Testament/Hebrew Bible Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark**
Johann Vollmann	**Member**	**Associate Professor, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria**
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PROVIDERS METHODOLOGIST

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Date of on-site visit of higher education institution: 19 June 20025 – 20 June 2025

In České Budějovice, 19-20 June 2025 Signature

(IEP chairperson)

EVALUATION REPORT IN MODULE 3

NAME OF EVALUATED UNIT: Faculty of Science

FORD: 1 - Natural sciences

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE EVALUATED UNIT

3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation

Indicator 3.1 is a non-evaluated indicator that provides basic information about the evaluated unit such as its mission and vision, organizational structure, size and staffing, or R&D&I capacities.

Commentary:

FSC provided the basic information necessary for understanding its role in the educational and research systems. The focus is on basic research dominantly in biology, with a smaller share of Earth sciences, chemistry and physical sciences, and some traces of other areas. The faculty has about 1300 students and 300 employees which means it is among the biggest of SBU. The staff composition according to the number of professors, associate professors etc. and the age structure are reasonable, however, the gender balance is not favorable regarding women at senior positions. On the other hand, four out of seven vice-deans plus the economy manager are females which makes the faculty management much more favorable with respect to gender balance.

The faculty's mission is to provide high-quality education and conduct cutting-edge research that addresses both regional and global challenges. This is reflected mostly by participation of many students in research activities and by many projects funding the research.

RECOGNITION BY THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

3.2 Recognition by the research community

Evaluate the position of the evaluated unit in the R&D&I research community based on the facts presented in indicator 3.2 and its annexed tables (3.2.1 to 3.2.5).

Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:[1]

The recognition of FCS by the Czech research community is very high: the awards "*Česká hlava*" (Czech Head) are among the most prestigious in Czechia and they were awarded to two FSC students in 2020 and in 2022. The other national awards such as Mendel medal or Martina Roesselova Memorial Fellowship, etc., also indicate a high level of national recognition. There is also evidence of international recognition: a staff member is elected as the President of the Society for Tropical Ecology, and another one as the vice-chair of FENS-Kavli Network of Excellence. Researchers of the FSC serve in editorial boards of several prestigious journals such as Annals of Botany, Complex & Intelligent Systems. Table 3.2.2 lists 10 examples as suggested, however in several cases it turns out that the editorial board membership is not active anymore, or the editorial board member shows a

[1] Provide verbal assessment of the indicator and briefly comment on the reasons for awarding the specific rating. Follow a similar procedure for the other indicators.

different affiliation than the USB. Regarding the most important invited lectures delivered by the academic staff, table 3.2.3 shows 10 examples, some of which indicate highly prestigious invited plenary lectures at international conferences (e.g., V. Novotný, Conference of the Ecological Society of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, Leipzig 2023) whereas some others are hard to identify (the table only mentions the title of the talk and name of the university – which could in principle be also a seminar for a handful of colleagues). Nevertheless, it also occurs here that the lecturer shows a different affiliation than the USB: in the Book of Abstracts (*https://www.gfoe-conference.de/WEBS/GFOe2023.pages.download/book_of_abstracts.pdf)* V. Novotný is affiliated with the Biology Centre of the Czech Academy of Science. It is a question whether such cases (different affiliation than USB shown in the abstract of the lecture or in the list of editorial board members of a journal) should be listed in the SER.
The table indicates the ability of the faculty members to present their results in talks at foreign institutions, which is expected from a research-oriented institution. Table 3.2.4 shows that the FSC is able to show a list of 10 examples of esteemed foreign researchers who came to give a talk here, and Table 3.2.5 gives 10 examples of FSC people serving as evaluators of projects, both domestic and foreign: some of the examples show evaluation of individual projects of highly competitive grant agencies in other countries (e.g., Medical Research Council of the United Kingdom or The Israel Science Foundation), and there are examples of membership of panels of the Czech Science Foundation.

Apart from the information given in the SER it should be noted that about 13 scientists affiliated with the FCS are listed as the top 2% of the most-cited scientists in their fields in the Elsevier list based on Scopus (Stanford list of "World's Top 2%" researchers). This is the highest number of the USB (and more than half of the whole USB). This fact demonstrates the true global recognition of the FSC scientists in a much more convincing way than just showing lists of editorial board members.

Recommendations:

The overall recommendation is simple: continue doing good science at the highest possible level, having reasonably ambitious goals. The recognition then comes automatically.

A minor recommendation: The FSC could consider seeking more recognition by the international research community by their own academic staff displaying the USB as their main affiliation.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

3.3 Research projects

Evaluate the most important research projects of the evaluated unit, especially regarding the results achieved and the application potential of the project, the proportionality with respect to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, the degree of interdisciplinarity and collaboration with other parts of the evaluated HEI, and the consistency with the declared mission and vision of the evaluated unit. Use the data from the full list of research projects and contract research activities in Tables 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:

The FSC is among the most active in achieving research projects, with 80 projects in the role of main beneficiary and 41 projects as „another participant" (during the 5yr evaluation period) which

is more than the sum of all the remaining faculties apart from FFPW. However, the research projects at the FSC are almost entirely from the Czech national budget, dominantly from the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR) with a minority of the Czech Technology Agency (TAČR), Ministry of Education and other ministries. The only exception in Table 3.3.1 is a NATO project that had a one-year overlap with the evaluated period in 2019. It is a question how this fulfills the statement of mission „*The Faculty's mission is to provide high-quality education and conduct cutting-edge research that addresses both regional and global challenges*" from which one would expect a much stronger participation in international projects funded by other resources than just the Czech national budget. The contract research activities listed in Table 3.3.2 show that this part of income is very small, oscillating between 0.1% and 0.2% of the overall faculty budget. Most of the contracted research is done for other universities (Charles University, Palacký University, etc.) or for other institutions financed from the national budget (e.g., various museums or Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic). There are a few exceptions of contract research conducted for private companies with revenues not exceeding 500 kCZK a year. To aspire for a higher score, the FSC should be more active in participating at or leading international research projects.

Recommendations:

To fulfill its mission, the FSC should concentrate on participating in international research project, e.g. Horizon Europe, and try to demonstrate its ability to get revenues from outside the Czech national budget.

3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society

Evaluate the research results already applied in practice or intended to be applied in practice. When evaluating, consider whether the results are proportionate to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, how they contribute to the fulfillment of the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and, if stated in the self-evaluation, how the results take into account the gender dimension and sustainability. Use the data from the full results summary in Table 3.4.1 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:

The SER lists several patented results which cover a device for monitoring the bark beetle, a method and device for nano-printing nanoparticles, a substrate with an antimicrobial surface layer, especially for respiratory masks and air filters, or a process for preparing a nanostructured superhydrophobic surface layer with a radially symmetric wettability gradient. These patents have national protection, and a license is mentioned of the bark beetle monitoring to a Czech company NeraAgro Technology (all these licenses could amount to a few tens of kCZK as indicated in Table 3.5.1). The SER also mentions a spin off company BioCanim founded and owned by the USB; however, this should be considered as a means of commercialization of research results rather than a research result per se. The SER also mentions activities in covid testing during the pandemics. This was certainly extremely relevant for the society, although it might have been just routine application of the lab equipment rather than a research result in the strict sense.

The panel believes that these achievements are very good, but to get a higher rating the FSC should fully explore its potential to generate research results that can be applied in practice, and monitor their real impact.

Recommendations:

It would be useful if the FSC tries to demonstrate a real use of its research results, not just mentioning national patents. Also, it would be useful if more ambition is demonstrated to reach beyond the Czech market with the useful devices or processes developed at the USB.

TRANSFER OF RESULTS INTO PRACTICE

3.5 Transfer of results into practice

Evaluate the effectiveness of the transfer of results into practice by the unit being evaluated. Pay attention to whether the composition of the stated users of the results or the way the R&D&I results are commercialised (if stated) is consistent with the R&D&I results produced and the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and how successful the evaluated unit is in its activities, such as attracting new users of the results, commercialising the R&D&I results and obtaining funding from non-public, non-grant sources.

Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

The SER describes how awareness of the intellectual property is being spread across the university. It is a general scheme of motivations for the FSC researchers, and collaboration between FSC vice-dean for development, the Project Department and the USB Technology Transfer Office.
There are two most important examples of transfer of results into practice: a spin off company BioCanim founded and owned by the university (development of novel cancer therapies) that generated income of over EUR 240 thousand in 2023, and a spin off company NeraAgro Technology to which a license for the bark beetle monitoring system is sold. It is not clear if the reported income of BioCanim is profit for the USB or just revenues from which one must subtract expenses to see the balance. Starting spin-off companies is a rather risky activity with very uncertain future results. Nevertheless, the IEP appreciates that the FSC does this pioneering work: even though the first attempts might not bring significant financial rewards, it is important to learn and gather experience which might be extremely useful in the future.

Although the panel believes that the FSC has more potential to expand the transfer activities to other areas, the panel appreciates the drive of the FSC to explore new ways in this direction and therefore gives the highest rating.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the FSC develops a structured knowledge transfer strategy that clearly defines target user groups, mechanisms for implementation, and measurable indicators of impact. It is important to define what the FSC wants to achieve in this area and how to measure whether the efforts were successful.

The University might consider founding a SPV (special purpose vehicle) company through which it can (co)own its spin-offs. This might be much more practical than to govern the individual companies separately through the university administration. Examples could be found in „Charles University Innovations Prague a.s.", or in „MUNI Ventures s.r.o.", a SPV of the Masaryk University in Brno.

POPULARIZATION OF VAVAI

3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public Evaluate how active and successful the evaluated unit is in the field of popularisation of R&D&I and communication with the public.	
Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

The FSC is very active in research popularization. Among the most important examples are the outreach activities aimed at high school students, enhancing their understanding of natural sciences and informatics:

- Junior University (a collection of various popularization activities for high school students, such as (a) summer schools in general Biology and Molecular Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, (b) one-day practicals for high school students, and (c) High School Professional Activities (SOČ) - one-year projects for high school students. These activities can have the biggest impact in raising the new generation of scientists, or at least of people with friendly attitude to science.
- The FSC provides invited lectures for high schools (currently 87 offered topics), an activity where high schools can arrange for a popular science lecture by FSC scientists and incorporate topics such as AI, GMOs, or nature conservation into their curriculum.

The FSC also organizes „Weekends for high school teachers" where the latest laboratory methods or fieldwork approaches are introduced to the teachers. This means that the teachers can keep the up-to-date knowledge of their fields. They can also give the most accurate information to students interested in science that want to continue their studies at a university.

According to the SER, the scientists frequently engage in press and media commentary or interviews on pressing issues or their scientific discoveries. This should bring the most important information to the general public. There are also annual activities such as „Researchers Night" or „Open day" that became very popular and attract numbers of visitors. The FSC is also active in social media (mostly Facebook and Instagram and starting also Bluesky).

Although it is not explicitly mentioned in the SER, from the discussion with the faculty management it became clear that the academic staff is very active in preparing high school students for competitions like Biology Olympiad, as well as organizing these competitions at the national level.

The highest score is awarded here because the popularization activities are very systematic in a broad spectrum, not just relying on a few one-day events.

Recommendations:

It is highly recommended that the FSC continues in its established popularization activities, giving maximum support to its staff and students who serve the society this way.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module 3

Evaluate how the evaluated unit has reflected the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the IEP, if applicable.

If the evaluated unit has not been evaluated before, the indicator will be marked as N/A – Not Applicable.

Rating [1–5]:	4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:

The report of 2020 mentions the following recommendations.

- *„The research teams of the Faculty of Science should continue applying for applied research projects. It is strongly recommended that more stress is put on the Horizon collaborative projects, for the University both as participating and as coordinating such projects. The faculty as well as the whole University should specify this also in their strategic documents, identifying goals and milestones in this direction for the next years.*"

Unfortunately, no new Horizon project participation is mentioned since then. The SER mentions that to succeed in Horizon projects, a sufficient administrative support for the applicant would be needed, and the FSC has during the last 5 years invested in restructuring the Project department. The SER also mentions various incentive schemes such as indirect cost allocation, etc.

- *„The University might consider if enhancing revenues from contract research and non-public sources would be useful. Arguments for and against such a shift should be broadly discussed and if the USB decides for it, this decision should be a part of the strategic documents, and the management should look for suitable measures how to stimulate increase of these activities.*"

This recommendation is being fulfilled through the new spin-off company founded by the FSC. If successful, this might bring non-public resources through its commercial activities.

- *„When registering applied research results, it would be useful to identify and contact the end-users of the results and to get some feedback how these results are useful to them.*"

This issue has not been addressed in the SER. Some evidence of getting such feedback was perceived from the discussions with the faculty management, but it would be useful to collect it systematically.

- *„The Faculty of Science might consider whether a stronger technology transfer could be useful in their portfolio. The decisions to move in this direction, however, should be done after serious considerations of all risks, advantages and disadvantages.*"

As far one can see in the current Strategic Plan of the FSC, technology transfer is not mentioned there so it might not be among the priorities now. Nevertheless, the SER mentions collaboration of the faculty with the Technology Transfer Office, and the foundation of spin-offs indicates that the FSC takes this issue seriously. We consider this recommendation to be fully followed.

- *„The university should continue its support of people willing to do services for the international R&D&I community such as serving in editorial boards or international committees."*

This recommendation seems to be fully followed.

- *„The FSci should continue in supporting the popularization activities conducted by its staff. It can be recommended that the Faculty of Science systematically monitors and registers all the popularization activities*".

It is great to see that the popularization activities flourish at the FSC. It might still be useful to pay some attention to a systematic monitoring and registering them (in a way that would not lead to increase of bureaucracy). An example could be mentioning the activities of the University of Third Age: one can see on the university webpage that FSC participates here, but the SER does not mention it.

Recommendations:

We just repeat the previous recommendation *„that more stress is put on the Horizon collaborative projects, for the University both as participating and as coordinating such projects. The faculty as well as the whole University should specify this also in their strategic documents, identifying goals and milestones in this direction for the next years".* We believe that more administrative support should be provided at the university level in this direction. Perhaps the relevant people might try to be active in the association **CZARMA**, z. s. (Czech association of research managers and administrators) through which helpful advice and success examples could be found.

EVALUATED UNIT RATING

Evaluation of unit	
Having evaluated the individual criteria of module M3, please summarise your evaluation in the context of the module, describing and justifying the strengths and weaknesses of the unit being evaluated.	
3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation	**NOT RATED**
3.2 Recognition by the research community	5 - Outstanding
3.3 Research projects	4 - Very good
3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society	4 - Very good
3.5 Transfer of results into practice	5 - Outstanding
3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	5 - Outstanding
3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module	4 - Very good
Average rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding
Grade [A–D]:	A

Summary assessment:

The FSC is a mature, highly research-active faculty with focus on biology and other fields such as chemical, physical, mathematical, and computational sciences. It has very strong international

collaboration which is also reflected in high recognition by the scientific community world-wide (e.g., the faculty has the highest number of researchers on the Stanford list of "World's Top 2%" researchers from the whole university). The staff composition according to the number of professors, associate professors etc. and the age structure are reasonable, however, the gender balance is not favorable regarding women at senior positions. On the other hand, four out of seven vice-deans plus the economy manager are females.

The FSC has one of the biggest numbers of research projects in a wide area of topics. Unfortunately, the vast majority comes from the Czech national budget, with an almost negligible fraction from other sources.

The FSC shows a strong effort in knowledge transfer, founding two spin-offs - NeraAgro Technology and BioCanim. Although these companies have not yet shown a significant commercial impact, it is very important that the faculty has started gathering experience in this direction. These activities, as well as, e.g., providing the lab capacities for COVID testing, have a significant impact on the society.

The FSC is also very active in research popularization, with especial focus on young generation. This is very important for the broad society to better understand the main challenges of the current science, as well as for keeping the research alive by securing a steady influx of young and motivated researchers.

Summary recommendations:

The faculty should continue doing good science at the highest possible level, having reasonably ambitious goals. This itself will bring the recognition by the scientific community.

To fulfill its mission, the FSC should concentrate on participating in international research project, e.g. Horizon Europe, and demonstrate its ability to get revenues from outside the Czech national budget. This is the most important recommendation that the panel wants to bring forward.

It would be useful if the FSC tries to document a real use of its research results, beyond mentioning the awarded national patents.

Similarly, as for other faculties, it is recommended that the FSC develops a structured knowledge transfer strategy that clearly defines target user groups, mechanisms for implementation, and measurable indicators of impact. It is important to define what the FSC wants to achieve in this area and how to measure whether the efforts were successful.

The University might consider founding a SPV (special purpose vehicle) company through which it can (co)own its spin-offs. This might be much more practical than to govern the individual companies separately through the university administration.

It is highly recommended that the FSC continues in its established popularization activities, giving maximum support to its staff and students who serve the society this way.

EVALUATION REPORT IN MODULE 3

NAME OF EVALUATED UNIT: Faculty of Health and Social Sciences

FORD: 3 - Medical and health sciences

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE EVALUATED UNIT

3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation

Indicator 3.1 is a non-evaluated indicator that provides basic information about the evaluated unit such as its mission and vision, organizational structure, size and staffing, or R&D&I capacities.

Commentary:

The Faculty of Health and Social Sciences (FHSS) has a history spanning more than thirty years. Its primary focus lies in education (professional training), scientific research, and other creative activities within the fields of health and social sciences. The faculty's mission is to educate professionals, enhance the quality of public health and social services, and thereby contribute to citizens' health, safety, and overall quality of life. Its vision is to develop into a nationally and internationally competitive institution that provides tangible benefits to the city and the surrounding region.

The faculty comprises six departments, one institute, and the Dean's Office. The Institute of Applied Health and Social Sciences – Practical Workplace is a unique unit that offers opportunities for both academic and non-academic staff to participate in creative activities and bridge the gap between theory and practice. FHSS is the second-largest faculty in terms of student enrolment, offering BSc, MSc, and PhD programs. Although some programs have English-language accreditation, the number of students enrolled in English-taught courses is currently very low or negligible. The faculty also provides a range of lifelong learning courses.

According to the self-evaluation report (SER), the number of academic staff is proportional to the student population.

Research at the faculty is focused on three main areas:

- Healthcare (e.g., innovation and modern technologies, holistic and safe nursing care, prevention)
- Social Services (e.g., demographic challenges, ageing, immigrant integration)
- Public Safety (e.g., integrating public health and radiobiology into crisis management and civil protection).

The faculty has established multidisciplinary research teams, with a strong emphasis on applied research compared to basic research. Efforts are being made to foster interfaculty collaboration, the most active of which is currently with the Faculty of Education. At the international level, FHSS is a consortium member in two projects under the Horizon and PIANOFORTE programs. The Research & Development & Innovation activities (R&D&I) of the faculty are highly relevant to the needs of the local and regional society.

RECOGNITION BY THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

3.2 Recognition by the research community Evaluate the position of the evaluated unit in the R&D&I research community based on the facts presented in indicator 3.2 and its annexed tables (3.2.1 to 3.2.5).	
Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**
Qualitative assessment:[1] Based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), FHSS is recognized as one of the leading institutions in the Czech Republic in the field of nursing research. The Department of Nursing, Midwifery, and Emergency Care has participated in numerous research projects in recent years. These projects are primarily interdisciplinary in nature, linking nursing with public health, social work, and/or crisis management. In the areas of social work and community health, FHSS staff have been involved in international research collaborations, including the Horizon and PIANOFORTE projects. The scientific staff's involvement in the editorial boards of prestigious international journals is a significant achievement. According to the SER, six faculty members serve on the editorial boards of eight different international journals, including *KONTAKT*, the official journal of FHSS. As presented in Table 3.2.1, three faculty members received notable R&D&I awards during the evaluation period - two at the national level and one at the international level. During the same period, six FHSS colleagues were invited to present at nine different scientific events. Additionally, the faculty hosted nine international guest speakers who presented their research findings. Five FHSS colleagues served on national or international evaluation boards, with a total of eight instances of participation. Faculty members are actively involved in a range of national and international professional and scientific organisations.	
Recommendations: To further enhance its recognition within the R&D&I research community, FHSS is encouraged to broaden the international visibility of its interdisciplinary research by publishing more widely in high-impact journals beyond its own editorial scope and by increasing participation in leading international conferences. Encouraging a wider group of academic staff to actively engage in international research networks and serve on editorial or expert boards could also strengthen the faculty's reputation. Additionally, the systematic monitoring and promotion of faculty achievements - such as awards, invited talks, and roles in evaluation panels - may contribute to raising the institution's profile and benchmarking its position more effectively within the global research landscape.	

[1] Provide verbal assessment of the indicator and briefly comment on the reasons for awarding the specific rating. Follow a similar procedure for the other indicators.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

3.3 Research projects

Evaluate the most important research projects of the evaluated unit, especially regarding the results achieved and the application potential of the project, the proportionality with respect to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, the degree of interdisciplinarity and collaboration with other parts of the evaluated HEI, and the consistency with the declared mission and vision of the evaluated unit. Use the data from the full list of research projects and contract research activities in Tables 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

The research activities of the FHSS demonstrate clear alignment with the faculty's mission and vision, particularly in supporting health and social prevention efforts and enhancing population health, safety, and quality of life. The strongest research area is nursing, which significantly contributes to the quality of care and patient safety at both hospital and community levels. Projects in this field are characterised by a multidisciplinary approach and strong links to practical implementation, often involving collaboration across departments, other universities and the Ministry of Health.

In addition to improving clinical practice, these research activities provide valuable opportunities for the professional development of healthcare experts and support scientific output through publication.

Main applied research projects:

- Surrogacy in the CR: legal, psychosocial and ethical analysis, GA17-07753S (provider: Grant Agency of CR)
- Social Exclusion of Seniors 65+ Living in a Home Surrounding in the Czech Republic, LTC18066 (provider: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports)
- Analysis of factors influencing the risk of falls - opportunities of involvement of nurses and pharmacists in minimisation of the risk, NV16-33463A (provider: Ministry of Health)
- Impact of air pollution on the morbidity in children, NV18-09-00151 (provider: MH)
- Sequential Hybrid Ablation versus Surgical CryoMaze Alone for Treatment of Atrial Fibrillation (SurHyb Trial): a multicentre randomised controlled trial, NV19-02-00046 (provider: MH)
- Comprehensive prevention and interdisciplinary care for individuals with cerebral stroke, NV19-09-00199 (provider: MH)
- Safety of nurse medication administration at selected hospital wards, NU20-09-00257 (provider: MH)
- Role of nurses and their protection during pandemic situations, NU21-09-00300 (provider: MH)
- Complex Education of Stable Ischemic Heart Disease Patients Coordinated by Nurses, NU23-09-00369 (provider: MH)
- A Care Model for Seniors in Housing Facilities in the Concept of Three-stage Housing, TL01000032 (provider: Technological Agency of CR)
- Standardisation of Woodcock-Johnson IV test for population of Romani children, TL02000187 (provider TA)
- Support for informal caregivers in the South Bohemian Region through audio-visual means including virtual reality, TL03000518 (provider: TA)
- Quality and sustainability of body parts donation programmes in the Czech Republic, TL05000144 (provider: TA)

- Support and development of financial, digital, social and health literacy among the 65+ population, TQ01000591 (provider: TA)
- COST Action CA21123 Cancer – Understanding Prevention In Intellectual Disabilities (CUPID), 2022 - 2026 (provider: COST EU)
- Health System of the First Czechoslovak Republic in the Context of National and Social Composition of the State – Centre vs. Periphery, GA20-09470S (provider: Grant Agency of CR)

Considering the total amount of supported grants, the projects mentioned above were the most significant, bringing approximately €1.55 million (~40 million CZK) to the faculty. Except for one, all grants originated from Czech ministries and funding agencies; international grants are not listed in the appendix. Currently the faculty does not engage in contract research.

Recommendations:

While several areas show strong potential for practical implementation, there is still room for improvement in terms of overall research efficiency and impact. Notably, the amount of grant funding received has shown a declining trend - approximately halving in recent years - which highlights the need for strategic reinforcement in this area. Moving forward, the faculty should explore opportunities to initiate research contracts in selected fields. In addition, the simulation centre operating within the Department of Nursing, Midwifery, and Emergency Care holds significant potential for both professional training and the development of research projects, which could be utilized more extensively.

3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society

Evaluate the research results already applied in practice or intended to be applied in practice. When evaluating, consider whether the results are proportionate to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, how they contribute to the fulfilment of the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and, if stated in the self-evaluation, how the results take into account the gender dimension and sustainability. Use the data from the full results summary in Table 3.4.1 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

Between 2019 and 2023, the FHSS implemented several research projects with tangible societal benefits, particularly in the fields of health and social care, contributing to sustainability, efficiency, and long-term positive outcomes.

- Support for Informal Caregivers: This project introduced virtual reality tools to reduce caregiver stress and improve psychological well-being, with the outputs widely implemented in therapeutic settings and respite care programs.
- Standardisation of the Woodcock-Johnson IV Test for Romani Children: The project enhanced understanding of the cultural and educational needs of Romani children, supporting more inclusive educational practices and promoting long-term social integration.
- Senior Care Model in Tábor: A newly implemented care model strengthened senior residential services and informal caregiver support, improving sustainability in elder care and fostering peer support through training and self-help groups.
- Body Parts Donation and Assisted Reproduction: This interdisciplinary research addressed psychosocial and ethical aspects of donation practices, influencing expert discussions on legislation, donor compensation, and ethical frameworks in reproductive health.

The projects show a commendable integration of gender and sustainability considerations, with several explicitly addressing the specific needs of women (particularly among informal caregivers and Romani children) and contributing to long-term improvements in health and social care systems.
Recommendations: These projects demonstrate a strong application focus and societal relevance, although future efforts could benefit from further strengthening in dissemination and broader-scale implementation.

TRANSFER OF RESULTS INTO PRACTICE

3.5 Transfer of results into practice	
Evaluate the effectiveness of the transfer of results into practice by the unit being evaluated. Pay attention to whether the composition of the stated users of the results or the way the R&D&I results are commercialised (if stated) is consistent with the R&D&I results produced and the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and how successful the evaluated unit is in its activities, such as attracting new users of the results, commercialising the R&D&I results and obtaining funding from non-public, non-grant sources.	
Rating [1–5]:	**3 - Average**
Qualitative assessment: The FHSS demonstrates a commendable focus on the societal implementation of its R&D&I outputs, effectively aligning with its applied research mission. The examples provided show a clear and meaningful connection between research results and real-world users, such as municipalities, healthcare and social service providers, and educational institutions. Notably, the implementation of the "Model of Care for Seniors" and the use of virtual reality tools in home hospice and caregiver support exemplify thoughtful application and user-oriented development. Similarly, contributions to clinical practice (e.g., SURHYB project) and professional education highlight the faculty's capacity to translate research into action. However, while the examples are strong, the narrative lacks systematic evidence of how new users are attracted over time or how the impact of these interventions is measured and evaluated. The absence of a structured strategy for broadening the user base or tracking long-term societal impact limits a full assessment of effectiveness. Moreover, although some income from non-public sources (journal sales) is reported, other opportunities for non-grant, non-public funding - such as service-based collaborations or tailored programmes for stakeholders - are underutilised and not addressed. There is also no indication of formalised commercialisation efforts, which is consistent with the faculty's stated focus and mission. However, articulating a clearer model for knowledge transfer - detailing the mechanisms, user engagement strategy, and metrics for success - would provide greater transparency and potentially enhance the scalability and visibility of impact. This would also support the faculty in attracting additional external partners or non-public funders in a more strategic manner. Overall, the faculty's transfer of results into practice is well aligned with its applied and socially focused mission, but it would benefit from a more systematic, evaluable, and outward-facing approach to further enhance reach, accountability, and sustainability. In summary, the lack of systematic evidence on user growth and impact evaluation, underutilisation of non-grant funding opportunities, and the absence of a clear model for knowledge transfer justify the classification as 'average' rather than 'very good'.	

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the faculty develops a structured knowledge transfer strategy that clearly defines target user groups, mechanisms for implementation, and measurable indicators of impact. The SER does not mention the simulation centre operating within the Department of Nursing, Midwifery, and Emergency Care, despite its significant potential for both professional training and the development of research projects. Additionally, exploring further non-public, non-grant funding sources - such as service-based collaborations - could enhance both the sustainability and societal reach of the faculty's research activities.

POPULARIZATION OF VAVAI

3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public

Evaluate how active and successful the evaluated unit is in the field of popularisation of R&D&I and communication with the public.

Rating [1–5]:	**3 - Average**

Qualitative assessment:

The FHSS demonstrates commitment to the popularisation of research and development and to strengthening public communication. The wide range of initiatives indicates an active and socially engaged institution, with a particular emphasis on health education, disease prevention, and public awareness.

Summary of key activities and their impact:

- Health Days and Nurses' Day (e.g., on Palackého Square, in hospitals): Offered free health screenings, expert consultations, and educational activities on lifestyle disease prevention, reaching a broad audience and strengthening health literacy.
- Children's University and Suburban Camps: Provided interactive, age-appropriate education on health, first aid, and social topics to children, fostering early interest in healthcare fields and developing empathy and teamwork skills.
- First Aid Workshops (e.g., Episcopal Grammar School, nursery and primary schools): Delivered practical, hands-on training in first aid and crisis response, increasing students' readiness and simultaneously enhancing nursing students' communication and teaching abilities.
- Researchers' Night: Engaged the public with interactive demonstrations and scientific tools (e.g., simulators, health measurements), helping to connect science with everyday life and break down barriers between academia and the public.
- Specialised events (e.g., Hospital Childcare Day, Half Marathon medical support): Offered professional development opportunities for students and showcased the faculty's applied impact in public health and event medicine.
- Media engagement: Faculty experts regularly appeared in public campaigns and the media, further strengthening the visibility of science and healthcare issues in society.

However, while the faculty demonstrates commendable activity and commitment in public engagement, most initiatives remain event-based, fragmented, and occasional, often tied to specific campaigns or annual programmes. There is no evidence of a sustained, long-term strategy for public communication, nor of systematic evaluation of outcomes and societal impact. Furthermore, the initiatives are largely concentrated on local or regional audiences, with limited indication of broader outreach, scalability, or integration into institutional frameworks that would ensure continuity and visibility over time.

Taken together, these limitations - the ad hoc nature of activities, the absence of longitudinal impact assessment, and the lack of a structured, strategic approach - explain why the faculty's performance is assessed as "average" rather than "very good," despite its active and socially engaged profile.

Recommendations:

It would be necessary to adopt a more centralised and sustained approach, integrating key outreach activities into everyday practice - particularly through stronger, ongoing cooperation with schools, municipalities, and other community stakeholders. Additionally, the broader use of digital tools and the development of open-access educational content could significantly expand reach and accessibility. A more systematic structure, underpinned by clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, would enhance not only the effectiveness but also the visibility and scalability of these important initiatives of the results.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module 3

Evaluate how the evaluated unit has reflected the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the IEP, if applicable.

If the evaluated unit has not been evaluated before, the indicator will be marked as N/A – Not Applicable.

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

Since the last institutional evaluation, the FHSS has made notable and encouraging progress in addressing several key recommendations. The most visible success is the strengthening of its international presence, which was previously identified as a priority. The increase in publications in internationally indexed journals (WoS and Scopus), together with the faculty's active participation in Erasmus+, COST Action projects, and Horizon Europe proposals, clearly demonstrates a growing international visibility and scientific engagement. These achievements reflect a strong institutional commitment to raising research quality and expanding collaboration networks.

In the area of applied research in societally relevant but previously underrepresented fields (physiotherapy, rehabilitation, nutritional therapy, laboratory diagnostics), the faculty has made meaningful initial steps. While the number of externally funded projects in these domains is still modest, partly due to a shortage of experienced full-time researchers, the introduction of internal support mechanisms, such as grant schemes and mentoring structures, is highly commendable. These initiatives are already producing tangible results in the form of collaborative research plans and proposals, and they offer a promising foundation for future growth. Particularly encouraging is the interdisciplinary integration, with physiotherapy experts contributing to cardiac rehabilitation initiatives, which showcases the potential of internal expertise working together.

Some challenges remain, especially regarding the low level of external project funding in certain key areas. The faculty's explanation—limited national tradition in these fields and the current lack of established researchers - is valid. At the same time, it highlights the importance of a long-term strategy for research capacity building and leadership development. Importantly, the faculty's internal funding schemes represent a proactive step in the right direction and already demonstrate a capacity to nurture new research trajectories.

Concerning commercialisation and contract research, the faculty has reasonably clarified that these activities are not aligned with its mission. Instead, it focuses on public-facing applied research and

knowledge transfer, particularly through educational initiatives, policy engagement, and community partnerships. This approach is consistent with the faculty's values and societal orientation. Still, developing a more structured knowledge transfer strategy - framing its impact model more explicitly - would further strengthen external understanding of its contributions.
Science popularisation remains an area where further progress could be made. Although outreach activities are ongoing and commendable, they are still mostly initiative driven. A more strategic mid-term plan with defined goals, target groups, and impact measures could significantly enhance the visibility and sustainability of these efforts.

Overall, the FHSS has responded constructively and with visible commitment to many of the previous recommendations. Particularly in internationalisation and in building internal research support structures, the progress is clear and promising. While certain areas remain at an early stage of development, the faculty has established a solid foundation for long-term improvement. With continued strategic focus, FHSS is well-positioned to consolidate its achievements and further increase its impact both internationally and societally.

Recommendations:

To build on its current trajectory and address remaining gaps, the FHSS should prioritise developing research leadership in underrepresented fields like physiotherapy, nutrition, and diagnostics - supporting doctoral and postdoctoral growth. Internal research funding schemes should be sustained and scaled, with clearer pathways toward external grant acquisition. A formalised knowledge transfer strategy would help articulate how the faculty creates societal impact through education, policy engagement, and community partnerships, in the absence of traditional commercialisation. A mid-term strategic plan for science popularisation - with defined goals, target audiences, and impact metrics - would further enhance visibility. Finally, deepening international partnerships through joint research initiatives aligned with regional health needs could strengthen both the faculty's global presence and societal contribution.

EVALUATED UNIT RATING

Evaluation of unit

Having evaluated the individual criteria of module M3, please summarise your evaluation in the context of the module, describing and justifying the strengths and weaknesses of the unit being evaluated.

3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation	**NOT RATED**
3.2 Recognition by the research community	**4 - Very good**
3.3 Research projects	**4 - Very good**
3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society	**4 - Very good**
3.5 Transfer of results into practice	**3 - Average**
3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	**3 - Average**
3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module	**4 - Very good**
Average rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**
Grade [A–D]:	**B**

Summary assessment:

The FHSS presents itself as a dynamic and socially engaged academic institution with a clearly defined mission to improve public health and social services through high-quality education and applied research. Over its three-decade history, the faculty has developed a strong portfolio in health and social care, particularly in nursing, where it is recognized as a national leader. Its applied and interdisciplinary orientation aligns well with regional needs, and its contributions to public health, ageing, informal caregiving, and education for vulnerable groups are especially commendable.

The faculty's research is strongly practice-oriented, with tangible outcomes that have been implemented in a variety of healthcare and community settings. There is clear evidence of alignment between its research projects and its mission to address societal needs, such as improving elder care, supporting informal caregivers, and promoting inclusive education. However, the declining trend in external funding, particularly from international sources, raises concerns about long-term sustainability and competitiveness. Furthermore, although many initiatives have clear practical value, their impact is not always systematically monitored or benchmarked.
The faculty has made significant strides in research popularisation and community engagement. Its outreach activities - ranging from health fairs to school programs - are diverse and impactful, contributing both to public health literacy and the professional development of students. Nevertheless, these efforts often remain sporadic or tied to one-off events, limiting their strategic potential.

Recognition by the academic community is growing, especially through participation in EU projects and increased publication activity in indexed journals. However, the research profile of FHSS still appears concentrated within a relatively small group of staff, and broader participation across departments could enhance the institution's academic reach and resilience. Similarly, while there are early signs of improvement in underrepresented areas such as rehabilitation and diagnostics, these fields require more strategic investment to develop a critical mass of expertise.
Overall, FHSS is a faculty with a socially relevant mission, a strong orientation toward applied outcomes, and promising interdisciplinary potential. To fully realise its ambitions for national and international competitiveness, however, more systemic development is needed in the areas of research funding, internal capacity building, strategic planning, and knowledge transfer.

Summary recommendations:

The proposed recommendations aim to enhance the faculty's research capacity, societal impact, and international competitiveness. Key strategic priorities include developing a long-term R&D&I strategy with measurable goals and allocating targeted resources to build research capacity in underrepresented fields such as rehabilitation, nutritional therapy, and diagnostics. Encouraging broader staff engagement in research - especially among early-career researchers - through internal incentives is also emphasized.

To strengthen international visibility, the faculty should actively pursue participation in competitive funding programs (e.g., Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, COST), promote interdisciplinary research themes, and support publishing in high-impact international journals. Establishing a formal knowledge transfer structure is recommended to systematize partnerships with external stakeholders, monitor impact, and attract non-public funding.

Public engagement efforts should be expanded and integrated into a strategic program, supported by digital content development and impact evaluation. Systematic monitoring of societal research

impact, along with the documentation of success stories and implementation outcomes, will aid in communicating value to stakeholders and tracking institutional progress.

Diversifying funding sources through training, consultancy, and spin-off initiatives - particularly in digital health and social innovation - is encouraged, provided alignment with the faculty's mission. Finally, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration across faculties and departments will support integrated approaches to complex health and social issues, driving innovation and expanding the faculty's research ecosystem.

EVALUATION REPORT IN MODULE 3

NAME OF EVALUATED UNIT: Faculty of Agriculture and Technology

FORD: 4 - Agriculture and veterinary sciences

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE EVALUATED UNIT

3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation

Indicator 3.1 is a non-evaluated indicator that provides basic information about the evaluated unit such as its mission and vision, organizational structure, size and staffing, or R&D&I capacities.

Commentary:

The faculty is an educational centre focusing on active cooperation with the "application sphere". The mission is promoting independent knowledge through education and research. Particularly, applied scientific and contract-based research is carried out, as main partners and funders are the Ministry of Agriculture, the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, some other regional institutions as well as commercial companies operating in the agricultural sector. Basic research is clearly not the focus of the faculty which has implications on research strategy, funding opportunities, project partners etc. The faculty is – by itself and through collaboration with commercial research partners – well equipped for applied experimental research. Among all faculties of USB, the Faculty of Agriculture and Technology (FAT) probably is the most applied one. Based on its focus, the FAT can deliver innovation to their partners and stakeholders in the field of agriculture.

The vision of the faculty is to support students and staff to be competitive both nationally and internationally.

The faculty has 141 employees (end of 2023), 82 of whom are academic staff. Among the academically highest-ranking professors and associate professors, the proportion of female staff is rather low (about 10% and 25% for full professors and associate professors, respectively). Although the gender balance is frequently lacking in technical faculties, there is a need for constantly monitoring and improving that issue. As most of full professors are in the age cohort of >60 years, improving the gender balance appears feasible in the near future.

A total of 54 study programmes (including various lifelong learning courses) is existing, some of them will be terminated in 2024 according to the SER. Nevertheless, this number is very high compared to the student number of 1154 (as of 2023). Student numbers are rather stable over the years reported. It must be considered that a high teaching load of academic staff is also affecting the time and capacity available for research.

The faculty is organised in 11 departments covering agriculture (production), related fields (environmental disciplines, applied biology/chemistry) and technologies (various supporting and digital technologies).

Since 2021, a strategic focus (based on recommendations of the 2020 IEP evaluation) was adopted with five priority research topics: Sustainable agriculture, agricultural biotechnology, quality of products/food, agriculture and environment, and agriculture and technology 4.0. These topics were excellently chosen as they very well reflect the needs and current challenges of the agri-food system

such as sustainable production, climate change, food quality and food safety for consumers, agricultural biotechnology, environmental impacts of production including life cycle assessment, and modern technologies including digitalisation, robotics and artificial intelligence. These topics are connecting departments within the faculty, and individual research projects are assigned to specific priority research topics.

RECOGNITION BY THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

3.2 Recognition by the research community

Evaluate the position of the evaluated unit in the R&D&I research community based on the facts presented in indicator 3.2 and its annexed tables (3.2.1 to 3.2.5).

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:[1]

There is a significant recognition of individual FAT faculty members in various academic spheres including academic quality control:

- Some of the faculty members have received awards (honourable mentions, cooperation medal), mainly on the national level of the Czech Republic.
- Eight faculty members are serving as members of editorial boards in international peer reviewed journals (journal impact factors are rather low).
- Faculty members have delivered invited lectures at recognized foreign universities and institutions both in European countries and world-wide. Due to their outstanding scientific output, some individual faculty members are well recognized in the international scientific community.
- International scientists from recognized institutions in the UK, The Netherlands, Poland, Austria, Sweden, the USA and China delivered guest lectures at FAT.
- Several faculty members served in the evaluation of research projects (primarily in national programs, in Poland, in Slovak Republic, but not on the European level).
- The faculty is well recognised on the regional level, e.g. through the faculty operated micro-brewery, extension activities with schools, vocational schools etc. While this does not contribute to research community recognition, it generates recognition within the applied sphere which is also part of the faculty mission.

Recommendations:

While the faculty is very well recognized, the recognition by the research community is mainly happening on the national level. An increased international recognition and visibility (as it is mentioned as a goal in the faculty vision statement according to the SER) could be achieved by increased participation in international research projects.

An increased international staff exchange both for research and teaching for early and mid-career staff members, international (English) publications, and related academic activities / networking would help to increase international recognition. It is strongly recommended to foster all such activities.

[1] Provide verbal assessment of the indicator and briefly comment on the reasons for awarding the specific rating. Follow a similar procedure for the other indicators.

As some academic staff members are recognised as research project evaluators, they could more actively participate in EU project evaluations which is a hands-on-experience that would support their own project activities and better recognition of the institution.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

3.3 Research projects

Evaluate the most important research projects of the evaluated unit, especially regarding the results achieved and the application potential of the project, the proportionality with respect to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, the degree of interdisciplinarity and collaboration with other parts of the evaluated HEI, and the consistency with the declared mission and vision of the evaluated unit. Use the data from the full list of research projects and contract research activities in Tables 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

FAT is participating in several relevant applied research projects (international and national levels) which are all assigned to particular priority research topics established earlier. Most of these projects have a high application potential which can be seen from the participation of other stakeholders such as plant breeding companies or animal husbandry institutions. The faculty is generating significant budget from publicly funded research projects, whereas the overall revenue from a number of contract research projects is comparatively low.

Individual projects include:

- NEXTFOOD: An EU-funded H2020 RIA action which focuses on educational outputs (educational materials, web-based software tools) for training farmers and innovations in the agri-food system. While this is an important activity with high degrees of interdisciplinarity and collaboration, it is not typical research project, but dealing with extension and innovation instead.
- The Biostimulants project is another international partnership activity in research, implementation and dissemination including winter and summer schools. It is resulting in scientific output and patents as well.
- In the Algae Bloom international project dealing with data-driven prediction of eutrophication of surface water areas through agricultural impact (water quality assessment on nitrate, phosphate contamination), collaborations between USB faculties FAT and FFWP were successfully realised, thus a higher level of interdisciplinarity is given. The content of this project is also well illustrating the faculty research focus priorities of agriculture/environment interaction, sustainability, and the agriculture and technology 4.0 focus.
- A project on smart technologies for cattle and pig production focuses on improvement of livestock production (animal welfare, health etc.) using digitalisation and big-data approaches for stable and herd management. Intelligence systems (software development) are utilised here again for animal health monitoring and disease detection. Results are commercialised by a company partner.
- The poppy genomic and transcriptomic breeding project is an excellent example of combining state-of-the-art genetic technologies with practical research objectives in the specialty crop poppy, which is widely grown in Czech Republic. While the project is coordinated by FAT, plant breeding companies and another university (University of

Ostrava) are participating, and results are supporting the selection of new poppy breeding materials.

- Similarly, a project of investigating the processing of oilseed wastes (protein-rich oil cake) is based on an excellent idea in circular economy. The project pursues multidisciplinary approaches within the research priority on quality of agricultural products and foodstuffs; it can contribute to the development of new plant-based protein-rich foods.
- Other national projects focus on sustainable feeding and better health through reduction of antibiotics in calve feeding, reducing inhibitory substances in milk, and developing a robotic milking system. Again, a high level of interdisciplinarity within these projects is apparent.
- The project dealing with a robotic milking system is another example of an innovation project dealing with efficiency in production in the agriculture and technology 4.0 strategic research topic. The base of that innovation is a newly designed robotic arm and AI software with an image analysis system for automatic operation. However, similar innovations have also been developed by other institutions and companies before.
- A long-term strategic project (1994-2023) of environmental monitoring of the vicinity of the Temelín nuclear power plant is an important professional service which the USB FAT provides to society. The collection of reference samples and reference data is helpful in generating a unique documentation, knowledge and monitoring experience which are of international interest. The project is also helpful for renewal of FAT laboratory equipment and for teaching in environmental sciences. In addition, the nature of the project is highly interdisciplinary affecting crop production, forestry, grassland, and soil science.

Recommendations:

The research projects of the FAT are in the applied field, where they clearly contribute to solving practical problems in the Czech agriculture. While the research carried out is of high quality, it is recommended to foster active participation in EU-funded projects which would support the further development of the faculty, its research topics and its staff. For example, there are applied research and innovation actions (RIA) within Horizon Europe, for which the FAT might be a perfect partner both in terms of academic staff and infrastructure capacities.

Beside other topics deserving intensive elaboration at the project level, the oilseed waste processing project is a perfect example for further research opportunities and interdisciplinary collaboration: In the up-coming circular economy, “waste” from food/feed processing is a high-potential raw material for new products. Thus, similar projects should be extended to major oil (and other) crop species with possible involvement of plant breeding (varieties) and food processing/food industry (development of novel products).

3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society

Evaluate the research results already applied in practice or intended to be applied in practice. When evaluating, consider whether the results are proportionate to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, how they contribute to the fulfilment of the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and, if stated in the self-evaluation, how the results take into account the gender dimension and sustainability. Use the data from the full results summary in Table 3.4.1 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**

Qualitative assessment:

Mainly implemented through project-based work, the FAT has generated various impressive research results with high relevance to society in general and specifically for the stakeholders in the agri-food system. As the field of research is mainly in the applied sphere as emphasized in the mission statement of the faculty, the results are of immediate use and will thus have an impact on society. As the activities of FAT are designed along priority research topics which reflect major societal needs, they can fulfil the mission of the faculty in the best possible way. The results and outcomes are manifold: They include services to public and scientific community, software tools, patents, books as well as methodologies and technologies.

Among the research results applied or applicable are:

- Web-based tools for education or auditing such as in NEXTFOOD, software tools for the assessment and prediction of surface water quality and algal bloom based on the processing of satellite images and data.
- Individual patents such as the patents on plant-based bio-stimulant production, black garlic preparation, advanced automation of milking robots or an entomopathogenic fungal strain for pest and disease control.
- Dissemination of know-how through the publication of books (calf feeding and feed additive publication).
- Certified methodologies such as biotechnology methods in mutation approaches for poppy breeding and optimizing the utilisation of oilseed cakes as by-products with high seed protein content.

The project on poppy biotechnology mentioned above is illustrating the research impact on society, as poppy is a traditional and relevant field crop in Czech Republic. The mutation breeding approach based on TILLING generated new poppy lines which have been submitted for cultivar registration by the commercial breeding partner. The new cultivars are low in alkaloids thus preventing the mis-use of poppy capsules for opium drug production and consumption which has a clear societal health effect.

The BAT (Best Available Technology) centre is hosted by the FAT is a centre of expertise for intensive poultry and pig production. The centre is preparing materials and advice for policy makers on different levels, it disseminates results to students, to the professional and the general audience. Thus, it has a significant societal impact.

The project on oilseed cake utilization has a similarly large impact on society, which could be extended to more common oilseeds such as sunflower and oilseed rape as well: The project introduces these cakes as valuable products rather than a waste which fits in the bio-economy framework and the zero-waste strategy. Moreover, it might stimulate the food industry in developing new plant-based foods from sustainably grown raw materials which would contribute both to healthier human nutrition regimes and reducing emissions from the agri-food sector. This

has a clear and relevant impact on society and could be extended to other crops of Czech Republic and for European agriculture as well.
Recommendations: As referred to in 3.3, the interesting project on oil cake utilization has been implemented with rather exotic oil seeds such as hemp, linseed, milk thistle and pumpkin. This could be extended to the major oil crops such as oilseed rape and to other major crop plants (cereals, legumes, tuber crops) grown in central Europe which would increase the impact of that strategy both in Czech Republic and internationally.

TRANSFER OF RESULTS INTO PRACTICE

3.5 Transfer of results into practice	
Evaluate the effectiveness of the transfer of results into practice by the unit being evaluated. Pay attention to whether the composition of the stated users of the results or the way the R&D&I results are commercialised (if stated) is consistent with the R&D&I results produced and the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and how successful the evaluated unit is in its activities, such as attracting new users of the results, commercialising the R&D&I results and obtaining funding from non-public, non-grant sources.	
Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**
Qualitative assessment: As most of the projects are practically oriented rather than representing basic research according to the mission of the FAT, the transfer of research outcomes and developed technologies into practice is easily accomplished, as the results are on a high technology readiness level. The faculty's direct collaboration with relevant stakeholders such as commercial companies and ministries also ensures the timely transfer of results into practice which is in the interest of the company or institutional partner. Thus, a number of licenses from patents have been sold to commercial partners indicating the practical relevance of the project topics. In addition, the FAT is providing services (production of observation/monitoring data, analytical services, collaborative development including processes and recipes for food manufacturers) to commercial project partners as well as to other universities and research institutions. Despite the efforts invested, the revenues earned from non-public sources (donations, licenses) were not very high during the reporting period. However, this might be due to the size of the commercial partner enterprises, market conditions and other parameters.	
Recommendations: For generating higher revenues from the transfer of results, more commercial partners should be addressed for collaborations and out-licensing of services.	

POPULARIZATION OF VAVAI

3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	
Evaluate how active and successful the evaluated unit is in the field of popularisation of R&D&I and communication with the public.	
Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**
Qualitative assessment: The faculty is actively engaged in communicating their research to the general public through different events, media channels and all possible ways. University-wide events and exhibitions (open days, night of scientists, university day) were attended by significant numbers of visitors which is remarkable given the overall population/size of Ceske Budejovice. FAT participation in exhibitions and fairs as well as public lectures represent a more targeted communication to the public. Various events for schools of different education level (even pre-school level), students and summer schools were conducted as well.	
Recommendations: Despite many popularization activities carried out, a more targeted communication should be considered as it might increase efficiency and would contribute to popularity of the faculty. For example, for attracting potential new students, communication is necessary with schools of a particular age level to raise interest and awareness. This could be done on a nation-wide level using suitable materials and formats. For targeting and attracting international students to the FAT, recruitment activities (international office, international study programme(s), promotion, financing aspects, partly international/external teaching staff) should be considered.	

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module 3	
Evaluate how the evaluated unit has reflected the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the IEP, if applicable. If the evaluated unit has not been evaluated before, the indicator will be marked as N/A – Not Applicable.	
Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**
Qualitative assessment: The establishment of five priority research topics was based on a recommendation from the last evaluation. The priority topics were well chosen and appear very helpful for strategic planning and thinking, they are also useful for shaping the profile of the faculty. In addition to the priority topics (and partly related to them), a life cycle assessment (LCA) laboratory has been established, which can serve as a service unit for external stakeholders as well. An international board of advisers has been established and is operating periodically to support the faculty in improvement of its quality. The project support office has been extended which is essential for supporting departments in project application and management across the different programmes.	

An international department was expanded towards improving internationalization of the faculty both in research (project participation) and teaching (international doctoral students).
Recommendations: We advise to explore the feasibility to reduce the number of departments to align them with the five priority research topics. Simplifying the structure of the FAT would increase the effectiveness of faculty management and decision making while improving the external visibility and profile of the FAT.

EVALUATED UNIT RATING

Evaluation of unit Having evaluated the individual criteria of module M3, please summarise your evaluation in the context of the module, describing and justifying the strengths and weaknesses of the unit being evaluated.	
3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation	**NOT RATED**
3.2 Recognition by the research community	**4 - Very good**
3.3 Research projects	**4 - Very good**
3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society	**5 - Outstanding**
3.5 Transfer of results into practice	**5 - Outstanding**
3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	**4 - Very good**
3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module	**5 - Outstanding**
Average rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**
Grade [A–D]:	**B**
Summary assessment: The Faculty of Agriculture and Technology has a strong focus and capacity in applied research where it delivers very good results which are relevant for the agriculture of the Czech Republic. On a strategic level, the faculty has adopted five priority research topics which are reflecting the present and future needs and challenges of the agri-food system while connecting the different departments and working groups for increasing efficiency. Within that framework, the faculty is engaging in collaborative research projects covering the different areas of the agricultural sector. Through these projects, the faculty is engaging with different commercial and public stakeholders which ensures a successful transfer of relevant results into practice thereby creating an impact on the societal level. As most of the projects are dealt with on a regional or national level, the faculty needs to find ways of enhancing international collaboration through applied research projects. This would also be beneficial for staff development and would increase the visibility and recognition of the faculty by the international research community.	
Summary recommendations: • Analyse (and reduce) the high number of study programmes • Improve international recognition/visibility through increased participation in international research programmes • Improve communication about the faculty and study programmes to attract more students	

EVALUATION REPORT IN MODULE 3

NAME OF EVALUATED UNIT: Faculty of Fisheries and Protection of Waters

FORD: 4 - Agriculture and veterinary sciences

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE EVALUATED UNIT

3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation

Indicator 3.1 is a non-evaluated indicator that provides basic information about the evaluated unit such as its mission and vision, organizational structure, size and staffing, or R&D&I capacities.

Commentary:

The mission of FFPW is to advance and apply scientific knowledge in freshwater fisheries, aquaculture and protection of freshwaters. Therefore, it focuses on sustainable use of aquatic ecosystems, conserving biodiversity and sustainable aquaculture systems. Its vision is to establish itself into an into a leading European centre of excellence in research, innovation and education.

To reach these goals, it wants to combine cutting-edge research and high-quality education with engaging with society through outreach, knowledge sharing and life-long learning opportunities. Key areas of social impact are (1) development of sustainable fish farming; (2) safeguarding or improving the quality of freshwater ecosystems in the region and (3) technological innovations for stakeholders in fisheries and protection of waters. FFPW endorses an Open Science policy.

FFPW is a strongly research oriented faculty, comprising 2 institutes: the Research Institute of Fish Culture and Hydrobiology at Vodňany and the Institute of Aquaculture and Protection of Waters, mainly based in Ceske Budejovice (it has a dependency in Nové Hrady). In addition to this, FFWP leads and harbours the South Bohemian Research Centre of Aquaculture and Biodiversity of Hydrocenoses (CENAKVA) which has recently be included in the Czech Roadmap of Large Research Infrastructures, enabling at least 25% of its capacity being available for free open access (thereby fostering national and international collaboration).

The faculty is a medium-sized faculty at USB, with about 200 employees that remains stable in time. The age structure is quite healthy with relative high numbers of mid-career staff. The age structure of the full professor group is rather old with almost half of the group 60+, but the faculty has initiated a plan to appoint younger (40+) staff into full professorships in the coming years. The gender balance among its staff is relatively balanced with 45% female staff members working in all positions. The PhD group consists of more female (54%) than male students, but senior positions are still dominated by males (almost 70%). FFPW has about 200 students, divided over BSc, MSc and PhD programmes, which is almost tenfold less than at some other faculties in USB, providing a fortunate balance between teaching load and research time. The faculty's strong research focus is reflected by PhD students outnumbering MSc students. Its international focus is reflected by the fact that both MSc and PhD programmes are taught in English.

For the near future, FFPW wants to increase its student number with at least 10%, have more international projects, among them at least one ERIC project.

RECOGNITION BY THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

3.2 Recognition by the research community Evaluate the position of the evaluated unit in the R&D&I research community based on the facts presented in indicator 3.2 and its annexed tables (3.2.1 to 3.2.5).	
Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**

Qualitative assessment:[1]

The recognition by the research community is by all means evident:

- FFPW students excel in different national competitions and win awards
- Early career staff win national awards which were specifically targeting young scientists, for their groundbreaking research
- Several FFPW scientists rank among the global top 2% of most-cited scientists in their fields
- About 20 FFPW academics serve on editorial boards of ISI journals, some of them high ranking in their field (with IF >10) and many are invited to review manuscripts.
- International scholars from USA, Asia and Western Europe visit and lecture at FFPW regularly. Vice versa, FFPW scientists are invited for lectures at international workshops or conferences.
- FFPW scientists participate in review committees of national and international research projects, sit in advisory committees and are member of (international) professional societies. Most of this is within the larger European context. Students of FFPW serve as national coordinators of the European Aquaculture Society – Student Group.
- FFPW scientists are also involved in the scientific or organisational committees for high level international conferences
- The average AIS (Article Influence Score) has increased from 0.79 in 2020 to 1.28 in 2024. As a value of 1.00 indicates that the articles have the same impact as the average article in the database (WoS), this means that current FFPW papers have a higher-than-average impact. Since WoS operates at global scale, it means that FFPW papers are above world average.

In conclusion, the faculty is represented everywhere in national and international scientific and academic fora and is taken serious by western European colleagues.

Recommendations

We recommend FFPW to continue on the path they have chosen, and focus even more on gaining international recognition, by publishing in Q1 journals, taking up leading positions (rather than just participating) in international conferences (organizing sessions, etc) and in international scientific/research societies.

To further stimulate the production of high impact papers, the faculty could explore the possibility to foster the scientific debate in the faculty, for instance by organizing plenary discussions (at least at department level) on draft papers before they are submitted, and/or on research proposals etc.

[1] Provide verbal assessment of the indicator and briefly comment on the reasons for awarding the specific rating. Follow a similar procedure for the other indicators.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

3.3 Research projects	
Evaluate the most important research projects of the evaluated unit, especially regarding the results achieved and the application potential of the project, the proportionality with respect to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, the degree of interdisciplinarity and collaboration with other parts of the evaluated HEI, and the consistency with the declared mission and vision of the evaluated unit. Use the data from the full list of research projects and contract research activities in Tables 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 to supplement the evaluation.	
Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

FFPW's research is entirely embedded in the four Research Programmes of CENAKVA, e.g. (1) reproductive and genetic techniques for conserving fish biodiversity and advancing aquaculture; (2) pollutants in freshwater environments and their effects on ecosystems; (3) sustainable aquaculture practices and (4) the functioning of freshwater ecosystems in the context of global environmental change. However, not all four programmes are equally productive, and this may create an unbalance in the quality of FFPW's research programmes. CENAKVA bridges historical practices with modern environmental and social challenges. FFPW rightfully envisages that its task will shift from pure fish production to maintaining water quality, biodiversity and landscapes that mitigate droughts and floods in a changing environment. As at least 25% of CENAKVA's capacity is to free open-access activities, this strong interaction between FFPW and CENAKVA guarantees international collaboration and interdisciplinary outputs. Even more, because of this combination, FFPW was able to become and remain a stable partner in the EU project *AquaExcel* which integrates top-class aquaculture research infrastructures in Europe, exemplifying its international stature. Meanwhile, after 10years the *AquaExcel* program has been followed up by a new project called *AquaServe*, which means that FFPW will continue and benefit from the international exchanges which are provided by this program. In short, the integration of FFPW's research with the programmes of CENAKVA provides an ideal platform for FFPW to continue and realize its ambitions as demonstrated by its mission and vision.

The BIODIVERSITA project enabled research in fish genetics, reproductive physiology and germ cell biotechnology and yielded over 230 outputs. Via a strong collaboration with a private fish producing company in the project "Optimalisation of supplemental feeding and management of pond aquaculture", game changing suggestions for pond management adjustments have been produced which may help the Czech carp production sector to stop its deteriorating economic situation.

As the quality of research projects and the underlying organization is not equally excellent in all research programmes, a "very good" grading seems appropriate.

Recommendations:

As general recommendation, also here we suggest continuing searching high profile (and preferably international) projects, building international consortia on specific topics of value to the faculty.

The linkage with the four research programmes of CENAKVA is very useful. However, not all 4 programmes are equally productive. This is a point that requires further attention.

3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society

Evaluate the research results already applied in practice or intended to be applied in practice. When evaluating, consider whether the results are proportionate to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, how they contribute to the fulfilment of the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and, if stated in the self-evaluation, how the results consider the gender dimension and sustainability. Use the data from the full results summary in Table 3.4.1 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**

Qualitative assessment:

FFPW delivers results with various impacts on (mainly environmental) sustainability, economic profitability of regional fish farms and the quality of surface waters (and thus indirectly on the health of those who depend on these waters). It all fits well in their R&D&I profile and contribute to the mission and vision of the faculty. There are few studies that include the socio-ecological context and thus the human factor in the issue at stake.

The SER gives examples of how the FFPW reaches immediate impact on society.

Sauer and colleagues developed a method for long term sampling and analysis of water quality in rivers. They tested it in the Danube basin. The outcome of this study is used to integrate it in regulatory frameworks via collaboration with the German Environment Agency, hence, Czech research has impact on German regulations!

The study of *Roy* and colleagues led to policy documents published by the Aquaculture Advisory Council of the European Commission and the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture division and therefore has global impact.

The FFPW (see *Mraz et al*.) works closely together with the Czech fish processing industry on specific applications to search new products derived from fish biomass, either in the food industry or even in cosmetics. Some of these products were specifically developed for pre-school children under the brand “Happy Fish Delicates” and are distributed among 200 Childcare institutions and schools in the country. These products are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, promoting both child health and circular resource use. Residual materials not suitable for human consumption are processed into pet foods.

Another innovation relates to the technology to reproduce and farm pikeperch in intensive, closed recirculation systems which enables a year-round production in a most cost-effective way (see *Policar* and co-authors). This technology is currently being applied by companies in the Czech Republic, Switzerland and Germany.

Cisar and co-authors developed a web-based animal tracking system to follow and track fish predators such as otters and cormorants. The service enables the calculation of losses caused by these predators. The Czech Ministry intends to use it to eventually compensate the fish farmers for the losses incurred.

Recommendations:

Currently the strongest impact of the FFPW’s research is at the international level. As the Czech fish farming sector is small, it might be rational for FFPW to focus its research even more than today on the international sector. Having the Central European Pond farming as a base, its research could be of high importance for the aquaculture sector in developing countries which is mainly pond based. This could give the FFPW also a unique position in the European aquaculture research.

TRANSFER OF RESULTS INTO PRACTICE

3.5 Transfer of results into practice	
Evaluate the effectiveness of the transfer of results into practice by the unit being evaluated. Pay attention to whether the composition of the stated users of the results or the way the R&D&I results are commercialised (if stated) is consistent with the R&D&I results produced and the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and how successful the evaluated unit is in its activities, such as attracting new users of the results, commercialising the R&D&I results and obtaining funding from non-public, non-grant sources.	
Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**

Qualitative assessment:

Part of the evaluation of this criterion is comprised in our evaluation of 3.4. FFPW uses basically two different approaches for transfer of results into practice, e.g., (1) by direct contract research commissioned by an immediate user of the results and (2) by responding on calls for projects with a certain strategic outcome issued by national and international agencies, such as the Ministries of the Czech Republic or the European Commission. These 2 approaches are complemented by incidental consultancies when a demand for it passes by. All these approaches are immediately based on the results of the R&D&I produced at the faculty and in line with its mission and vision.

The FFPW is also very active in searching new users and opportunities. It has engaged a dedicated "technology scout" who seeks funding from non-public sources hitherto not used yet by the faculty.

The FFPW tries to commercialize its results where possible via licenses. However, the amount of revenues from these licences is rather small. Yet, it is quite commendable that FFPW succeeds in producing revenues from licenses based on its research from various companies, whether it is the Makro hypermarket or Delius s.r.o. or small startups as Kosmetika Czech Caviar (producing cosmetic products from fish roe).

The faculty avails over an "Aquaponic Unit" where technical innovations are explored in combining hydroponic crop farming with intensive RAS based fish farming, an example of circular food production. Innovation tests are developed in close cooperation with commercial stakeholders. This facility is also regularly opened to the public. However, despite its apparent attractiveness and many trials, aquaponic systems haven't got successful commercial applications anywhere in the world. The question arises whether the investment in this facility was really justified by the societal demand for this knowledge.

A Czech trout farming company suffering different production collapses returned to healthy conditions after FFPW established effective management strategies and solved its production issues.

In the area of wastewater treatment, the FFPW assesses micropollutant removal efficiency, detects illegal drugs and evaluates risk related to contamination of agricultural production due to sewage sludge or polluted irrigation. It also conducts pilot studies to detect newly emerging contaminants together with COWI in Norway. These findings led to a guide "Methodology for determining the conditions for the safe use of water and sludge from wastewater treatment plants in agriculture".

Recommendations:

The IEP recommends analysing critically the effectiveness of investing in aquaponic research in the long run.

POPULARIZATION OF VAVAI

3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	
Evaluate how active and successful the evaluated unit is in the field of popularisation of R&D&I and communication with the public.	
Rating [1–5]:	**4 – Very good**
Qualitative assessment: FFPW is very active in popularisation of R&D&I and communication with the public and according to the SER seems quite effective in these efforts. It uses its website, socials and fairs/exhibitions to popularize its research. Certified methodologies and technologies are made freely available online, attracting hundreds of visits annually. In addition to this, the faculty organizes specific Open Days for the public and is a desired target for school excursions. A strong result is the variety of Lifelong Learning programmes the faculty offers to the public. On average 2000 people register for these programmes annually. Further it organizes so-called “children universities” and “junior universities” for primary school pupils and talented students respectively. The flagship initiative of the university is the series “International Summer Schools” which are attended by students from universities in other European countries. Dissemination through popular science publications is a standard procedure at FFPW with on average more than 15 articles published annually in these magazines.	
Recommendations: It might be wise to consider popularization of the research in international fora.	

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module 3	
Evaluate how the evaluated unit has reflected the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the IEP, if applicable. If the evaluated unit has not been evaluated before, the indicator will be marked as N/A – Not Applicable.	
Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**
Qualitative assessment: FFPW implemented nearly all recommendations of the previous evaluation. • The former IEP called for growing awareness of global challenges and to include these in the R&D&I. Since then, FFPW frames her activities through the lens of the SDGs. Obviously, this is not a one-time change but a continuing process of change. The effect is noticeable as the faculty receives growing international recognition. • Findings are integrated in their doctoral education programmes, which are all taught in English. Two-thirds of the current PhD students are non-Czech. • The former IEP called for a more effective and efficient acquisition of projects focusing more on fewer but larger projects than the many small (often very applied) projects at the time. FFPW currently avoids projects that are overly small and has implemented a suit of	

measures to respond to the above comment, ranging from other selection procedures for acquisition to efforts to increase awareness among staff.

- The former IEP called for systematically monitoring the social impact of its R&D&I. FFPW has now established a dedicated Dean's Assistant for social relevance. To broaden its acquisition portfolio, a technological scout has been employed. Also, based on suggestions of the former IEP, a faculty Board of Commerce and Social Relevance has been established.
- To further increase its international (scientific) recognition, the number of staff involved in editorial work has significantly increased.
- The faculty was advised to try and track its social impact and reputation. It has explored the possibility of using *AltMetrics* but because of its costs, sees it as impossible to implement.
- The former IEP recommended to work on career opportunities for young staff aiming to keep high talents within the faculty. FFPW has updated its Career Plan and established a School of Doctoral Studies, which is a very commendable action.

Recommendations:

There are no specific recommendations regarding this point. Just continue as you did.

EVALUATED UNIT RATING

Evaluation of unit Having evaluated the individual criteria of module M3, please summarise your evaluation in the context of the module, describing and justifying the strengths and weaknesses of the unit being evaluated.	
3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation	**NOT RATED**
3.2 Recognition by the research community	**5 - Outstanding**
3.3 Research projects	**4 - Very good**
3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society	**5 - Outstanding**
3.5 Transfer of results into practice	**5 - Outstanding**
3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	**4 - Very good**
3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module	**5 - Outstanding**
Average rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**
Grade [A–D]:	**A**

Summary assessment:

The FFPW is a strong and well performing faculty within the realm of the USB context but has also acquired a good to strong position among its European colleagues. It is quite successful in attracting international projects and international students. Obviously, the faculty benefited from having a small student number, giving a comparative advantage in having time and resources for research. Yet, its leadership has operated very smartly and created the opportunities that enabled its current stature. The creation and development of CENAKVA have been a major achievement in this regard. The faculty was also pioneering within USB developing a PhD council, an EU desk, a talent scout and more recently a Board of Commerce and Social Relevance, before these measures were developed centrally at USB. One of its major limitations for its future growth might be the comparatively small

size of the aquaculture sector within the Czech Republic. However, its embedding in the international networks may provide even better options for further growth.

Summary recommendations:

The main recommendation is to continue and focus on producing top level research and to create a culture within FFPW where young scientists can flourish.

Important in this regard is to develop a career perspective for young scientists which goes beyond the common level of USB, acting once more as an example pioneer within the university. Especially the gender balance among senior faculty levels could be further improved by empowering young and mid-career female scientists.

FFPW can further strengthen its international profile by searching impact of its pond-based research in sectors where this knowledge might be highly needed, such as tropical aquaculture.

EVALUATION REPORT IN MODULE 3

NAME OF EVALUATED UNIT: The Faculty of Economics

FORD: 5 - Social sciences

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE EVALUATED UNIT

3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation
Indicator 3.1 is a non-evaluated indicator that provides basic information about the evaluated unit such as its mission and vision, organizational structure, size and staffing, or R&D&I capacities.
Commentary: The Faculty of Economics at the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice (FEC) offers a wide range of study programs at the bachelor's (8 programs), master's (5 programs, including 1 in English), and doctoral (2 programs, including 1 in English) levels, both full-time and part-time. FEC consists of six departments and two divisions (languages and law). FEC emphasizes internationalization and offers students the opportunity to study abroad through programs such as Erasmus+ and CEEPUS. The faculty cooperates with universities in France, Germany, Austria, the USA, Australia, and other countries. The faculty focuses on applied research in the fields of economics, management, regional development, environmental economics, and so called bioeconomics. It cooperates with businesses and institutions to solve practical economic problems using modern methods and models. FEC is the first university in the Czech Republic to obtain Fairtrade Faculty status. It promotes the ideas of fair trade, social responsibility, and sustainability not only in teaching but also among the wider public.

RECOGNITION BY THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

3.2 Recognition by the research community	
Evaluate the position of the evaluated unit in the R&D&I research community based on the facts presented in indicator 3.2 and its annexed tables (3.2.1 to 3.2.5).	
Rating [1–5]:	**3 - Average**
Qualitative assessment:[1] FEC is a dynamic but relatively small research institution with an emphasis on applied research, regional cooperation, and support for sustainable development. The faculty's scientific and research activities focuses on three main areas: (i) Economics, Finance, and Business Management, (ii) Regional Development, Public Finance, and Environmental Economics, and (iii) Business, Marketing, and Tourism. The faculty tries to emphasize applied research, often in cooperation with regional businesses and institutions. New topics such as the circular economy, green economy, and bioeconomy are being developed, reflecting current trends in the EU, but the faculty is still halfway there.	

[1] Provide verbal assessment of the indicator and briefly comment on the reasons for awarding the specific rating. Follow a similar procedure for the other indicators.

FEC participates in domestic and international research projects. Significant initiatives include: (i) POWER4BIO: A project focused on the development of the bioeconomy within the Horizon 2020 program, (ii) GAČR and TAČR: Projects funded by the Czech Science Foundation and the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (e.g., in the area of random set modelling and the impact of energy prices on consumer behaviour), (iii) Visegrad Funds: Cooperation on projects related to soft skills and the preparedness of small and medium-sized enterprises for stressful situations.

The faculty strives to support participation of students in research activities through: (i) Student Scientific and Professional Activities (SVOČ), which is an annual competition where students present their research work (e.g., in 2023, 44 papers focusing on economic and financial imbalances were presented); (ii) Publishing activities: Students have the opportunity to publish their work in professional journals, thereby gaining valuable experience for their future academic careers. However, the faculty's focus on supporting high-quality publications should be strengthened.

The faculty regularly conducts internal evaluations of academic staff and research activities. This process is anchored in the dean's measures and focuses on the quality of scientific and pedagogical activities. It would be desirable to introduce even greater incentives for high-quality publications.

FEC develops international cooperation with universities in Europe, the USA, and Australia. Students and academics can participate in exchange programs, joint research projects, and international conferences.

Recommendations:

FEC could focus more deeply on selected areas of economics and economic science (teaching, thesis topics, grant acquisition, and research publications) in which it has the potential to excel. The first area is environmental economics, bioeconomics, and sustainable innovation as key directions for the future development of the South Bohemian region, the Czech Republic, and neighbouring EU countries. In economics teaching, greater emphasis could be placed on explaining and analysing economic principles related to externalities, or rather their internalization (i.e., including all of these in product prices or decision-making processes). Current developments in the EU provide a very good opportunity for this (Pigouvian tax, i.e., corresponding to social damage (e.g., carbon tax), tradable permit system (EU ETS 2), and subsidies for activities related to environmental improvement). When teaching economics, these phenomena should be pointed out much earlier than in specialized courses, which would support a new style of teaching economics. The second area worthy of further development is fair trade. Again, micro- and macroeconomics lectures could systematically analyse that sustainable social optimality is consistent with taking fair trade principles into account rather than ignoring them. From the perspective of the faculty's functioning, the area of fair trade should be supplemented by emphasizing it in economics teaching, not just in the functioning of the faculty. The third area that has not been mentioned, but in which the FEC could excel, is economic integration, including **monetary integration (the introduction of the euro)**. Here, too, the FEC could gain a reputation as an academic institution that is respected in this important field. Another area **for specialization is the relatively new field of macroprudential policy**, which should complement fiscal and monetary policy. By specializing in the above areas, the FEC could gain a reputation as an analytically strong institution. A fifth area for deeper specialization at FEC could be the field of increasing **financial and economic education and literacy**. Here, synergies with the Faculty of Education, which also focuses on this area in ad hoc projects, could be exploited to a greater extent. Finally, further internationalization of the faculty's research activities would be desirable.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

3.3 Research projects

Evaluate the most important research projects of the evaluated unit, especially regarding the results achieved and the application potential of the project, the proportionality with respect to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, the degree of interdisciplinarity and collaboration with other parts of the evaluated HEI, and the consistency with the declared mission and vision of the evaluated unit. Use the data from the full list of research projects and contract research activities in Tables 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**3 - Average**

Qualitative assessment:

Since 2020, FEC was involved to several research projects. The most significant ones are:

1. POWER4BIO (Horizon 2020, 2018-2021)
Focus: Supporting the regional bioeconomy and the transition to a sustainable economy.
Outputs: Creation of bioeconomic development strategies, catalogues of business models, and training for regional actors.
Interdisciplinarity: Combining economics, environmental sciences, and regional development.
Cooperation: Involvement of academic institutions, industry, and public administration.

2. "Bankruptcy as a Win" - Simulation Application
Focus: Development of an online tool simulating insolvency proceedings and crisis decision-making.
Outputs: Interactive educational application with legal and managerial dimensions, usable in teaching and practice.
Interdisciplinarity: Combining law, economics, and management.
Cooperation: Use in academic environments and among court officials.

3. Diversification of the impacts of the bioeconomy on the forestry and timber sector (2019-2021)
Focus: Analysis and proposal of strategic goals for the forestry and timber sector until 2030.
Outputs: Recommendations for state administration, support for sustainable development in forestry.
Interdisciplinarity: Combining economics, forestry, and environmental sciences.
Cooperation: Cooperation with the Czech University of Agriculture and companies in the field.

4. The impact of energy price changes on consumer behaviour in the Czech Republic (TA ČR, 2024-2026)
Focus: Analysis of the impact of energy prices on consumer behaviour in the Czech Republic.
Outputs: Consumer behaviour models, recommendations for energy policy.
Interdisciplinarity: Combining economics, energy, and behavioural sciences.
Cooperation: Involvement of academics and experts from the field.

The proposals for these projects were aimed at supporting the development of the South Bohemian region in the form of applied research, support for regional development, sustainability, and innovation. On a positive note, the FEC sought cooperation with other institutions of regional and national importance. However, to the members of the international evaluation panel the practical usability of the outputs appears to be limited. The opponents did not find regular evaluation, promotion, and annual summaries of the results (how many citizens used the outputs/applications, what their experiences were, how to improve their functioning) and efforts to update them.

Recommendations:

Focus on research topics in which FEC can achieve international success and build a good reputation in these fields (see part 3.2). FEC could continue its previous strategy of acquiring grant projects by

offering cooperation or combining its research efforts with other academic institutions in its priority areas (bioeconomics, fair trade, and possibly European economic integration, macroprudential policy, or financial education). Another recommendation is to concentrate more resources (both material and human) to significantly increase the number of grant proposals. In this area, FEC lags behind the best faculties of the University of South Bohemia.

3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society

Evaluate the research results already applied in practice or intended to be applied in practice. When evaluating, consider whether the results are proportionate to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, how they contribute to the fulfilment of the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and, if stated in the self-evaluation, how the results take into account the gender dimension and sustainability. Use the data from the full results summary in Table 3.4.1 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**3 - Average**

Qualitative assessment:

Through several activities, FEC has a certain influence on society, especially in the South Bohemian region. The main areas of impact of FEC's activities are as follows:

1. FEC's efforts to promote regional development

FEC participates in projects focused on the sustainable development of the South Bohemian Region. For example, the project “Paths to Sustainable Development of the South Bohemian Region - Bioeconomy and Green Economy” (2025-2027) focuses on supporting the bioeconomy and green economy in the region. Another example is the project “Further Increasing the Efficiency of Systems through the Application of Circular Economy Principles in the Context of Regional Management” (2023-2025), which is dedicated to implementing circular economy principles in regional management. However, we will have to wait for the results and feedback from these projects.

2. Education and training of experts for the regional labour market

FEC responds to the needs of the regional labour market through new study programs. For example, the study program “Economics in Energy” focuses on preparing experts for the energy sector with an emphasis on sustainability and renewable energy sources. Furthermore, the study program “Sustainability Management” offers an interdisciplinary approach to the environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainability. However, it must be noted that the number of study programs could be reduced (thereby possibly improving their comprehensibility and selection for new students), as there are visible overlaps between some of them.

3. Social responsibility and environmental initiatives

FEC is involved in social responsibility and sustainability through: (I) Its status as a Fairtrade faculty, which it obtained as the first in Central Europe, and its support for Fairtrade products (nevertheless, greater emphasis could be placed on explaining and analysing economic principles related to externalities, or rather their internalization, for example including all of these in product prices or decision-making processes); (ii) Installing solar panels on the faculty building, which contributes to energy self-sufficiency and reducing the carbon footprint (however, this is in no way related to quality of teaching and economic research at the faculty; It is "only" a commendable consideration by the faculty management in the process of increasing the sustainable operation of the faculty); (iii) Organizing educational events and courses for the public that promote sustainable behaviour and environmental education. There is also room here for increasing FEC activities so that they reach a larger proportion of individual groups within society.

Recommendations:

The results of the research according to standard classifications are rather average, both in terms of the quantity and quality of research publications. Focusing on selected research topics, applying greater motivation for above-average research outputs by faculty staff, and greater involvement of doctoral students could bring about improvements in this area. It would also be very beneficial to try to obtain or jointly obtain a European research grant.

TRANSFER OF RESULTS INTO PRACTICE

3.5 Transfer of results into practice

Evaluate the effectiveness of the transfer of results into practice by the unit being evaluated. Pay attention to whether the composition of the stated users of the results or the way the R&D&I results are commercialised (if stated) is consistent with the R&D&I results produced and the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and how successful the evaluated unit is in its activities, such as attracting new users of the results, commercialising the R&D&I results and obtaining funding from non-public, non-grant sources.

Rating [1–5]:	**3 - Average**

Qualitative assessment:

FEC strives to link theory with practice through: (I) Project-based teaching and involving students in scientific and research activities, which strengthens the practical skills of graduates; (ii) Cooperation with the business sector and public institutions, which enables the transfer of knowledge and innovation into practice. This cooperation partially contributes to the development of the region and increases the competitiveness of local businesses.

Recommendations:

The transfer of research results into practice could be more systematic. The FEC could organize more frequently seminars on selected research topics (see section 3.2), which would also be accessible to the wider professional public. Deepening cooperation with institutions such as the Czech National Bank, the Czech Statistical Office, and the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic could also support the transfer of research results into practice. We consider the organization of seminars within the Czech Economic Society to be very beneficial. Some on-line applications created in the past appear to be outdated or less-functional ("Bankrupt jack Vohra": see https://bankrotjakovyhra.cz/hra/ or „Jedeme spolu": se https://jedemespolu.cz/jizdy.html), which is not a good sign in terms of the public resources spent in the past. These applications should be maintained, promoted, and evaluated for their use in everyday life.

POPULARIZATION OF VAVAI

3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	
Evaluate how active and successful the evaluated unit is in the field of popularisation of R&D&I and communication with the public.	
Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

Since 2020, the FEC has implemented several activities aimed at popularizing research, development, and innovation (RDI) and communicating with the public. These key initiatives include:

1. Student Scientific and Professional Activities (SVOČ): The annual SVOČ competition allows students to present their own research projects. For example, in 2023, 54 students participated and presented their work in seven sections. A selection of contributions was published in a collection that reflects current topics such as economic and financial imbalances at various levels.

2. Invest Day business competition: Invest Day is a competition focused on supporting students' business ideas. In 2025, nine teams participated in the finals, presenting innovative projects such as the Farmiture design growing rack and Ergosenc smart ergonomic chairs.

3. Inproforum Conference: Inproforum is an international conference organized by FEC that focuses on current challenges in economics and business. In 2023, 91 experts from various countries participated in the conference, discussing the topic “Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital World.”

4. Award for popularizing science: In 2023, Doc. Ing. Eva Cudlínová, CSc., was awarded the Milada Paulová Prize for her contribution to the field of bioeconomics. This award reflects the faculty's long-term efforts to popularize scientific knowledge in the field of sustainable development.

5. Environmental and socially responsible projects

- LOKNI filtration station: FEC installed a drinking water filtration station, thereby promoting environmentally friendly behaviour and reducing plastic consumption. However, this project is not directly linked to any research project or research activity, but rather "only" guides the younger generation towards sustainable growth.
- “Jedeme spolu” (Let's Ride Together) project: An initiative aimed at promoting carpooling in rural areas, which contributes to sustainable mobility and reducing emissions. However, the functionality and extent of use of the application are for members of the international panel unclear (see part 3.5).

6. Cooperation with secondary schools: FEC cooperates with secondary schools, granting them the status of “Faculty School.” This cooperation includes professional lectures, workshops, and other activities that promote students' interest in economics and facilitate their transition to university.

7. Participation in Researchers' Night: The faculty regularly participates in the nationwide Researchers' Night event, offering interactive workshops, lectures, and competitions focused on economic topics. For example, in 2021, the faculty prepared programs such as “Trying Out University Life.”

8. Day camps for children: FEC organizes day camps for children aged 8-12, focusing on economics, mathematics, and travel. These camps promote interest in economics from an early age. Here, it would be possible to join forces with the Faculty of Education, and the event could focus on improving the level of financial education and literacy.

9. University of the Third Age: The faculty offers University of the Third Age programs, which introduce economic topics to seniors and promote lifelong learning. Some new innovative items with a direct impact on the behaviour of older citizens could be included here (for example financial education and literacy for older citizens).

10. Popularization publications: FEC publishes the EFektiv magazine, which serves as a platform for presenting faculty activities, student projects, and research results. This magazine is available to the general public and contributes to the transparency and openness of the faculty. Does the faculty management receive feedback from students and teachers on the format of this magazine? It is also questionable whether the costs are being spent effectively.

Recommendations:

In several activities, members of the international evaluation panel recommend continuing and increasing general awareness of these events. As already mentioned in earlier sections of this report, some applications appear to be non-functional. For the sake of FEC's good reputation, it is important to monitor the functionality of these applications (especially on the relevant web pages) and to be aware of their use. It would therefore be advisable not only to ensure the creation of applications, but also to keep them fully operational for the duration of their use.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module 3

Evaluate how the evaluated unit has reflected the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the IEP, if applicable.

If the evaluated unit has not been evaluated before, the indicator will be marked as N/A – Not Applicable.

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

Between 2019 and 2023, the FEC underwent a certain transformation, which sought to implement the recommendations of the International Evaluation Panel.

However, members of the international evaluation committee see room for more visible and rapid development of the faculty and its specialization. Within its limited human resources, the faculty has sought to engage in research activities in areas that reflect the current challenges of the regional and global economy—sustainability, energy transformation, and innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises. However, the faculty has not been successful in obtaining prestigious European or Czech grants.

The emphasis on linking the academic sphere with practice was reflected in the creation of several specific projects – from the development of tools for currency risk management to research into the circular economy or consumer behaviour in conditions of changing energy prices. As already mentioned in the report, these projects and their applications need to be updated, evaluated, and maintained in working order.

Furthermore, thanks to its efforts to establish active cooperation with businesses, public administration, and foreign partners, the faculty continues to be regarded as an important driver of regional development with potential national and, perhaps in the future, international reach.

At the same time, FEC sought to expand its educational reach compared to the previous evaluation period and established closer contact with the professional public (across different age groups) and

other institutions. Through new interdisciplinary programs, such as courses in robotic automation, tax issues, and bioeconomics, and projects such as Invest Day, organized in cooperation with the South Bohemian Science and Technology Park, it has partially succeeded in bringing an entrepreneurial and innovative spirit to its teaching. The emphasis on lifelong learning was reflected in cooperation with the University of the Third Age and participation in Adult Education Week. The faculty also supported internal research teams (this support could be greater), introduced incentive tools to improve the quality of publications (with a few exceptions, this has not yet happened), and actively popularized science through digital media and public events. The faculty should continue intensively in this direction of development.

Recommendations:

The previous evaluation report recommended that FEC should continue to develop its strengths in applied research, particularly in the areas of regional development, marketing, sustainability, and small and medium-sized enterprise management. FEC has implemented most of the recommendations or initiated processes for their development. The faculty had significant potential in terms of participation in national and international grant projects. This is an area where efforts need to be increased in the coming period. It is commendable that improvements have been made in focusing on the social impact of these activities, but this could still be implemented more systematically. The previous report also recommended that the FEC should focus on the development of environmental issues and use its knowledge of the regional context to establish deeper interdisciplinary and interregional partnerships, thereby strengthening its position as a relevant actor in socio-economic development. Here, it can be said that the FEC is following this direction, and tangible results can be seen in these areas.

In the area of cooperation with the non-academic sphere, the previous report praised the organization of seminars, workshops, round tables, and the Invest Day competition, recommending that this competition be extended to the entire university and that employees also be involved. Here again, it can be said that the faculty accepted most of the recommendations from the previous evaluation report and tried to implement them. The recommendation here would be to focus on selected topics, whether in terms of research or popularization, and to use them to raise the faculty's profile. It can be said that there is still considerable scope for linking the FEC with practice and commercializing the faculty's outputs, which could contribute to improving the faculty/university budget. Reserves are still seen in the creation of internal research teams (with the acquisition and involvement of Ph.D. students) and greater internationalization of research activities. Overall, the faculty shows moderate growth potential, which should be supported in the future by a clearer strategic vision (focus on selected topics such as economic integration, prudential policy or financial education and literacy - see section 3.2) that would raise the profile of FEC, focusing on linking scientific excellence and social relevance.

EVALUATED UNIT RATING

Evaluation of unit Having evaluated the individual criteria of module M3, please summarise your evaluation in the context of the module, describing and justifying the strengths and weaknesses of the unit being evaluated.	
3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation	**NOT RATED**
3.2 Recognition by the research community	**3 - Average**
3.3 Research projects	**3 - Average**
3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society	**3 - Average**
3.5 Transfer of results into practice	**3 - Average**
3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	**4 - Very good**
3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module	**4 - Very good**
Average rating [1–5]:	**3 - Average**
Grade [A–D]:	**C**

Summary assessment:

The Faculty of Economics (FEC) is a smaller faculty in the Czech academic sphere, focusing on applied research, regional cooperation, and sustainable development. Its scientific and educational activities concentrate on three key areas: (i) economics and management, (ii) regional development and environmental economics, (iii) marketing and tourism. Its research efforts seek to emphasize current topics in line with progressive European trends such as the circular economy, green economy, and bioeconomy. FEC has actively participated in several national and international research projects (e.g., POWER4BIO, TAČR, Visegrad Fund) and cooperates with businesses and public institutions. In this area, it would be appropriate to further strengthen the FEC's efforts, as the grant success rate was rather low during the evaluation period. Students try to get involved in research through competitions (e.g., SVOČ), publication opportunities, and educational applications. The faculty strives to have a visible social impact, especially in the South Bohemian Region, through research projects, educational programs, and environmental initiatives. It offers new study programs tailored to the needs of the regional labour market (e.g., Economics in Energy, Sustainability Management), promotes Fairtrade principles, and educates the public on sustainable economic development.

The faculty strives to improve communication in the field of science through popularization activities (e.g., Invest Day, Inproforum, Researchers' Night), cooperates with secondary schools, and organizes events for children and seniors. It publishes the EFektiv magazine, which informs the public about its activities.

Summary recommendations:

The Faculty of Economics (FEC) is encouraged to concentrate its teaching and research activities on several key areas where it has the potential to excel, such as environmental economics, bioeconomy, fair trade, European economic and monetary integration, macroprudential policy, and financial literacy. In economics instruction, greater emphasis should be placed on real-world applications such as internalizing externalities and integrating these topics earlier in the curriculum. Fair trade should be addressed not only as a faculty value but also systematically within economics courses. Additional specialization in macroprudential policy and European integration would

position FEC as an analytically robust academic institution. Enhanced cooperation with faculties like Education could further support initiatives in financial and economic literacy.

To improve its academic profile, FEC should build on its grant acquisition strategy by deepening collaboration with other academic institutions in its priority research areas. Current research output is assessed as average, both in quality and quantity; thus, motivating faculty for higher-level publications and increasing PhD student involvement could elevate results. Furthermore, FEC should improve the transfer of research into practice through more frequent seminars on key topics and closer collaboration with institutions like the CNB, CZSO, and Ministry of Finance. Organizing such activities under the Czech Economic Society would be especially valuable. Finally, attention should be given to ensuring the long-term functionality and visibility of applications developed by the faculty, particularly those accessible via the web, to maintain FEC's professional credibility.

EVALUATION REPORT IN MODULE 3

NAME OF EVALUATED UNIT: Faculty of Education (FED)

FORD: 5 - Social sciences

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE EVALUATED UNIT

3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation

Indicator 3.1 is a non-evaluated indicator that provides basic information about the evaluated unit such as its mission and vision, organizational structure, size and staffing, or R&D&I capacities.

Commentary:

FED has a long tradition of preparing education professionals, over 75 years. The faculty comprises 17 departments, is organized into broader subject sections, and is one of the university's largest faculties. It serves over 2000 students across 27 study programs, in addition to 1200 lifelong learning students. Most of the research in the faculty is applied research. The faculty, according to SER has a strong regional position regarding education of (future) teachers. Its vision emphasises the development of study programs that equip future educators to promote deep learning and interdisciplinary collaboration. The research in the department is rooted in the advancement of interconnected educational domains such as subject didactics, pedagogy and psychology. The faculty supports basic and applied research in disciplines relevant to teacher education (TE), such as mathematics, languages, kinesiology, geography and art. The SER argues that a notable strength of the faculty is its ability to translate applied research findings into tangible outputs that benefit the education and social sector, such as comprehensive textbook series, guidelines for social workers and generally providing support and consultation for the education/social sector.

Being a large faculty with a heavy teaching load it serves the region with its needed professionals within education. On the other hand, heavy teaching loads on the employees seem to hinder a larger engagement with research, although within sports education and psychology of education such capacity has been built up to a high scientific standard.

From an international perspective there are too few full professors and associate professors for such a large Faculty. The reasons seem to be internal to the promotion schemes in Czechia, rather that the competence of the academic staff at USB. This fact and the high teaching loads are a real hindrance towards more research activity among all the academics at FED it seems.

RECOGNITION BY THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

3.2 Recognition by the research community Evaluate the position of the evaluated unit in the R&D&I research community based on the facts presented in indicator 3.2 and its annexed tables (3.2.1 to 3.2.5).	
Rating [1–5]:	**3 - Average**

Qualitative assessment:[1]

FED academics demonstrate policy-impact internally in the Czech Republic. A project for developing administrative routines of basic schools is mentioned, and one of the professors was involved in the national policy strategy for future education policy. Some of the academics are active in relevant international research-oriented organisations and conferences, some of them indirectly relevant for education research. The reported engagement of academics in national and international organisations is commendable but still seem to be locally or regionally oriented. Given the size of the faculty, one would have liked to see even broader participation, especially internationally.

The academic staff participates in international scientific journals and editorial boards. Engagement with known international publishers and book series is demonstrated, as well as some more local. The invited lectures demonstrate engagement internationally, especially by postdocs within the faculty. Also, the invited lectures demonstrate participation in an international community. Three of the projects accounted for have direct relevance to teacher professional development. The number of academics involved in international research organisations, conferences, journals etc. can be expanded and since only a limited part of it addresses the core activity of the faculty (professional development + teaching and learning in teacher education), this aspect of educational research could be enhanced.

Invited lectures are mainly provided by USA academics. The IEP believes that European engagement/collaboration could be developed more. A broader engagement in educational conferences within (at least) Europe (i.e. ECER, EARLI, EECERA etc) should be encouraged, as this is a way of getting into promoting international publications and building researcher's networks.

Recommendations:

- The reported activities can be expanded and developed to encompass a larger part of the academic staff. The faculty engages in research in the region, nationally, and some internationally. The international research engagement related to the core activities of the faculty could be enhanced. This would also promote a way of reaching a higher international standard.
- Develop a wider European research network and establish/find collaboration partners in Europe related to education research, including engagement in scientific publishing.
- This will also require investments in basic/foundational research, preferably in trans- and/or interdisciplinary research within education and in participatory and action research, which is preferably oriented towards the core activities of the faculty (professional development and teaching and learning practices).

[1] Provide verbal assessment of the indicator and briefly comment on the reasons for awarding the specific rating. Follow a similar procedure for the other indicators.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

3.3 Research projects	
Evaluate the most important research projects of the evaluated unit, especially regarding the results achieved and the application potential of the project, the proportionality with respect to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, the degree of interdisciplinarity and collaboration with other parts of the evaluated HEI, and the consistency with the declared mission and vision of the evaluated unit. Use the data from the full list of research projects and contract research activities in Tables 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 to supplement the evaluation.	
Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

In the given period, one basic research project is accounted for, "The Schwarzenberg Wind Harmonie project", funded by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic; the rest of the projects account for applied research and Erasmus+ projects. Five projects are ongoing at the time of evaluation. Within the field of subject didactics, education and psychology a strong emphasis is on science. Another project is about helping dyslexia student to learn to read, now implemented in pre-service education. There are two projects within mathematics education, one related to teacher reflection and one related to textbook development. The rest of the applied projects relate to public and state administration. Three are ongoing Erasmus+ projects but in the evaluated period there have been 5 projects. During the site visit the IEP was also introduced to the Sportslab, engaged in respiratory research on high performing athletes, which demonstrated research and collaboration on a high international level. The projects accounted for show commitment to enhancing teaching and learning in school and in the HE institution. The total revenue from projects exceeds 200.000 Euros in the period and has increased in the period except for the last year.

It is commendable that the emphasis is put on applied research within educational sciences at FED, however no participatory or action-oriented research is accounted for. This leaves the impression that the research initiatives are more policy driven and mainly top-down. Policy driven research is to be expected in an Education Faculty, but also some mor bottom-up and participatory research should be accounted for.

The ongoing research projects align with the university's research mission and vision. The faculty supports other faculties at USB, and they are engaged in cross disciplinary research related to sustainability education. FED's strength lies in its development of applied research. The number of ongoing projects show a commitment to R&D&I. One could wish for more research funding allocated to the core activities of the faculty. To develop the ongoing education of professionals a stronger emphasis could be put on both basic and applied research. The specificity of educational teacher education research should be developed and enhanced, but it requires the leaders of the department and the university to acknowledge this and to set a strategy and a plan for how it can be developed.

The score reflects that the research activities demonstrate national and international significance with high relevance. Development of educational research over a broader spectrum of the faculty's responsibility for professional development in education should be developed and basic research could constitute part of this.

Recommendations:

- Make a strategy for the next period for how the research capacity of FED will be developed. Basic research seems to be underfunded and should be prioritized together with applied research
- Use current strengths to develop research capacity. Further develop transdisciplinary research relevant for education research with other faculties – using the faculties current strengths. (Key words seem to be, ICT, Sustainability, Psychology/well-being, Natural sciences)
- Provide programs to develop research capacities connected with teaching, such as participatory and action research orientations
- Start by developing a few projects, see to it that they are supervised/followed up and secure success so they can serve as models
- Projects directly related to pedagogy and psychology related to teaching and learning and professional development for teachers/social workers should be developed.

3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society

Evaluate the research results already applied in practice or intended to be applied in practice. When evaluating, consider whether the results are proportionate to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, how they contribute to the fulfilment of the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and, if stated in the self-evaluation, how the results take into account the gender dimension and sustainability. Use the data from the full results summary in Table 3.4.1 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**3 - Average**

Qualitative assessment:

Measuring impact of SSH research is generally difficult. In this light the listed direct outputs are important, although not substantial. For reasons related to the Covid19 crisis an emphasis on technology enhanced teaching and learning was developed in the period and there was one project on assessment. Some projects have had direct impact, guidelines (recommendation) implemented by the Ministry, a virtual space for formal assessment practices open to students and teachers, the development of a software library, and an important textbook development in mathematics from freshman to graduation – that was a finalist in an international competition. Also, a digital platform related to sustainability education and textbooks are now being used by schools. A significant part of the output is related to production of textbooks for the education sector, (math, sustainability education)

The current output of research related activities shows a lack of projects directly related to the core of FED's activity – educating professionals for school and social services, more broadly defined as teacher education research – within education research. Although textbooks are important for the education sector, they only account for one didactical aspect of education.

Recommendations:

- Research demonstrating collaborative projects with schools /social service sector could be enhanced. Develop more research related to the interface between teacher education (TE) and teaching in schools, leaving more room for bottom-up innovative research and research on teaching and learning strategies.

- Engage the different departments of FED within TE in trans-disciplinary research projects related to the ongoing teaching in the departments
- Focus on innovative teaching and learning methods, further develop and spread already developed practices/programs

TRANSFER OF RESULTS INTO PRACTICE

3.5 Transfer of results into practice

Evaluate the effectiveness of the transfer of results into practice by the unit being evaluated. Pay attention to whether the composition of the stated users of the results or the way the R&D&I results are commercialised (if stated) is consistent with the R&D&I results produced and the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and how successful the evaluated unit is in its activities, such as attracting new users of the results, commercialising the R&D&I results and obtaining funding from non-public, non-grant sources.

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

The direct transfer or users of results from FED are mainly Ministries, the Czech school inspectorate and Union of school's association. Results lead to revisions on a national level. This makes sense since we are speaking of the education sector. This is then a dissemination of results from research to policy level, more that dissemination to practice level. Some courses are developed for regional schools based on research findings.

Results from research on education are not likely to be commercialized. However, several publications of which some represent teaching material are produced. The development of a FED publishing house in 2019 is commendable. The department has also been engaged in over 11 dissemination projects, funded by Norwegian Funds, related to integration of pupils from disadvantaged families. This allowed for transfer of research outcomes from other European countries.

No non-public funding has been attracted in the period.

Recommendations:

- Establish closer contact and collaboration with schools in the region for joint research projects related to the core functions of the faculty. Broader dissemination into practice requires good collaborative functions with educational institutions in primary and secondary education.

POPULARIZATION OF VAVAI

3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	
Evaluate how active and successful the evaluated unit is in the field of popularisation of R&D&I and communication with the public.	
Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**
Qualitative assessment: There are long traditions at FED for dissemination of R&D&I. Researchers nights, Olympiads (more than 10 years tradition) and so forth. The main strength of the dissemination of results and activities related to this are within the natural science field and technology Overall, the dissemination and activity in relation to popularisation and communication of R&D&I is very good but can be enhanced to cover a larger area of activity and research within FED. The mentioned projects seem like good projects and ways of engaging with the public that should be kept up and expanded on.	
Recommendations: - A participatory approach to research in TE would enhance the possibility of transfer into practice and create a closes way of communication between the different parts of the education sector. This means the transfer process must be seen as reciprocal between research and practice.	

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module 3	
Evaluate how the evaluated unit has reflected the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the IEP, if applicable. If the evaluated unit has not been evaluated before, the indicator will be marked as N/A – Not Applicable.	
Rating [1–5]:	**3 - Average**
Qualitative assessment: *Recommendation of the IEB from the previous evaluation:* ***Recommendation 3.2, 3.3 a 3.4:*** *The collaboration between USB and funding organizations is obvious and supported by a funding scout. Fundraising should be continued, especially for international funds and EU projects. It requires to continue personal contacts, regular visits at (international) conferences, networking and a basic budget for traveling.* *•The Faculty should continue to underline the active role of their research for the construction of academic teaching. The idea to enlarge this to other faculties is very good, however it would require more staff. The actual staff is already full of teaching duties.* *•Contract research with companies could be planned, see Recommendations at 3.7-3.9.* *•A concrete strategy to increase the number of publications should be continued and made visible.* Having participated in a project to develop and implement pedagogical competencies with the staff of USB, concentrating on publishing strategies and acquiring small funds for applied research is a good development. It partly answers the recommendation given in 2020. Contract research is	

limited and not the focus of FED – but some has been conducted. However no concrete plan to increase publication is presented. Due to high teaching responsibility of the academic staff this might be a challenge, as was noted in the former evaluation

Regarding the points 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, the development in the period is seen as average. Some of this may have been caused by the COVID19 crisis in the middle of this period.

Recommendation 3.5 a 3.6 (from 2020)
The engagement in innovative teaching is an important task for education faculties and could be enlarged.
•The influence of the educational (didactical) research on the teaching methods at schools or other education bodies is important and should be underlined also in future.
•The visibility of the research outcomes can and should be fostered by a stronger engagement in networks (teacher associations, ministry advisory boards, national working groups).
•The research could be fostered by more academic staff and a reduction of the workload of the PhD students. The Faculty needs also a strategy to enhance the attractivity of the location, e.g. through a family-supporting strategy, dual career offers, better research opportunities.

Little reference to innovative teaching and didactical research with schools are accounted for, some reference given to digital or ICT/VR inspired teaching and to development of textbooks. Textbooks are commendable, but not a core to development of pedagogical practices. Innovative teaching methods, followed up by participatory and action research approaches are recommended for the future.

Better visibility and engagement in networks have been achieved in the period especially on national and regional level (some on international)

High teaching loads still seem to be the case. A better program for support gender balance, family support is in place on university level (ref. M4M5)

Recommendation 3.7, 3.8 a 3.9
The influence of research on the teaching at university is well established and should be developed further along future research outcomes. The connection with neighboring universities is well established and should be continued to have an exchange of researchers especially in those departments without a full professor.
• The importance of education could be fostered by including more visible programs like citizen science programs, possibly together with the science or arts Faculty. Ecological or historical projects can attract media thereby increasing the presence of the Faculty in the society.
• The exchange with municipality and other administrative bodies should be carefully continued.
• In future also, commercialization could be an important field of development. Many support programs ask for cooperation with SMEs. In education these could be publishers, but also local companies which are interested in linking their technical items to schools.

Internal cross-disciplinary training programs are important, and important for FED to participate in with their expertise. The recommendation to develop cross-faculty programs only seem to have been developed on a limited base (with Economy).

The development of teaching materials seems to be a good answer to what can be commercialized by FED. To be able to present in public more of its aims and ideas for good teaching in the 21st century – the faculty could develop its mission to make this more comprehensive within its own Faculty and from this develop a public strategy (It will take time).

EVALUATED UNIT RATING

Evaluation of unit Having evaluated the individual criteria of module M3, please summarise your evaluation in the context of the module, describing and justifying the strengths and weaknesses of the unit being evaluated.	
3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation	**NOT RATED**
3.2 Recognition by the research community	**3 - Average**
3.3 Research projects	**4 - Very good**
3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society	**3 - Average**
3.5 Transfer of results into practice	**4 - Very good**
3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	**4 - Very good**
3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module	**3 - Average**
Average rating [1–5]:	**3 - Average**
Grade [A–D]:	**C**

Summary assessment:

In summary FED compares with many other education faculties/teacher educations internationally, given the size of the faculty in the university (often one of the larger), the high teaching loads and large cohorts of students, the low number of academics on the level of associate and full professorship and the relative low output in basic research. The strength of the faculty is on applied research, especially within the areas of the natural sciences (in education) and psychology. In the period the faculty has also supplied important collaboration and training to other faculties at USB. It has also developed important textbooks utilized across the country. Having developed its own publishing house is a great and important achievement.

FED has been active on various research projects that have had impact on a national level and several employees are active both nationally and internationally in research related activities. Although the number of basic research projects are low, the number of applied projects is very good, showing active engagement in several Erasmus+ projects.

FED is working in a good direction, and the grade C is strong (more like C+, B-). A main reason that the grade is not better is that FED lacks substantial research that goes to the core of the faculty's activity and its own vision. That is research related to its core activities, professional development within education, esp. teacher education. The teaching load in the faculty is high and seem to hinder more active research engagement.

Summary recommendations:

What distinguishes educational research in/on (teacher) education from research in other fields, notably the natural sciences, is its close reference to practice. To develop FEDs own aims and didactical approach for higher education of educational professionals (i.e., Teachers, social workers) FED needs to have a strategy, and it should be linked to research. Building on the existing research profile and strengths, FED could further develop more practice-oriented research. Close collaboration with the practice field (i.e. primary and secondary education) can be further developed in collaborative projects. Research projects involving in-service teachers and students in action research is another way of integrating research into the teaching at FED – this would count

as research-based teaching. FEDs strength is within applied research – developing more action-oriented research could further enhance this and contribute to the faculty's research output.

There are several aspects of the ongoing activities at FED and USB that will contribute to the desired research development, the newly established doctoral school is one. Building on current strengths and developing this into practice-oriented research should be advanced, alongside research projects that cut across the different faculties at USB - creating true trans-/inter disciplinary research. Internal collaborations at USB could also promote better international engagement and publications for FED.

Furthermore, the IEP recommends development of plans for advancement of the academic staff as well as for scientific publications. The international relations and networks in education research should be strengthened. This, of course is based on good and solid educational research projects. Regarding promotion, at assistant prof. level there are many female employees, so the gender issue should not be a problem. Achieving this will need funds and a good follow up plan to be successful.

EVALUATION REPORT IN MODULE 3

NAME OF EVALUATED UNIT: Faculty of Theology

FORD: 6 - Humanities and the arts

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE EVALUATED UNIT

3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation

Indicator 3.1 is a non-evaluated indicator that provides basic information about the evaluated unit such as its mission and vision, organizational structure, size and staffing, or R&D&I capacities.

Commentary:

The Faculty of Theology (FTH) is a publicly funded higher education institution with a Roman Catholic affiliation. In addition to Theology, Religious Studies, and Philosophy, the areas of research and teaching covered by the FTH include Social Work and Leisure Education. The unusually wide range of academic and societal interests is also reflected by the mission statement of the faculty. The mission of the FTH is to provide attractive study programmes, deliver high-quality research, and contribute to the society. The faculty is also interested in combining the best traditions of the humanities and social sciences with modern technologies, as well as seeking to engage in an international network of leading higher education institutions and professional organisations.

The organisational structure of the FTH comprises four academic departments – including Theology, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Education, and Social Work – and additional departments focused on professional training and lifelong learning. There are five vice-deans, each supported by an expert team that provides guidance on matters such as education, research, strategic development, and international collaboration. There are 45 academic employees and 3 postdoctoral researchers in total. More than half of the academic staff is relatively young (under 50 years).

The research conducted at the FTH covers both basic research and applied research aimed at addressing the needs of social service providers, schools, policymakers, churches, and religious organisers. The research is organised around ten centres that bring together experts across the faculty's departments and focus on sub-fields of Theology and cognate disciplines (e.g., Church History, Diaconia, Early Biblical Reception, Ecumenic, Scholastic Philosophy, Sociology of Religion).

The study programmes provided by the FTH include: five BA programmes (Theology, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Leisure Education, Social Work and Caritas Studies), five MA programmes (Theology, Diaconal Theology, Philosophy, Leisure Education, Ethics in Social Work), and three PhD programmes (Theology, Philosophy, Spirituality and Ethics in Social Work). Three additional programmes have either been just accredited or are in the process of being accredited; these programmes will expand the areas of education within the USB to cover, for example, Sociology and Social Ethics. Furthermore, the FTH develops and provides lifelong learning courses.

The number of study programmes has grown drastically since 2019. Currently, the total number of students is 711, including 288 full-time students and 423 students engaged in a "combined form of study"; the large number of part-time students pertains to older students seeking further qualifications. Most students (547) are enrolled in undergraduate programmes, while there are 142

students engaged in graduate programmes and 22 PhD students. The great majority of the study programmes provided by the FTH are understandably in Czech.

Overall, the number of study programmes is somewhat large in comparison with the number of students. Even though women constitute the great majority of the student body, they are underrepresented among academic employees, especially at the full and associate professor levels. Not all academic employees are employed full-time, and the number of postdoctoral researchers is low. The number of student intake fluctuates a fair amount year-by-year, but the low intake numbers in years 2020 and 2021 are related to the disruption caused by Covid-19.

RECOGNITION BY THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

3.2 Recognition by the research community

Evaluate the position of the evaluated unit in the R&D&I research community based on the facts presented in indicator 3.2 and its annexed tables (3.2.1 to 3.2.5).

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:[1]

According to the SER, there has been a marked increase in the monitored criteria in comparison with the previous evaluation periods. While the exact growth of the selected activities is not documented in the report, the activities listed in the report demonstrate a good number of activities that indicate recognition by the wider research community. Moreover, the presentation delivered by the dean during the site visit confirms improvement on several fronts.

The faculty members of the FTH serve as members of editorial/advisory boards of international scientific journals. All the listed examples of academic staff participation in such boards concern highly specialised journals focused on sub-fields of Philosophy and/or Theology, except for the more experimental LIMINA journal. Only one out of the ten listed scholars is a woman.

The faculty members of the FTH have been invited to deliver lectures at international conferences and universities located in five different countries. The selected examples show a good geographical spread, although there seems to be less collaboration with the English-speaking world, and all the listed lectures have been delivered by scholars of two departments, including Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies and Department of Social Work and Caritas Studies.

The FTH has been visited by international experts from five different countries in Europe and the USA during the evaluated period. They delivered lectures relevant to the faculty's areas of research, especially Philosophy, Systematic Theology, and Diaconia. All the listed visitors are men.

The faculty members of the FTH are members of national evaluation panels, including major positions such as the chairmanship of one panel in The Research, Development and Innovation Council of the Government of the Czech Republic and membership in two committees of the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education. Only one example of involvement in international evaluations (evaluation of postdoctoral fellowships in Belgium) is given.

In addition, five awards have been granted to selected members of the FTH, including four local/national awards and one Humboldt Research Fellowship, which is a promising development.

In conclusion, the FTH demonstrates a very promising trajectory with respect to recognition by the research community. The IEP evaluates this criterion as very good because of the largely national

[1] Provide verbal assessment of the indicator and briefly comment on the reasons for awarding the specific rating. Follow a similar procedure for the other indicators.

character of the FTH and the uneven results of the different departments, as is shown by the fact that several areas of theological research do not feature in the selected merits presented in the SER.

Recommendations:

To raise the institution's profile and benchmark its position within the global research landscape, the faculty members are encouraged to broaden international visibility by increasing various academic activities (conference organisation and participation, research stays abroad, hosting guest researchers, etc.) and by publishing more widely in high-impact scientific journals, especially beyond highly specialised academic journals and those of its own editorial scope. The FTH should actively strive towards a better gender balance, a wider scientific impact, and stronger networks beyond neighbouring countries in Europe. It is likewise crucial to ambitiously develop all fields of research and education covered by the FTH. According to the report, the leadership strives to ensure that the activities involve a greater number of academics. This is indeed necessary, as the total number of researchers contributing to the activities during the evaluated period could be higher. There is a risk that the section "recognition by the research community" will bring future evaluations of the FTH down in case all the departments are not represented in the merits presented in the SER.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

3.3 Research projects

Evaluate the most important research projects of the evaluated unit, especially regarding the results achieved and the application potential of the project, the proportionality with respect to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, the degree of interdisciplinarity and collaboration with other parts of the evaluated HEI, and the consistency with the declared mission and vision of the evaluated unit. Use the data from the full list of research projects and contract research activities in Tables 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

The research projects undertaken at the FTH include both basic and – remarkable for the humanities – applied research; five of the listed projects represent basic research, whereas the other five projects represent applied research. Regarding basic research, the most notable area of research in the FTH is Philosophy. Regarding applied research, the faculty has hosted several projects aimed at helping professionals in education, social work, healthcare, and beyond. The FTH also established a Research Ethics Committee (REC) in 2022, and a considerable amount of self-assessment in Section 3.3 describes the work of the REC.

The listed ten projects, which have been carried out at the FTH during the evaluated period, focus on specific areas of Philosophy (Scotism and Kantian philosophy), biblical legal traditions and their reception, church history, spiritual and geriatric care, and early childhood and postgraduate education. The fields of Philosophy and Practical Theology (broadly understood) are highly represented. The projects have produced a range of results, including books, journal articles, book chapters, and practical outputs. Practical outputs (see also 3.4 below) are highly represented due to the high number of applied research projects. However, the five basic research projects are specified to have delivered academic publications. While all publication venues are not specified, most publications were published internationally, including several articles in high-quality scientific journals. The information provided by the site visit clarifies that the number of international articles has increased since the previous evaluation period, while the number of books is slightly lower.

The external funding gained during the evaluation period is nearly exclusively national. Seven out of the ten listed research projects were funded by the Czech Science Foundation or the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic with the USB as the beneficiary. In the case of two other projects, the FTH was another participant in projects funded by the Czech Science Foundation and Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, respectively. Finally, one project received a small amount of external funding from the Botstieber foundation based in the USA, which is a welcome development.

The amount of public fund support for projects carried out at the FTH has fluctuated in recent years, and there was a dramatic drop in 2022. Overall, the numbers have been somewhat low throughout the evaluated period, as all the projects are relatively small in terms of scope and resources. This is not rare in fields of philosophical and theological research, which rarely attract very large amounts of external funding and are still often characterised by solo research, especially in the more traditional sub-fields of Philosophy and Theology.

A small amount of national funding for contract research activities was acquired in 2023.

In conclusion, the IEP evaluates this criterion as very good, despite the recent drop in external research funding, because the FTH is clearly active and dynamic in pursuing research and the results it produced during the evaluated period are at a nationally competitive level. The FTH hosted a range of projects that represent multiple areas of theological and philosophical research. The applied projects are a special merit given that such projects are rare in the humanities.

Recommendations:

The FTH has hosted several research projects during the evaluated period. Yet there is still room for improvement as regards the breadth and outcomes of such activities. It is important to develop research projects in all fields of research covered by the FTH, not least in areas of basic philosophical and theological research, which constitute a significant amount of the FTH's areas of expertise. Although the recent trajectory of acquiring external research funding is promising, a strategy for increasing the acquisition of such funding – and especially international grants – is needed, not least because of the dramatic drop in project funding in 2023 and the virtual lack of international funding during the evaluated period. Strengthening academic networks (beyond surrounding countries in continental and especially central Europe) would be crucial to the development of ambitious international projects. Moreover, the research outputs could include more publications in high-impact top journals and in journals that reach a broader audience beyond a narrow group of specialists. The applied projects could deliver research publications in addition to various practical applications, which would mitigate the gap between basic research and applied research projects. Further contract research activities are desirable, though there is some promising development in this respect and such research is largely less applicable in philosophical and theological research.

3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society

Evaluate the research results already applied in practice or intended to be applied in practice. When evaluating, consider whether the results are proportionate to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, how they contribute to the fulfilment of the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and, if stated in the self-evaluation, how the results take into account the gender dimension and sustainability. Use the data from the full results summary in Table 3.4.1 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

The FTH has delivered important research results with clear societal impact, including a virtual reality software (VIREAS) for staff and clients of senior homes; a freely available methodology

manual that serves to support the use of the VIREAS software; four lifelong learning courses related to spirituality and social work; a professional training course for prison chaplains; and a website with a series of videos explaining spirituality in hospice care. Overall, this is a great amount of relevant societal applications for a faculty of theology mostly focused on basic research and related teaching.
Recommendations: The listed achievements demonstrate a very good application focus. However, the FTH is encouraged to further strengthen such activities. It would be especially desirable to consider what can be done to increase the societal impact of the basic research produced by the FTH.

TRANSFER OF RESULTS INTO PRACTICE

3.5 Transfer of results into practice	
Evaluate the effectiveness of the transfer of results into practice by the unit being evaluated. Pay attention to whether the composition of the stated users of the results or the way the R&D&I results are commercialised (if stated) is consistent with the R&D&I results produced and the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and how successful the evaluated unit is in its activities, such as attracting new users of the results, commercialising the R&D&I results and obtaining funding from non-public, non-grant sources.	
Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**
Qualitative assessment: In the FTH, the research results are transferred into practice and commercialised through the development and selling of highly demanded and well-received lifelong learning courses as well as training programmes designed for clergy, social workers, healthcare professionals, and educators. The money acquired through these courses and programmes fluctuates year-by-year but was at the highest level during the last year of the evaluated period (in 2023), which is a promising trajectory. In conclusion, the IEP evaluates this criterion as outstanding because the results of the FTH are regarded as internationally competitive in comparison with neighbouring countries.	
Recommendations: The listed examples of transferring research results into practice are most relevant and demonstrate a strong commitment to serve the society at multiple fora. It is nevertheless recommended that the FTH (and the other faculties) will develop a structured knowledge transfer strategy that clearly defines target user groups, mechanisms for implementation, and measurable indicators of impact.	

POPULARIZATION OF VAVAI

3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	
Evaluate how active and successful the evaluated unit is in the field of popularisation of R&D&I and communication with the public.	
Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**
Qualitative assessment: In the FTH, the faculty members frequently disseminate and popularise the results of their research in local events such as the Researchers' Night and the Night of Churches. They also visit secondary schools and, in some cases, serve as clergy. Knowledge exchange further happens through the organisation of lifelong learning courses and U3A courses. In conclusion, the IEP evaluates this criterion as very good because the results produced by the FTH are up to a nationally competitive level and have a significant regional contribution.	
Recommendations: The listed popularisation activities cover multiple loci and modes of communication, demonstrating a diverse portfolio of knowledge exchange. Nevertheless, there is a heavy focus on the occasional appearance of staff members in single events. Such events are very important, but their rather scattered and ad hoc nature may limit their long-term societal impact. Thus, it would be good to adopt a more sustained approach and add some new modes of science communication to the repertoire. The listed examples do not yet demonstrate a commitment to disseminate the results of research to the wider public audience by means of different media. Thus, the FTH is encouraged to popularise the basic and applied research carried out by its academic employees in newspapers, magazines, blogs, radio programmes, podcasts, vlogs, etc. There could also be engagement with cultural institutions such as museums and libraries.	

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module 3	
Evaluate how the evaluated unit has reflected the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the IEP, if applicable. If the evaluated unit has not been evaluated before, the indicator will be marked as N/A – Not Applicable.	
Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**
Qualitative assessment: The FTH undertook several measures to respond to the areas of development addressed in the report concerning the previous evaluation period, especially the weakness of relatively few applied research projects. The FTH developed several applied projects with practical applications and clear societal impact. The FTH also sought to develop contract research, although it turned out to be challenging since the funding structures of social service providers, NGOs, and schools limit their ability to commission research from academia. Yet there was some success in this respect, and the FTH further gained some revenues from non-public sources for research work (including three non-public grants). Finally, the faculty management addressed the issue of limited research hours	

observed in the report by developing new four postdoctoral positions, one for each department, and the average workload rose from 30% to 54%, as specified during the site visit.
Recommendations: The FTH has actively responded to the areas of development addressed in the previous evaluation report. While it is not specified whether the recommendation to develop "faculty clinical sites and other means of interacting with relevant bodies in society and church" led into anything, the applied projects implemented, and science popularisation activities undertaken, during the evaluated period demonstrate a strong commitment to and record of engaging with various societal players. As for the average workload for research, further transparency is needed to make it clear whether all permanent academic staff has the same access to such a relatively high research workload, or whether the average number is inflated by postdoctoral researchers who do not teach or by differences between the workloads of other faculty members at different career stages.

EVALUATED UNIT RATING

Evaluation of unit Having evaluated the individual criteria of module M3, please summarise your evaluation in the context of the module, describing and justifying the strengths and weaknesses of the unit being evaluated.	
3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation	**NOT RATED**
3.2 Recognition by the research community	**4 - Very good**
3.3 Research projects	**4 - Very good**
3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society	**4 - Very good**
3.5 Transfer of results into practice	**5 - Outstanding**
3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	**4 - Very good**
3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module	**5 - Outstanding**
Average rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**
Grade [A–D]:	**B**
Summary assessment: The FTH is an active and socially engaged academic institution with a relevant and timely mission to engage in both basic research and applied research; of great merit is also its ambition to reach a wide range of students from undergraduates to lifelong learners. In recent years, the faculty has developed its profile considerably, especially by developing new projects of applied research and novel transfers of research results into practice. Yet the faculty also covers multiple areas of basic research and hosts several centres of related research. These deliver important results, most prominently in selected areas of Philosophy and/or Systematic Theology. Based on the information received during the site visit, the average workload for research has risen from 30% to 54% since the previous evaluation period. This is an excellent trajectory, and the FTH should actively strive to maintain the current situation.	

Summary recommendations:

The proposed recommendations aim at enhancing the FTH's research capacity, international reputation and competitiveness, societal impact.

The evaluation committee recommends the FTH to strive for the development of the faculty as an ambitious, internationally recognised research unit. It is necessary to encourage broader staff engagement in ambitious research activities, especially beyond the areas of philosophical and theological research that are already very strong and successful at the FTH. Some new research paradigms could also be introduced. For example, it would be logical to strengthen digital humanities at the FTH since modern technologies and challenges in the digital space are singled out in the mission statement. Moreover, the FTH lists „Biblical Studies and Western Monotheisms" as one of the three key research fields of the faculty, but the areas of research listed under this topic do not include early Christianity and early Islam, which is rather surprising.

It is likewise desirable to build up new, more diverse international research networks beyond the existing ones, actively pursue participation in competitive, internationally recognised funding programs (such as Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Fulbright, or Humboldt), and support the publication of research results in high-impact international journals that reach a wider audience beyond narrow groups of specialists. The applied projects are a very welcome, promising development but should not be seen as fully detached from basic scientific inquiry; ideally, they would produce both practical applications and academic publications. Meanwhile, some further action could be undertaken to explicate the societal relevance of basic research conducted at the FTH.

Another area of development at the FTH is gender equality. Although women constitute 36% of the academic staff, they are clearly underrepresented in various academic activities and the higher levels of academic rank. Therefore, measured action is needed with regards to the research activities and career development prospects of female academic staff.

The are single gaps in the current dissemination activity, but they can be filled out with measured action. A formal strategy for knowledge exchange would lead to a more diverse science popularisation activity and longer lasting impact. The modes of popularisation could be expanded.

Finally, it should be noted that the rich repertoire of study programmes provided by the FTH offers education in a range of disciplines at different levels. To limit the excessive growth of administrative work, the FTH should carefully consider whether new degree programmes are needed and how to minimise related administrative workload in case new programmes are established.

EVALUATION REPORT IN MODULE 3

NAME OF EVALUATED UNIT: University of South Bohemia. Faculty of Arts (FAR)

FORD: 6 - Humanities and the arts

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE EVALUATED UNIT

3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation

Indicator 3.1 is a non-evaluated indicator that provides basic information about the evaluated unit such as its mission and vision, organizational structure, size and staffing, or R&D&I capacities.

Commentary:

Despite its short history (19 years), the faculty has established a well-defined structure, covering the main areas of knowledge in the humanities (except Fine Arts). It should be noted that the academic staff carries out both academic and artistic activities, the latter being integrated with the former. The faculty emphasizes basic research as its mission, which is most common in the humanities, but it also highlights its interest in transcending scientific contributions and seeking the social impact of its research, focusing on the study and dissemination of culture, history, archeology, languages and artistic expressions in the immediate environment, tasks that are also part of its vision as an institution.

The faculty has a considerable number of staff members. The male/female ratio is more or less balanced, but there are fewer females in the highest positions and more in the lowest. This doesn't correspond with the fact that Arts is a highly feminised branch of knowledge, as demonstrated by the large majority of female students, 61.4% of the total (134). The structure of the staff also follows a normal distribution according to age, with a greater presence of the middle generations (30-49 years old). The ratio of teachers from other countries could be increased. To this end, the competent authorities should guarantee both national and international staff to be capable and develop a sustainable academic career, which does not seem to be assured at present.

The number of students has increased over the years, indicating that the academic programmes offered are very attractive. Obviously, as studies become more advanced, the number of students decline. The number of doctoral students is low (30) considering their impact on the centre's research results. The number of training programmes is certainly high considering the number of students. However, at each level, many subjects are shared in the form of interlinked structures and common thematic blocks, thereby optimising the use of human resources. In any case, the teaching load must be monitored and controlled so that researchers have sufficient time for research.

Only two programmes are taught in English. This is understandable given the content of the subjects, but more programmes could be taught in English, which would have a beneficial effect on the internationalisation of the centre.

As established in its founding principles, the research carried out is basic, as is often the case in this field of knowledge. Yet, the faculty has also opened more applied lines of research. In both cases, results are presented in the form of publications and projects, and there is evidence of efforts to establish contacts and achieve international impact.

Considering its size, the faculty's structure is complex, with eight institutes and three research centres. The necessary coordination between both levels must be ensured so that functions do not overlap and mechanisms are established to set priorities and open new strategic lines in a harmonised manner.

It is noteworthy that the FAR brings together areas of different nature and with different research activities, a strength that should lead to the reinforcement of interdisciplinary studies within the faculty itself and with more distant areas of knowledge.

RECOGNITION BY THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

3.2 Recognition by the research community

Evaluate the position of the evaluated unit in the R&D&I research community based on the facts presented in indicator 3.2 and its annexed tables (3.2.1 to 3.2.5).

Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**

Qualitative assessment:[1]

The most notable research focuses on Czech studies (history, archaeology, literature, linguistics, etc.), a field in which the USB appears to be a national and international leading authority. Unfortunately, this focus on a small European language/culture has inherently the consequence of having few international colleagues and thus may result in a limited international impact. To compensate for this circumstance, the faculty has privileged relationships with departments around the world that have specialists in Czech cultural studies, thus consolidating its leading role in this area. At the same time, doors have been opened to comparative studies with other cultures and countries, establishing stable relationships with universities within and outside Europe, leading institutions in the study of their respective history, literatures, languages and cultures, such as the Sorbonne University, Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität München, and the University of Salamanca.

Academic staff members have won prestigious national and international awards (such as the Magnesia Litera Prize (twice), the Order of the Academic Palms from the Ministry of Education of the French Republic and the Knight's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit from the President of Hungary) and have given lectures at foreign institutions. Likewise, internationally renowned speakers, as John Searle (University of California, Berkeley), have been invited to give lectures. Two journals are published (one of which is indexed Q3). Staff members participate regularly in national and international editorial committees. They also attend conferences at international universities and are project evaluators, mainly at the national level, at the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic.

According to the testimonies gathered, the faculty encourages international mobility, both academically and financially, so that staff at all levels can benefit from support in this regard at any point in their career.

Recommendations:

It is recommended to continue opening lines of research that will enable greater impact to be achieved for research carried out on the Czech language, history and culture. The potential of areas of the faculty that are well connected with foreign universities can be exploited by seeking to create stable international networks that enable the formation of consortia for joint projects. More

[1] Provide verbal assessment of the indicator and briefly comment on the reasons for awarding the specific rating. Follow a similar procedure for the other indicators.

contacts could also be established with universities outside the Czech Republic that deal with the same subjects, with a view to consolidating a position of leadership.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

3.3 Research projects

Evaluate the most important research projects of the evaluated unit, especially regarding the results achieved and the application potential of the project, the proportionality with respect to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, the degree of interdisciplinarity and collaboration with other parts of the evaluated HEI, and the consistency with the declared mission and vision of the evaluated unit. Use the data from the full list of research projects and contract research activities in Tables 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

The projects in which the faculty is involved highlight its strengths and most notable lines of research, covering a wide range of topics. Most of the ten highlighted projects are national in nature, while the remaining three are international but regional (Interreg or Visegrad, a total of 9 projects during the period evaluated), focusing on border areas, which is a limitation, particularly with the Bavaria region, as the project with the University of Passau "*From tradition to the future. The Linguistic-Literary Heritage of Eastern Bavaria and Southern Bohemia as a Focus for University Cooperation"* or the project "*Museum uploaded"*, with the Technical University of Deggendorf.

Most of the projects are basic research, but many produce research with social impact. In this regard, funding has been received from the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (in the ÉTA programme to support the innovative potential of social sciences, humanities and arts) and the Ministry of Culture (in the NAKI programme to support applied research in the field of national and cultural identity). The research carried out by the Archaeology department is particularly outstanding. This area is involved in projects and contracts of high applied value, and its collaboration with various regional museums is particularly remarkable.

Although the faculty has maintained its fundraising efforts during the period evaluated, if we consider the evolution over these five years, it has declined, so that last year the amount was half of that obtained in 2019.

On the other hand, although the funds allocated are limited, the number of contracts established with other entities for the development of research-related activities, especially cultural institutions and regional organisations, is noteworthy.

Recommendations:

It is recommended to take advantage of contacts with other countries in an international university network to lead or collaborate in projects with a broader territorial scope. The path, already established as participant in some international proposals, could be followed.

The thematic lines should also be expanded through interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary projects in collaboration with other areas within the USB itself (for example, Social Sciences or Education).

Therefore, projects must broaden their international horizons beyond neighbouring countries, and, in any case, the downward trend in funding in the last years of the period should be corrected.

3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society

Evaluate the research results already applied in practice or intended to be applied in practice. When evaluating, consider whether the results are proportionate to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit, how they contribute to the fulfilment of the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and, if stated in the self-evaluation, how the results take into account the gender dimension and sustainability. Use the data from the full results summary in Table 3.4.1 to supplement the evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**

Qualitative assessment:

In humanities, the direct benefit obtained is not easily quantifiable in economic terms, but they are often beneficial in social and community terms. Further, in humanities research outcomes are often published as monographs and chapters in monographs. Unfortunately, the latter publications are insufficiently considered in indicators of research production or quality, while they might be of high importance. This problem extends to the quantification of the impact of this type of research which puts FAR on a disadvantage when faculties are compared in evaluations and indicators for funding, in spite of its high-quality research.

Despite these drawbacks, the centre carries out research with immediate results and clear social impact, covering a wide range of topics and formats, and with the intention of offering the community cultural products in open formats. Two projects stand out: first, the project *Czech Literature in the World and Foreign Literature in Czechia in 1989-2020*, a specialised public database and a specialised map relating to the period 1989-2020, which has become a reference point in Czech studies. Secondly, the project *Creating a "Gulag" Model in Virtual and Augmented Reality as a Tool for Increasing the Effectiveness of Teaching 20th-Century History*, which is unique in its conception and is aimed at both teachers at different educational levels and the general public. Also noteworthy are the projects and contracts carried out by the Archaeology Department, known as top specialists in the history of this region in Europe and frequently consulted by all kinds of national and international organisations.

Recommendations:

It is recommended to intensify the path begun in projects that include results with social impact, not only in areas where research has more obvious applications, but also in other areas that could generate social benefits.

The designation of Ceske Budejovice as one of the European Capitals of Culture in 2028 should be an incentive to strengthen and extend this capacity to create synergies with the environment.

TRANSFER OF RESULTS INTO PRACTICE

3.5 Transfer of results into practice	
Evaluate the effectiveness of the transfer of results into practice by the unit being evaluated. Pay attention to whether the composition of the stated users of the results or the way the R&D&I results are commercialised (if stated) is consistent with the R&D&I results produced and the mission and vision of the evaluated unit and how successful the evaluated unit is in its activities, such as attracting new users of the results, commercialising the R&D&I results and obtaining funding from non-public, non-grant sources.	
Rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**
Qualitative assessment: In line with section 3.4, it is difficult to quantify the contribution of FAR's research transfer. As is often the case in the humanities, the creation of companies, both start-ups and spin-offs, is difficult given the nature of its type of research. However, at least one project seems to be underway in this direction, i.e., *LegTerm*, a database based on the Czech legal system, whose terminology is confronted with legal terms or concepts from other legal systems expressed in specific languages. The resulting tool is extremely useful in the world of translation and can be extended to other languages and to other thematic areas of translation. The FAR does stand out in its relations with non-academic institutions, usually closely related to culture. It is probably one of FAR's most important strengths. At these institutions the university seems to play a very prominent social role, becoming a regional benchmark. Unfortunately, these contacts do not translate into a higher FAR funding.	
Recommendations: It is recommended to maintain and expand the level of relations with the group of non-academic entities, creating a network in which the USB retains its role as a social leader. As a result, this network potential could be used to encourage the creation of projects or contracts with the environment, as well as to institutionalise relations through agreements or initiatives that are stable over time. Although it is complex to create business initiatives or those with economic returns in this area, possible revenues from research and transfer activities in the FAR funds should be explored. The impact should be extended from the local-regional level to the national level, incorporating supra-regional bodies and involving other faculties and the FAR's own international network.	

POPULARIZATION OF VAVAI

3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	
Evaluate how active and successful the evaluated unit is in the field of popularisation of R&D&I and communication with the public.	
Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**
Qualitative assessment: As already mentioned in 3.5, this aspect constitutes the most notable strength of the FAR, making the faculty one of the most active players in the life of the city and the region. This influence can be seen in two areas: on the one hand, into its educational aspect, as secondary schools benefit greatly from the already established joint activities. On the other hand, there is also a wide variety of	

institutions and organisations that enjoy the collaboration with the university centre: some of them are international, such as the Alliance Française or the Instituto Cervantes, while others are national, such as the Czech Academy of Sciences or the National Archives.

The activities outlined offer diversity in terms of scope, audience and interests, and involve the various institutes of the FAR, with the creation of educational materials (books, video series, etc.) and with the organisation of a researchers' night, which has been ongoing over time, and which is very noteworthy.

Recommendations:

The designation of Ceske Budejovice as one of the European Capitals of Culture in 2028 should serve as an incentive to consolidate and expand this capacity to create synergies with the environment and extend it to others at the national and international levels.

It is recommended to increase both the number of scientific meetings that disseminate the activity and reference of the FAR in certain fields and ongoing contact with national and international colleagues.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module 3

Evaluate how the evaluated unit has reflected the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the IEP, if applicable.

If the evaluated unit has not been evaluated before, the indicator will be marked as N/A – Not Applicable.

Rating [1–5]:	**5 - Outstanding**

Qualitative assessment:

The FAR has shown commitment and interest in addressing the suggestions made in previous reports. The FAR has implemented measures aimed at fulfilling the recommendations received in the latest evaluation: popularisation of scientific results in the media, developing opportunities for social relevance of research with local government, regional and state institutions, and greater involvement of visiting professors. In all cases, the FAR has shown improvements and has even excelled in some areas, such as the first and second points mentioned, which have become one of its hallmarks.

Recommendations:

Although the data are positive, it is advisable to strengthen contact with other academic institutions, both national and international, not only through visits by guest lecturers but also through the organisation of scientific events, where these contacts can be intensified and stabilised and through the creation of stable networks. As a complement to this, it is always advisable to maintain and increase the mobility of their own researchers.

EVALUATED UNIT RATING

Evaluation of unit Having evaluated the individual criteria of module M3, please summarise your evaluation in the context of the module, describing and justifying the strengths and weaknesses of the unit being evaluated.	
3.1 Introductory information about the unit under evaluation	**NOT RATED**
3.2 Recognition by the research community	**5 - Outstanding**
3.3 Research projects	**4 - Very good**
3.4 Research results with existing or prospective impact on society	**4 - Very good**
3.5 Transfer of results into practice	**4 - Very good**
3.6 The most important activities in the field of popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public	**5 - Outstanding**
3.7 Implementation of the recommendations in Module	**5 - Outstanding**
Average rating [1–5]:	**4 - Very good**
Grade [A–D]:	**B**

Summary assessment:

The grading options for the joint evaluation do not allow for nuances to be established. The most accurate grade in this case would be either a B+ or an A-, which better reflect the faculty's position both within the university and in the national university system, as well as its international recognition.

As is common in the field of humanities, evaluating FAR research presents various challenges: on the one hand, the results are often published in formats (monographs, book chapters) for which there are no quantification tools. On the other hand, the possibilities for transfer with economic returns and in collaboration with companies present obstacles that are common in this field. The social impact must therefore be measured using other parameters that reflect the value of the contribution of this type of research at all levels, from local to international.

Despite its short existence, the FAR has achieved remarkable results in the research carried out by its departments/institutes and research centres, with particular emphasis on certain lines of research, which are internationally renowned. In this regard, it has developed first-rate international relationships in the most prominent lines of research and very promising ones in others that are still developing.

Likewise, the role of the FAR in its immediate regional and local environment is very important, with a network of intense relationships with public and private organisations of all kinds, especially in the cultural and social spheres, where it has achieved an unquestionable position of reference.

Summary recommendations:

It is recommended that international action be maintained and intensified, where the situation is already excellent in some areas and very promising in others. In this regard, first, these existing relationships should be consolidated and expanded in the form of stable collaboration networks. Second, scientific meetings and the interchange of researchers should be encouraged. Third, the designation of Ceske Budejovice as one of the European Capitals of Culture in 2028 should serve as an incentive to consolidate and expand this capacity to create synergies with the environment and extend it to others at the national and international levels.

The thematic lines should also be expanded through interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary projects in collaboration with other areas within the USB itself and with cross-disciplinary areas at other universities, both national and international.

It is recommended to maintain and expand the level of relations with the group of non-academic entities, creating a network in which the USB is the social leader. As a result, this network potential could be used to encourage the creation of projects or contracts with the environment, as well as to institutionalise relations through agreements or initiatives that are stable over time. Although it is complex to create business initiatives or those with economic returns in this area, possible revenues from research and transfer activities in the FAR funds should be explored.

SUMMARY RATING IN MODULE 3

MODULE 3 – SUMMARY RATING

After evaluating the individual units, please provide a summary evaluation of social relevance in Module 3 for the HEI as a whole. Please assess the balance of the evaluated units, how they contribute to the mission and vision of the HEI and describe the strengths and weaknesses of the HEI assessed in Module 3.

The summary rating is determined in accordance with the rules of the Methodology HEI2025+ as the average of the grades of the individual units, weighted by their size in terms of FTE staff.

EVALUATED UNIT	Grade [A–D]
FSC- Faculty of Sciences	**A**
FHSS- Faculty of Health and Social Sciences	**B**
FAT – Faculty of Agriculture and Technology	**B**
FFPW – Faculty of Fisheries and Protection of Waters	**A**
FEC – Faculty of Economics	**C**
FED – Faculty of Education	**C**
FTH – Faculty of Theology	**B**
FAR – Faculty of Arts	**B**
Summary grade	**A**

Summary quality assessment:

The University of South Bohemia is a research-oriented university that aims to provide innovations at both regional and international level. The university's structure includes eight faculties ranging from STEM sciences (FSC, FAT, FFPW) to Social Sciences (FED, FHSS, FEC) and Humanities (FAR, FTH). The university's mission is to provide high-quality education, support scientific knowledge, and serve society; its vision is to become a modern, open, and socially responsible institution with an international reach. All faculties contribute clearly to this mission and vision. They engage all in socially relevant activities, collaborating with the public sector, regional communities, and supporting the popularization of science. All faculties have established a clear gender policy, supported by flexible working conditions, adopt an Open Science policy and strive to increase staff and student mobility. Most faculties excel in applied research, with a clear impact on regional and national level. A few faculties, particularly FSC, FAR and FFPW, achieve first-rate international recognition for their research and are well reputed within the European context. Some faculties (e.g., FED, FEC) should increase their research efforts but seem hampered by an overload of teaching activities for an understaffed faculty.

Summary recommendation:

Based on the faculties' evaluation, three recommendations stand out. First, the university risks to lose its excellent grade if it is unable to bring the profession-oriented faculties such as FED, FHSS and FEC to a higher research focus. Investing in a strong research profile of these faculties is imminent. Second, the university should stimulate the faculties to be bolder for engaging at the international level. Running on the international competition will sharpen the research projects and upgrade the outcomes. Third, we recommend interacting more with commercial and other external stakeholders, where applicable.

1 EVALUATION REPORT FOR MODULES 4 & 5

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION NAME: University of South Bohemia

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER (CRN):

MODULE 4 – VIABILITY

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF R&D&I

4.1 Organisation and management of R&D&I Evaluate the organizational structure and setup of the R&D&I management system in relation to the size and type of the university and its mission and vision. Also consider comparisons with foreign universities of similar size and focus.	
Rating [1–5]:	4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:[1]

The organizational structure of USB is quite complex with many “boards”. The idea is probably to optimize the “connection” between central and the peripheral (faculty) management. The latter was a major critique in the ER 2020 but has been addressed now. Despite big differences among faculties, the IEP observed that they work well together and share a common spirit, which is a big achievement of the current central management. Each faculty has an international Board that advises on R&D&I strategies, like the USB International Board's role for the central management. Also, the establishment of a School of Doctoral Studies is a major achievement to align more the procedures among faculties.

The university has the ambition to be a leading research-based university within the Czech Republic. It embraces the motto; “high quality research in whatever we do”. It stretches its research portfolio from more basic and strategic research in faculties as Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Fisheries and Protection of Waters on one hand to more applied research at the Faculty of Agriculture and Technology and the Faculty of Theology and to professional training in the Faculty of Education and Health and Social Sciences on the other hand. The IEP acknowledges this double focus of USB on research and professional training as an instrument for its mission to serve the region. The university management sees this broadness as a guarantee for the university stability. Yet, the focus on scientific excellence in some faculties and providing high quality professional degrees in other faculties may cause alienation among faculties and put the university ambition as an overall research university at risk.

The budget and number of academics remains quite stable over the years, which can be regarded as a sign of stability of the university. The current distribution of the LCDRO budget over faculties – done in close agreement with faculty management – benefits the already successful faculties and leaves small space for growth for the others. The university endorses an Open Science policy and thus scientists publish in Open Access journals whenever possible. However, the high costs involved may become a barrier for some faculties to fully implement this policy.

[1] Provide verbal assessment of the indicator and briefly comment on the reasons for awarding the specific rating. Follow a similar procedure for the other indicators.

Recommendations:

1. Strengthen the research capacity in the more "profession" oriented faculties. The IEP is convinced that these faculties (e.g., FHSS, FED, FEC) have strong possibilities to develop a good portfolio of applied/action research. The IEP would specifically recommend faculties such as FEC and FED to explore deeper international collaboration in the area of financial and economic literacy development.
2. We recommend USB to explore priority research themes, collaborations and networks for the whole university which can stimulate cross-faculty collaboration. Topics as "sustainability" and/or "green economy and sustainable society" could enhance a university wide synergy in focus and become a unique selling point for USB's profile.

R&D&I QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT SYSTEM

4.2 System of support for a quality R&D&I environment and incentive measures for quality science

Evaluate the systems/measures/tools described to stimulate high-quality science at the HEI being evaluated. In your evaluation, consider the documented effectiveness of the measures described, their impact on achieving the mission and vision of the HEI being evaluated, the realization of excellent science and the possible absence of key systems/measures/tools.

Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

High quality science is also stimulated by engaging in crucial national and international consortia, often established by or with support of the central management. Examples are the involvement of USB in Kreativ-EU, ESPRI which offers international collaboration in Environment, Health and Food, and the inclusion of CENAKVA, the research institute of the faculty of Fisheries and Protection of Waters in the *Roadmap of Large Research Infrastructures of the Czech Republic*. USB scientists gain access to high quality research via these consortia.

The university established central support systems for attracting and acquiring such high-quality external projects, such as the TTO office, an EU desk and the USB Project Office. In addition, the Science & Research Office at the rectorate offers money for small R&D&I projects such as the cost of conferences, workshops or publishing a book. The university has a focused policy to support young researchers. For example, the USB Grant Agency provides money for funding PhD students. In addition, the rectorate supports annually 2 postdoc positions in natural sciences and 2 in humanities. Over the evaluated period, the university funded 15 postdoc positions in total.

The university encourages faculties to invest in top quality research infrastructure and stimulates faculties to invest in shared or cross faculty infrastructure. The USB Fund of Strategic Priorities is used as the instrument to achieve these goals. The central management of the university stimulates collaboration between faculties with some strategic funds and vocalizing its interest.

Another tool to stimulate high quality science is based in the awarding system. The university has specific awards for top scientists, but besides that, uses financial stimuli as a general tool for awarding for quality publications in international journals.

The IEP endorse the university's strategy for Open Science. Adding more publishing houses such as Elsevier to the OS system would facilitate young scientists to comply with their targets.

Overall, the central management takes the position to encourage, to stimulate, to incentivize, to endorse, but leaves ultimately the responsibility to faculties for establish the proper tools to achieve high quality science.

Recommendations:

In addition to its already outstanding support for quality R&D&I and science, the IEP advises the university to further deepen the support for *individual researchers* in grant applications and in providing management support for budgeting and administration once a project is acquired. The IEP envisages that the central management could take a more directive role in this endeavour and establish closer links between those organizational units at individual faculties that assist in organizing international cooperation and the central level of the university.

4.3 Quality control system for R&D&I environment

Evaluate the described internal and external evaluation system in terms of its quality, effectiveness and suitability for the HEI.

Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

Quality is controlled by internal and external evaluations. At faculty level, internal evaluation is performed using the EAP (evaluation of academic personnel) system, which is used by all faculties, to evaluate individual performance. An internal Evaluation Board evaluates the quality of infrastructure. Annual evaluation talks between the faculty and/or department leadership, and each faculty staff is common practice. Upon approval by the Academic Senate) the USB budget, strategic plan and the annual report on activities of USB is definitively set by a Board of Trustees. The USB Scientific Board provides feedback on the R&D&I plans.

External evaluation is done by the International Board of the University and the IB's of each faculty. Research outcomes are evaluated by the Ministry via the M2025+ method, Module 1 and 2.

USB signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA) and will implement it fully by 2028.

An Ethics committee, the USB Code of Conduct, and an Ombudsman should guarantee proper conduct, both in the personal sphere among academics and in developing ethical guidelines for research.

Recommendations:

Considering the high performance of USB, the IEP has the impression that the university may be prouder on its achievements and have the ambition to move itself up on the international university rankings. It recommends exploring possible strategies to do so.

4.4 Sustainability and resilience of R&D&I	
Evaluate the described system of measures for sustainability and resilience of R&D&I in terms of their quality, effectiveness or possible absence of key measures.	
Rating [1–5]:	4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:

USB established a Strategy on Sustainability and Green Transformation policy. That is very positive. It also has a clear policy for social responsibility, which shows the potential for USB to grow further in this aspect.

The SER mentions many activities focused on sustainable development, such as the installation of photovoltaic panels, solar benches to charge laptops and mobile phones, etcetera. For some faculties, such as FFPW, energy costs remain a problem that needs to be solved badly. To benchmark itself and to learn how to further improve its sustainability, the university enrolled in the QS World University ranking system for sustainability, where it ranks the 824th position, or the 8th among all Czech HEIs ranked in the system. It scores high for its research in environmental sciences, knowledge exchange, health and wellbeing and good governance but can do more in environmental education and environmental sustainability.

The university has engaged a cybersecurity manager which is very applaudable considering the current attacks on university IT systems. This is an important step to improve the resilience of R&D&I at USB.

Data management varies substantially between faculties. although the central management has made it a priority issue. But none of the faculties have yet a centralized data storage system and a policy to develop Open Science. Only FSC and FFPW have some guidelines, be it specific for PhD students only. Synergistic effects could be achieved by sharing data across the university, i.e., by establishing a university data centre.

As mentioned under 4.2, the University adheres an Open Science policy and stimulates Open Access papers and has even engaged an “Open Science manager” to help faculties to make further progress in this endeavour. However, financial constraints limit a wide application.

Recommendations:

1. Data management varies substantially between faculties. The USB should standardise these procedures by establishing a University Data Centre.
2. As the IEP has some doubts about the effectiveness of some sustainability measures by the university, it recommends evaluating all these measures with a critical view and a scientific approach and to develop a sustainability policy with measures that have a significant measurable impact.

PERSONNEL POLICY (HRM ?)

4.5 Structure of human resources	
Evaluate the described structure of human resources at the evaluated HEI in terms of age composition, degree of internationalization, distribution by job classification, and gender balance. For the assessment, use the data from the annexed tables 4.5.1 and 4.5.2; it is also possible to draw on the more detailed staffing data presented in indicator 3.1 of the self-evaluation reports for the evaluated units.	
Rating [1–5]:	4 - Very good
Qualitative assessment: The number of R&D&I staff have increased slightly over the past 5 years. The age structure has hardly changed, with a relative elder and predominantly male cohort among professors (65% above 60yrs old). The percentage of female staff declines from 58% among assistants to 14% among professors. The proportion of foreign employees remains small (5-7%) but has nevertheless increased over the past years. Yet, of the PhD students and early career researchers, almost 40% has another nationality than Czech, giving USB an international character. The relative low proportion of foreign faculty staff is very understandable, given the low Czech salaries compared to Western standards. The University has implemented a few policy lines to stimulate the recruitment of international students and researchers, such as supporting sabbatical visits of foreigners to USB, helping administrative staff to communicate in English; a Welcome Office helps foreign students and scientists with visa, residence issues and integration into the Czech society. The University strives clearly to search gender equality among its staff. Despite these efforts, the gender balance remains quite unequal in the higher academic levels. This is not unique for USB. The IEP acknowledges that this is a tedious problem and presumably quite common in Central Europe; it has been a long struggle in all European universities. See further under 4.7.	
Recommendations: Introduce and implement a “visiting professor” program which usually leads automatically to cooperation between universities.	

4.6 Academic and Research Careers	
Evaluate the described system for the recruitment and career development of academic and research staff. Evaluate the system in terms of its quality and effectiveness, as well as the potential absence of key elements.	
Rating [1–5]:	4 - Very good
Qualitative assessment: USB has implemented a USB Career Regulations Plan, as one of its key tools for fulfilling its mission, vision and strategic goals. It provides general rules for career plans for individual employees. In addition, faculties have their own career regulations, mainly to specify the USB regulations. To increase the possibility recruiting international academic staff, vacancies are advertised internationally. For non-academic staff, social media are used. The university is aware of the necessity to ensure new recruits a safe and comfortable environment and has counselling systems in place, which usually are operated at department level. One faculty (FFPW) has a specific	

document that helps new employees to orient themselves in the new environment and/or get a mentor or buddy to support them during the first days of employment. The School of Doctoral Studies has produced a handbook to help new PhD students. USB calls for fixed terms for senior positions in faculties but leaves the decision to these faculties.

Academic staff may request 6 months of sabbatical leave every 7 years. The regulations to deal with this are at faculty level. Returning staff may return on their original position but also this seems to vary among faculties. The regulations regarding maternity leave and return to work after it are clear and well developed. The university operates with a family friendly policy regarding maternity/paternity leave.

The IEP noticed that young and particularly female scientists often take decisions regarding their labour conditions which may hamper future career possibilities. In its quest to support female staff, the university offers a plethora of choices, such as flexible working hours, working from home, part-time employment and so on, all of which is commendable from a management point of view. These measures are very popular among young and particularly female scientists. However, with less working hours comes also lower productivity, less publications and this affects the career possibilities for the same persons at a later age.

Sometimes, understandable university policies may have unwanted effects on career possibilities for young scientists. For example, USB understandably discourage publications in so-called pirate journals. Therefore, publications in MDPI journals are not counted for RIV points which is important in the job evaluation and for career perspectives. But young scientists co-authoring an article with international colleagues may not be in the position to stop the leading authors to publish in these journals. She/he should not be punished. A Q1 paper is a Q1 paper.

A major constraint for USB is the fact that in the Czech Republic, academics tend to receive lower salaries than similar positions/functions in society. As a result, recruitment of postdocs, assistant professors and lecturers is difficult, leading to understaffing in several faculties with high student enrolment where teaching load is high and time for research low.

Recommendations:

1. Explore the feasibility to develop a sort of buddy or mentor system for young scientists in their quest to move up on the academic ladder.
2. Faculties differ in the procedures for recruitment and supporting staff in their career development. The IEP would suggest the central management of the university to harmonize these procedures among faculties and to ensure that faculties can learn from each other.
3. If salaries of academics are below the average for similar functions in society, the university risks to enter on a self-supporting spiral of losing capacity. This can only be counteracted by making academic jobs more attractive in terms of possibilities for research, gaining prestige, international contacts etc.
4. Develop a transparent remuneration system that is based both on teaching and scientific research.

4.7 Gender equality measures	
Evaluate the gender equality measures described in self-evaluation. Evaluate the measures in terms of their quality and effectiveness, as well as the potential absence of key measures.	
Rating [1–5]:	4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:

Although the university promotes gender equality, it has no specific gender policy for recruitment or career development and use quality as the main criterion. Its gender policy is based on the USB Gender Equality Plan 2025-2028 and covers 6 areas: organization and administration, balance between work and life, organizational culture, specific facilities, gender equality in recruitment and promotion and in research. USB spend quite some efforts in awareness among managers, for example, providing training courses regarding work and family life balance and offers various flexible forms of work, all to facilitate female employees to continue and search an academic career.

Yet, despite this, the gender balance remains quite unbalanced in senior positions. The SER explains this by low application rates by women for higher positions and relates this to the care giving tasks of females at home. As outlined in 4.6, the IEP has a slightly different view. The very policies of USB regarding flexible labour conditions which are very friendly for mid-career females with a young family, may turn out negative for later career chances, unless specific measures are taken to overcome this backlog.

The gender balance should not remain restricted to the university components falling under the jurisdiction of the central management only. Also, higher constituents such as the Board of Trustees should strive for equal male/female composition. The IEP knows that members of this board are nominated by the Minister (after consultation with the rector), hence, it is one of the cases where the Ministry should give good examples to follow.

Overall, the current gender policy by the central management is a clear improvement compared to the 2020 Evaluation, yet the efforts seem still to be insufficient. A more aggressive action plan would be desirable, especially targeting senior academic positions (see above).

Recommendations:

1. The persistent gender inequality among senior staff warrants attention. Western European universities faced the same problem, and some have succeeded to overcome it. It would be wise to search and contact those to learn from their experiences.
2. To facilitate the career perspectives of female staff when running for higher positions, it might be useful to calculate productivity based on the number of active research years rather than calendar years or age. Next a buddy system for re-integration after absence time may be useful to explore.
3. When a government encourages its public institutions such as HEI's to establish a proper gender balance among its staff, the IEP believes that the ministry itself should give a good example and therefore calls MEYS to nominate members of the Board of Trustees towards a more gender-balanced composition.

4.8 Mobility of academic and research staff (including sectoral and inter-sectoral mobility)	
Evaluate the described mobility of academic and researcher staff. Pay attention to whether the evaluated HEI achieves the set objectives, whether the mobility objectives are appropriately set for the HEI and whether the strategies in place lead to their achievement or help remove existing barriers to mobility.	
Rating [1–5]:	4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:

USB has a clear mobility plan for its R&D&I staff, using both internal and external funding schemes. It has mounted an organizational support system via its International Relations Office and Project Office. For most PhD programs, an international internship is mandatory, which is a strong achievement. The duration of this international internship is minimally 1 month but a few go out for periods up to 3 months. The plan is quite successful as the university recorded 50 outgoing and 21 incoming longer term mobilities in 2023 alone. Most mobilities are realized via the EU Erasmus program, both for students and staff and target neighbouring countries. However, this is not a result of policy, and several go to distant countries, including the USA and Asia. An indirect result of this mobility policy is the fact that during the evaluated period, more than 1600 USB publications had an international authorship.

There is an imbalance among faculties: in some it is more common for the staff and students to have international experience than in others. It is important to realize that any faculty with research ambitions needs to foster contacts with researchers in other countries.

Recommendations:

1. Mobility for PhD students should be at least 3 months. The newly erected Doctoral School should establish this as a USB wide rule.
2. Most of the international contacts are with surrounding countries. This is insufficiently ambitious. The IEP recommends a bolder approach.
3. Introduce and implement a “visiting professor” program which usually leads automatically to cooperation between universities (see also 4.5).
4. More could be done to encourage staff to go out. Therefore, the IEP recommends that international experience is a preferable qualification in the career plans for academic staff.

RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

4.9 Research infrastructure	
Evaluate the system described for the acquisition/optimisation of core facilities and other equipment and their renewal. Evaluate the system in terms of its effectiveness and suitability for the HEI. Also consider the system for sharing instruments and equipment, including core facilities and equipment of evaluated units. Use the data in Annex Table 4.9.1 to support your evaluation.	
Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

The university is very active in acquiring and running high quality research infrastructures and equipment. It participates in 3 European Strategic Fora on Research Infrastructures and projects/landmarks (ESFRI), and hosts two core research infrastructures, e.g. *CENAKVA* (which is part of the Czech Roadmap of Large Research Infrastructures) and the *Czech Arctic Research Station* for polar research. It is also involved in 8 Horizon projects, some of which enable the acquisition or renewal of research equipment.

The university has all necessary organizational structures in place to acquire, renew and optimize the use of expensive infrastructure and equipment. It promotes cross-faculty collaboration via a Fund of Strategic Priorities and fostering sharing resources among faculties.The IEP observed that the mentioned research infrastructures remain confined to very few faculties, in particular FSC and FFPW and to a smaller extend, FAT. Yet, other faculties (for example, FHSS with its simulation centre or FED with its respiration and metabolic facility) avail of infrastructures which can be potentially used as research infrastructures. Centralization of research data in a single university data centre could further stimulate research. The acquisition of new expensive equipment goes through a procedure where different management layers and different faculties of the university have a role to play. As such, the university guarantees that the acquisition is endorsed and that cross faculty use is enabled. Practice shows that lab and equipment sharing between faculties is quite common.

All this supports the ambition of USB to be a high-level research university as stated in its mission.

Recommendations:

We recommend the University to take care and broaden the research infrastructure especially in the more "profession" oriented faculties as a tool to strengthen their research capacity (see also 4.1)

FINANCES

4.10 Budget and structure of financial resources

Evaluate the budget and financial resource structure of the evaluated HEI in terms of its suitability for the HEI, i.e. whether the financial resource structure is appropriate for the size and type of the evaluated HEI. You should also pay attention to the ability of the evaluated HEI to attract prestigious research projects. Use the data in the annexed tables 4.10.1 to 4.10.5 to support your evaluation.

Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

The total R&D&I budget of USB has remained stable over the past 4-5 years and is largely based on public funds, such as the governmental contribution via LCDRO, research grant projects and specific support for PhD research. The amount of non-public funding is minimal (max. 4%). There is a large discrepancy among faculties, with FFPW, FSC and to a smaller extent FAT consuming more than 80% of the total R&D&I budget of the university. This is entirely based on the rules how the LCDRO budget is calculated. This system fosters productive faculties in terms of research output. Yet, when looking at the % share of funding via (international) grants and non-public sources (table 4.10.1), FFPW is clearly a very active faculty in searching for extra money outside LCDRO, but also FEC, FHSS show relatively good results, just as FSC and FAT.

The large discrepancy in research funding among faculties might become a risk for the internal balance within the university and may jeopardize its ambition to be a widely recognized research university. Especially research fields and faculties which have less access to business opportunities and the associated complementary income may have increasing difficulties in the internal competition for funds thereby reducing their research capacity.

Recommendations:

1. Specific programmes could be established to encourage research in the "poorer" faculties. See also recommendations in 4.1 and 4.9.
2. The university should stimulate the faculties and their researchers to seek more actively for projects outside the Czech national budget.

4.11 Rules for the use of institutional support for the LCDRO	
Evaluate the strategy described and the rules for the use of institutional support for the LCDRO. In your evaluation, consider the effectiveness of the implemented strategy and policies and whether they contribute to the mission and vision of the HEI.	
Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

The university developed a clear and USB-shaped method to distribute the LCDRO among faculties, whereby all faculties can count on a reliable minimum amount of this money, together about 50% of the total. Another part of the LCDRO is divided based on the performance of faculties in research output and on the amount of grants acquired. The idea is to stimulate and activate faculties in their research and search for external research money. The central management and all deans approved this method. This methodology is an attempt to reconcile the basic needs of all faculties and stimulate them to contribute more to the mission of the HEI as a research university.

This system of dividing the LCDRO funds over faculties, how fair it may look, leads to further strengthening the already strong faculties (especially FSC and FFPW). See also our comments in 4.10.

Recommendations:

See recommendations in 4.10.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

4.12 Significant collaborations in R&D	
Evaluate listed examples of significant R&D&I collaborations with respect to the effectiveness of the collaborations established, their proportionality and appropriateness to the type of HEI and its mission and vision.	
Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

At national level, the main collaborative partners are the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS), the Charles University and regional authorities. Especially the CAS programmes are interesting as they include also collaborations with the Institutes of Philosophy, History and Psychology, all potential partners for the group of poorer faculties at USB. The key CAS partner however is the Biology Centre, located within the campus and a strong partner for FSC.

USB has been and is still very active at the international level and is partner in several high-level European consortia which provide USB with a high international reputation. It is partner of the EU Alliance of Universities, together with 10 other partner institutions of all over Europe. One of the major programmes of this Alliance, e.g., Kreativ-EU, offers very interesting opportunities to strengthen USB's ambition on education and social relevance. It focuses on a long-term institutional cooperation with the aim to establish a fully European University using Europe's cultural heritage at the heart of its teaching and research. All USB faculties are involved and as such, this project strengthens also the internal cohesion and search for a commonly embraced profile of USB. The program DANUBIUS, operated by the DANUBIOUS-ERIC consortium opens collaboration with partners working on the largest river in Europe, e.g. the Danube. The project ELIXIR is a European research infrastructure in the fields of bioinformatics and biological data and supports international collaboration in the life sciences. However, the IEP observed that the intensity of international collaboration varies among the faculties.

In conclusion, all projects and consortia as well as individual collaborations are very appropriate to the mission and vision of USB.
Recommendations: 1. The IEP recommends USB to consolidate stable networks with foreign universities, beyond the relationships between members of a consortium in a specific project, thereby streamlining formation of research partnerships. 2. The university management should continue in supporting efforts in research collaboration at all levels. It should especially focus on intensifying international collaboration of faculties and departments whose potential in this area is still not fully utilized.

STUDIES

4.13 Doctoral studies	
Evaluate the described organisation of doctoral studies. Pay attention to the setup and quality of the processes, as well as their effectiveness through basic statistics, such as drop-out rate or data on the future career of graduates.	
Rating [1–5]:	4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:

The USB Study and Examination Code defines the basic requirements for any doctoral program at USB. Each of the 32 doctoral programmes at USB must have a Program Board which specifies these general requirements into specific ones for their program. Such an approach is logic and comparable to standards in other European universities.

Upon admission, the student together with his supervisor composes an Individual Study Plan specifying the courses, mobility, research output, teaching duties and other requirements the student must fulfil. The duration of the PhD study is 4 years, but the average duration is 5.6 years. Only 10% complete their PhD within the set 4 years. The drop-out rate is 40% compared to a national level of 60% drop-out. Despite the favourable national comparison, these drop-out levels are far too high when compared to international peers. As an example, the PhD programmes at Wageningen University (the home university of the chair of the IEP) have an average drop-out rate of less than 15%.

USB has issued a “doctoral degree supervisor standard” specifying the requirements for being a qualified PhD supervisor. An important aspect of this standard is that the number of actively supervised PhD students is maximised at 5, and the total of BSc, MSc and PhD students at 15 per supervisor. This guarantees sufficient supervisor time for each doctoral student.

USB has a double PhD degree with the University of Lorraine in France (with FAR) and with the University of Stavanger in Norway (with FSC) and has a few joint PhD programmes with other Czech universities (FAR in the field of Archaeology and FED around Didactics).

USB hasn’t yet developed a university wide system of tracking graduates’ careers. Yet at faculty level, some data are available.

An important asset of USB is their School of Doctoral Studies which aims to support and promote the quality of PhD studies across the university. Among others, it stimulates the inclusion of so-called soft skills in the PhD training programmes, which are of increasing importance in current-day society. All this is a very good development.

Using the data supplied in table 3.1.4 of SER, the university has 32 doctoral programmes which trained about 1240 PhD students between 2019 and 2023, i.e. an average of less than 10 students per programme per academic year. This warrants attention as it suggests a high level of inefficiency, and too many study programmes.

The average drop-out ratio (close to 45%) among PhD programmes is far too high and is again an indication of inefficiency in the management of the programmes.

Recommendations:

1. The IEP recommends unifying current doctoral programs into a smaller number that would increase the synergies among participating researchers, both teachers and students, should be considered.
2. Mobility for PhD students should be at least 3 months. The newly erected Doctoral School should establish this as a USB wide rule (see also 4.8).
3. The IEP recommends the university to increase the efficiency of its doctoral programmes thereby reducing the drop-out ratios below 20%.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

4.14 Implementation of recommendations in Module 4

Evaluate how the HEI has reflected the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the IEP, if applicable.

If the HEI has not been evaluated before, the indicator will be marked as N/A – Not Applicable.

Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

In general, most important recommendations have been followed up by USB which is highly appreciated. The reflection on the rank position is regrettable as these rankings, with all their biases and shortcomings, still gives an impression where the university stands internationally. USB might be among the 6 better universities in the Czech Republic, but if it wishes to compete more as a research university in the international arena, it should reflect on how to improve the ranking. The ranking on itself is not a goal but an independent demonstration of its international allure; reflecting on causes of the current level will help USB to grow further according to its mission and vision.

Recommendations: No further recommendations

MODULE 4 RATING

MODULE 4 – SUMMARY EVALUATION

After evaluating each indicator, please provide an overall evaluation of Module 4. Assess the overall state of the research and institutional environment and the quality of the internal processes of the HEI. Consider whether and how the set processes contribute to the fulfilment of the HEI's mission and vision.

The aggregate grade is determined in accordance with the rules of the Methodology HEI2025+ as a simple average of the scores for each indicator.

INDICATOR	RATING [1–5]
4.1 Organisation and management of R&D&I	4 - Very good
4.2 System of support for a quality R&D&I environment and incentive measures for quality science	5 - Outstanding
4.3 Quality control system for R&D&I environment	5 - Outstanding
4.4 Sustainability and resilience of R&D&I	4 - Very good
4.5 Structure of human resources	4 - Very good
4.6 Academic and Research Careers	4 - Very good
4.7 Gender equality measures	4 - Very good
4.8 Mobility of academic and research staff (including sectoral and inter-sectoral mobility)	4 - Very good
4.9 Research infrastructure	5 - Outstanding
4.10 Budget and structure of financial resources	5 - Outstanding
4.11 Rules for the use of institutional support for the LCDRO	5 - Outstanding
4.12 Important collaborations in R&D&I	5 - Outstanding
4.13 Doctoral studies	4 - Very good
4.14 Implementation of recommendations in Module 4	5 - Outstanding
AVERAGE RATING	4 - Very good
GRADE [A–D]	A

Summary assessment:

The university is on the right track to have its viability at top level. However, there is always room to improve, and USB could pay more attention to some points which – with time – could put its viability at risk. Most of these points refer to the "soft" management parts, e.g., human resources. We would mention specifically, the position of women and the career options for young staff. A second point that merits further attention is the level of internationalization, which is largely focused on neighbouring countries.

In the long run, the most important threat to USB's viability is the large difference among faculties in their focus on internationally competitive research. Strong attention on local/regional impact with professional training and associate practical experience should not be an excuse for reduced interest in basic or strategic research at international level.

Summary recommendations:

The IEP recommends USB to spend all efforts possible to reduce the discrepancy in the research profile between faculties.

The IEP invites USB to spend additional efforts to equalize the gender balance and foster career opportunities for female staff

MODULE 5 – STRATEGY AND POLICIES

5.1 Mission and vision of the evaluated institution in R&D&I

Evaluate the described vision and general mission of the university emphasizing R&D&I (in context of its educational function and the educational policy strategy of the state or the relevant ministry for higher education. Compare the defined mission with reality. The evaluation should consider how the mission and vision of the HEI has been fulfilled in the past five-year period and whether the vision for the next five-year period is adequately set and realistically achievable.

Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

USB's mission is oriented to be a research university, both for basic and applied research, and to strive to societal impact of this research in different ways. As such, the university has the ambition to be both competitive in the international research arena and competent as a partner for regional societal stakeholders. Its USB Research Strategy stands on four pillars, needed to achieve its mission and vision, e.g., (1) Excellence; (2) Interdisciplinarity; (3) Societal Relevance and (4) Internationalization. Over the past five-year period, the University has achieved good results in this ambition, and especially in the STEM faculties (FSC, FFPW and FAT) which operate at international level. As a result, these 3 faculties cover about 50% of USB's R&D&I capacities. At the other side of the axis, FED and FHSS provide professional degrees for teachers and nurse professionals who are very import for the regional stakeholders.

USB will continue the same path during the following five-year period, with some extra attention on a few points: It plans to develop the STEM fields particularly, to strengthen the excellence of research in social sciences and to improve the interconnection between natural and social sciences/ humanities by stimulating interdisciplinarity. The University has set in place an impressive number of action plans to realize these goals.

The involvement of USB in the project KREATIV-EU provide ample opportunities for interdisciplinary and cross-faculty cooperation. The more profession-oriented faculties at USB such as FHSS, FED and FEC may use the opportunities provided by this project to collaborate with the stronger research faculties as a stepstone to strengthen their own research capacity.

The existing dichotomy within USB between very strong research faculties and more professional training-oriented faculties remains an Achilles heel for its ambition to become a leading research university in the Czech Republic if this is not well addressed. However, the IEP noticed that the issue is now in the centre of attention of the USB management and will most probably be followed up. One possible instrument to address this issue is to have all faculties embracing a shared key research area where each of them can contribute to by its own expertise.

Recommendations:

If USB wants to maintain its excellent profile as a research university in the future, it will be crucial to upgrade the research profile of the social sciences faculties to a level that matches the STEM faculties.

We recommend to search for a shared key research area where all faculties can contribute to as a common denominator for USB's R&D&I profile, thereby strengthening its mission and vision.

5.2 Research and development objectives	
Evaluate the set goals of the HEI in both the area of R&D&I and the development of the HEI as an institution. Consider whether the goals are adequately established in relation to the size and type of the HEI, as well as its mission and vision, and whether they are achievable within the proposed timeframe.	
Rating [1–5]:	4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:

The university developed very specific goals for the coming years. It wants to increase it student numbers from 9000 to 12000, to acquire minimally 5 ERC (or similar) grants, increase the % of female faculty staff with 10% and to increase the student mobility from the average 4% currently to 10%. The IEP appreciates very much that the University management formulates such SMART and bold goals which are well in line with its mission and vision. It is a token of the quality of the current central management.

As written under 5.1, the university has set in place an impressive number of actions to achieve its goals as outlined in the mission and vision and USB Strategy document. Some of these measures are a clear follow-up of the 2020 Evaluation and will modernize and professionalize the university considerably. Examples are the establishment of an ombudsperson at all faculties, the installation of a School for Doctoral Studies, an intention to improve and harmonize its assessment procedures for research among faculties, a strong enforcement of its actions towards collaboration with international and with industrial partners, and the development of an institutional data repository.

Yet, the IEP questions the need to increase student numbers with more than 30%, when the heavy teaching load at some faculties is already a barrier for strengthening their research capacity.

The IEP appreciates the actions the university plans to increase the gender balance among its staff, particularly the focus on larger childcare facilities. We embrace each action that keeps female researchers working so that they remain competitive in the career market.

Recommendations:

To optimize the time for research at all faculties, the university should focus first on increasing the efficiency of its study programmes (reducing drop-out ratio's; optimizing the number of study programmes etc.) rather than searching higher student enrolments.

5.3 Institutional instruments and measures for the implementation of the research and development strategy	
Evaluate the described institutional and strategic instruments for the fulfilment of the research and development objectives regarding how they will contribute to the fulfilment of these objectives. In your evaluation, also pay attention to the possible absence of key instruments or measures.	
Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

The University has put in place several instruments for the fulfilment of its research and development objectives. Some are more important than others, but all are relevant. The School of Doctoral Studies and the USB Grant Agency will certainly be benchmarking developments but also its action plan to reform the research assessment at USB, the development of a data repository, and the support systems for postdocs and returning scientists after a break are worth mentioning. A very valuable novelty is the intention to develop an instrument to help "promising" (not yet fully top) teams to grow into excellency.

Each faculty has a system to monitor performance of its faculty staff, including a mandatory annual performance interview with the faculty management. If such a system would be combined with a discussion on future ambitions and welfare/labour issues from the employee on one hand and expectations by the leadership on the other hand, this could constitute a crucial instrument in developing both its HR policy and the university's ambitions for its research strategy.

Recommendations:

The IEP encourages the university to go on and even strengthen its intention to stimulate excellency among its staff and support promising candidates.

5.4 Implementation of recommendations in Module 5

Evaluate how the HEI has reflected the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the IEP, if applicable.

If the HEI has not been evaluated before, the indicator will be marked as N/A – Not Applicable.

Rating [1–5]:	5 - Outstanding

Qualitative assessment:

USB has taken the recommendations of the previous evaluation well on board. We welcome particularly its response to the earlier comment that the disconnection between central and peripheric management levels needed to change into preferably a sort of ONE-USB policy. The university has implemented a lot of changes to improve this disconnection, and the issue is much less of a problem right now.

The other major comment, e.g. regarding its professionality in terms of HRM, gender and diversity and research integrity has also received the required attention.

Obviously, the university should continue to develop along the path it is currently following thereby spending specifically attention to the gap in research capacity in the different faculties. But overall, the IEP is quite positive about the implementation of the recommendations in Module 5.

Recommendations:

The university should continue spending specifically attention to the gap in research capacity in the different faculties.

MODULE 5 RATING

MODULE 5 – SUMMARY EVALUATION	
After evaluating each indicator, please provide an overall evaluation of Module 5. Evaluate the overall setting of the HEI's strategic objectives and development plan. The aggregate grade is determined in accordance with the rules of the Methodology HEI2025+ as a simple average of the scores for each indicator.	
INDICATOR	**RATING [1–5]**
5.1 Mission and vision of the evaluated institution in R&D&I	5 - Outstanding
5.2 Research and development objectives	4 - Very good
5.3 Institutional instruments and measures for the implementation of the research and development strategy	5 - Outstanding
5.4 Implementation of recommendations in Module 5	5 - Outstanding
AVERAGE RATING	5 - Outstanding
GRADE [A–D]	A
Summary assessment: The existing dichotomy within USB between very strong research faculties and more professional training-oriented faculties remains an Achilles heel for its ambition to become a leading research university in the Czech Republic if this is not well addressed. However, the IEP noticed that the issue is now in the centre of attention of the USB management and will most probably be followed up.	
Summary recommendations: One possible instrument to address the gap in research capacity and output between faculties is to have all faculties embracing a shared key research area where each of them can contribute to by its own expertise.	

OVERALL EVALUATION IN MODULES 1 TO 5

OVERALL EVALUATION

Provide a summary evaluation of the HEI as a whole across all five modules. Justify your evaluation and highlight the main strengths and/or weaknesses of the evaluated HEI. The overall grade is determined according to the rules of the "Methodology VŠ2025+".

MODULE	MODULE WEIGHT	GRADE [A–D]
MODULE 1 and 2	50 %	**A**
MODULE 3	30 %	**A**
MODULE 4	10 %	**A**
MODULE 5	10 %	**A**
OVERALL RATING		**A – Excellent**

Qualitative assessment:

The University of South Bohemia is a research-oriented university that aims to provide innovations at both regional and international level. The university's structure includes eight faculties ranging from STEM sciences (FSC, FAT, FFPW) to Social Sciences (FED, FHSS, FEC) and Humanities (FAR, FTH). The university's mission is to provide high-quality education, support scientific knowledge, and serve society; its vision is to become a modern, open, and socially responsible institution with an international reach.

The IEP observed much progress compared to the 2020 evaluation, both in terms of scientific output, focus on social relevance and gender policy among all faculties. Very different from 2020 is the positive and the broadly shared atmosphere of strong commitment to the USB as a corporate unit. There is a strongly growing sense of cooperation between faculties. This is leading to more cohesion within the university across diverse fields.

In short, the university is on the right track to have its performance and viability at top level. Yet, there are points of attention. The IEP would suggest to focus on the following three points.

First, despite a USB shared ambition to eliminate the gender gap, the career options of women and young staff are not addressed well. The policy to increase employment flexibility has an unintended negative effect on women's career options as reduced labour time leads also to lower research output. If career decisions are only based on bibliometric data, these women have lower opportunities to grow into senior academic levels. A second point that merits further attention is the level of internationalization, which is largely focused on neighbouring countries.

In the long run, the most important threat to USB's viability is the large difference among faculties in their focus on internationally competitive research. Strong attention on local/regional impact with professional training and associate practical experience should not be an excuse for reduced interest in basic or strategic research at international level. This dichotomy within USB between very strong research faculties and more professional training-oriented faculties remains an Achilles heel for its ambition to become a leading research university in the Czech Republic.

Recommendations:

Upgrade the research capacity and output of the weaker faculties. Investing in a strong research profile of these faculties is imminent.

Second, the university should stimulate the faculties to be bolder for engaging at the international level. Running on the international competition will sharpen the research projects and upgrade the outcomes.

Third, we recommend, where applicable, interacting more with commercial and other external stakeholders,