

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

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION NAME: Škoda Auto Vysoká škola o.p.s.

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER (CRN): 29142890

THE LIST OF EVALUATION UNITS IN MODULE 3: 1 UNIT (Škoda Auto Vysoká škola o.p.s.)

CHAIRPERSON OF INTERNATIONAL EVALUATION PANEL

Name and surname: Associate professor Carmen Giorgiana Bonaci, PhD

Phone number: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

LIST OF INTERNATIONAL EVALUATION PANEL MEMBERS		
Name and surname	Position in IEP	Current position
Carmen Bonaci	Chairperson	Researcher, Associate Professor
István Benczes	Member	Researcher
Zuzana Machová	Member	Rector
Jürgen Mühlbacher	Member	Researcher
Margherita Russo	Member	Researcher
Peter Trebuňa	Member	Researcher
Dariusz Krol	Member	Head of the Knowledge Engineering Group

PROVIDERS METHODOLOGIST

Name and surname: Iveta Ptacnikova

Phone number: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Date of on-site visit of higher education institution: June 11, 2025

In _____ date 24/10/2025

Signature _____
(IEP chairperson)

EVALUATION REPORT IN MODULE 3

NAME OF EVALUATED UNIT: Škoda Auto Vysoká škola o.p.s.

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 mission of the evaluated unit is to follow the needs of the automotive industry leader, with a role at national and regional level, where the ŠKODA AUTO company (ŠA) is located. The vision is to create robust connections with the auto industry and attract talent to support its development, also with a (future) international PhD program and with blended courses, accompanied by focused research (with international cooperation finalised also with patents and scientific publications) and the creation of a Prague branch, to also become more attractive for international students and researchers. The education profile nicely reflects the needs of the automotive industry, aiming to educate graduates with applied knowledge and industry-specific competencies, each BA and MA programme being tailor-made. ŠKODA AUTO University (ŠAU) has long positioned itself as a significant regional partner in the areas of innovation, technology transfer, and the training of new professionals, actively responding to labor market demands and regional development needs.

ŠAU presents a clear and consistent vision of contributing to the development of applied research and its direct relevance for the automotive industry and related sectors. One would expect that ŠAU, as a specialised university, would place even more emphasis in its research and training activities on engineering or related STEM fields. By doing so, ŠAU could strengthen its multidisciplinary character too – an aspect the university seemed to focus very much in their onsite presentations.

The university is proud of its applied research profile, demonstrating notable engagement with professional stakeholders. It seems that its embeddedness into the ecosystem of ŠA (and the Volkswagen group) is more like an opportunity (expanding its fields of interest) which however has not been fully realised yet. Also, the relationship can be a threat as well due to the uncertain situation of the automotive industry globally and locally.

The social contribution of the evaluated unit lies primarily in supporting regional and national economic development through practical outputs, especially those arising from contractual research activities commissioned by ŠA and other partners. However, the broader societal impact beyond its primary industrial focus remains somewhat limited. This may be due to the predominant emphasis on contractual outputs, which are not always accessible or generalisable. Additionally, the self-evaluation does not indicate robust activity in terms of citizen engagement, co-production of knowledge, or broader dissemination of research benefits to society. Nonetheless, the university's emphasis on employability, collaboration with public institutions, and regional development, particularly in the Mladá Boleslav area, does suggest a meaningful, albeit narrowly defined, societal contribution.

The intimate and fruitful relationship between ŠAU and ŠA is quite straightforward and evident. ŠAU, however, defines itself as a social sciences university. Questions may evolve like how social sciences are exactly supposed to enhance this collaboration between the two partners, what is it that ŠA can benefit from the close collaboration, and whether the two partners have really pinned down what the two sides can expect from each other.

The organizational structure supports its mission and vision through strategic partnerships made possible by (a) a significant change in the board (from business world, with a clear assignment of areas of competence) and (b) a recently nominated new Rector, with a prominent position in the scientific community, (c) a very well organised and motivated administrative staff (almost half of the total staff) supporting its organisation for the teaching and the research activities, and (d) a teaching staff dedicated to implement both theoretical and applied knowledge, also with (e) very well structured and modern laboratories, blended programme, students and staff mobility programmes (as a source of learning), (f) a recently created Research Centre with full time researchers.

ŠAU proves to be a rapidly expanding institution with a dynamically increasing student and staff number (esp. in the last five years). With almost 1,200 students, in 2024 the total staff was almost 90 full time equivalent units, one third was technical and administrative staff. While overall the age structure is fine, ŠAU does need to remedy the case of most of the Professors being at or above 70 years old.

The R&D&I capacities rely on (a) a highly qualified multidisciplinary teaching staff dedicating part of the activity to research; (b) a dedicated staff of the Research Centre (at present of very limited unit) to be more focused on quality and broaden the impact of research activities; (c) the internal research laboratories (also the recent AI lab) and the Skoda Auto industry labs support effective applied research in the auto industry production areas (such as automation, digitalisation of production processes and logistics) and zero emissions transition, (d) a very well organised administrative staff to support: browsing through and applications to international and national calls, publications in open access, and the online access to publications (available also in English).

Overall, we do see ŠAU's unique position as the only university in Central Bohemia with good opportunities for development.

However, the university's embedding into the broader international research ecosystem is still underdeveloped. If the university aims to elevate its academic reputation to a more international level, it should concentrate on the following areas:

- **Research diversification:** increase engagement in fundamental research and projects funded by public sources (e.g., Horizon Europe).
- **International collaboration:** seek partnerships with universities located in regions with a strong automotive industry presence (e.g., Italy, China), which could also attract international students.
- **Gender balance improvement:** particularly among the faculty and within STEM disciplines.
- **Research outreach and popularization:** expand public lectures, podcasts, and blogs to ensure research outcomes do not remain confined within the "closed loop" of the automotive company.

Throughout these initiatives, ŠAU can maintain its strong ties with ŠA while simultaneously broadening the university's impact beyond the automotive sector.

- **Strengths:**

○ Clear focus on automotive industry needs ○ Strong applied research orientation ○ Well-structured infrastructure and motivated staff ○ Rapid growth in students and staff ● Challenges: ○ Limited international visibility ○ Narrow societal impact beyond industry ○ Age imbalance among professors (many >70 years) ● Recommendations: ○ Clarify the role of social sciences in industry collaboration ○ Continue building international networks ○ Address staff age and gender balance ○ Broaden societal engagement beyond industrial partners
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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 Given the limited size of the staff and the fact that contract research can hardly be used for publication, the research effort of the evaluated unit is of great value: the main fields of research, logistics and accounting, received awards, filed patents and submitted publications accepted by indexed journals; also, the newly created Research Centre was receiving an award; staff members were actively engaged in evaluation of national/European research project/programme calls. Overall, there's an automotive and sometimes even owner centred focus on applied research. Starting with average R&D, a trend upwards to more qualitative R&D can be seen. The self-evaluation provides limited evidence of recognition at international academic level. Although the university has reported involvement in international networks and some international co-authorship, the visibility and academic influence of its research staff in high-impact disciplinary settings remain modest. While the self-assessment provides detailed individual level descriptions, it fails to address the issue of how the university actually evaluates its position in the wider (national, international) research community. With adequate number and level of individual contributions, ŠAU should carefully elaborate on the university/institute's positioning as well. Most of the engagements appear to be at the regional or national level, with a clear dominance of applied and professionally oriented activities. Membership in editorial boards is largely limited to Czech or industry-specific journals. Similarly, staff serving as evaluators tend to assess mainly	

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.

applied research projects (e.g., for the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic), which reflects the institution's applied orientation but also limits its academic visibility in basic or theoretical research communities.

The data in Table 3.2.2 on editorial boards of international scientific journals enlists several scholarly journals. Most of the Professors employed by ŠAU are affiliated with one or two peer reviewed academic journals which is indeed an impressive result. However, only one of these journals is categorised as Scimago Q1 (being a Czech journal). Another one is a Q2 journal. The rest is categorised as Q3 or lower. These journals are typically Czech or are edited in the area.

MM Science Journal: a Czech journal (in English), in Engineering, only Q3 (H index: 19)

Acta Logistica: Slovak, in Engineering, in Business, Management and Accounting, in Social Sciences (only in Transportation), only Q3 (H index: 11)

Archives of Transport: Polish, in Engineering, in Social Sciences (only in Transportation), Q2 (H index: 21)

International Advances in Economic Research: USA, Springer, Economics, Q3, (H index: 34)

Journal of Competitiveness, Czech, in Business, Management and Accounting, and in Economics, Q1 (H index: 39)

Review of Economic Perspectives, Polish, De Gruyter, Economics, Q3, H index: 16

Marketing Science and Inspirations and Historická sociologie: no Scimago ranking.

A related concern is the gender imbalance within the institution's academic leadership and research structure. There is a notably low number of women, particularly at higher academic ranks (associate professors and professors), and this situation has not significantly improved since the last evaluation. While the institution notes its awareness of this issue, more proactive measures are needed to address it.

- **Strengths:**

- High value of applied research with awards, patents, and publications
- Strong regional and industry relevance
- Growing Research Centre

- **Challenges:**

- Low international recognition
- Predominance of regional or national focus
- Gender imbalance in senior academic roles

Recommendations:

Keep the record of the previous years, increase the full-time researchers of the Research Centre, broaden the areas of multidisciplinary research in the automotive industry on the most challenging areas of environmental sustainability and autonomous driving.

There is already an interesting network of applied universities established, but to foster the scientific reputation, ŠAU should now focus to enhance this network with international universities of technology. Intensify collaboration with industrial partners that have a strong international presence, leveraging these connections for joint projects and presentation of results abroad. Expand and connect networks of contacts by actively seeking partners and opportunities. Establish

partnerships like those in UK and Germany, which have shown significant socio-economic contributions and the ability to solve community problems while building institutional capacity.

Instituting awards for outstanding research can significantly enhance recognition. ŠAU could establish awards to recognize exceptional research contributions in automotive industry.

Encourage open science practices and data sharing within the automotive research community. Although there are barriers such as legal constraints, improving transparency can accelerate scientific progress and promote inclusivity.

Invest in specialized research facilities, such as the Skoda Auto AI Centre. Such facilities can attract high-quality research projects and collaborations.

Support and motivate academic staff to publish in high-impact journals by implementing incentive mechanisms for internationalization. ŠAU should focus more on journals which are highly ranked in Scimago ranking. They should consider other journals as well besides Czech or Slovak ones.

Strengthen participation in international research consortia and seek involvement in high-prestige scientific advisory bodies or editorial boards beyond regional publications. Systematically increase staff participation in international research networks and promote greater involvement in European projects.

The number and frequency of (public) lectures and seminars delivered by foreign scientists is modest, it should definitely be increased in the future. Since ŠAU has a strong regional focus, it should perhaps concentrate on inviting scholars from the region. By doing so, ŠAU members can have better access to internationally recognised journal editorial boards as well.

Improve gender representation, especially among senior academic roles (associate and full professors), and develop targeted support measures to attract and retain female researchers.

Engage early-career researchers in international activities (internships, mentoring, grants).

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:

In general, the achieved results are truly significant for their application potential, both for those resulting in patents, and for the ones resulting in policy recommendations, positioning ŠAU as a significant think tank in the field of analysing and planning education policies in the Czech Republic.

The proportionality with respect to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit is significantly high, with a high degree of interdisciplinarity and very strong motivation in collaboration within the evaluated HEI and with external research partners, and the consistency with the declared mission and vision of the evaluated unit.

The university's research project portfolio is heavily skewed towards contract research, particularly commissioned by ŠA. This shows how fruitful the cooperation between the university and its founder, ŠA, has been over the years. This relationship demonstrates the synergies between the two entities. It is also reassuring to see that quite many of these projects provide impact in the narrower region itself. In fact, ŠAU's regional/local impact is evidently one of its major strengths, its research projects leading to significant advancements in vehicle design, safety, and performance. ŠAU's research projects involve a comprehensive initiative that combines innovative technological development with practical industry applications and educational integration. This multifaceted approach ensures that the research not only advances automotive technology but also provides valuable learning opportunities for students.

On the other hand, there is limited activity in investigator-driven, competitive research projects at national or international level.

The self-evaluation report acknowledges this imbalance and notes some diversification efforts, including participation in applied projects funded by the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic. However, there are still few basic research projects or significant competitive grants. The institution explicitly states that basic research is not its main focus, which is reflected in the limited project diversity.

The self-evaluation report also shows that the university is not being under constant pressure for applying financial resources to enhance its research and innovation activities. It is well exemplified by the fact that some of the financial resources provided by ŠA was not directly related to the automotive industry; ŠA generously financed activities related to social sciences, like the project of "Diversity wins – Adaptation of Training Materials to the Cultural Environment of the Czech Republic" or "Wage Convergence in South Eastern Europe".

In fact, public funds support was way scarcer than contract-based ones, most of the public funds coming from the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic.

It is understood that by the end of 2023, ŠAU has not yet managed to join a successful consortium as a member of a Horizon 2020 or Europe project. It should also be acknowledged that ŠAU managed to take part in COST project. The question is of course whether COST will enhance ŠAU's capacity and ability to engage in Horizon activities as well.

The 2023 and 2024 strategic documents suggest an increasing emphasis on internal support mechanisms and calls for diversifying funding sources, which may lead to improvement in future assessments.

In our onsite visit, nevertheless, we were given the impression that ŠAU is seriously working on increasing its relevance and presence in international (e.g. European Union) projects.

- **Strengths:**

- Strong collaboration with ŠA and regional impact
- High interdisciplinarity and motivation among staff
- Emerging internal support mechanisms

- **Challenges:**

- Limited investigator-driven research
- Low diversification of funding sources

Recommendations:

Do work on establishing stronger links to the academic discourse.

Diversify the portfolio of research projects by pursuing more publicly funded grants and basic research opportunities, particularly those evaluated through peer review, external competitive funding, including international sources (e.g., Horizon Europe). More COST and Jean Monnet applications are encouraged. This would also help in the direction of reducing dependence on contract research with the parent company.

Given the strategic importance of contract research to support the specific technical demand from the funding company of ŠAU, its share (almost 71% of total funds in the past five years) is clearly absorbing most of the current research capability. A stronger Research Centre might result in ŠAU's greater involvement in competitive funding for research projects and enable its international project involvement.

Strengthen strategic partnerships with industry and internationally active institutions. Increase the volume and quality of joint research projects with industry leaders (including international partners), utilize industrial advisory boards to share practical needs, and present results abroad.

Engage multiple departments and external partners to foster a comprehensive research environment.

Collaborate with automotive manufacturers, suppliers, and research institutes to leverage expertise and resources.

Utilize advanced simulation tools and testing facilities to validate research findings.

Conduct simulations and tests on vehicle aerodynamics, ventilation, and passive safety.

Improve vehicle performance and safety standards.

Enhance user experience and safety in autonomous vehicles.

Demonstrate significant potential in reducing accident injuries and fatalities.

Contribute to road safety and compliance with traffic regulations.

Development of new technologies and systems that enhance vehicle performance, safety, and user experience.

Analyse and improve ergonomic conditions in vehicle assembly lines.

Enhance worker safety and productivity.

Develop and integrate new course materials focusing on electric vehicles (EVs) and automotive electronics.

Prepare students for the evolving automotive industry focused on sustainability.

Incorporate practical exercises, industry placements, and laboratory work to enhance student learning and engagement.

Establish double degree programs and international partnerships to broaden the scope and impact of 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:

If a university is being active in the field of social sciences, it can be hard (if not impossible) to provide with practical results. Yet, the strong collaboration with ŠA has helped ŠAU to absolve this point. With ŠAU's increased interest and solid commitment to engage in more internationalised research projects (see 3.3), their chance to successfully attain this particular point (i.e., in the applied field) has been substantially strengthened.

ŠAU's research efforts have far-reaching implications for society, from enhancing vehicle safety and promoting sustainable transportation to modernizing education and fostering industry collaboration. These initiatives not only advance technological innovation but also contribute to social equity, environmental sustainability and economic development.

The institution presents a strong set of research results with demonstrated impact, particularly in the form of implementation and utilisation by SA. The evaluation of Table 3.4.1 confirms that the unit has produced results that have been directly applied in practice, including technical innovations, process improvements, and educational tools for the automotive industry. This societal relevance is real and immediate, particularly in relation to economic and industrial needs. However, the results are largely produced within a closed loop with the parent company, and broader dissemination beyond the industry partner is not always clear.

Research results already applied in practice were produced in collaboration with The Government Office of the Czech Republic and the Digital and information agency. The project yielded effective solutions for implementing e-government within the Czech context, and to the publications of "Digital Czechia in Digital Europe" and "The Level of Digitalisation and Interest in Digital Services from the Perspective of Citizens, Companies and Government Authorities. Analytical Study", which have been translated into English.

Moreover, in a project funded by the European Climate Foundation, ŠAU, in collaboration with AutoSAP and ACEA, has prepared a total of four outcomes for the interested ministries of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Key areas of impact deriving from ŠAU's involvement in various research projects that have significant implications for society include:

- **Safety vs. Price:** Research has shown that the price of a vehicle does not necessarily correlate with its safety ratings. This finding is crucial for consumers, indicating that affordable vehicles can be just as safe as more expensive ones.
- **Smart Cars:** Research on smart cars emphasizes their transformative impact on human travel and driving experiences. The interaction between intelligent vehicles and human society has profound implications for user experience and emotional well-being.
- **Electric Vehicles:** The establishment of EV charging stations at university has shown a positive impact on environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainable development.

- **Shared Services:** Studies on shared services highlight their potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 14-65% compared to traditional vehicles, improving urban air quality and providing affordable transportation options for underserved populations.

Overall, the results are proportionate to the R&D&I capacities of the evaluated unit and they fully contribute to the fulfilment of the mission and vision of the evaluated unit. Given its applied focus and strong integration with the automotive sector, the societal contribution is significant and deserves recognition. In fact, ŠAU has a natural competitive advantage in applying their major findings in practice – this can differentiate it from other social sciences units.

The gender and sustainability aspects of these results are mentioned in general terms, but their integration into the design and implementation of outputs could be elaborated further.

- **Strengths:**
 - Strong applied societal impact
 - Effective collaboration with public agencies
 - Demonstrated regional relevance
- **Challenges:**
 - Limited broader dissemination beyond industry
 - Gender and sustainability integration needs improvement

Recommendations:

Starting an open academic discourse about all the (sometimes critical) trends concerning mobility in a much broader sense might help to find new perspectives and also enhance academic reputation. Research on sustainable transportation can lead to more resilient and inclusive academic environments. This includes promoting active mobility, public transport initiatives, and reducing reliance on private vehicles.

Develop a structured process for evaluating the real-world application and longer-term impact of research results.

Expand efforts in documenting successful examples of technology transfer or innovation implementation, and clarify the mechanisms through which research results are transferred.

Increase the internationalization of applications – develop a larger number of international projects focused on the transfer of applied outputs, better leverage results for participation in European innovation programs, and strengthen mobility of both academic staff and students.

Competency-Based Education: Implementing modular education models and creative project support can enhance key competences in automotive/mobility engineering students. This approach prepares graduates for successful careers and flexible adaptation in society.

Provide data on gender distribution please.

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:

Technology and knowledge transfer is one of the strongest aspects of the evaluated unit. The university has a clearly articulated system for contractual research, particularly with its parent company, SA. Results are frequently transferred into production, management, and training processes. The institution has mechanisms for IP protection, contractual arrangements, and documentation of implementation. It evidently demonstrates that ŠAU (due to its close collaboration with its founder organisation) has a strong comparative advantage in the transfer of academic knowledge into applied fields (e.g., patents). The alignment between the institutional research profile and practical transfer pathways is well developed and appropriately supported. This transfer dynamic is arguably more advanced than at many comparable private or professionally oriented institutions.

Based on the self-evaluation and the onsite visit, ŠAU has been very successful in attaining contract research. In fact, their capacity is not even enough to cover such claims. Over the years, the evaluated unit has achieved new users (contractual research has involved others than SA, AutoSAP has also been amongst the receiver of such university generated benefits) thus obtaining funding from non-public, non-grant sources.

The transfer of research results into practice at ŠAU can be understood through various insights from the provided abstracts, focusing on industry-university collaborations, technology transfer, and practical applications in the automotive sector.

The effectiveness of the transfer of results into practice by the unit being evaluated is very good both for the two patents filed and for implications of research in outlining precise policy recommendations.

However, the transfer is almost exclusively industrial in nature and lacks sustainable diversity in terms of partners. There is limited evidence of knowledge transfer to the public or non-profit sectors, or through open-access dissemination.

- **Strengths:**

- Efficient knowledge transfer to industry
- Strong IP and contract management
- Demonstrated comparative advantage due to the partnership with SA

- **Challenges:**

- Narrow partner diversity

Recommendations:

The transfer of research results into practice at ŠAU can further be achieved effectively through robust industry-university collaborations, practical implementation of research findings, and the

integration of modern technologies into educational programs. These efforts can help bridge the gap between academic research and industrial application, ultimately benefiting both students and the automotive industry.

Engaging in broadening the commercial partners should be balanced by a larger part of non-commercial research activity supported also by more full-time researchers.

Foster strong industry-university partnerships with clear communication and mutual goals.

Develop strategic partnerships with innovation centers.

Utilize structured methodologies and tools to align research with industry needs.

Improve the formalisation of knowledge transfer processes, including agreements and partnerships with external entities.

Continue expanding collaboration with international partners and participation in European projects to increase the volume of transferred technologies and enhance the international impact of outcomes.

Consider establishing or strengthening an internal unit responsible for supporting commercialisation, technology transfer, and broader societal dissemination.

Provide methodological support for the creation of spin-offs and start-ups, and offer training for academics in technology transfer.

Fill specialized positions such as "Global Expert" – aimed at transferring know-how not only into science but also directly into business and commercialization.

Raise awareness of collaboration opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the region, for example by organizing sector-specific networking events or thematic workshops.

Motivate academic staff and students to translate research outcomes into practical applications.

Integrate practical, hands-on training and modern technologies into the curriculum to prepare students for real-world applications.

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:

ŠAU has been active in the field of popularisation of R&D&I and communication with the public by organizing a Research Open Day series of events, lectures and seminars, dissemination events, and publications targeted at non-specialist audiences. Key activities include not only expert and popular science lectures but also organizing conferences, workshops, excursions, and participating in educational fairs. Significant emphasis is placed on collaboration with secondary schools, supporting talented students, and fostering career development, alongside active communication through modern media channels.

The university consistently prioritizes connecting science and practice with the everyday reality of the region and broader society. ŠAU demonstrates exemplary activity in promoting technical

education, particularly among younger generations. Best practices include engaging industry experts in teaching and highlighting concrete cases of applied research.

These efforts, however, remain limited in scope and reach. Most of the enlisted activities are mainly related to academic events and have much less influence on or provides less access to the general/wider public. The institution does not provide evidence of systematic or long-term strategies to engage with the broader public or to promote research literacy outside academia or the automotive sector. It is unclear to what extent the activities actually target the public and not only at the automotive sector in a broader view.

This area is one where significant progress can be achieved in the future. The potential for science communication is evident, given the applied and practical nature of many projects, but it appears to be underutilized. There is an opportunity for the university to better leverage its research outputs for broader societal understanding and involvement, particularly through cooperation with schools, municipalities, and public events. Areas for improvement include enhancing media visibility, systematizing impact evaluation, and expanding interactive or online activities.

- **Strengths:**

- Active events for academic and regional audiences
- Clear potential for applied science communication

- **Challenges:**

- Limited public reach
- Lack of systematic long-term engagement strategy

Recommendations:

Addressing common engagement barriers (such as lack of time, funding and professional development in engagement techniques) through targeted support and training can enhance the impact that ŠAU's R&D&I activities have on society.

Based on its regional importance, ŠAU should generate more awareness and publicity of its work amongst the public. The launching of doctoral training could significantly contribute to this point as students and their supervisors could provide original boost to the popularisation activity at the university.

Involve students and early-career researchers to increase engagement and visibility.

Developing a strategic communication plan that includes both public engagement and marketing elements can help ŠAU effectively disseminate their research findings and innovations.

Systematise outreach and impact evaluation of popularisation efforts (surveys, attendance tracking, feedback collection).

Expand activities targeting the general public (e.g., science cafés, podcasts, popular science blogs) to raise the visibility of R&D&I.

Increase focus on digital science popularization content (video presentations, webinars, virtual laboratory tours).

Expand systematic media coverage of ŠAU's achievements beyond specialized outlets, including regional and national channels.

Maintain and grow the network of partner schools in the region; pilot a "mentorship" program for talented students – a children's technical university.

Further engage industry partners not only in teaching but also in jointly organizing popularization events.

Starting an open academic discourse about all the (sometimes critical) trends concerning mobility in a much broader sense might help to find new perspectives and also enhance academic reputation (same as in 3.3).

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 institution has made visible efforts to respond to recommendations from the previous evaluation. Internal processes for research support have been gradually improved, and in 2024–2025, several new policies and organizational changes were introduced under the newly appointed rector and vice-rectors. These included the establishment of clearer internal evaluation tools, grant support structures, and steps to foster internationalization and research planning. Importantly, these initiatives appear to build on foundations established by the previous leadership and indicate continuity in addressing long-standing challenges.

ŠAU has fully reflected the recommendations from the previous evaluation of the IEP in three main areas: (a) the creation of a full-time team of researchers in the Research Centre; (b) the broadening of international research cooperation and the scope of contract research; (c) communication (both at international conferences and through a newly designed and effective website).

Since 2020, ŠAU joined 6! consortia (between 2020 and 2025). This is a superb achievement. Although none of these bids won during the evaluated period, yet the very fact that ŠAU was so determined to get involved in a successful Horizon project deserves all respect. While the self-evaluation only reports modest achievements on international collaboration, the onsite visit provided a more successful leap forward in this regard. Certainly, there are plenty to do in here, but it has been very encouraging to see that ŠAU has been very much committed to its internationalization activity. ŠAU managed to significantly strengthen its position in contract research related to the social sciences and business studies. The efforts ŠAU has made are self-evident and speak for themselves related to transparency (webpage) as well.

The impact of some of these changes is not yet fully visible in the results for the evaluated period (2019–2023). It will likely materialize more clearly in the next cycle.

The implementation of recommendations is thus promising, and the institution has demonstrated a willingness to evolve, supported by strategic planning and leadership renewal.

- **Strengths:**

- Clear improvements in internal processes and strategic planning
- Strong engagement in international consortia
- Enhanced transparency and communication

- **Challenges:**

- Impact of reforms not yet fully visible
- Need for structured alignment of individual contributions to institutional goals

Recommendations:

The three areas mentioned above should be kept growing in order for ŠAU's research to boost its impact.

Try to enhance your network with international universities of technology and take part in their scientific conferences and projects, even if they are not so strongly focused on the automotive industry. This will help build up academic reputation and develop a research culture with a broader, and sometimes even more critical perspective, and also develop a research culture that is more connective to the academic discourse.

Actively develop long-term partnerships with key industry players, including comprehensive offerings of professional training, joint research, and innovation initiatives.

Strengthen and professionalize international activities, particularly in project management for European grants.

Continue building on the positive momentum in management reform observed since 2024, ensuring new strategies are embedded and linked to clear R&D&I indicators.

Reflect on past evaluation outcomes in a more structured way and demonstrate how changes (e.g. Open Calls, individual incentives) align with long-term institutional goals.

Support academic staff commitment to the new vision rather than a top-down approach.

Increase motivation and support for early-career researchers and students to participate in strategic research projects and publish in prestigious international journals.

Continue investing in infrastructure and personnel, continuing to profile ŠAU as a regional leader in sustainable and applied research.

The rapid evolution in the automotive industry, particularly with electric vehicles and automotive electronics, necessitates curriculum updates to align with industry demands. This includes hands-on laboratory exercises, industry placements, and enhanced e-learning modules. ŠAU will benefit from similar updates to stay relevant.

Integrating entrepreneurship courses into engineering programs can be beneficial. Blended teaching methods, including simulations and traditional lectures, can provide students with practical business experience. ŠAU should continue incorporating such methods to foster entrepreneurial skills among students.

Continuous collaboration between academia and industry is crucial for keeping educational programs relevant. ŠAU could implement more industry talks, capstone projects, and events to raise career awareness among students.

Effective coaching and mentoring programs are essential for enhancing students' chances of professional employment. Key success factors include senior management commitment, clear matching processes, trained mentors, and robust evaluation.

The use of digital tools and platforms, such as chatbots for recommending research papers, can enhance the learning experience. ŠAU might explore similar technological integrations to support student learning.

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	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	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: ŠAU is the exemplary case for the mutually beneficial relationship between university/academia and the industry. Evidently, the main strength of ŠAU has been its reliance on and its intimate relationship with SA. It is the obvious interest of ŠAU to maximise the results it can gain from such potential. Its research orientation is more applied than base research; yet it should not mean that ŠAU refrains from the territory of the latter. While excellent basic research is not yet developed, there has been some diversification in recent years. It is impressive how successfully the university managed to increase the number and size of its contract-based research grants related to the various applied fields. The research projects at ŠAU are a comprehensive initiative that combines innovative technological development with practical industry applications and educational integration. This multifaceted approach ensures that the research not only advances automotive technology but also provides valuable learning opportunities for students. ŠAU presents a relatively coherent and stable research profile, with activities that are well-aligned with its applied, professionally oriented focus. The university has been involved in various research projects that have significant implications for society. Practical implementation of research findings is crucial. Simultaneous development processes have been successfully applied in university-industry collaborations to address economic, performance, and environmental concerns in automotive applications. The institution's public outreach is at a reasonable level, although international recognition and broader academic impact remain limited. ŠAU faces some weaknesses, including limited scope, market volatility, lower prestige, a limited range of study programs, and unsatisfactory research output. These factors collectively impact their ability to compete with traditional universities. Addressing these weaknesses requires strategic efforts to diversify programs, enhance research capabilities, and improve overall institutional adaptability and prestige.	

In more concrete terms, the self-evaluation is correctly written, trying to adequately answer all questions. The data provided by the university have been put together accurately and have been very useful.

Nevertheless, the general impression is that ŠAU is much stronger in individual based projects than in ŠAU/institute-wide ones. Its success largely depends on the capacity and ability of its individuals. This has been reflected by the report itself. While the document gives long lists of detailed activities of its individual members, the university somewhat failed to provide a more aggregate view of its achievements and challenges as a community. A university is naturally more than just the sum of its elements.

Overall, the evaluated unit's performance rather corresponds to the level that can be expected from a smaller, professionally profiled institution with well-established internal processes but not yet fully developed research excellence in terms of international recognition and diversity of outputs.

The changes implemented in the past five years mark a trend in awareness of the potential of becoming more significant in producing original research and not only in being very good in contract research.

While it still shows a lack of academic reputation caused by its ownership and the focus on applied contract research, ŠAU is on a good path. Results will come in the next years, if the plans of the new rectorate are implemented. Focus will be crucial! The first step should be the relentless effort to implement the new international strategy as presented during the onsite visit.

Summary recommendations:

ŠAU should pay more attention on how the individual achievements can be translated into the success of ŠAU itself. While significant progress has been achieved on the level of individual contributions, especially with the arrival of new faculty members, this progress should be reflected upon the general development of ŠAU as an institution as well. Instead of acknowledging and respecting certain professors' contributions, the academic community should recognise ŠAU's capacities and efforts in research activities.

Don't try to build up a new research culture top down, this might not work. You can improve the infrastructure but not build an environment. Rather the first step is to commit the academic staff to the new vision. This might not be possible by delegating and splitting academic staff into researchers and teaching staff – as the current way looks like.

Continue to diversify research activities, with increased support for basic research. Intensify publication activities in prestigious international journals and motivate staff to achieve high-profile awards.

Strengthen internationalisation and efforts to engage with the broader research community, including outside the industrial sphere.

Leave the comfort zone of "picking low hanging fruits" and start to connect more with international universities of technology and their academic discourse. New topics will help to build up academic reputation.

The strong link between teaching and research activities is another key for further enhancing of research results.

Continue efforts to connect research, teaching, and practice, including enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration and supporting talent development.

Prepare students for the evolving automotive industry focused on sustainability.

Establish double degree programs and international partnerships to broaden the scope and impact of research.

International collaboration with universities in countries with regions specialised in the automotive sector (such as Guangdong in China or Emilia-Romagna in Italy) might provide a clue both for ŠA and ŠAU in attracting foreign students and providing its students and researchers with experiences abroad.

Invest in specialized research facilities, such as the ŠA AI Centre. Such facilities can attract high-quality research projects and collaborations.

Encourage open science practices and data sharing within the automotive research community.

Consider further refining internal R&D&I support mechanisms, including incentives for excellence and gender equity.

Create a specialized position to support technology transfer, intellectual property protection, and the development of spin-off companies.

Increasing both the teaching and the full-time research staff is one of the keys for reaching more ambitious results, in publications and patents and in the popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public, which require a lot of organization and networking.

Develop a more strategic and visible approach to public engagement and popularisation of research results.

Increasing size and scope of the international collaboration might also provide opportunities for a more balanced gender staff in teaching STEM disciplines and creating a more virtuous circle in attracting more female students.

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]
Škoda Auto Vysoká škola o.p.s.	B
Summary grade	B

Summary assessment:

ŠAU is the exemplary case for the mutually beneficial relationship between university/academia and the industry. Evidently, the main strength of ŠAU has been its reliance on and its intimate relationship with ŠA. It is the obvious interest of ŠAU to maximise the results it can gain from such potential. Its research orientation is more applied than base research; yet it should not mean that ŠAU refrains from the territory of the latter. While excellent basic research is not yet developed, there has been some diversification in recent years.

It is impressive how successfully the university managed to increase the number and size of its contract-based research grants related to the various applied fields. The research projects at ŠAU are a comprehensive initiative that combines innovative technological development with practical industry applications and educational integration. This multifaceted approach ensures that the research not only advances automotive technology but also provides valuable learning opportunities for students. ŠAU presents a relatively coherent and stable research profile, with activities that are well-aligned with its applied, professionally oriented focus.

The university has been involved in various research projects that have significant implications for society. Practical implementation of research findings is crucial. Simultaneous development processes have been successfully applied in university-industry collaborations to address economic, performance, and environmental concerns in automotive applications. The institution's public outreach is at a reasonable level, although international recognition and broader academic impact remain limited.

ŠAU faces some weaknesses, including limited scope, market volatility, lower prestige, a limited range of study programs, and unsatisfactory research output. These factors collectively impact their ability to compete with traditional universities. Addressing these weaknesses requires strategic efforts to diversify programs, enhance research capabilities, and improve overall institutional adaptability and prestige.

In more concrete terms, the self-evaluation is correctly written, trying to adequately answer all questions. The data provided by the university have been put together accurately and have been very useful.

Nevertheless, the general impression is that ŠAU is much stronger in individual based projects than in ŠAU/institute-wide ones. Its success largely depends on the capacity and ability of its individuals. This has been reflected by the report itself. While the document gives long lists of detailed activities of its individual members, the university somewhat failed to provide a more aggregate view of its

achievements and challenges as a community. A university is naturally more than just the sum of its elements.

Overall, the evaluated unit's performance rather corresponds to the level that can be expected from a smaller, professionally profiled institution with well-established internal processes but not yet fully developed research excellence in terms of international recognition and diversity of outputs.

The changes implemented in the past five years mark a trend in awareness of the potential of becoming more significant in producing original research and not only in being very good in contract research.

While it still shows a lack of academic reputation caused by its ownership and the focus on applied contract research, ŠAU is on a good path. Results will come in the next years, if the plans of the new rectorate are implemented. Focus will be crucial! The first step should be the relentless effort to implement the new international strategy as presented during the onsite visit.

Summary recommendation:

ŠAU should pay more attention on how the individual achievements can be translated into the success of ŠAU itself. While significant progress has been achieved on the level of individual contributions, especially with the arrival of new faculty members, this progress should be reflected upon the general development of ŠAU as an institution as well. Instead of acknowledging and respecting certain professors' contributions, the academic community should recognise ŠAU's capacities and efforts in research activities.

Don't try to build up a new research culture top down, this might not work. You can improve the infrastructure but not build an environment. Rather the first step is to commit the academic staff to the new vision. This might not be possible by delegating and splitting academic staff into researchers and teaching staff – as the current way looks like.

Continue to diversify research activities, with increased support for basic research. Intensify publication activities in prestigious international journals and motivate staff to achieve high-profile awards.

Strengthen internationalisation and efforts to engage with the broader research community, including outside the industrial sphere.

Leave the comfort zone of "picking low hanging fruits" and start to connect more with international universities of technology and their academic discourse. New topics will help to build up academic reputation.

The strong link between teaching and research activities is another key for further enhancing of research results.

Continue efforts to connect research, teaching, and practice, including enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration and supporting talent development.

Prepare students for the evolving automotive industry focused on sustainability.

Establish double degree programs and international partnerships to broaden the scope and impact of research.

International collaboration with universities in countries with regions specialised in the automotive sector (such as Guangdong in China or Emilia-Romagna in Italy) might provide a clue both for ŠA and ŠAU in attracting foreign students and providing its students and researchers with experiences abroad.

Invest in specialized research facilities, such as the ŠA AI Centre. Such facilities can attract high-quality research projects and collaborations.

Encourage open science practices and data sharing within the automotive research community.

Consider further refining internal R&D&I support mechanisms, including incentives for excellence and gender equity.

Create a specialized position to support technology transfer, intellectual property protection, and the development of spin-off companies.

Increasing both the teaching and the full-time research staff is one of the keys for reaching more ambitious results, in publications and patents and in the popularization of R&D&I and communication with the public, which require a lot of organization and networking.

Develop a more strategic and visible approach to public engagement and popularisation of research results.

Increasing size and scope of the international collaboration might also provide opportunities for a more balanced gender staff in teaching STEM disciplines and creating a more virtuous circle in attracting more female students.

EVALUATION REPORT FOR MODULES 4 & 5

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION NAME: Škoda Auto Vysoká škola o.p.s.

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER (CRN): 29142890

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:¹

ŠAU is a small university (less than 90 staff FTE, one third administrative staff) with a special focus on both training and research. Its private status differentiates the university from public universities in several respects, including its organisational/operational structure. While the co-habitation of a CEO and a Rector can always be a challenge for the entire organisation in general and both the CEO and the rector themselves in particular, we have been convinced during our onsite visit that the two partners can work in close cooperation with each other in a very constructive way. In fact, ŠAU's practice and experience can be set as an exemplary case (i.e., best practice) for other private entities on how such a unique situation can be settled in a very positive way. This can be said even in an international comparison, not only in the domestic setup. Private universities are becoming more and more prominent in Central and Eastern Europe. It seems that ŠAU has done a really good job in this increasing competition. The University model emphasizes the integration of education, science, and business to form an innovation ecosystem.

It has an agile and cohesive structure, with no faculties, headed by a Director. It is divided into nine departments, according to their professional focus, with Head and staff specifically assigned. The Head of each department manages staff evaluation, drawing up staff's personal development plans and evaluating the implementation of these plans with them annually. Departmental structure seems to be an adequate format for the mission of ŠAU.

Accounting and controlling, human resources, legal and marketing offices, and the Research and Creative Activities department constitute the technical and economic foundation of the institution.

The Rector, the highest representative of the academic community, manages R&D&I in cooperation with the Vice-Rector for Science and Research. Two other Vice-Rectors are in charge for Student Affairs and Quality Management and for International Relations. Vice Rectors are available in adequate number; they seem to be the right choice for the positions.

Strategic direction is reflected in internal regulations binding on all ŠAU employees.

An Internal Evaluation Board deals with management and quality assurance in science and research, and is responsible for approving the University's Internal Evaluation Report and the annual

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.

endorsement of the fulfilment of quality standards across all domains of the University's activities, including R&D.

The Grant Committee is responsible for the approval of Internal Grant Agency (IGA) projects, Grant Competitions of Excellence (GCE), Student Grant Competitions (SGC), and the supervision of these projects. The project/grant office seems to contribute to the success of ŠAU quite extensively; it is a very ambitious and capable organisational unit with well trained, enthusiast and competent colleagues; ŠAU needed that hub very much.

The Research and Creative Activities Department supports academic staff in their research activities, provides administrative support for project, publication, and R&D&I communication activities. The vice-Rector for S&R is responsible for the Research Centre and for the Library's operation.

Compared to the previous assessment done in 2020, it is most welcomed that ŠAU paid particular attention to the reshaping of the organisational structure of R&D&I, thereby utilising its capacities in a more efficient way. The onsite visit made it evident that substantial financial and human resources have been dedicated to develop further R&D&I capacities and organisational structures.

A new research strategy was adopted in 2024, accompanied by structural reforms under the new rectorate. These changes address previously identified shortcomings and show a strong shift toward systematic R&D&I management, though much of the impact will likely be visible in the next evaluation period.

The highly diversified structure might prove challenging to sustain when correlated with the size of the university.

Effective University-Industry Collaboration (UICs) are crucial for innovation. A performance measurement system for open innovation initiatives can strengthen university-industry interactions. This system should include dimensions such as strategic alignment, effective communication, and benefits management to optimize collaboration outcomes.

Recommendations:

Consolidate recent structural changes to ensure sustainable implementation.

Do not lose sight of a lean structure that allows clear responsibilities and a fit to the vision/mission.

Expand the capacity of the Research Department to further support academic research.

Consider establishing an international advisory board to reinforce ŠAU's international mission.

Consider benchmarking more consistently against comparable international professionally oriented HEIs.

Establish specialized R&D centres that focus on automotive technologies. ŠAU can play a pivotal role in regional innovation systems by acting as knowledge brokers and coordinators.

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

ŠAU managed to set up a well-functioning and effective incentive system with the explicit aim of promoting high quality R&D&I activities (especially in terms of publications and grant acquisitions). ŠAU has structured an internal system to support (with subsidies, project consultancy, management and administration) the participation of its academic staff to national and international calls. Internal procedures and rules have been set up adequately; employees should have a clear understanding of the system. The effectiveness of that support is documented by the number of applications submitted, the variety of academic fields and the interdisciplinarity of the proposals, and the rate of success.

Support for attending conferences is internally provided on a competitive base, as well as the support of excellent science and of interdisciplinary research. The university seems to be engaged in financially supporting mobility of its academic staff. Yet, it is not clear what are the expectations in terms of academic output in return for the generous financial support. While the support system seems to be a generous one and easy to access by faculty members, it is not clear how exactly it is embedded in the overall strategy of the university.

The introduction of the Open Call system is a strong step toward incentivising quality research, offering researchers the opportunity to reduce teaching loads in favour of R&D. However, long-term effects are yet to be assessed, as this measure was only introduced in 2024.

Master students involved in research activities are supported in their participation in conferences.

ŠAU tried to provide answers to the specific points one-by-one with adequate care. However, the whole point of 4.2 seems to be lacking of some coherence. While the particular answers are fine, the document missed the focus on how its mission and vision could be achieved by utilising the evaluated points. The answers make quite a few references to concrete examples without, however, providing a coherent picture.

Also, while the presented specific points and the incentive system seem to be state of the art, the obtained results for the evaluated period do not classify as research excellence and still allow the aiming of the “low hanging fruits”.

The incentive system, while well-designed, could benefit from stronger integration with the university’s overarching mission and vision, and from clearer prioritization of research excellence, particularly in international collaborations.

Recommendations:

Align research incentives more closely with the university’s mission and strategic goals.

Introduce clearer metrics for excellence in science beyond project volume and external funding.

Monitor and evaluate the impact of the Open Call system in terms of research outcomes.

Enhance international collaborations, particularly with universities of technology, integrating mobility with international network-building. Invite editors of journals to foster academic recognition and reputation.

Implement targeted support for early-career researchers and the formation of new research teams. Attract young researchers by providing them specific incentives for working at ŠAU (e.g., monetary incentives or more time for research).

Implement modern analytical tools to refine information from unstructured data, enabling the identification of the latest trends in R&D activities. These tools can help in making precise predictions.

Develop an evidence-based system for innovation support which includes tools, training, technical assistance, and quality assurance/quality improvement.

Establish a responsible peer review system to enhance the reliability of scientific knowledge and reduce the influence of administrative power on scientists' career trajectories.

Avoid one-size-fits-all policies. Instead, adopt ethical and human-oriented approaches that consider the unique characteristics of different disciplines and promote equity and integrity in research.

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

ŠAU has made significant progress in this area. In fact, one of the most evident progresses has been achieved on the set up and consolidation of all those mostly internal (rather than external) evaluation systems which are in the heart of its quality assurance system on research. An Internal Evaluation Board (IEB) was created to define principles of quality assurance and to prepare the internal evaluation report, at least every five years, therefore playing a very significant role in these developments. The introduction of whistle-blower protection and a binding Code of Ethics demonstrates commitment to transparency and academic integrity.

It seems that ŠAU has really utilised a great deal of efforts to lay down a transparent and effective system. Despite these structural achievements, evidence of their practical effectiveness remains limited, and a systemic approach to quality assurance in research has yet to be fully implemented.

Therefore, the basic question is whether the system that has been praised above can work effectively in practice.

Recommendations:

While the annual reports of the IEB can help ŠAU to keep its focus on quality driven research, IEB should perhaps adopt a medium-term overall assessment report in year 3, where a more sophisticated and in-depth analysis is done and IEB provides more concrete recommendations/suggestions if needed.

Include regular external peer reviews of research quality.

Implementing a robust quality control system in the R&D&I environment at ŠAU involves integrating comprehensive QMS, leveraging advanced technologies, and adopting continuous improvement strategies.

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

ŠAU has made quite significant progress in terms of strengthening its research capacities, especially its staff/human resources, financial resources, background/back-office support, and rules and procedures. These developments are a positive response to the previous accreditation process. The onsite visit confirmed strong institutional commitment, although the university's success remains linked to the performance of its founding partner, ŠA.

The university's Third Role extends to engagement with primary and secondary schools and the local community. Sustainability of R&D&I is pursued through financial stability, academic autonomy, adaptability, innovation, and adherence to ethical standards. The issuance of the Sustainability Action Plan in 2023 (which arguably seems to have also been enacted in the preceding years) represents a formal commitment to this agenda, though practical outcomes are yet to be fully realized.

Both the report and the onsite visit showed that most of the activities in relation to sustainability and resilience of RDI have been initiated relatively recently. It is therefore a bit early to draw convincing conclusions from practice.

Recommendations:

Focus on effective implementation of sustainability and resilience measures. Their effectiveness should become visible in the following evaluation cycle.

Develop a diversification strategy for R&D&I funding in order to reduce reliance on ŠA (which limits strategic resilience).

Strengthen internal research capabilities beyond industrial contracts.

Leverage digitalization research to enhance academic ranking and impact.

Conduct empirical research on the environmental practices employed in the automotive sector and their impact on innovation.

Integrate intellectual property education into the forthcoming doctoral program.

Update educational programs to include the latest advancements in EVs, smart automotive technologies, and sustainability practices.

Foster strong partnerships with industry to ensure continuous relevance and practical application of research and education.

Build resilience into the university's strategic objectives, focusing on risk management, crisis communication, and psychological support for the academic community.

PERSONEL POLICY

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

The current gender distribution reflects historical trends in the technical and economic fields. However, explanations attributing gender roles to programmatic focus are discouraged. Women's representation among professorships and associate professorships remains modest.

Age distribution is adequate, but attention should be given to recruiting assistant professors, potentially through the doctoral school. Also, the age structure shows that some of the prolific members of the faculty are close to retirement.

It is very reassuring to see that ŠAU has taken seriously the recommendations of the previous accreditation panel and engaged in the hiring of research focused employees. In numbers, this is still not that significant, but this step evidently shows that ŠAU has been committed to such a quality oriented change.

Internationalisation of staff (as well as information on it) remains limited and should be fostered.

The split into academic and teaching staff might lead to cultural problems and should be seen as a temporary solution only.

Recommendations:

Strengthen gender equality measures, especially in recruitment to senior roles.

Young generations of researchers/educators should be promoted in more direct ways.

Increase opportunities to attract international researchers.

Offer short term contracts to invited (young) international researchers.

The use of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, is recommended for enhancing human resource management practices in ŠAU.

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

ŠAU has made formal and procedural commitments to develop R&D&I staffing since 2023–24. Since 2024 onwards, various forms and procedures help ŠAU to recruit high quality workers in R&D&I positions.

While promotion criteria exist, a structured career development path for researchers is not yet fully developed. Career development pathways remain closely linked to teaching, with limited research-only tracks.

Measures support staff returning from parental leave and convert fixed-term contracts to permanent roles when appropriate.

The evaluation of academic staff is carried out once a year. They are evaluated by the Head of the Department or Research Centre based on the Personal Development Plan (PDP).

It was only in 2024 that ŠAU has started a process to enhance equal treatment of all employees, irrespective of gender and nationality, consistently upheld in the context of career development, and an adaptation of new staff and mentoring. The 2026 Career Code is expected to further support gender balance and early-career researchers.

ŠA is a significant player in the Czech economy, employing a substantial portion of the labour force and contributing notably to exports. This prominence suggests that the company likely supports academic and research initiatives to maintain its competitive edge.

Recommendations:

Develop (with the help of external experts) a university-wide research culture aligned with ŠAU's mission and vision.

Clarify and enhance research career tracks independent of teaching responsibilities.

Recruit foreign faculty on contract to strengthen research performance and international rankings.

Implement mentorship and development programmes for early-career researchers.

Continue supporting a more gender balanced structure.

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

ŠAU has made a fine job in laying down the foundations of a university which is highly accessible for both men and women. Gender equality looks rather convincing on paper. Since most of these measures were put on paper only a year ago (or a few years ago), it is still too early to draw conclusions on these rules' effectiveness.

Yet, the onsite visit was quite reassuring in experiencing that ŠAU has been very committed on this front too. Rules are at place, commitment is firm, people are dedicated to the issues, that is, all necessary ingredients are together to successfully absolve this requirement

The recruitment process is carried out with the help of a selection committee, which is regularly trained on the system of non-discrimination in the selection process. The Gender Equality Plan issued in 2022 is currently being updated for up to 2029.

Gender balance in management positions, in 2020 and 2024, show the effort in a more balanced composition, while no significant change is seen in the Academic Senate. Do consider that these functions should establish role models.

The gender imbalance in senior positions is not sufficiently addressed in the self-evaluation.

Recommendations:

The gender equality measures are expected to provide significant changes in the next decade, but the process of implementation must be carefully monitored to create the conditions for actual changes in the recruitment stage and in maintaining opportunities for the women already employed in the evaluated unit.

Women's representation in the academic council(s) should be strengthened.

Monitor and publish gender-disaggregated data regularly.

Holistic Approach: Combining various measures such as career support, training, organizational responsibility, and preferential treatment to address different aspects of gender inequality.

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

Mobility's aims and the backing support system are well defined in the university's Internationalisation Strategy. In accordance with the university's mission, ŠAU's mobility activity is strongly related to the university's focus on the automotive industry. ŠAU's main objective is to involve the staff in research networks related to the automotive sector (Gerpisa, the Automotive Skills Alliance), with international mobility mainly promoted through: short-term stays under the Erasmus+ programme (involving the Department of Human Resource Management, Department of

Production, Logistics and Quality Management), and other international mobility research projects (COST actions projects); international trips (almost one fourth of the academic staff has been involved in the period under consideration).

Besides Erasmus+ sources, ŠAU is also keen on providing its employees extra financial resources thereby strengthening network style collaboration in the academia.

With strong systemic support mechanisms, ŠAU should choose networks and conferences in a more ambitious way. This is the field of organizational learning, make better use of it.

Recommendations:

Develop a structured mobility programme with incentives. Erasmus short stays are not very sustainable in respect to academic reputation. Try to find better long-term solutions / cooperations. Support a larger number of academic staff in attending international conferences.

Strengthen intersectoral mobility to increase diversity of experience and build new networks, not only in the automotive sector.

The document does not specify the age distribution of mobility, but one might have the impression that ŠAU prefers to support the mobility of senior colleagues. While this is a rational act on behalf of the university, ŠAU should perhaps work out a specific scheme for young researchers as well thereby enhancing their embeddedness into the international scientific community.

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]:

4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:

ŠAU has documented its approach nicely and adequately. The onsite visit also provided the opportunity to make direct contacts with those laboratories which are at the heart of infrastructure intensive training and research.

Among the core facilities of the evaluated unit there is a very effective Educational Technical Centre that offers well-equipped laboratories and research centres to simulate operations of an industrial enterprise (a production and logistics laboratory, practical informatics, physics, electrical engineering and automation laboratories, a data centre, a 3D printing laboratory, a virtual reality, electromobility and Industry 4.0 laboratory, and a mechanical and electrical engineering research laboratory). The system of acquiring and renewing instruments and equipment is based on three primary sources: own investments, donations from sponsors and external and internal R&D projects. ŠAU has received instruments from corporate partners, such as HW and SW, worth tens of millions of Euros.

The Centre allows modern teaching for ŠAU's students, supported by skills and knowledge acquired from specialists from the field, as well as for broader educational activities for the public, clubs, lectures or workshops. One of the projects for the public is, for example, the IT Academy for children, there will also be 3D printing courses and a number of other technically oriented events.

The institutional strategy for the infrastructure's renewal and optimisation should be clearly defined.

Recommendations:

Define a clear strategy for infrastructure renewal and investment.

Strengthen sharing of facilities across departments.

The very advanced and very well organised research infrastructure might provide in a systematic way ad hoc activities for female students in secondary schools (also with competitive games), engaging then in STEM, and providing them a clue for attending STEM courses.

Engage in joint research projects with other universities and commercial research institutes to leverage shared expertise and resources.

Form interdisciplinary research teams that include experts in advanced materials, structures, additive manufacturing, and autonomous vehicle technology.

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

On the one hand, ŠAU has shown an adequate level of research activity and research finance. On the other hand, this has happened mostly by utilising private sources provided mostly, though not exclusively, by ŠA. Funds are received largely (88.4%) by not public sources, i.e. ŠA as ŠAU has yet not been too successful in raising research funds from foreign sources (with the exception of the Norway fund). It is a question of perspective how one evaluates such results. ŠAU's massive reliance does not really force the university to rely on foreign sources or that it should turn to more public funding. ŠAU can safely engage in R&D&I activities without tapping into such sources. Yet, the university has also demonstrated that it, at least, tried to take part in foreign networks as well. However, low diversification and minimal competitive funding pose a risk.

The large share of private resources enhances the possibility to update research infrastructures and binds the evaluated unit in a virtuous circle of research and education, aligned with the needs of the automotive industry, and prepared to compete for ambitious research projects. The large share of contract research limits the time that the academic staff can spend in preparing and being engaged on competitive projects.

The budget shows only an overall perspective and isn't really goal (or output) oriented.

Recommendations:

Align resource allocation with performance and strategic goals.

Make use of stronger organizational unit-oriented or project-oriented approaches to foster development, competition and transparency.

Increase efforts to secure national and international competitive funding, especially EU funds.

Create conditions for acquiring a larger share of private funding to be used for supporting top level scientific research.

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

As a result of the 2020 evaluation, in 2021, ŠAU became beneficiary of LCDRO, which was used: to support research projects of the Internal Grants Agency, to pay for personal expenses of researchers and costs related to participation in scientific conferences; and since 2023 to pay salary and costs of external researchers of the Research Centre.

The strategy adequately addresses the institutional support for LCDRO; its rules are transparent and applicable. The provided table demonstrates that ŠAU has indeed taken on this form and several beneficiaries could rely on sources from this.

Such a support was for sure relevant for strengthening the mission of the evaluated unit, contributing to its publishing activities. However, the concrete deliverables are not mentioned in the text, so it is a bit hard to evaluate its effectiveness.

Recommendations:

Align LCDRO funding rules more closely with long-term research development priorities.

Increase transparency of fund allocation.

Reduce the overemphasis on applied automotive research (also in this field) to enhance academic reputation.

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

ŠAU has made significant developments in this field. In its previous round of evaluation, ŠAU simply did not provide too much evidence for either national or international level collaboration. This time, the document has been very elegantly argued and contains enough information for evaluation. The examples are convincing and show that ŠAU has indeed invested heavily in consolidating its positions internationally and nationally.

At national level, the examples provided by ŠAU's SER reflect the role of key partner in applied research, in policy analysis and in contract research. The collaboration with ŠA is the cornerstone of the institution's R&D, which can be seen as a strength, but also a limitation in terms of diversity. At international level, the two mentioned COST Action projects highlight the networking activities in which it is involved. At both levels, they correlate with the type of HEI and its mission and vision.

That said, ŠAU's performance shows a robust progress compared to its previous results, yet if it is compared to other universities, there is certainly room for further progress.

The strong focus on the automotive sector and applied universities is appropriate but will not help improve ŠAU's academic reputation.

The new internationalization strategy is very convincing and will help to improve reputation and cooperative networking.

Recommendations:

Analyse barriers to successful international grant applications.

Build new collaborations, including with international academic partners.

Investing more resources in preparing research proposals can provide further opportunities for stronger cooperation at national and international level.

Strengthen multilateral research networks.

Focus on identifying, monitoring, and maximizing both tangible and intangible benefits, such as knowledge creation and technological advancements, to ensure the success of collaborations.

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]:	N/A - Not Applicable
Qualitative assessment: The school does not currently offer doctoral programmes. Therefore, this indicator is not applicable. ŠAU aspires to submit a techno-economic Industrial Innovation Management programme for accreditation in the very near future (as early as 2025) - which is in fact a most welcome development. ŠAU's representatives showed enthusiasm and proficiency during the onsite visit in relation to the implementation of doctoral level training at SU.	
Recommendations: Finalize accreditation to unlock new research development opportunities. Define the role of doctoral students in teaching and future academic career paths.	

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]:	4 - Very good
Qualitative assessment: As documented by the SER together with the onsite visit, all the dimensions pointed out in the recommendations from the previous evaluation have been significantly orienting the changes in both organization and results of research activities, with a very significant improvement. By doing so, ŠAU has been able to create a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment, paving the way for future growth and success. It was a most welcome development at ŠAU that the university managed to join some international consortia, increasing the visibility of the university. ŠAU emphasized its efforts to join Horizon projects. In terms of number of applications, ŠAU was in fact quite successful, yet none of the grant applications was supported by the Commission. We can say that ŠAU has taken seriously the recommendations on internationalization. They are basically at the beginning of this development but it is all promising. ŠAU also increased the number of research professionals both with regards to academic faculty members and grant office workers. They also set up a Research Centre where professors should concentrate on research activity exclusively. According to the self-evaluation document and the experiences gained at the onsite visit, one can argue that ŠAU has been making a steady progress in the setting-up of a new doctoral school.	

Some earlier recommendations, especially related to strategic and structural reform, are being addressed under the new leadership. However, tangible effects will be visible in the next period.

Recommendations:

Ensure effective implementation of current reforms and document outcomes for future improvements.

Maintain momentum in internationalization and research excellence initiatives.

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	3 - Average
4.2 System of support for a quality R&D&I environment and incentive measures for quality science	3 - Average
4.3 Quality control system for R&D&I environment	3 - Average
4.4 Sustainability and resilience of R&D&I	3 - Average
4.5 Structure of human resources	3 - Average
4.6 Academic and Research Careers	3 - Average
4.7 Gender equality measures	3 - Average
4.8 Mobility of academic and research staff (including sectoral and inter-sectoral mobility)	3 - Average
4.9 Research infrastructure	4 - Very good
4.10 Budget and structure of financial resources	3 - Average
4.11 Rules for the use of institutional support for the LCDRO	3 - Average
4.12 Important collaborations in R&D&I	3 - Average
4.13 Doctoral studies	N/A - Not Applicable
4.14 Implementation of recommendations in Module 4	4 - Very good
AVERAGE RATING	3 - Average
GRADE [A–D]	C

Summary assessment:

ŠAU has evolved into a well-structured, applied university with strong industry alignment. While international recognition and research excellence remain in development, recent organizational reforms, infrastructure investments, and strategic planning position ŠAU for significant growth. The university demonstrates robust capacity to enhance its reputation, diversify research outputs, and strengthen international collaborations.

ŠAU has a well-structured organization and management of R&D&I, with a development plan coherent with its mission and vision, optimal level research infrastructure and a growing network of research cooperation both at national and international level.

The previous evaluation brought an opportunity for ŠAU to access LRCDO and to implement the recommendations received from the IEP. The fact that its budget is largely privately funded implies a strong alignment in teaching and research to the needs of the automotive sector, and this is a

leverage to create a unique institution at national level and a relevant partner at international level, but it also poses a risk.

ŠAU has undeniably made robust and solid efforts to radically increase its presence on the international scene of academic research. Although in terms of successful grant applications, they still need to wait for success of international grant applications, the necessary back office help and support, along with the procedural infrastructure, are set up.

ŠAU also paid attention to the human resources and contracted high profile researchers for the job.

While structures have recently been revised and promising measures introduced, their impact is expected to become more visible during the next evaluation cycle.

Summary recommendations:

Focus on implementing recent reforms and documenting their effects. All the planned initiatives must be carefully monitored to correct undesired outcomes or enhance the potential emerging in the process of change.

Address structural gaps in gender equality, mobility, and internationalization.

Expand collaborations with European universities of technology.

Broaden research topics beyond the automotive sector (e.g., e-mobility, sustainable cities, autonomous driving).

Participate in consortia with higher success potential for international funding. Practically, it means that either the lead institute or the topic should be more carefully chosen.

Invite foreign editors (short-term) and young researchers (mid-term) to learn from each other and build sustainable relationships outside your comfort zone.

Foster a university-wide research culture through inclusive engagement of all staff.

Focus on long-term, strategic development rather than short-term, low-hanging achievements.

The university may benefit from establishing specialized R&D centres that focus on automotive technologies. Implement modern analytical tools to refine information from unstructured data, enabling the identification of the latest trends in R&D activities. These tools can help in making precise predictions.

The onsite visit convinced the panel that ŠAU has the expertise and competences to improve its rating within the next 5 years if the level of surprise stays still this high as the new rectorate shows at the moment.

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

Evaluating ŠAU's mission and vision with regard to R&D&I, one must acknowledge that ŠAU is a relatively small-sized private university with the constant support of its founder, ŠA. Only such a context makes it possible to evaluate its mission and vision correctly and adequately. To put it differently, ŠAU's performance cannot be judged as compared entirely to large, public universities which normally encompass various disciplines from life sciences to engineering and social sciences and humanities. Although its present size is relatively small, the mission and vision of the evaluated unit - clearly defined only recently, in 2023 - refer to an ambition positioning of the evaluated unit both in teaching and research especially linked to the needs of the automotive industry, making this HEI a unique case for the Czech Republic and a relevant partner at international level.

It is clear from its mission that ŠAU's foremost goal is to train students who can contribute to the success of both the university and the company. ŠAU's educational programmes are closely related to the needs of ŠA. Compared to the previous cycle, ŠAU has shown a clear and decisive step towards technical disciplines and informatics besides social sciences. It is a highly understandable decision taken into account that ŠAU is primarily and mainly an applied university. The provisional or target R&D&I capacities of ŠAU shows nicely how ŠAU perceived its transformation in the future by giving more emphasis to engineering and natural sciences while keeping the relevance of social sciences more or less intact.

For the next five years, the expected changes in the FORD shares will make the interdisciplinary base of the unit more balanced, assigning a stronger share to engineering and technology research fields. This might support a stronger positioning of the evaluated unit in the applied research related to the automotive industry. The self-evaluation emphasizes strong links to the automotive industry and prioritizes applied and contractual research as key areas of development. The document notes that although basic research is not a central aim, the institution seeks to strengthen its research dimension in the future.

The strategic plan 2021-2025 targeted the priority objectives of the Strategic plan of the Ministry of Higher education, of the National Policy on Research, Development and Innovation of the Czech Republic 2021+ and on the Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2030. Moreover, it focused on the PhD program as an essential component to upgrade the attractiveness of the unit both for academic staff and for research partners. While the PhD program enhances institutional attractiveness, it should emerge as a product of reputation-building rather than as an initial driver.

Compared to the previous evaluation period, the formulation of strategic intentions and vision has improved in clarity and ambition, although full alignment with the vision of a well-rounded research institution remains in progress. Building a research environment should be done by setting specific priorities, with focused strategy and clearly defined priorities.

It has been very reassuring to read and to experience at first hand during the onsite visit that ŠAU has made substantial steps towards internationalization.

Recommendations:

ŠAU is very much at the beginning of the implementation of its new strategy. Its ultimate goal should be to become an internationally (or at least regionally) recognized university at its own field. It should rigorously implement its new strategic directions and adjust plans as needed (corrections/alignments made if necessary).

Establish monitoring procedures to align the strategic plan with its practical implementation.

Prioritize internationalization by building networks with universities of technology, participating in joint projects, and adhering to the common academic discourse in the field.

Clarify the balance between educational and research missions and explicitly demonstrate how current activities contribute to long-term research objectives.

Consider strengthening the emphasis on basic research or high-level academic outputs to ensure long-term academic credibility and relevance.

Incorporate sustainability as a core value, reflecting the global trend towards sustainable development in higher education. This aligns with the broader goals of the automotive industry to innovate towards more sustainable practices.

Project a vision of contributing to global sustainability goals, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This can position the university as a forward-thinking institution committed to making a positive global impact

Highlight a strong commitment to research and innovation, particularly in automotive technology and related fields. This can position the university as a leader in advancing automotive technologies and contribute to the industry's evolution

Emphasize a vision of strong community and industry engagement, fostering partnerships that benefit both students and the broader community. This can include collaborative projects, internships, and community outreach programs.

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]:

3 - Average

Qualitative assessment:

ŠAU is currently undergoing a reconfiguration of its activities and organizational structure, aligning more closely with the automotive industry's specific needs. This redefinition positions ŠAU explicitly as an applied university, combining a strong focus on applied research with robust knowledge transfer mechanisms.

Participation in the HORIZON project represents a significant step toward building a broader theoretical and applied framework. ŠAU should aim to enhance academic reputation through the

development of basic principles in the automotive sector, leveraging existing expertise and workforce capacity.

Organizational reforms have facilitated a more systematic pursuit of research objectives, with key focus areas including sustainable mobility, digitalization, and artificial intelligence. In parallel, ŠAU has expanded cooperation with industrial partners, the public and non-profit sector, and international research networks.

ŠAU has set development goals that are well tailored to its size and applied research orientation. The introduction of internal instruments (such as the Open Calls) is a positive step toward creating a more dynamic and participatory research environment. While these objectives seem realistic, their impact remains to be demonstrated in the long term, especially as many measures were implemented only recently (2024–2025).

The strategy acknowledges the institution's limitations in international academic competitiveness but aims to deepen R&D&I quality via better management and internal processes.

Recommendations:

Establish a detailed timeline breaking down strategic reform initiatives into smaller scale projects to facilitate monitoring and evaluation.

Ensure that implementation of strategic objectives is regularly monitored and that success indicators are clearly defined.

Define and implement procedures to align research and development objectives with actual outcomes over the next five years.

Build on the Open Call model to diversify research themes and support bottom-up initiatives that may lead to more diverse outputs, including those of a more academic nature.

Consider benchmarking against institutions such as the Center Automotive Research (CAR) Duisburg to identify best practices for transitioning from applied research to broader scientific recognition.

Modernize curricula to include advanced diagnostics, battery management systems, and smart automotive technologies.

Embrace global product development strategies to maximize productivity and innovation by spreading activities across multiple regions.

Implement modular education models that focus on key competences in automotive/mobility engineering.

Utilize open-source and proprietary digital platforms to facilitate learning and adaptation to technological changes.

Promote research and development in sustainable automotive technologies, including hybrid and electric vehicles.

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]:

4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:

This section of the SER summarizes information already detailed in Module 3 and 4. Yet, this summary provides a correct overall picture about the instruments the university is using currently. The array of institutional and strategic instruments for the fulfilment of the research and development objectives appears complete and coherent. However, procedures to monitor the alignment of research and development objectives to their actual implementation in the next five years are missing.

ŠAU has implemented a set of relevant instruments to support its research development strategy, particularly since 2024. These are important innovations that were mostly not present in the previous period and whose actual implementation and results remain at an early stage. Their real effects are expected to materialise in the next evaluation period.

Building a common research culture is essential, as reliance on outsourced specialists may negatively impact long-term research culture and increase vulnerability to brain drain.

Recommendations:

Implement monitoring procedures to align institutional and strategic instruments with operational outcomes over the next five years.

Establish robust evaluation and feedback loops for the new measures and consider introducing external advisory input to benchmark progress.

Continue strengthening the institutional instruments, especially those that support quality-oriented research culture and long-term planning.

Starting from the current situation, develop incentives to foster a research-oriented culture.

Incorporate critical reflections on unachieved objectives and areas of failure.

Utilize direct funding and other supportive policy instruments to boost research commercialization.

Develop instruments to assess the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) state within the university.

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]:

4 - Very good

Qualitative assessment:

ŠAU has made great efforts to meet the recommendations prescribed in the report of the previous evaluation panel. Structural improvements in management and the strategic orientation of research

are evident. At the same time, many actions were taken outside the evaluated period, and their impact can only be assessed retrospectively in the next cycle.

Both the SER and onsite visit indicate that ŠAU has the competences and willingness to work hard on their future development and we are hoping the IEP's advice and recommendations help once more. We would be happy to see the future results of the beautiful development that has been taking place at ŠAU.

Recommendations:

Consolidate the new strategic approach introduced by the current leadership and continue aligning research activities with the institution's updated mission and vision.

Include measurable milestones to assess future progress.

Maintain commitment to the strategic reform process, recognizing that meaningful institutional change is gradual and takes time.

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	3 - Average
5.2 Research and development objectives	3 - Average
5.3 Institutional instruments and measures for the implementation of the research and development strategy	4 - Very good
5.4 Implementation of recommendations in Module 5	4 - Very good
AVERAGE RATING	4 - Very good
GRADE [A–D]	B

Summary assessment:

All the dimensions under analysis in Modul 5 have been carefully presented by the evaluated unit, ŠAU proving willingness and competences to adapt to the necessary changes in order to achieve a coherent development, as foreseen in the strategic plan and aligned with the priority objectives for R&D&I at national level.

ŠAU developed a clear and well-defined mission and vision, suitable for a relatively small unit aiming for an ambition positioning both in teaching and research especially linked to the needs of the automotive industry. The evaluated institution has made visible progress in its strategic thinking and institutional instruments for R&D&I, redesigning itself to foster the transition towards a more balanced research and teaching profile.

The process might have started somewhere around 2023-2024. Some results can be seen already by now, but most of the fruits can be harvested only later on. The transitory period seemed not to

overburden the university and staff feedback indicates general satisfaction with the ongoing changes.

Summary recommendations:

Maintain momentum in strengthening research strategy and internal systems. Emphasise transparency, clear goals, and quality standards in implementation. Focus also on long-term capacity building and engagement with the wider academic community.

Define and implement monitoring procedures to align institutional and strategic instruments with operational outcomes over the next five years.

Establish a 3–5 years timeline for planned initiatives, to be evaluated periodically by the Internal Evaluation Body.

Continue building international networks, particularly with universities of technology, and diversify research focus beyond the automotive sector.

Encourage high-level academic outputs and broaden the research culture, ensuring active engagement of all units and staff.

Project a vision of contributing to global sustainability goals, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ensure that the research and development objectives are aligned with current industry trends and technological advancements, thereby preparing students for successful careers in the automotive sector.

We are confident that ŠAU has the willingness and capacity to follow recommendations and improve steadily. We look forward to seeing and trust its upgrade within the next 5 years.

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 %	D
MODULE 3	30 %	B
MODULE 4	10 %	C
MODULE 5	10 %	B

OVERALL RATING

C – Average

Qualitative assessment:

Škoda Auto University (ŠAU) is the exemplary case for the mutually beneficial relationship between university/academia and the industry. Evidently, the main strength of ŠAU has been its reliance on and its intimate relationship with Škoda Auto company (ŠA). It is the obvious interest of ŠAU to maximise the results it can gain from such potential. Nevertheless, the relationship can be a threat as well due to the uncertain situation of the automotive industry globally and locally. ŠAU's research orientation is more applied than base research; yet it should not mean that ŠAU refrains from the territory of the latter. While excellent basic research is not yet developed, there has been some diversification in recent years.

ŠAU has evolved into a well-structured, applied university with strong industry alignment. While international recognition and research excellence remain in development, recent organizational reforms, infrastructure investments, and strategic planning position ŠAU for significant growth. The university demonstrates robust capacity to enhance its reputation, diversify research outputs, and strengthen international collaborations.

ŠAU developed a clear and well-defined mission and vision, suitable for a relatively small unit aiming for an ambition positioning both in teaching and research especially linked to the needs of the automotive industry. The evaluated institution has made visible progress in its strategic thinking and institutional instruments for R&D&I, redesigning itself to foster the transition towards a more balanced research and teaching profile.

Recommendations:

ŠAU should pay more attention on how the individual achievements can be translated into the success of ŠAU itself. While significant progress has been achieved on the level of individual contributions, especially with the arrival of new faculty members, this progress should be reflected upon the general development of ŠAU as an institution as well. Instead of acknowledging and respecting certain professors' contributions, the academic community should recognise ŠAU's capacities and efforts in research activities.

Continue to diversify research activities, with increased support for basic research. Intensify publication activities in prestigious international journals and motivate staff to achieve high-profile awards.

Strengthen internationalisation and efforts to engage with the broader research community, including outside the industrial sphere.

Prepare students for the evolving automotive industry focused on sustainability.

Establish double degree programs and international partnerships to broaden the scope and impact of research.

International collaboration with universities in countries with regions specialised in the automotive sector (such as Guangdong in China or Emilia-Romagna in Italy) might provide a clue both for SA and ŠAU in attracting foreign students and providing its students and researchers with experiences abroad.

Encourage open science practices and data sharing within the automotive research community.

Consider further refining internal R&D&I support mechanisms, including incentives for excellence and gender equity.

Develop a more strategic and visible approach to public engagement and popularisation of research results.

Focus on implementing recent reforms and documenting their effects. All the planned initiatives must be carefully monitored to correct undesired outcomes or enhance the potential emerging in the process of change.

Address structural gaps in gender equality, mobility, and internationalization.

Maintain momentum in strengthening research strategy and internal systems. Emphasise transparency, clear goals, and quality standards in implementation. Focus also on long-term capacity building and engagement with the wider academic community.

Define and implement monitoring procedures to align institutional and strategic instruments with operational outcomes over the next five years.

Establish a 3–5 years timeline for planned initiatives, to be evaluated periodically by the Internal Evaluation Body.

Project a vision of contributing to global sustainability goals, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We are confident that ŠAU has the willingness and capacity to follow recommendations and improve steadily. We look forward to seeing and trust its upgrade within the next 5 years.