



**Landbúnaðarháskóli Íslands**  
Agricultural University of Iceland

**FACULTY OF PLANNING AND DESIGN**

**SELF-REVIEW REPORT**

Version 14.06.2021





## Summary

During the spring semester 2021, the Faculty of Planning and Design at the Agricultural University of Iceland (AUI) conducted a self-evaluation assessment following the recommendations of the Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF2). A Self-Evaluation Committee was established to take on this task. The Committee included the Head of Faculty, one Study Programme Coordinator, three student representatives and three foreign experts who worked across the three faculties at AUI. Three review meetings were held, one with the undergraduate students, another with the graduate students and finally, a review meeting with the staff. These meetings were essential to get an overview of where our strength lies and what we need to improve. The report covers research and teaching within the Faculty, focusing on Study Programmes at the university level.

This report is the first evaluation of the Faculty of Planning and Design since it was established in January 2020, and it has been a good exercise of self-reflection and is expected to serve as a reference point for the development of the Faculty in the future. The Faculty needs to define a coherent strategy and set clear priorities for teaching and research for the future. Overall, teaching and learning within the Faculty provide good opportunities for students, who are satisfied with the education they receive.

The Faculty is active in research and excels in the fields of planning and sustainable land use, landscape architecture, environmental planning, botany, greening and design. The Faculty needs, however, to develop its research strategy and priorities for research, as well as a recruitment plan to strengthen priority areas. Setting some specific targets and goals that are measurable will help in tracking progress and measuring the impact of the Faculty.

This self-review has been invaluable as a point of self-reflection on where the Faculty is today and where we want it to be in the future. The goals and action points set out in this report will be followed up and presented annually at the Faculty meetings and revised as needed, so that it serves as a living document that helps to strengthen our work.

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# 1 Faculty of Planning and Design – Faculty Level

## 1.1 Introduction

In accordance with the Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework at the University level in Iceland and the Agricultural University's Guidelines for the organisation, schedule and process of institution-led review of faculties and interdisciplinary programmes, the Faculty of Planning and Design (P&D) at the Agricultural University of Iceland (AUI) carried out self-evaluation during the spring semester of 2021. The results are presented in this report. A Self-Evaluation Committee was established in January 2021.

The Committee members were:

- Sigríður Kristjánsdóttir, [sigridur@lbhi.is](mailto:sigridur@lbhi.is), Associate Professor, Head of Faculty & Study Programme Coordinator of the MSc Programme in Planning
- Kristín Pétursdóttir, [kristin@lbhi.is](mailto:kristin@lbhi.is), Assistant Professor, Study Programme Coordinator of the BSc in Landscape Architecture
- Maria Wilke, [mariaw@lbhi.is](mailto:mariaw@lbhi.is), PhD student
- Margrét Helga Guðmundsdóttir, [nem.mhg1@lbhi.is](mailto:nem.mhg1@lbhi.is), BSc student representative
- Hlynur Hugi Jónsson, [hlynur.hugi@gmail.com](mailto:hlynur.hugi@gmail.com), MSc student representative
- Gunnar Ágústsson, [gunnar@yrki.is](mailto:gunnar@yrki.is), former student representative
- Ågot Aakra, [agot.aakra@nmbu.no](mailto:agot.aakra@nmbu.no), Head of the Faculty of Chemistry, Biotechnology and Food Science, Norwegian University of Life Sciences
- Dr. Ülle Jaakma, [ylle.jaakma@emu.ee](mailto:yлле.jaakma@emu.ee), Vice-Rector of Research at the Estonian University of Life Sciences
- Dr. Susan Bryan, [Su.Bryan@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:Su.Bryan@uhi.ac.uk), Head of the Faculty of Sciences, Health and Engineering (Interim) at the University of the Highlands and Islands

The Committee included the Head of Faculty, one Study Programme Coordinator, one PhD student, three student representatives and three foreign experts who worked across the three faculties at AUI. The Committee received data on number of students, courses, teaching and Faculty members, as well as results from student and Faculty satisfaction surveys from the Office of Teaching and Learning at AUI. This information is presented and discussed in this self-evaluation report.

## 1.2 Faculty Characteristics

The Faculty of Planning and Design conducts research and teaching in the fields of planning sciences and landscape architecture. The Faculty focuses on planning, design, construction and management of our environments. The strategy of P&D aligns broadly with the strategy of the AUI, in that the emphasis is on enhancing research, teaching, innovation and international collaboration. Further, the emphasis of activities within P&D on environmental issues and planning different land use contributes to distinguishing AUI from other universities in Iceland.

The role of the Faculty is to strengthen research, teaching and innovation in the fields of landscape architecture and planning, with a focus on the sustainable development goals. As the world continues to urbanise at an unprecedented rate, the demand for our work in P&D is more urgent than ever. Our planners, designers and landscape architecture innovators are working to empower communities, protect natural and cultural environments and confront the most pressing challenges of our time.

### 1.2.1 Management Structure and Organisation of Teaching

The Faculty of Planning and Design is one of the three Faculties at AUI. As mentioned earlier, the Faculty was created in 2020 following a change in the structure of AUI. The Faculty, like the university, operates across three campuses (Hvanneyri, Keldnaholt and Reykir).

The administration of the Faculty is governed by the Faculty meetings, which are organised at least twice per year, in accordance with Article 13 of Regulation 366/2020. In addition, the Faculty has in place a decision-making mechanism approved at the last Faculty meeting (December 2020) that allows decisions to be made *per capsulam*, without the Faculty members to be physically present. The daily administration of the Faculty is in the hands of the Head of Faculty, as described in Article 11 of Regulation 366/2020.

The programmes within the Faculty prepare students to ensure that the development of land use is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable and supports human and natural diversity through lectures, field trips, workshops, and studios. P&D offers programmes at the undergraduate and graduate level: an undergraduate programme (BSc in Landscape Architecture), an MSc programme in Planning (**Table 1**) and a PhD programme in Planning. In addition, P&D has strong links to the Continuing Education programme at AUI. In addition, the Faculty offers a vocational programme in Gardening and Flower Decoration, but these programmes are not included in the present report, which focuses on teaching at the university level.

**Table 1. Overview of present Study Programmes within the Faculty**

Name of Study Programme	Cycle <sup>1</sup>	Degree	Credits (ECTS)
BSc in Landscape Architecture	1.2	BSc	180
MSc in Planning	2.2	MSc	120
PhD in Planning	3	PhD	180

<sup>1</sup> See National Qualification Framework for Higher Education No. 530/2011.

### 1.2.2 Human Resources

The Faculty currently has 8 Faculty members (**Table 2**). Among these, 5 are academic teaching positions (1 Associate Professor and 4 Assistant Professors). Seven Faculty members are female but only one male, and 4 out of 5 academic positions are held by

women. The Faculty also includes one PhD student, one specialist and one Faculty member in another position. All Faculty members, except Assistant research specialist, hold 100% positions.

Faculty members are spread across the three campuses of AUI, but the distribution is uneven: 3 Faculty members are in Hvanneyri, 1 in Reykir, 3 in Keldnaholt and the PhD student is situated in Ísafjörður.

**Table 2. Faculty members and Sessional Teachers, number (No.) and full-time–equivalent (FTE) as of 31 December 2020**

	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	FTE	No.	FTE	No.	FTE
Professors	0	0	0	0	0	0
Associate Professors	0	0	1	1.00	1	1.00
Assistant Professors	1	1.00	3	3.00	4	4.00
Adjunct Lecturers	0	0	0	0	0	0
Specialists	0	0	1	0,50	1	0.50
PhD students	--	--	1	1.00	1	1.00
Other positions	0	0.00	1	1.00	1	1.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6.50</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7.50</b>
Sessional Teachers	11	0	4	0	15	0

**Table 3. Age of Faculty members, as of 31 December 2020**

Total	<30	30–39	40–49	50–59	>59	Total
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No. %
Professors	0	0	0	0	0	0
Associate Professors	0	0	0	1	0	1
Assistant Professors	0	1	1	2	0	4
Adjunct Lecturers	0	0	0	0	0	0
Specialists	0	0	1	0	0	1
PhD students	0	1	0	0	0	1
Other positions	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>
%		<b>25%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4. Period of employment of Faculty members (years), as of 31 December 2020**

Total	<5	5–15	16–24	25–39	>40	Total
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
Professors	0	0	0	0	0	0
Associate Professors	0	1	0	0	0	1
Assistant Professors	2	2	0	0	0	4
Adjunct Lecturers	0	0	0	0	0	0
Specialists	0	1	0	0	0	1
PhD students	1	0	0	0	0	1
Other positions	0	1	0	0	0	1

<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 5. Research output of Faculty members, based on the Evaluation System for the Public Universities in Iceland, expressed by mean research points (A) and research points from peer-reviewed publications (B)**

	2016		2017		2018		2019		Mean	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Faculty	70.01	23.13	113.75	76.75	49	0	37	10	67.44	27.47
University	625.62	410.2	695.12	435.88	517.61	274.08	579.31	387.92	604.42	377.02

**Table 6. Teaching obligations (%) of Faculty members and Sessional Teachers divided between Study Programmes**

Study Programmes	Faculty members		Sessional Teachers		Total
	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours
All	4806	52	4539	48	9330

### 1.2.3 Finance

**Table 7. Key financial numbers for 2020**

Budget 2020	Millions ISK			1000 € (1€ = 153.5 ISK)	
	AUI	Faculty	%Faculty	AUI	Faculty
Revenues					
National	109	2	2%	710	13
International	38	2.5	6.5%	248	16
Other income	555	0.5	0.01%	3616	3
<b>Total revenues</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>5</b>		<b>4574</b>	<b>32</b>
Expenses					
Salaries	957	73.5	7%	6235	479
Operating costs	930	27.5	3%	6059	179
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>1185</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>7720</b>	<b>626</b>

### 1.2.4 Students and Study Programmes

As of December 2020, the number of students in the BSc programmes within the Faculty is 33. The number of students in the MSc programmes is 25 and in the PhD programme is 1. Since the Faculty was founded in 2020, 3 students have defended their MSc thesis.

**Table 8. Total number of students, number of entrants, retention rate for first year and completion rate (4-year mean)**

Programme	No. of students			No. of entrants <sup>3</sup>	Retention rate	No. of graduates	Completion rate <sup>4</sup>
	Total no.	Full time <sup>1</sup>	Part time <sup>2</sup>				
BSc in Landscape Architecture	33	28	6	20	76%	7	44%
MSc in Planning	25	11	13	13	97%	3	11%
PhD in Planning	1	1		1	0%	-	-

<sup>1</sup> > 22.5 ECTS completed. For PhD students > 1 ECTS completed.

<sup>2</sup> 1–22 ECTS completed.

<sup>3</sup> For all programmes except MSc & PhD, no. of students completing at least one examination in first term.

<sup>4</sup> 2-year rate for diploma, 4-year rate for BSc, 3-year rate for MSc, 5-year rate for PhD.

Annual surveys of student satisfaction are conducted at the university for second-year undergraduate students, graduate students and former students. Responses to the surveys are usually aggregated to the university level because there are not enough respondents within each Study Programme to provide meaningful results.

### 1.2.5 Actions

**Table 9. Faculty characteristics actions**

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible party
<b>Ch. 1.2</b>	<b>Faculty Characteristics</b>			
1	Create Team Vision Statement for the department.	Mission, Vision and Strategy. Using the SMART method. Involving students and stakeholders.	June 2021.	Head of Faculty, all staff members and students.
2	Turn Subject-Level Review into a living and an active document.	Using the SMART method.	Review the action plan annually at the beginning of the school year.	Head of Faculty and all staff members.

3	Due to growing number of students, it is necessary to recruit more academic teaching positions.	The ratio of students and academic positions need to go hand in hand [we suggest that the optimal ratio recruitment plan for P&D is 1 academic staff member per 12 students].	2026.	Head of Faculty, selection committee.
4	Strengthen the team and improve job satisfaction.	Reform workshop.	January 2023.	All staff members.

## 1.3 Academic Vision

### 1.3.1 Strategy for Teaching and Research

The programmes within the Faculty prepare students to ensure that the development of land use is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable and supports human and natural diversity through lectures, field trips, workshops and studios. P&D offers programmes at the undergraduate and graduate level: an undergraduate programme (BSc in Landscape Architecture), an MSc programme in Planning and a PhD programme in Planning. In addition, P&D has strong links to the life-long learning programme at AUI.

The Faculty is currently working on creating a strategy for teaching and research in accordance with the new policy of AUI. The aim is to have it ready before 2022.

### 1.3.2 Research Impact of the Faculty

The Faculty is doing research on urban forms, urban morphology, urban planning theories and practices, public planning projects and policies. Research on public spaces is undertaken from a multidisciplinary perspective combining social sciences, architecture and planning, aimed at considering the environmental and social aspects of the built environment. The Faculty is doing research in coastal planning to understand the processes of marine spatial planning and public participation in the Icelandic context to contribute to a sustainable use of marine resources. P&D is also at the forefront in the fields focused on the formation and development of the urban and rural landscape, how sustainability influences many aspects in Icelandic planning and how delicate it often is to find the right balance between economic efficiency and environmental and social aspects. The fundamental areas of research at P&D are research relating to environmental planning with a focus on botany, including the Icelandic flora; urban forestry and greening; ecology (ecological restoration) landscape analysis; sustainable land use; and visual elements in Icelandic landscape. Further research in landscape architecture focuses on green redevelopment and competitiveness in Nordic urban regions, landscape urbanism, biophilic cities, soil erosion and holistic approaches.

### 1.3.3 Collaboration and International Context

Planning and Landscape Architecture are young disciplines in Iceland, and therefore, it is important to establish an academic field where research and publications can flourish, both

within Iceland as well as abroad. Research at P&D aims at understanding urban and rural, as well as coastal, planning processes and landscape architecture in the Icelandic context as well as in larger Nordic and Arctic environments. The Faculty research is the response to the current proliferation of planning research in Iceland, as well as the domestic base for research publication.

Therefore, courses at BSc and MSc levels are mostly taught in Icelandic and concern the Icelandic context within which students will work as practitioners and/or researchers. However, students are well informed about the international context within each course. Visiting lecturers are also invited and the students are encouraged to pursue their schooling abroad, by means of the Erasmus programme. Information sessions for the students are organised by the Office of International Relations and Research at AUI. At the PhD level, the programme is in English.

Regarding teaching and research, the Faculty pursues an open recruitment policy, hiring domestic and foreign specialists. The objective is to internationalise teaching and research in Iceland.

At the domestic level, the Faculty has special relationships with the University of Iceland and the University Centre of the Westfjords. At the international level, the Faculty has special relationships with several universities worldwide.

### 1.3.4 Actions

**Table 10. Academic vision actions**

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible party
<b>Ch. 1.3</b>	<b>Academic Vision</b>			
1	Develop a strategy and vision for teaching and research for the department in accordance with the new policy of AUI.	Research vision for the Faculty to be discussed at next Faculty meetings.	December 2022.	Head of Faculty and all Faculty members.
2	Enhanced department infrastructure and technology.	Laser cutter.	April 2022.	Faculty members.
3	Integrate research into teaching.	Improved teaching material.	June 2024.	Faculty members.
4	Maintain high and harmonised teaching standards.	Internal and external scrutiny of assessment exercises.	Ongoing.	Head of Faculty and all staff members.

5	Active teaching exchange – Erasmus	Encourage each teacher to go abroad once every three years in general.	June 2026.	Head of Faculty.
6	Developing more applications for research fund and increase research quality.	Apply for Internationalisation grants such as Horizon Europe and other EU grants.	Ongoing.	Head of Faculty and all Faculty members.
7	Maintain good research environment.	Establish a research metrics system to monitoring the research productivity among the staff.	June 2022.	Head of Faculty and all Faculty members.

## 1.4 Student Support

### 1.4.1 Student Orientation

Orientation for new students in the undergraduate programmes at the Faculty is organised centrally at AUI by the Office of Teaching and Learning. The different Study Programmes at the Faculty also host the Orientation Days at the beginning of each academic year in August, where students get to meet each other and the programme coordinators and are introduced to the university and the services provided. At the Orientation Days, there is also an introductory walk through the campus in Hvanneyri with visits to different university buildings. One point that has been mentioned by some students at the review meeting is that it is necessary to discuss the final master's thesis at an earlier state in the learning programme.

Orientation and support for students in the graduate programmes concerning the culmination of the graduate studies – master's thesis and the PhD dissertation – is organised centrally at AUI by the Graduate School. The Graduate School organises Graduate Student Seminars twice a year. Attendance is mandatory for all graduate students from the start of studies. Each graduate student has, during his/her studies at AUI, to give two talks at those seminars, one in the beginning when the thesis-project work has been decided and the other later when the main results have been found. PhD students must give 3 talks at those seminars. The 2<sup>nd</sup> PhD seminar is also a mid-term evaluation, where PhD committees and AUI's Graduate School decide if a PhD student can finish his/her studies.

### 1.4.2 Rights and Obligations

Students at AUI are treated according to the equal rights policy, aimed at reducing potential inequalities and ensuring equal rights. The equal rights policy at AUI is based on Act No. 10/2008 *on the Equal Rights of Women and Men* and Act No. 59/1992 *on the Affairs of*

*Disabled People.* The Agricultural University of Iceland places emphasis on persons being treated with respect and is decidedly against any kind of bullying. The school administration has the responsibility to enforce the individual provisions of the equal rights policy. Representatives of students are appointed to the Equal Rights Committee.

Rights and obligations of the students are introduced during the Orientation Days and during the Graduate Students Seminars specifically for MSc and PhD students. This information is also available on the website of the university.

One student representative from the undergraduate programme at the Faculty (that is, the BSc in Landscape Architecture) is invited to attend the Faculty meetings, where he/she can express his/her views but does not have voting rights (Article 13 in Regulation 366/2020).

### 1.4.3 Support Services

Undergraduate students receive information on the organisation of their Study Programme, including courses, timetables and dates for examinations from the Study Programme Coordinators and through the AUI website. Detailed information about specific courses, for example on course contents and evaluation, is provided at the beginning of each course by the course instructors.

Students are provided with IT services, including an e-mail account and access to the intranet, Ugla, and the teaching platform Canvas, connection to the wireless network within AUI and through EDUROAM (Education Roaming) and licenses to software. Library services are available at all three campuses, and online access to electronic books and scientific journals is also available. At the library, it is possible to ask for advice about access to information and references related to teaching, research and coursework.

The AUI Student Association is also available to support students in their academic or personal matters while they are studying at the university. The Faculty monitors student satisfaction through quality surveys and comments received in course evaluations.

### 1.4.4 Actions

**Table 11. Student support actions**

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible party
<b>Ch. 1.4</b>	<b>Student Support</b>			
1	Increase encouragement for students to pursue further studies at the graduate level.	Increase retention rates from BSc programmes to MSc and PhD studies.	June 2022.	Study Programme Coordinators, teachers in all programmes
2	Increase awareness of job opportunities after graduation.	Organise sessions with former students who are now working in different fields as	June 2022.	Study Programme Coordinators, Office of Teaching and Learning

		part of the Orientation Days.		
3	Student handbook.	Information for all AUI students.	Ongoing.	Head of Faculty in collaboration with other AUI staff.

## 2 Study Programmes

The three Study Programmes offered by the Faculty (as outlined in **Table 1**) will be discussed in detail in the following sections, regarding student admission, progress and employability and teaching and learning.

**Table 12. Study Programmes addressed in the current self-review**

Name of Study Programme	Cycle <sup>1</sup>	Degree	Credits (ECTS)
BSc in Landscape Architecture	1.2	BS	180
MSc in Planning	2.2	MSc	120
PhD in Planning	3.0	PhD	180

<sup>1</sup> See National Qualification Framework for Higher Education No. 530/2011.

### A. Study programmes at the BSc level

#### 2.1 BSc in Landscape Architecture (LA) (BSc 180 ECTS)

##### 2.1.1 Students

The intake rate has grown dramatically in the last years when we changed the name of the programme from environmental planning to landscape architecture (LA). It doubled from 2018 to 2019 and then tripled from 2019 to 2020 (**Table 13**). The retention rates after the first year are 76% on average. Completion rate is 44.2% on average. There are no international students following the whole programme, as most courses are taught in Icelandic, which is the rule for undergraduate studies at Icelandic universities. However, some of the third-year courses are offered in English, and exchange students can take those courses. LA has had at least one exchange student attending the programme each fall semester. We have followed the fate of students who graduated from our LA program, on their acceptance to get in to Master programmes. In most of the master programmes within Landscape Architecture or Urban Planning in the Nordic countries, it is required to have a portfolio. Our students who choose to give it a try have managed to get in. It gives us a measure of the quality of the programme.

**Table 13. Landscape Architecture BSc intake rate (%)<sup>1</sup>, no. of students completing first term<sup>2</sup>, retention rate (second year) (%)<sup>3</sup>, number of students graduating, completion rate<sup>4</sup>, total number of registered students on 20 October (all study years), of which full time (>22.5 ECTS completed) and part time (1-22 ECTS completed), sex ratio and age group for the years 2013–2016.**

	Intake rate (%)	No. students in first term	Retention rate (%)	No. students graduating	Completion rate (%)	Total no. of	% Male	Full time	Part time	Mean age	Age range
2020	95%	47	-	5	50%	53	19%	49	4	33.06	19–57
2019	90%	16	87.59%	6	35.71%	26	19%	22	4	30.76	20–55
2018	91%	8	75%	7	50%	26	23%	18	8	31.67	22–54
2017	90%	9	66.67%	9	41.18%	27	22%	21	6	29.7	21–54
<b>Mean</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>31</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Proportion of applications resulting in a new record (accepted applications and registration fees paid).

<sup>2</sup> No. of students completing at least one examination in the first-year autumn term.

<sup>3</sup> Proportion of students returning in the second-year autumn term, completing at least one examination.

<sup>4</sup> 4-year completion rate.

Students have their representatives in all major AUI committees. These include the University Council, the University Forum, Undergraduate Studies Committee and Ethics Committee. Students also have a representative at the Faculty Meeting where academic matters are discussed.

The office of the LA Study Programme Coordinator is at Hvanneyri, where all the LA course work takes place. Students have good access to their Study Programme Coordinator. It can be added that the interaction between students and their teachers, including Study Programme Coordinators, is very informal and relaxed in Iceland. This is even more so at AUI because of its small size.

Teaching- and course evaluations are taken online at the end of each course. The programme also used to have review meetings with the students to discuss and evaluate the courses twice a year. The routine wasn't kept up in recent years but started up again this spring semester. The aim is to keep having these meetings twice a year, with a good structured approach to questioning of students to get more information about the student experience.

The general attitude towards the programme is positive, with positive comments from the students on the quality of the teaching, study facilities, accessibility and active communication with the Study Programme Coordinator, academic teachers, Office of Teaching and Learning and Undergraduate Studies Committee. In addition, how the programme managed to run the courses during the COVID-19 pandemic has gained positive feedback. In the instances when students have pointed out problems, these have been highlighted by the course evaluation, and the Head of Teaching and Learning and the Study Programme Coordinator has acted to improve the situation before the course is taught again.

The first day of the autumn term is allocated to the orientation of new undergraduate students where they receive general information on AUI, the campus in general and its surroundings, about support services and facilities available and how to use the IT system. LA delivers the handbook to provide reference points for students. Student Union representatives meet with new students and introduce them to the student social life on campus as well as student participation in the different committees and parts of AUI according to AUI rules and organisation chart, i.e., student duties and rights.

The Student Council is elected by students every year. It is primarily engaged with organising social events, but also, importantly, it selects student representatives in the University Council and the Undergraduate Studies Committee. There, student representatives are well received, treated on an equal basis and encouraged to express the student voice.

Students in LA have their own student association, named Genius Loci. The association was established just before COVID-19, which has had a negative effect on the social life, but the list of activities is waiting to be implemented. One of the activities is to establish so-called science visits where the students visit companies and institutes.

#### 2.1.1.1 Actions

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible party
<b>Ch 2.1.1</b>	<b>Students</b>			
1.	Ensure that the Study Programme Coordinator has a programme review meeting once or twice a year, once each semester.	Formal review meetings with students.	Ongoing.	Study Programme Coordinator and Head of Faculty.
2.	Ensure that the results of course evaluations are considered and that action is taken where needed.	Formal review of results in programme meetings after each short semester.	Ongoing.	Study Programme Coordinator, Assistant Professors.
3.	To submit a course evaluation after each short semester for the LA courses that run over two semesters.	Open the course evaluation earlier.	August 2021.	Study Programme Coordinator, Office of Teaching and Learning.
4.	Give the Study Programme Coordinator a direct access to the result of all the course evaluations within the programme. Today, the Office of Teaching and Learning is the only one who has access to all of them.	The responsibility transfers from the Office of Teaching and Learning to the Study Programme Coordinator.	August 2021.	Study Programme Coordinator and Office of Teaching and Learning.

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### 2.1.2 Teaching and Learning

The Environmental Planning (UMSK) programme was initiated in 2001, with the first graduations in 2004. AUI received permission to change the name of the programme to Landscape Architecture (LA) in 2020. LA is only offered as a BSc degree. The LA programme shares about one-third of its courses with other BSc programmes at the AUI.

The programme offers an interdisciplinary education in knowledge and skills necessary to practise environmental design, -planning, -conservation and -restoration in the field of Landscape Architecture. The programme combines theory (e.g., geology, botany and environmental impact) with practice of professional-oriented skills (e.g., technical constructions, planning regulations and interdisciplinary planning projects), with a focus on consequential thinking and strategies to execute ideas. The programme consists of various courses, exercises, practical training and work on interdisciplinary projects. Furthermore, it should enhance research in this field in Iceland, as this will support and contribute to the development of Landscape Architecture in Iceland.

The Study Programme Coordinator is responsible and manages supervision of the programme and oversees the development and work quality. The Study Programme Coordinator communicates with teachers and students about programme matters. The responsibility for each module is clearly defined and is in the hands of the Study Programme Coordinator, who ensures the quality of teaching in cooperation with the Office of Teaching and Learning.

Programme description schemes and individual course descriptions are in accordance with the National Quality Framework for Higher Education in Iceland. Each Study Programme has its own set of learning outcomes which were originally defined in detail in connection with the accreditation process in 2008. Similarly, each course has its learning outcome defined according to the ECTS User Guide. The curriculum is continually evolving, and old courses are redefined and new courses added as needed – at least to the extent that our economy allows. This is done to meet changing societal needs and shifts in emphasis within the different fields.

Decisions about new course content, validation, monitoring and review of programmes are discussed and accepted by the Undergraduate Studies Committee. In addition, all new expenses must be accepted by the Undergraduate Studies Committee, and new programmes are only initiated after acceptance by the Faculty in question and the University Council. Programme descriptions are overseen by the Office of Teaching and Learning and checked against the National Framework for Higher Education in Iceland and the ECTS User Guide. We encourage teachers to use different teaching and assessment methods when course descriptions – new or revised – are overseen by Study Programme Coordinators and the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

The LA programme has programme meetings regularly, organised by the Study Programme Coordinator, to revise and coordinate across courses. The meetings are held two to four times per semester. In addition, the members of the programme have a one- to two-day meeting every year where the whole curriculum is controlled more in depth.

**Table 11. Structure of the BSc Study Programme in Landscape Architecture**

## 600038 Landscape Architecture, B.Sc (Courses in 2021-2022)

First year	
Fall	Spring
Ⓢ 01.53.02 Construction craftsmanship for landscape gardening 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 03.11.02 Introduction to academic methodology 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 01.54.01 Visual Art I - Drawing 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 2e Ⓢ 01.56.05 LARC I - Introduction to Landscape Architecture, Planning 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 10e Ⓢ 01.60.03 General geology 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 03.65.02 Computer Aided Design I 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e	Ⓢ 02.02.02 Botany 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 02.57.02 History and Trends in Garden Design 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 02.59.05 LARC II - Green Public Spaces 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 10e Ⓢ 02.06.04 Basic Ecology 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 8e Ⓢ 02.58.02 Visual Art II 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e
Elective courses are only for students who have completed compulsory courses in the 1st year.	
Second year	
Fall	Spring
Ⓢ 03.54.02 Visual Art II 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 03.61.03 Trees and Shrubs for Urban Greens and Recreation Areas 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 03.60.05 LARC III - Green Space Management 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 10e Ⓢ 03.63.03 Soil Science 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 04.64.02 Drawing and Modelling 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e	Ⓢ 02.24.03 Geographical Information Systems I (Cartography) 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 04.62.02 Planning 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 04.63.05 LARC IV - Landscape analysis and landscape theory 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 10e Ⓢ 04.68.01 Infography 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 2e Ⓢ 04.73.03 Geographical Information Systems II - GIS 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 04.36.02 Meteorology 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e
Third year	
Fall	Spring
Ⓢ 05.81.02 Environment, planning and public health 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 05.68.06 LARC V - Site Planning, Proposals and Procedures 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 12e	Ⓢ 06.38.03 Environmental Impact Assessment 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 06.70.06 LARC VI - Landscape and Man Made Constructions 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 12e Ⓢ 06.10.05 B.Sc. Final Assignment - Thesis 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 10e
Year of study unspecified	
Fall	Spring
Ⓢ 03.53.03 Ecological Restoration and Sustainable Land Management 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 03.52.01 ARCHITECTURE AND NATURE - The positive impact of design on nature 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 2e Ⓢ 01.24.02 Environmental Ethics 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 05.33.02 Organic Agriculture 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 01.49.03 Forest science I - Introduction to forest science and forestry 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 06.85.02 Computer Aided Design II 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 05.89.02 Visual Art IV - Sketching and analysis 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e 1) Ⓢ 03.46.04 Icelandic Ecosystems 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 8e Ⓢ 05.69.03 Pollution and Waste Management 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 05.72.02 Nature Conservation 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 05.82.03 Nature Interpretation / Practical approach for tourist guides 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 06.90.02 Geographical Information Systems III (Environmental modelling with GIS) 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e	Ⓢ 02.12.01 Field Botany - Summer Course 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 2e Ⓢ 02.61.01 Field course: Geology and soil science 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 2e Ⓢ 03.47.02 Geology of Iceland 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 06.64.03 Protected areas management plans 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 05.85.02 Communication in environmental and natural resource issues 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 06.40.02 Sustainable Development 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e
1) Next taught in fall 2022.	

To ensure consistent workloads for each course, AUI has a form to evaluate the credits and student work in each course. Lecturers are encouraged to use this form to evaluate each course. More widespread use of this form would ensure consistency between courses.

As mentioned previously, the teachers who are teaching each semester have review meetings in the beginning of every short semester to evaluate and compare the workflow for the semester.

Most of the courses are built on lectures, problem solving assignments, creative idea work and presentations of results – written, oral, maps or posters. The students are required to read textbooks and other material and search for information through other relevant sources. Assignments are both individual and for groups of 2–4 students and involve several field trips and visits to companies and institutes. LA students also attend conferences, seminars and meetings outside the AUI, sometimes as active participants. Occasionally, such participation counts as part of the student work assessment.

The LA programme arranges seminars each autumn. In these events, the students present projects they have worked on and experiences from excursions abroad and different experts from outside AUI give lectures. Exchange students from other countries have also presented their home countries and universities and graduated LA students have taken part.

The Undergraduate Studies Committee deals with the Course Catalogue for individual programmes, shapes registration rules and supervision of study progress, defines course requirements, sets guidelines for assessment and appraisal of courses, monitors the quality of courses and teaching and determines improvements as required in cooperation with the University Council. The Undergraduate Studies Committee settles controversies which may arise in the process of teaching or course assessment. Decisions made by the Undergraduate Studies Committee may be appealed to the Rector.

The Undergraduate Studies Committee meets according to a regular meeting schedule and handles matters brought forward by students, Faculty, Study Programme Coordinators or the Office of Teaching and Learning. Matters are often prepared informally, and we believe that the role of the Committee is well understood by students, Faculty and other staff. Meeting minutes are published on AUI's website.

Students evaluate course content and teaching in a formal way at the end of term, using electronic forms. The survey outcomes are available to individual teachers and the Head of Teaching and Learning.

The programme gained a recognition for two years from IFLA, the International Federation of Landscape Architects. The programme received two recommendations for improvement. The first recommendation is to increase the % of design in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years to fulfil the 50% design/theory rule, to have a more design-orientated programme. The second recommendation is to increase the number of landscape architects among the teaching staff within the programme.

The LA programme is different from our natural science programmes and courses. The programme uses spatial data to a larger extent than other programmes and various kinds of material and equipment for drawing, presentations, modelling and analysis and visual representation of the environment. Computer programmes such as AutoCAD, Adobe, ArcGIS and SketchUp are used for the same purpose.

For practical exercises in landscape architecture and construction, the programme uses various kinds of equipment, machinery, plants, stone and other construction material, etc. Student projects often deal with real-life situations in Iceland. In such case studies, the

“material” is often personal communications from specialists at landscape architecture studios or local governments, guides from field trips or information and discourse connected to course topics found in media and social media.

### 2.1.2.1 Actions

**Table 16. BSc Teaching and learning actions**

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible party
<b>Ch. 2.1.2</b>	<b>Teaching and Learning</b>			
1	Add more design-oriented courses to the curriculum.	Review the curriculum.	June 2022.	Study Programme Coordinator and Assistant Professors.
2.	To increase the number of landscape architects amongst the teaching staff.	Discuss the need with the University Council.	June 2022.	Study Programme Coordinator.

### 2.1.3 Coordination between Teaching and Research

As described in the Study Programme, the BSc programme in Landscape Architecture aims to graduate students with solid knowledge, understanding and skills in the interaction between man, nature and planning/design by mixing natural sciences with technology, design and planning. To ensure that the BSc students are exposed to recent knowledge developments in their field of study, the lecturers and teachers of the courses are currently practicing experts in the relevant field. That includes both internal teachers at AUI and other institutions, academic or not and Icelandic or foreign. The programme has had one to three *incoming staff mobility* from international enterprises, coming to teach in a workshop or as a part of a studio course, every year.

Students have the possibility to take individual studies – practical training, where they work in their field of study for several weeks, in companies, municipalities or institutions, mostly in the summertime. Students can get up to 6 ECTS for this work. The development of a 10-ECTS final project also provides the student with first-hand experience in conducting a small research project in close collaboration with their supervisors.

The programme is now focusing on applying for funding for research and aims on improving in that field.

### 2.1.3.1 Actions

**Table 17. BSc coordination between teaching and research actions**

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible
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				party
<b>Ch. 2.1.3</b>	<b>Coordination Between Teaching and Research</b>			
1	Annual meeting with the Federation of Landscape Architecture in Iceland where possibilities for final projects are reviewed and discussed.	Flow of information on final project ideas.	February 2022	Study Programme Coordinator.
2	Organise a 2- to 4-ECTs <i>elective course</i> annually, where a foreign guest teacher is invited to teach a new subject to LA students.	Flow of new theory and knowledge.	September 2022.	Assistant Professors.
3	Apply for research funding.	Flow of new theory and knowledge.	Ongoing.	All programme members.
4	Hold more conferences, inviting guest lecturers and practitioners to have a presentation.	Flow of new theory and knowledge.	Ongoing.	All programme members.
5	Organise a 2- to 4-ECTS elective course where a small group of students work on a specific topic. Their names will be in the publication.	Flow of new theory and knowledge.	September 2021.	All programme members.

### 2.1.4 Conclusions

The BSc Study Programme in Landscape Architecture has been successful, which is mirrored in the diverse professional careers and tasks of our former students. The collaboration with the Association of Icelandic Landscape Architects is good and can grow. As mentioned, the programme gained quality recognition from IFLA last year. We need to ensure that we maintain this recognition in the coming years. So with this and the highly increased student intakes, it is foreseen that the programme will grow in the coming years.

## MSc & PhD Study Programmes

Graduate (MSc) and post-graduate (PhD) studies are managed jointly across all the three Faculties of AUI. The managing body is named the Graduate Studies Committee. The committee is chaired by a Graduate Studies Coordinator, who is elected at a general university meeting (every 3<sup>rd</sup> year) and one senior representative from each of the three faculties, an MSc Study Programme Coordinator (who is usually also a Faculty representative), the Head of Teaching and Learning and two student representatives, one for MSc students and one for PhD students. One 25% administrative position is also allocated for helping with the management of the graduate studies.

The MSc programmes are either “organised master programmes”, which are led by MSc Programme Coordinators, or as individual, research-based MSc programmes, which are led by the Graduate Studies Coordinator. At present, only one organised MSc programme is within the Faculty of Planning and Design.

AUI can award PhD degrees in seven different fields of study, which are also offered as undergraduate and/or MSc programmes. All those are managed by the Graduate Studies Committee, but the doctoral programmes of AUI also belong to the Graduate School of University of Iceland, in the same way as the Doctoral School of the University of Akureyri.

## 2.2 MSc (XX ECTS)

### 2.2.1 Students

The number of students enrolling the MSc programme in Planning has increased over the last years (**Table 12**). 10 students have graduated in the period 2017–2020, and average time for completion of the programme is 4 years.

The Faculty has 52% of all MSc students (82) registered at AUI. In keeping with the multidisciplinary nature of planning, the MSc Study Programme in Planning is accessible to students trained in various disciplines. Most students entering the MSc Study Programme are trained in areas traditionally associated with planning. They hold a BA in Architecture, BSc in Landscape Architecture, BSc in Engineering, etc. But the programme is also accessible to students trained in other disciplines. Some hold a BA in Law, BA in Economics, BA in Art History, etc. In such case, students are requested to take extra courses needed to bring them up to date.

There are no international students following the whole programme, as courses are taught in Icelandic. But we do accept Erasmus students into specific courses which are then taught both in English and Icelandic.

The intake rate varies by a factor of two from year to year since 2017. Eight students started the programme in 2017 and 2019. They were twenty in 2018 and sixteen in 2020 (**Table 18**). The retention rates after the first year are 97% on average, which is remarkably high. Completion rate is 11% on average, which is exceptionally low. Students often interrupt their studies at the MSc thesis-research project stage and enter the labour market. Indeed, the problem seems to be that students easily find jobs in the planning sector before they graduate and sometimes they do not return to finish their degree. This shows that the Icelandic society needs planners and that the MSc Study Programmes in Planning responds to this need. However, it is a major problem because those professionals are incompletely educated/trained.

Teaching and course evaluations are taken online at the end of each course. The general attitude of students towards the courses offered in the MSc programmes is incredibly positive. As well, as part of the graduate study programme, two whole-day seminars are organised each year with mandatory attendance of all MSc students, in situ or online. Each MSc student must present their thesis topic twice during their studies at this seminar series. During those seminars, various other practical information sessions are organised for the students, and

some general discussions about issues that can be improved in respect to the graduate studies programmes are taken up. This venue has proven to be especially important for creating an encouraging academic environment for the individual research-based graduate students, as they are otherwise quite spread among different campuses of AUI.

The fate of the students in the employment market after graduation is good, and they are working in the National Planning Agency, municipalities, engineering offices and in related offices.

**Table 18. Planning MSc No. of new entrants, number of students graduating, completion rate<sup>1</sup>, total number of registered students 20 October (all study years), of which no. of active students<sup>2</sup>, sex ratio of registered students and age group for the years 2017–2020**

	Intake rate (%)	No. students in first term	Retention rate (%)	No. students graduating	Completion rate (%)	Total no. of students	% Male	Full time	Part time	Mean age	Age range
2020	80%	16	-	3	10%	34	21%	16	18	37	24–55
2019	80%	8	90.91 %	4	16,67 %	26	31%	9	17	40.04	24–57
2018	87%	20	100%	2	18.18 %	26	31%	16	10	38.92	27–56
2017	100%	8	100%	1	0%	12	25%	4	8	26.7	26–55
Mean	87%	13	97%	2.5	11%	25	27%	11	13	<b>36</b>	

<sup>1</sup> 5-year completion rate.

<sup>2</sup> Students with registered ECTS units.

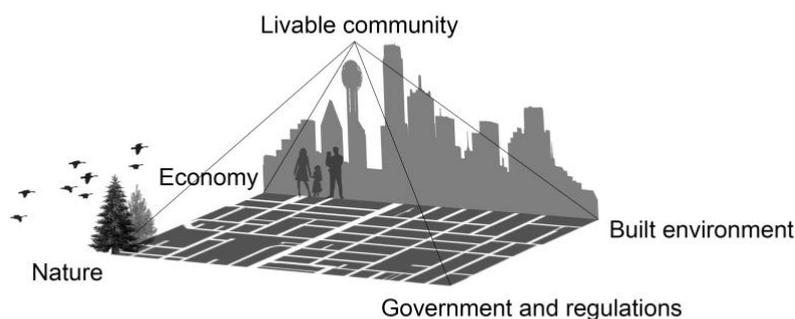
The MSc students in Planning at AUI do not have a special student association. However, all MSc students belong to the general student association of AUI which organises various social events at the Hvanneyri campus. All graduate students at AUI also have a Facebook group, managed by the MSc student representative in the Graduate Studies Committee, where they can interact. The MSc programme also has a special Facebook page.

## 2.2.2 Teaching and Learning

The Master Programme in Planning was launched in the fall 2009. The programme was developed in close collaboration with the Icelandic Planning Association. After graduation, the students can apply to receive the legal job title Planner.

The Study Programme combines planning theory and practice and the study of Icelandic circumstances, aiming for sustainable development and the creation of a liveable environment. Students gain a broad, multidisciplinary knowledge of planning. Three-quarters of the programme consists of courses and one-quarter consists of a research

project. The courses focus on a sceptical approach to planning with a mixture of courses on planning theory, ethics and a variety of practical methods to improve planning solutions which form the frame for a liveable community.



The Planning Pyramid (Sigríði Kristjánsdóttir in Sigríður Kristjánsdóttir (Ed.) *Nordic Experiences of Sustainable Planning: Policy and Practice* p.x. Routledge, 2017.

Upon completion of the studies, the students are supposed to have acquired a solid knowledge of planning as a profession and to be able to work independently on consulting, problem solving and development in the planning field. Students take courses at AUI as well as at other universities which the AUI is in collaboration with, such as the University of Iceland and universities abroad. The programme's flexibility allows for the opportunity to attend other universities, e.g., abroad, during parts of the study, as well as allowing for some specialisation, e.g., in the fields of urban planning and designing, environmental planning or rural planning. The study emphasises individual work as well as practical case studies where students tackle real problems, thus practising skills for independent work. Graduating students have gained necessary knowledge of planning required for certification by the Icelandic Planners Association.

The core courses include planning theory and methods, planning processes, governmental system, legal environment and stakeholders in planning. Economic, sociological, technological, transportation and environmental aspects of planning and the basic elements of built and natural environments are also studied, as well is cartography (GIS) and graphic presentation.

Specialisation in planning and various planning methodologies aiming for optimal solutions and sustainable development and a liveable environment are taught.

Elective courses present the students with the opportunity to specialise within a particular field of planning. The elective courses are chosen to support the student's research project, enabling them to further their knowledge within the chosen field.

The Study Programme Coordinator is responsible and manages supervision of the Study Programme and oversees the development and work quality. The Study Programme Coordinator communicates with teachers and students about programme matters. The Study Programme Coordinator ensures the quality of teaching in cooperation with the Office of Teaching and Learning.

The Study Programme is currently under revision. Early this year, the Study Programme Coordinator organised several meetings with teachers to discuss existing courses and creation of new ones. Learning outcomes were defined and last discussed on this occasion. Teachers are professionals working in the planning fields within public institutions and private firms in Iceland. This allows the programme to link with the practice and the research in planning, as some teachers conduct research within their respective institution. However, an Adjunct Lecturer was also hired 50% early this year to strengthen teaching and research within AUI. She has been involved in the revision of the Study Programme.

The MSc of Planning Programme at the Agricultural University of Iceland (AUI) is an educational credential for professional planning practice in Iceland. It is set up as a two-year programme. Upon completion of the study, the students are expected to be able to deal with planning issues, to assist government agencies with planning decisions and to estimate the consequences of planning decisions.

Due to the country's unique situation, it is important that planners in Iceland have gathered knowledge of the local environment, nature, climate, community, economy, legal issues, technology, culture, aesthetics, history, transportation, urban development and the inner structure of the built environment. There is a growing need for educated planners with local knowledge, as according to Icelandic legislation, local authorities shall prepare regional, municipal and local plans, as well as a plan for the whole country. While being tailored to meet local requirements, the programme follows the latest trends in planning theory and the planning profession. The students are trained in the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods, spatial design and applied planning approaches which engage collaboration between various stakeholders. External examiners review the large projects, for example in the Studio course and master thesis.

**Table 19. Structure of the Study Programme**

600029 Planning, M.Sc (Courses in 2021-2022)	
First year	
Fall	Spring
Ⓢ 07.62.02 Human and Planning 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 07.59.03 Planning methods 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 08.71.01 Urban Morphology 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 07.61.03 Planning law and administration 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e 1) Ⓢ 07.86.03 Urban Ecology 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e	Ⓢ 08.65.02 Urban economics 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 06.38.03 Environmental Impact Assessment 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 08.61.02 Urban Planning and design 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 07.58.02 Planning theory 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 08.64.06 Studio 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 12e
1) Taught every other year, next 2021.	
Second year	
Fall	Spring
Ⓢ 08.62.01 Applied research for planning 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 2e Ⓢ 07HAG101F HI - Cost Benefit Analysis 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 07FOM102F HI - Introduction to Qualitative Research 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 10e Ⓢ 07.12.01 Graduate student seminars I 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 1e Ⓢ 08.66.02 Transportation Planning 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e	Ⓢ 08.12.01 Graduate student seminars II 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 1e Ⓢ 10.10.15 Master Thesis 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 30e
Year of study unspecified	
Fall	Spring
Ⓢ 06.90.02 Geographical Information Systems III (Environmental modelling with GIS) 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 03.11.02 Introduction to academic methodology 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 05.81.02 Environment, planning and public health 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 03.39.04 Statistics & Experimental Design 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 8e Ⓢ 02.33.02 Basic Practical Statistics 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 03.65.02 Computer Aided Design I 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e 1) Ⓢ 07.76.02 Rural planning 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 06.85.02 Computer Aided Design II 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e	Ⓢ 08.33.01 Arctic Planning and Environmental Changes 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 2e Ⓢ 04.73.03 Geographical Information Systems II - GIS 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 06.51.03 Entrepreneurship 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 02.24.03 Geographical Information Systems I (Cartography) 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 6e Ⓢ 08.67.01 Contour lines and design 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 2e Ⓢ 05.85.02 Communication in environmental and natural resource issues 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 04.62.02 Planning 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e Ⓢ 08.60.02 Power and democracy in planning practice 🇩🇪 🇩🇪 4e
1) Taught every other year, next 2022.	

The structure of the Study Programme is reviewed annually in February in a meeting with all teachers in the MSc programme, included are comments from former students that are working as planners as well as from current students.

## Structure

### Semester 1

During the first semester, students attend lectures on planning theory and methods. The perspective is on planning in Iceland. Major acts of Icelandic planning legislation are covered as well as the basic features of the administrative system. Scientific methods are studied, with a particular focus on ethics. Students also participate in a studio course, focusing on human behaviour and planning. Students also can broaden their knowledge base by attending elective courses or using that flexibility to fulfil any prerequisites they may be lacking.

### Semester 2

The second semester focuses on urban planning and design. The students will work on a practical studio assignment, solving a planning problem related to a real-world situation from their surroundings. A course in urban economics is also taught in this semester. Research in planning is discussed, emphasising that students familiarise themselves with

academic research in the field. At the end of the semester, the students will have chosen a topic for their master thesis.

### **Semester 3**

This semester the students will choose elective courses related to their thesis topic. They have the option to choose courses from AUI and other universities. Thus, they can build a solid knowledge base and specialise in their selected topic. Two courses are taught on methodologies, cost-benefit analysis and qualitative research methods, introducing the students to methods, which can be applied in the completion of the thesis topic. Courses on public participation and transportation are also offered.

### **Semester 4**

In the final semester, the focus is on the writing of the master thesis. Students are encouraged to work individually under the guidance of supervisory staff. The master thesis should aim at combining the theories and methods which the student has mastered to solve a real-life planning problem. We encourage our students to choose a topic of personal interest so that they will excel in their field of specialisation. This way, we obtain a variety of different topics related to current planning events in Iceland.

### **The educational settings**

The MSc Study Programme in Planning is taught at the main research facility of AUI at Keldnaholt. Keldnaholt is located near beautiful natural areas at the eastern edge of the dynamic capital city of Reykjavík. The research facility is close to large outdoor recreational areas and just a short bus ride away from the old town centre. The teaching is a mixture of lectures, discussions, studio work and field trips. These methods are aimed at developing the skills outlined above. Lectures and research work develop knowledge and understanding. Work on research projects develops applied knowledge and skills in information gathering and presentation. Independent work is emphasised through a variety of projects throughout the programme, which are theoretical as well as practical. Discussions and research or studio classes are emphasised, and course grades usually reflect a combination of skills in solving problems, working on projects and taking exams. Most textbooks are in English or Nordic languages.

### **Mode of study**

Full-time study for two years or a part-time study for a longer period according to an individual study agreement – 120 ECTS. Students are encouraged to select courses at other universities in Iceland as well as abroad through the Erasmus programme.

### **Admission criteria**

To enrol in the Msc of Planning Programme, an applicant is required to have successfully completed a BSc degree from AUI or to hold an equivalent academic qualification which the Faculty recognises. Minimum grade is 7.25 to obtain admission.

## Prerequisites

Students planning to enter the graduate programme are expected to have finished at least one undergraduate course in each of the following subjects: economics, environmental studies (ecology and natural sciences), cartography (GIS), statistics, computer-aided design and graphic presentation. Students without sufficient background will be counselled to take the undergraduate-level prerequisite courses concurrent with their graduate studies.

## PhD Programme

P&D has started a PhD Study Programme in Planning in 2020, and currently, we have one student enrolled. The Faculty is applying for further funding to increase the number of PhD students.

One student representative from graduate students at the PhD level actively participates in the Graduate Studies Committee of AUI. Some of the PhD students at AUI are staff members at the Faculty and can attend and have voting rights at the Faculty meetings, but currently, there is no specific student representative for PhD studies at the Faculty meetings.

Teaching and course evaluations, as for the undergraduate courses, are taken online at the end of each course. Due to the novelty of the PhD programme, there has not been any evaluation of teaching and course evaluations by the PhD student at P&D, as courses are still ongoing. The evaluations will follow once the first student has completed courses. The general attitude of the student towards the courses offered in the PhD programme is incredibly positive, especially with respect to welcome by staff at AUI, access to AUI courses and exchange programmes to attend courses abroad, funding, facilities and ability to network with other PhD students and scientists in different fields for interdisciplinary research at AUI.

There is no formal orientation for new PhD students at AUI. The level of orientation depends on the project at hand and the associated advisor. In general, PhD students at AUI work in isolation on independent research projects. The main communication platform for graduate students is the 2-ECTS mandatory graduate student seminar, where students meet either in person or online once per semester and present their research and progress. The seminar is also a venue to bring forward information on programme structure, available courses, study exchange programmes, funding opportunities, student counselling and other services available within the university.

Currently, there is no student association for graduate students available within AUI. A new student-led initiative, in the format of weekly informal online meetings where all PhD students are invited, started in early 2021 and has been taken up with enthusiasm by the PhD students.

In the beginning, it was a deliberate policy of AUI to keep the number of PhD students low as the PhD programmes were tested and developed. During 2010–2019, the total number of active PhD students were kept at ca. 5, i.e., new students would only be admitted as older students finished (see later).

The first PhD degree from AUI was awarded in 2010, and since then, only six PhD degrees have been awarded. According to the strategy for AUI, the academic staff has been encouraged to

include PhD positions in grant proposals they submit. This policy change has led to the first PhD students enrolling in the PhD programme in Planning. The PhD student is a staff member at the Faculty and can attend and have voting rights at the Faculty meetings.

No specialised PhD-level courses are given by AUI on regular basis, but some such courses are still organised by Faculty members every year in connection to ongoing European projects and bilateral agreements (e.g., NOVA, ERASMUS, H2020 ITN projects, etc.). Only in this way the number of attending PhD students can justify giving a specialised PhD-level course. Therefore, the PhD students also tend to make use of the International Office of AUI to attend some specialised PhD courses abroad. There are, however, some advanced graduate courses available at AUI, including the mandatory 14 ECTS (three courses) that all PhD students must take, and more.

Course evaluations are taken online at the end of each of the mandatory courses. Student participation in these surveys is low also at the PhD level. The results of these teaching and course evaluations show that students are satisfied. The general attitude of students towards the mandatory courses offered in the PhD programmes is positive.

The Graduate Studies Committee organises two seminars annually with mandatory attendance of all PhD students and international MSc students, in situ or online. These seminars are held in English and are different from those mentioned earlier for MSc students. Recently, a formal orientation for new PhD students has been given at this venue. Each PhD student must present their thesis topic three times during their studies at this seminar series. These seminars are the main communication platform for the PhD students, where they meet either in person or online once per semester and present their research and progress. The seminars are also a venue to bring forward information on programme structure, available courses, study exchange programs, funding opportunities, student counselling and other services available within the university. This venue has proven to be particularly important for creating an encouraging academic environment for the PhD students, as they are otherwise quite spread among different campuses of AUI.

Further orientation takes place at the two mandatory PhD courses (mandatory to all graduate and post-graduate students), but in general, the PhD students at AUI work in isolation on independent research projects.

Currently, there is no student association for PhD students available within AUI, but formally, they belong to the general Student Association. A new student-led initiative, in the format of weekly informal online meetings where all PhD students are invited, started in early 2021. This was initiated after encouragement by the Graduate Studies Committee.

## 2.2.2.1 Actions

Table 20. MSc &amp; PhD teaching and learning actions

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible party
<b>Ch. 2.1.2</b>	<b>Teaching and Learning</b>			
1	More students finish the final MSc thesis-research project.	Find ways to encourage the students to graduate.  Increase support for students throughout the research project process: writing guidelines and guiding the students.  Increase the value of the research project: working for the dissemination of the results (exhibition, peer-reviewed article, etc.).	June 2024.	Head of Faculty and new Adjunct Lecturer.  MSc supervisors.
2	Create a better working environment for graduate students in Keldnaholt.	Design a room for group projects.  Increase student access to the building (after 23:00).	June 2022.	Study Programme Coordinator and Head of Faculty.
3	Ensure that the Study Programme Coordinator has a programme review meeting once or twice a year, once each semester.	Formal review meetings with students.	May 2021.	Study Programme Coordinator and Head of Faculty.
4	Ensure that the results of course evaluations are considered and that action is taken where needed.	Formal review of results.	May 2021.	Study Programme Coordinator and all staff.
5	Ensure the standards of student achievement.	Review whether the assessments meet the learning outcomes.	Ongoing.	Study Programme Coordinator and all staff.
6	Create a better workspace for modelling and creative work.	Turn the old carpentry workshop on the first floor into	December 2021.	Study Programme Coordinator

		a modern workshop for the masters' students.		and Head of Faculty.
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### 2.2.3 Coordination between Teaching and Research

As described in the MSc Study Programme, the lecturers and teachers of the courses are researchers and currently practicing experts in the relevant field to ensure that the MSc students are exposed to recent knowledge developments in their field of study.

In the second year of the programme, MSc students must work on their thesis project (30 ECTS), for which they must find a suitable supervisor and develop jointly their ideas. This ensures that students will have direct access to state-of-the-art research. As planning is an interdisciplinary field, it is mandatory for the student to have 2 supervisors for their thesis. Together they must fulfil these requirements: a certificated planner, hold a PhD, be an expert in the field.

In parallel with the Study Programme, actions are undertaken to involve MSc students in research. The Faculty just started a collaboration with a private firm that is developing a methodology aimed at evaluating the quality of public spaces. The project is part of the Human Cities / SMOTIES project (improvement of public spaces in remote places) granted by the Creative Europe programme of the European Commission. Additional funding has been provided by the Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNIS) to hire three students to work on the project during the summer. The students will work on a case study in an Icelandic municipality. It will be an opportunity to work in the field of applied research. Their training will also enable them to develop their skills and to become familiar with other approaches in urban planning (history and social psychology). The students will also have the possibility to work with the European team of Human Cities / SMOTIES and get to know projects that are spread all over Europe. This will be a unique experience for them as well as a big chance to encounter European pioneers in urban planning.

The MSc Study Programme is now focusing on developing other similar actions and applying for funding for research.

The PhD programme is inextricably linked with research at the Faculty, as the main output and thesis of PhD students is comprised of at least three research papers. Academic support is therefore directed at helping PhD students with publication of their work. PhD students are also encouraged to collaborate with other department members and researchers at other faculties of AUI to promote interdisciplinary research.

The first PhD student is conducting research in collaboration with the Resilient Sustainable Coasts (COAST) project that is funded by NPA. The PhD committee is a mixture of Icelandic and foreign academic experts in the field. Each individual PhD student gets three (to five) specialists appointed to their PhD committee, who supervise the student's research work and help with selection of appropriate courses that support the individual studies. Among the PhD

committee members, one must belong to AUI, but others are usually linked to research institutions or other universities in Iceland or abroad (at least one co-supervisor).

To have a PhD dissertation, the PhD candidate must have produced at least three first author papers, where at least one is already published, and a PhD thesis which gives the overview for the research conducted.

The PhD programme is primarily based on the independent research of the doctoral candidate, culminating in the dissertation. Entrance requirements are a research-based MSc degree or a comparable qualification from suitable field of expertise. Doctoral studies are governed by special Faculty regulations which are currently under review. The thesis must be defended openly for the public and can cover a wide variety of research topics linked to the programme in question. The official language of instruction for graduate-level courses is English.

Even if the Graduate Studies Committee oversees the PhD programmes, the day-to-day coordination and supervision of those students should take place within the appointed PhD committee. As the number of PhD students has increased, it has become apparent that more support (and control) is needed for the individual PhD committees, as sometimes they are not very functional. Therefore, it was very timely that a new system for monitoring the progress of the PhD students and ensuring proper supervision by the PhD committees was implemented in the fall 2020 – PhD portal. This system is an addition to Ugla (the student administration program). All PhD students and their tutors submitted a progress report in this system before the first deadline of 1 December 2020. Two such progress reports must be submitted annually, at the end of spring and autumn semesters.

Because of the foreseen increase in student numbers, it is important that the administration and support system for the PhD studies continues to improve. The increasing student numbers also make it more feasible to start developing PhD-level courses.

Similar as for the research-based MSc students, there is a need for some training of PhD supervisors. At many universities abroad, such a training must be done for holding an academic position, and a similar requirement would be beneficial if implemented at AUI. Also, it is not defined in the present rules of AUI if academic Faculty members are obligated to act as supervisors and if there are some maxima for how many students they can take on (if their teaching quota is not full). Those issues should be better clarified.

The courses offered to graduate students use a variety of teaching methods. For instance, in the mandatory courses, students actively participate in classes, presenting their work orally or in written form, attend lectures and have individual assignments. Assessment of the courses is also diverse. At AUI, most courses at the graduate level do not have a final exam but rely on assignments and active participation in class as a main tool for assessment. Written assignments and presentations, as individual or group work, are also common.

### *2.2.3.1 Actions*

#### **Table 21. MSc & PhD coordination between teaching and research actions**

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible party
<b>Ch. 2.1.3</b>	<b>Coordination between Teaching and Research</b>			
1	Support PhD students in publishing their work.	Hold writing workshops each semester.	December 2021.	Head of Faculty.
2	Annual meeting with the Icelandic Planning Association.	Flow of information for master thesis.	August 2021.	Head of Faculty and Study Programme Coordinator.
3	Encourage students to choose a topic for their MSc thesis-research project at an early stage in the programme.	Hold a seminar.	September 2021.	Study Programme Coordinator.
4	Familiarise students with research to prepare them for their MSc thesis-research project.	Grant application to hire first-year students on a research project.	February 2022.	Head of Faculty and Study Programme Coordinator. New Adjunct Lecturer.
5	Encourage students to choose course that will support them in writing their MSc thesis-research project.	Hold a seminar.	September 2021.	Study Programme Coordinator.
6	Encourage publication of results of MSc thesis-research project as peer-reviewed articles.	At least one publication per student.	One year after graduation.	Graduate Studies Coordinator, MSc supervisors and MSc students

### 2.2.4 Conclusions

The number of graduate and post-graduate student has increased in recent years. It has been a challenge to ramp up the support system at the same rate. The addition of a 25% administrative position to support the graduate studies this year really helps.

It is not foreseen that any of the MSc programmes will be discontinued, they are successful and offer skills and degrees not offered elsewhere in Iceland. Planning is a legally protected job title, and all the municipalities in Iceland need to have a planner. The department is still filling the knowledge gap regarding planning in Iceland.

It is foreseen that number of MSc students in the existing programmes will continue to increase in the coming years. This is a general trend at all Icelandic universities and stems from that prior to ca. 2000–2005, almost no MSc programmes were offered in Iceland and all professionals who continued their studies went abroad for their MSc and PhD education. This again is making an MSc degree become a minimum requirement for many positions outside academia, where a PhD degree is needed, and therefore, the intake rate to the existing MSc programmes continues to increase.

Because of the above changes, it is important that the administration and support system for the graduate studies continues to adapt to the increasing student numbers. The increasing student numbers also make it more feasible to continue with developing more MSc-level courses.

#### 2.2.4.1 Actions

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible party
<b>Ch 2.1.1</b>	<b>Students</b>			
1	Participation of MSc and PhD students in Faculty meetings.	At least one student should be representative in Faculty meetings.	December 2021.	Head of Faculty.
2	Formalise orientation programme for new PhD students.	Organised orientation schedule.	Ongoing.	Head of Graduate Studies, PhD supervisors.
3	Establish support for a graduate student association.	Graduate student association.	Ongoing.	Head of Graduate Studies, graduate students.
4	Annual meeting with the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities.	Discussing need for further research and funds.	December 2021.	Head of Faculty.

### 2.2.5 Teaching and Learning

The PhD programme is primarily based on the independent research of the doctoral candidate, culminating in the dissertation. Entrance requirements are a research-based MSc degree or a comparable qualification, or alternatively a BSc degree, usually completed with a minimum average grade of 7.0. However, the PhD committee may require the candidate to take courses in addition to the research. Credits for courses are added to the credits required for the dissertation.

The scope of the research project shall be 180 ECTS units (**Figure 6**). Doctoral studies are governed by special Faculty regulations which are currently under review. The thesis must be defended openly for the public and can cover a wide variety of research topics linked to the programme in question. The official language of instruction for graduate-level courses is English.

AUI has implemented a new system for monitoring the progress of PhD studies in the fall of 2020, the PhD portal.

**Figure 6. Structure of the PhD programme in Planning and Design**

**Programme composition**

Overview by : [Years](#) [Semesters](#) [Courses](#) [Spreadsheet](#)

**600050 PhD Studies Planning & Design, Ph.D. (Courses in 2021-2022)**

First year	
Fall	Spring
07.12.01 Graduate student seminars I   1e	
Second year	
Fall	Spring
08.12.01 Graduate student seminars II   1e	
Third year	
Fall	Spring
09.12.01 Graduate student seminars III (PhD)   1e	

The courses offered to graduate students use a variety of teaching methods. For instance, in the mandatory courses, students actively participate in classes presenting their work orally or in written form, attend lectures and have individual assignments. Assessment of the courses is also diverse. At AUI, most courses at the graduate level do not have a final exam but rely on assignments and active participation in class as a main tool for assessment. Written assignments and presentations, as individual or group work, are also common.

#### 2.2.5.1 Actions

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible party
Ch. 2.1.2	Teaching and Learning			

1	Review regulations for PhD studies at AUI.	Updated regulations for PhD studies.	May 2022.	Head of Graduate Studies.
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## 2.2.6 Coordination between Teaching and Research

The research projects developed by PhD students are conducted in close collaboration with supervisors at AUI and from other institutions. Students are trained in research topics that are being developed within the Faculty of Planning and Design. Currently, the requirement for a PhD thesis to be eligible for defence is to have one paper published, one submitted to a scientific journal and one in manuscript form. Ideally, this should be followed up by the supervisors and students to ensure that at least three scientific articles are published after completion of the programme.

### 2.2.6.1 Actions

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible party
<b>Ch. 2.1.3</b>	<b>Coordination Between Teaching and Research</b>			
1	Encourage publication of results of PhD studies as peer-reviewed articles.	At least three published papers after finishing PhD.	One year after graduation.	PhD supervisors, PhD students.

## 2.2.7 Conclusions

The number of PhD students was kept low during the first decade after the PhD Programmes were initiated. Since 2019, this policy has changed, and now AUI aims at strengthening its PhD programmes and increasing the student numbers. This is in accordance with the new strategy of AUI.

It is important that this change is followed by an appropriate ramping up of the support system, and the new 25% administrative position at the Student Office for the graduate and post-graduate students in 2021 was a timely step in that direction.

It is foreseen that number of PhD students in the existing programmes will continue to increase in the coming years, and it would not be unexpected if the total number of PhD students could triple in the next 5 years.

P&D has successfully attracted a PhD student to the new programme in Planning and will grow soon in terms of graduate studies offered. The PhD programme is in a development stage and should be regularly reviewed. Close collaboration will be aimed for with the other Faculties in terms of the PhD programme structure and support for the PhD students.

## 3 Summary and Main Conclusions for the Faculty

### 3.1 Lessons Learned from QEF1

This report is the first evaluation of the Faculty of Planning and Design since it was established in January 2020. The Faculty of Planning and Design is young and showing promise. There used to be only one Faculty within the AUI. Dividing the school into the three academic Faculties in 2019 created opportunities and challenges. Each Faculty is now more focused on specific fields, and they need to be strong enough to stand on their own pillars of knowledge. The QEF1, although it was conducted for different organisational units, provides a solid starting point for this assessment. Many of the points raised in the QEF1 for the whole university have been addressed within the Faculty, for example in terms of research productivity and internationalisation. Unfortunately, the last Subject-Level Review was not an active document. It is hoped that using the SMART method can turn the Subject-Level Review into a living and active document. This will be done by integrating it into the annual Faculty meeting in the beginning of the school year where we set the mark for the next school year.

The present assessment has provided a good exercise of self-reflection and will serve as a reference point for the development of the Faculty in the future. The Faculty needs to define a coherent strategy and set clear priorities for teaching and research, as well as a recruitment policy that allows the Faculty to grow and develop. As well, this self-review has made evident some areas that need improvement and others of which we can be proud.

After writing this report, it stands out that creating a new Faculty including landscape architecture and planning is challenging but also creates many opportunities. This self-evaluating report has been very helpful for the Faculty to improve and strengthen research and teaching.

### 3.2 Teaching and Learning

The Study Programmes are unique among Icelandic universities. Changing the name of the BSc programme from Environmental Planning to Landscape Architecture created a boom in applications, and we need to adjust to that. Teaching and learning within the Faculty provide good opportunities for students, as indicated by the high retention rates of the undergraduate programmes. Even though the students in the MSc programme have increased steadily throughout the years, there is still only one person working full time at the graduate level. Completion rates are low, but this is partly explained by half of the students taking the programmes as part-time students. Students are satisfied, but the system for evaluation of courses should be improved, both to increase students' participation and to ensure follow-up measures. The number of students is low compared to other universities in Iceland and abroad, but it has been steadily increasing in the last years.

### 3.3 Management of Research

The Faculty is currently developing a research plan and applying for grants to hire more staff to strengthen the research productivity, which is low compared to the average at AUI. Planning and landscape architecture are young academic fields in Iceland, and there are a lot of opportunities. However, the Faculty needs to develop its research strategy and priorities for research, as well as a recruitment plan to strengthen priority areas. Setting some specific targets and goals that are measurable will help in tracking progress and measuring the impact of the Faculty (e.g., number and quality of publications, research points in the University evaluation system, graduated MSc and PhD students, post-docs employed). The Faculty needs to develop measures to track impact on societal needs. AUI needs to recognise the specialty of the discipline and consider participations in planning competitions and other design work.

#### 3.3.1 Action Plan for Management of Research

**Table 22. Management of research actions**

	Action	Deliverable	Deadline	Responsible party
<b>Ch. 3.2</b>	<b>Management of Research</b>			
1	Encourage all staff to publish.	Hold a workshop for the employees on how to publish a pre-reviews paper.	June 2022.	Head of Faculty and Head of International Relations and Research.
2	Analyse the lack of human resources within AUI based on the developed researched strategy for P&D.	Recruitment plan for P&D.	June 2022.	Head of Faculty and Selection Committee.
3	Increase funding for research staff.	Apply for more research grants.	Ongoing.	Head of Faculty and all staff members.

### 3.4 Follow-up Processes

The implementation of the Action Plan will be a standing item on Faculty meetings. As well, the Head of the Faculty will report formally to the Rector on the status of the implementation and plans for the following year, no later than 1 December of each year. This will be followed up at the Executive Board of AUI. The Heads of Faculties will submit their reports to the Quality Committee of AUI no later than 15 March. The Quality Committee will write a short report to the Rector no later than 1 April, which will subsequently be discussed in a meeting between the Quality Committee, the Rector and the Heads of the Faculties.