



## Decision of the Accreditation Commission of AQAS

on the study programmes:

- “Interior Architecture” (B.Sc.), Faculty of Fine Arts (Turkish programme)
- “Interior Architecture and Environmental Design” (B.Sc.), Faculty of Fine Arts (Turkish programme)

offered by Istanbul Gelişim University, Turkey

**Based on the report of the expert panel and the discussions of the Accreditation Commission in its 70<sup>th</sup> meeting on 19/20 February 2018, the Accreditation Commission decides:**

1. The study programmes “Interior Architecture” (Bachelor of Science, Turkish programme) and “Interior Architecture and Environmental Design” (Bachelor of Science, Turkish programme) offered by the Faculty of Fine Arts of Istanbul Gelişim University are accredited according to the AQAS criteria for Programme Accreditation.

The accreditation is conditional.

The study programmes essentially comply with the requirements defined by the criteria and thus the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version. The required adjustments can be implemented within a time period of nine months.

2. The conditions have to be fulfilled. The fulfilment of the conditions has to be documented and reported to AQAS no later than **30 November 2018**.
3. The accreditation is given for the period of **six years** and is valid until **30 September 2024**.

### Conditions:

1. The learning outcomes of each programme have to be defined clearly.
2. The intended learning outcomes in each programme have to be reflected more prominently in the design of the curricula; learning paths have to be outlined.
3. Theoretical and practical applications of three-dimensional design and the basics of architectural design have to be strengthened in the curricula. Their use needs to be documented in the course descriptions.
4. The university has to outline a plan for the provision of further working space for students.

<p>The conditions were fulfilled on time. The Accreditation Commission confirms this with its decision of 25.03.2019.</p>
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The following **recommendations** are given for further improvement of the programmes:

1. The collaboration with labour market representatives should be strengthened.
2. Opportunities for group work should be expanded. This could also include interdisciplinary group work with students from other programmes.

With regard to the reasons for this decision the Accreditation Commission refers to the attached assessment report.



## Experts' Report

on the bachelor degree programmes:

- **“Interior Architecture” (Bachelor of Science; Turkish programme)**
- **“Interior Architecture and Environmental Design” (Bachelor of Science; Turkish programme)**

offered by Istanbul Gelişim University

Visit to the university: November 27–30, 2017

### Panel of Experts:

**Pia A. Döll**

bdia - Association of German Interior Architects, Berlin, Germany (labour market representative)

**Prof. Wolfgang Grillitsch**

University of Applied Science Stuttgart, Faculty of Architecture and Design, Germany

**Marcel Modes**

Student at RWTH Aachen University  
(student representative)

**Prof. Dr. Münevver Özgür Özersay**

Eastern Mediterranean University, Faculty of Architecture, Northern Cyprus

### Coordination:

Dr. Dorothee Groeger, Constanze Noack

AQAS, Cologne, Germany

## **Preamble**

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AQAS – Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes – is an independent non-profit organisation supported by more than 85 member institutions, both higher education institutions (HEIs) and academic associations. Since 2002, the agency has been accredited by the German Accreditation Council (GAC). It is therefore a notified body for accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes in Germany.

AQAS is a full member of ENQA and also listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) which confirms that our procedures comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), which all Bologna countries agreed upon as a basis for internal and external quality assurance.

AQAS is an institution founded by and working for higher education institutions and academic associations. The agency is devoted to quality assurance and quality development of both academic studies and teaching in higher education institutions. The activities of AQAS in accreditation are neither restrained to specific academic disciplines or degrees nor to a certain type of higher education institution

## **I. Accreditation procedure**

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This report results from the external review of the Bachelor programmes in “Interior Architecture” and “Interior Architecture and Environmental Design” offered by the Faculty of Fine Arts by Istanbul Gelişim University (IGU).

### **1. Criteria**

The assessment of the programmes is in accordance with a set of criteria for programme accreditation developed by AQAS. The criteria are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) 2015 and feature a set of indicators used to demonstrate the fulfilment of each criterion. However, criteria are met even if single indicators are not fulfilled. The indicators need to be discussed in the context of the programme as not all indicators are necessarily applicable to a programme.

### **2. Approach and methodology**

#### *Initialisation*

Istanbul Gelişim University mandated AQAS to perform the accreditation procedure in June 2017.

The university prepared a Self Evaluation Report (SER). In July 2017, IGU handed in a draft of the SER together with the relevant documentation of the study programmes and an appendix.

The appendix included e.g. an overview over statistical data of the student body, CVs of the teaching staff, information on student services, core information on the main library as well as the undergraduate academic regulations

AQAS checked the SER draft for completeness, comprehensibility and transparency. The final version of the SER was handed in in September 2017.

The accreditation procedure has been officially initialised by a decision of the AQAS Accreditation Commission on 28–29 August, 2017.

### *Nomination of the expert panel*

Composing the expert panel follows the stakeholder principle. Involved are consequently representatives from the respective discipline/s, the labour market and students. Furthermore, AQAS follows the principles for the selection of experts by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).

The Accreditation Commission nominated the expert panel in September 2017. AQAS informed the university thereafter about the members of the expert panel and IGU did not raise any concerns against the composition of the panel.

### *Preparation of the site visit*

Prior to the site visit, the experts reviewed the SER and submitted a short preliminary statement including open questions and potential points in need of additional information. AQAS forwarded these preliminary statements to the university as well as the panel members to increase transparency in the process and upcoming discussions during the site visit.

### *Site visit*

After review of the Self Evaluation Report, the site visit to the university took place 27 – 30 November, 2017. On site, the experts interviewed in separate discussions different stakeholders, such as the management of the university, the programme management, teaching and other staff as well as students, and consulted additional documentation as well as examples of graded work from students' achievements. The visit concluded with presenting preliminary findings by the experts to the university's representatives.

### *Report writing*

Following the site visit, the expert group drafted the following report assessing the fulfilment of the AQAS criteria for programme accreditation. The report included a recommendation to the Accreditation Commission. The report was sent to IGU for comments.

### *Decision*

The experts report together with the comments by IGU form the basis for the AQAS Accreditation Commission to make a decision regarding the accreditation of the programmes. Based on these documents, the Accreditation Commission decided on the accreditation on 19 - 20 February, 2018. AQAS forwarded the decision to IGU. The university had the right to appeal against the decision or any of the imposed conditions.

In March 2018, AQAS published the report and the accreditation result of the accreditation along with the names of the panel of experts.

## **II. General Information on the University**

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Istanbul Gelişim University (IGU) was founded in 2008 as a private vocational school by the Gelişim Foundation for Education, Culture, Health and Social Development. In 2011, the institution acquired university status and has since expanded its programmes and number of students. Today, the university is characterized by a student population of approx. 22.000 and a number of teaching staff of ca. 500.

The university is divided into 3 faculties, 3 institutes, 4 graduate schools and 2 vocational schools, which offer a wide range of graduate and postgraduate programmes in the fields of economics and social sciences, fine arts, engineering and health sciences.

The university pursues the goal of becoming an international education and learning institution by running joint projects with internationally recognised schools, by setting up a global research network and by providing high quality professional education in Turkish and English. A strategic plan

2016-2020 defines these objectives together with those of further developing and implementing graduate education and improving service processes as the main targets to be achieved by the university in the near future.

According to the university, its educational approach follows the principle of creative teaching and participatory learning. The university aims at educating civically engaged, self-reliant individuals by providing excellence and highest quality in its study programmes and by fostering critical intellectual development.

Istanbul Gelişim University offers continuous scholarships, free courses, internships and job opportunities to students. It supports international student exchange programmes. At the same time, it aims to support students' individual, social and academic development during university life. Students can receive consultation and help for their needs at the Psychological Counselling Guidance Unit. As outlined by the university, it supports its students in extra-curricular activities such as student clubs and student councils, summer schools and conferences.

IGU participates in the Erasmus+ programme and encourages student and staff mobility. As outlined by the university, the number of European partner institutions is currently 73. The International Relations Office takes responsibility for the organization of mobility programmes.

The study programmes to be accredited are part of the Faculty of Fine Arts, which currently offers 7 programmes. The faculty is governed by a Dean.

### III. Assessment of the study programmes

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#### 1. Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance

*The programme is subject to the Higher Education Institution's policy and associated procedures for quality assurance, including procedures for the design, approval, monitoring, and revision of the programmes.*

*A quality-oriented culture, focusing on continuous quality enhancement, is in place. This includes regular feedback mechanisms involving both internal and external stakeholders.*

*The strategy, policies, and procedures have a formal status and are made available in published form to all those concerned. They also include roles for students and other stakeholders.*

[ESG 1.1]

#### Description

As outlined by the university, one of Gelişim University's main objectives in quality assurance lies in the effective participation of internal and external stakeholders in all activities in accordance with international quality standards.

The establishment of the quality assurance system of the university is based on ISO 9000 Quality Management System, TS EN ISO-9001: 2015, Higher Education Law No. 2547 and "Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation". The aims, mission and vision of the university are determined according to these criteria and their appropriateness shall be measured.

Feedback of internal and external stakeholders shall be collected within the framework of the University Quality Commission. It consists of the Rector, Vice-rector and 14 members from various faculties, institutes, vocational schools and colleges. The commission is supposed to define, implement and further develop factors necessary for the improvement of quality standards. It thus evaluates reports, surveys and suggestions by students and external stakeholders. Additionally, an Office of Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance has been implemented which is working in coordination with the commission. The main performance indicators set at Istanbul Gelişim University are: A)

Number of Programmes, b) Number of Students, c) Number of Academic Personnel, d) Rate of fullness, e) Number of Programmes teaching in English, f) Erasmus Mobility, g) Student Activities, h) Number of Research Sources, and i) Scientific Publication Numbers of Staff.

A student council offers further opportunities for students to participate in the supervision of programmes, as presented by the university.

The incorporation of feedback of internal and external stakeholders forms the basis for the further development of study programmes. Evaluation reports have to be approved by the Rector, reviewed by Deans and Heads of study programmes and acknowledged by the Senate.

Furthermore, several measures are considered to be in place to monitor a programme's quality: regular course and teaching staff assessment questionnaires as well as student assessment and internship evaluation questionnaires. As mentioned above, the university obtains data covering various activities of its programmes. At the end of term, student's evaluations are said to be taken into account in a success analysis.

Istanbul Gelişim University Graduates and Members Association was established in May 2017 to continue the university's relation with its graduates, to increase information sharing, to foster the graduates' solidarity and to follow-up on their career developments.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

IGU is a young and dynamic university with a clear vision and academic ambitions. Strategic goals have been identified and are monitored via defined targets which in return are measured according to performance indicators. Generally, all members of the university, from management to staff, show a good understanding of quality management. Commitment to quality enhancement is present and reflected, among others, through the motivation to apply for a European accreditation without obligation.

The quality assurance system at IGU is based on national regulations (as defined by the Higher Education Council YÖK), the European Bologna framework and IGU-internal regulations. Decision-making procedures for administrative and academic issues are defined; responsibilities within the programmes are fixed and transparent to students. The quality assurance procedures are working well.

Student involvement is ensured and the panel could clearly see that feedback of students is taken seriously by the university. Students elect their representative for the respective boards. In addition to course evaluations and student representation in university bodies, informal procedures of feedback collection are utilised and work very well. Students reported an issue with the preparation of mock-ups, which had been addressed quickly.

Curriculum documentation is up-to-date with clearly defined expectations. The curriculum contains two internships by which the departments collect feedback from labour markets. However, to make better use of labour market feedback, the panel would suggest increasing the efforts of exchange with professionals and future employees of students (**Finding 1**). The career progression of graduates from the study programmes is followed. The connections to alumni could be fostered further as graduates can provide valuable information on the study programmes.

### **Conclusion**

The criterion is fulfilled. Adequate quality assurance mechanisms are in place and the programmes are subject to the internal procedures for quality enhancement. The experts recommend, however, strengthening the collaboration with the labour market.

## 2. Quality of the Curricula

*The intended learning outcomes of the programme are defined and available in published form. They reflect both academic and labour-market requirements and are up-to-date with relation to the relevant field. The design of the programme supports achievement of the intended learning outcomes.*

*The academic level of graduates corresponds to the requirements of the appropriate level of the European Qualifications Framework.*

*The curriculum's design is readily available and transparently formulated.*

[ESG1.2]

### Description

“Interior Architecture” and “Interior Architecture and Environmental Design” are supposed to train students to become creative, proactive and productive professionals in the design of interior spaces by addressing subjects of colour, texture, aesthetics, design and fine arts in both programmes. The spectrum of interior design ranges from spatial setup to furniture design and construction within visual expression techniques and rules; students shall be qualified to use two- and three-dimensional drawing and presentation programmes which determine the effect of detail, material and colour.

Learning outcomes are defined by the university covering the following – among other – aspects for both programmes: to gain the ability to develop concepts in design and planning areas and to promote sensitive project proposals considering local, regional, national and cultural characteristics; to acquire the competence to evaluate critical approaches and to present creative, innovative and original solutions to potential problems.

Students shall be qualified to evaluate current knowledge in the field and to take into consideration social, environmental and ethical consequences of their work. They are supposed to acquire self-confidence to engage and take responsibility in interdisciplinary studies and projects.

The curricula of both programmes thus convey knowledge about art and design materials and methods, about cultural history as well as legal regulations and procedures in the field.

Written and verbal expression shall be trained in both the native language and at least one foreign language. Students are furthermore supported by course instructors in participating in national and international competitions in order to experience team work, become familiar with the professional working life and to improve their research skills. According to the university, the programmes qualify students to proceed to graduate and doctoral studies.

The university outlines the programme's compatibility with the European and national qualifications framework.

At the time of the site visit (November 2017), “Interior Architecture and Environmental Design” had a total of 350 students, 133 male and 217 female. The programme “Interior Architecture” was opened in the academic year of 2016/17 and the student numbers has since risen to 56 in total, 35 male and 21 female.

Both programmes have a duration of study of 8 semesters and a credit volume of 240. Credits for courses vary between 2 and 15. Turkish courses and a class on the “History of Atatürk's Principles and Reforms” are mandatory – as nationally prescribed by the Turkish Council of Higher Education YÖK – in both programmes.

The first two semesters share a common curriculum with compulsory courses on basic design, drawing, construction science and introduction to project work. Afterwards, the number of electives increases with major-specific and social electives. The pool of major-specific courses con-



tains e. g. Turkish Architecture in the Ottoman Empire, Design Philosophy and Design for Disabled. So-called social electives may be taken in courses covering Law, Economics or Research methods. The final semester contains a dissertation.

The courses in “**Interior Architecture and Environmental Design**” include the following:

Semester 1: Turkish I, Foreign Language I, Basic Design I, Drawing, History of Art and Design I, Technical Drawing, Construction Technology I, Principles of Design

Semester 2: Turkish II, Foreign Language II, Basic Design II, History of Art and Design II, Perspective, Construction Technology II, Introduction to Project

Semester 3: Project I, Furniture Construction, Structure Technology, Indoor Construction I, Material Cognisance, Principles of Ataturk, Departmental Electives

Semester 4: Project II, Furniture Design, Computer Supported Design 2D, Indoor Construction II, Modern Building Materials, Principles of Ataturk II, Social Elective

Semester 5: Project III, Technical Equipment, Visual Expression Methods, Computer Supported Design 3D I, Departmental Electives, Summer Internship

Semester 6: Project IV, Lighting, Relationship between Human and Exterior Space, Computer Supported Design 3D II, Departmental & Social Electives

Semester 7: Project V, Departmental & Social Electives, Summer Internship

Semester 8: Graduation Project, Departmental & Social Electives

The curriculum of “**Interior Architecture**” in semester 1, 2 follows that of “Interior Architecture and Environmental Design”. Afterwards, it covers the following topics:

Semester 3: Project I, Furniture Construction, Structure Technology, Indoor Construction I, Furniture History, Principles of Ataturk, Departmental Electives

Semester 4: Project II, Furniture Design, Computer Supported Design 2D, Wood Construction Techniques, Modern Building Materials, Principles of Ataturk II, Social Elective

Semester 5: Project III, Technical Equipment, Visual Expression Methods, Computer Supported Design 3D I, Departmental Electives, Summer Internship

Semester 6: Project IV, Lighting, Relationship between Human and Exterior Space, Computer Supported Design 3D II, Departmental & Social Electives

Semester 7: Project V, Departmental & Social Electives, Summer Internship

Semester 8: Graduation Project, Departmental & Social Electives

Both study programmes are governed by a Head who is responsible for the coordination of each programme.

The university provides a student handbook which is updated every year under the supervision of the Head of the programme and the approval of the Dean.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

The Faculty of Fine Arts runs two programmes on interior architecture. The experts consider it certainly an advantage to offer two programmes in this important field of study. The two programmes are said to differ according to the admission criteria, the learning outcomes and their curricular elements.

The programme on “Interior Architecture and Environmental Design” accepts students with scores in the central examination test for university admission in Turkish and Mathematics while the new programme “Interior Architecture” requires scores in Mathematics and Science. Concerning the

learning outcomes and the content, the new programme “Interior Architecture” has been described as focusing on core interior architectural aspects, such as conceptual design, application details and furniture design.

The aim of “Interior Architecture and Environmental Design” has been outlined as the analysis and design of interior spaces with regard to their environment, such as close surroundings (e. g. gardens). Students shall thus be trained in assessing and designing not only enclosed but also open space.

The experts welcome these different approaches in the two study programmes and encourage the university to continue this path. However, the learning outcomes of each programme, as verbally expressed during the site visit, are currently not clearly defined and outlined. A clearer distinction as well as further revision of the current learning outcomes are required for each programme based not only on the above-mentioned necessary clarification but also on contemporary advancements and visions of relevant subject-specific issues (**Finding 2**).

Furthermore, the intended learning outcomes as described by staff are not clearly reflected in the curricula of the programmes. First of all, the current curricula are almost identical with the exception of a few courses – both programmes are characterized by courses on design, drawing, materials and project work; the intended difference between the programmes is hence barely visible in the topics dealt with. Second of all, although topics within the curricula are certainly relevant and adequate, their outline and progression over the duration of study does currently not seem to follow clear learning paths with regard to key skills.

Thus, the intended learning outcomes in each programme have to be reflected more prominently in the design of the curricula; learning paths have to be outlined according to the different approaches to interior architecture. The increase in level of complexity concerning different skills and topics should furthermore be clearly transparent in the curricula (**Finding 3**), especially inside the mandatory elements forming the basis of the education of students. A graphical overview of the curriculum according to the learning paths, not just according to individual courses, may be helpful in documenting the progression within the curricula. Within a programme modules can be grouped into certain fields of study which have a specific focus. Those fields could be „Cultural and Historical Knowledge“, „Communication and Presentation Skills“, „Design Knowledge“, „Construction Knowledge“, „Projects“ and „Students’ Profile (Electives)“ – to provide examples. The topics/groups of modules that create a learning path have to be defined by the teaching staff, of course.

Graduates of the programmes can be characterized as generalists in the field, who are eligible for technical aspects as well as design. Skills which are transferred very well via the curricula are technical skills, such as drawing or other two-dimensional designs. The experts are also impressed by the thorough training in communication skills which are essential for future career of the students. However, the amount of time allocated for three-dimensional design is not sufficient to train students in this important regard and thus has to be increased (**Finding 4**, see Chapter 3).

As interior architecture overlaps with various disciplines and working as an interior architect involves the collaboration with many different professions, the panel would recommend to increase interdisciplinary offerings in the curricula. Currently, a number of social electives is assigned in the curricula to allow students to choose courses from a variety of non-departmental topics; an option which the experts consider very positively. Yet, the panel would encourage the departments to offer interdisciplinary learning in which interior architects actually work together with e.g. architects and engineers on joint projects, possibly within the framework of the elective course system.

Both programmes contain internships which help students apply their knowledge and gain experiences in the work field. The university supports students in finding places by collaborating with the Chamber of Interior Architects. Students are encouraged to reflect on the internship by drafting a

mandatory internship report. This approach of integrating the internships into the curricula and the learning progression of students is well chosen and implemented by the departments.

All courses of the curriculum and their functions are documented and it is defined which elements are compulsory and which are electives. A typical course plan with an overview of all courses is available. As mentioned above, the departments should consider providing a graphic outline of the learning path of students based on key skills to be acquired.

All curricular elements are assigned to credits related to the expected workload. The academic degree awarded to the graduates corresponds to the learning outcomes and the requirements of the appropriate level of the European and the National Qualification Framework.

### **Conclusion**

The criterion is partly fulfilled. Intended learning outcomes are available, yet they are not clearly defined for each programme. Furthermore, the refined learning outcomes need to be reflected more prominently in the design of the curricula. Knowledge and key skills required to work as an interior architect are sufficiently conveyed via the curriculum with the exception of three-dimensional design which has to be strengthened. These skills along with the learning paths of students concerning important skills of interior architecture need to be documented in the course descriptions.

### **3. Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Students**

*The delivery of material encourages students to take an active role in the learning process.*

*Students are assessed using accessible criteria, regulations, and procedures, which are made readily available to all participants and which are applied consistently.*

*Assessment procedures are designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.*

[ESG 1.3]

#### **Description**

##### Learning, Teaching

According to the university, various teaching and learning methods are being employed within the study programmes: courses, laboratories, seminars, technical trips and field studies as well as group work, project, on-site applications and social activities.

The university encourages student mobility, especially within the framework of Erasmus+. As described by IGU, the Foreign Affairs Office, a body within the Rectorate, oversees all administrative procedures of exchange students and promotes mobility activities. Its Erasmus Coordination Office is said to work closely together with study programme coordinators in the application and selection procedure offered once a year.

The Dean of the faculty and the Heads are authorized for the selection of (new) courses. The Planning Unit provides course schedules and aims at preventing course overlaps.

##### Assessment

Courses usually contain a midterm and a final exam which are based on the theoretical and practical course content. A Planning Unit bears responsibility for the organization of the examinations. Times and locations are being published on the student information system OBIS. Make-up exams for excused students are being offered. The "Associate Degree and Undergraduate Education-Training and Examination Regulations" apply.

## Experts' Evaluation

Teaching and learning methods are generally suitable to achieve the intended learning outcomes. They support an interlacing of theoretical and practical aspects and they take into account the diversity of students and their needs. Classes and workshops are taught by committed instructors who apply a variety of didactic methods. Drawing courses train students well in two-dimensional design, as could be experienced by the experts. Mock-ups are prepared in workshops and in 6 project courses which develop from the design of a single room to a more complex design of a larger building. These project courses are among the favourite courses of students and provide first opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge to practice.

Students also receive training in three-dimensional design-basics, one of the core skills that interior architects have to obtain. The panel gained the impression that the amount of three-dimensional design in the curricula is currently not sufficient to train students adequately in this essential skill, like basic elements to create space, proportion, scale, organisation of space etc. The opportunities to practice three-dimensional design thus have to be expanded. Working with models, putting ideas into practice, realizing the limits of possibilities are valuable and essential experiences students have to gather. Students should not be afraid to fail or re-start when an idea does not work out/materialize. This applies especially to the practical application of skills. Students should be given as much possibilities to work with different kinds of material – be it only cheap and easily available material – to practice physical model-building. A trial and error-approach should be fostered which allows for failure and review. 3-dimensional design thus needs to be a mandatory part in design, project and other course work and it should be clearly described and outlined in the course descriptions (**Finding 4**, see Chapter 2). The increased training of three-dimensional design will improve the ability of students to transfer their knowledge to situations outside the university context.

The panel of experts would like to recommend that these project courses as well as other project works should be used to foster group work of students (**Finding 5**). As it is an essential characteristic of students' future employment to work jointly with different stakeholders, the importance of problem-solving skills and the ability to work successfully in groups cannot be stressed enough. The mutual understanding of the working methods and the way of solving problems in projects is an elemental aspect in the later successful cooperation. The provision of suitable working space for this kind of group work has to be enlarged accordingly (**Finding 6**, see Chapter 6).

Examinations and workload of courses can be considered adequate and fair; students report on examinations which require hard work, yet are fair and appropriate. Nevertheless, the amount of examinations seems quite high and the panel encourages the university to consider ways of reducing the number of assessments – within the framework of regulations provided by YÖK. Assessment and grading regulations are defined in the undergraduate policies available to students.

Project work in the respective courses is assessed according to a standardized project assessment grading system, which the panel considers very positively. Students and instructors are thus aware of the basis of assessment and it provides a framework which is transparent to the involved parties. Assessment in general is carried out in a variety of forms and seems fair and transparent as it has been reported by students.

Examinations usually take place during fixed time periods allocated in the academic calendar. A planning unit organizes the examination schedule to avoid any kind of overlap. Suitable opportunities to re-sit an exam are offered. Regulations to compensate for disadvantages, illness, absence, or other circumstances that may affect a student are published.

## Conclusion

The criterion is partly fulfilled. Learning and teaching methods are generally adequate to achieve the intended learning outcome. However, theoretical and practical applications of three-

dimensional design have to be strengthened in the curricula to support students in acquiring this essential skill. Applications need to be documented in the course descriptions.

Furthermore, opportunities for group work should be expanded. Assessment forms are varied and carried out in a fair and transparent manner.

#### **4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification**

*Consistently applied, pre-defined, published regulations are in place which cover student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.*

[ESG 1.4]

##### **Description**

###### Admittance to the study programme

Admission to the programs is based on a central examination system regulated by the national Council of Higher Education. The requirement for admission to Gelişim University is a pre-defined score in the Transition to Higher Education Examination and the Undergraduate Placement Examination. Furthermore, students must pass a foreign language proficiency test if a programme is offered in English. Opportunities for transition to IGU from vocational high schools or other higher education institutions are subject to the “Regulations on Transfer among Associate and Undergraduate Degree Programs, Double Major, and Subspecialty and the Principles of Credit Transfer among Institutions in Higher Education Institutions”.

IGU charges tuition fees but provides financial support such as scholarships and discounts.

###### Creditation and Recognition

Istanbul Gelişim University is part of the European Higher Education Area and applies ECTS credits to all its study programmes. ECTS credits and workload are assigned on the basis of the weekly course hours, midterm and final exams as well as other assignments, laboratory work, seminars and other learning component. 1 ECTS credit equals 25.5 hours of workload. In addition, IGU uses local credits.

Outgoing students sign a learning agreement and receive full academic recognition of their courses taken abroad. According to the university, ECTS transfer is guaranteed. Likewise, incoming students receive a Transcript of Records with ECTS credits and grades for recognition at their home institution.

Further transitional conditions are provided by the “IGU Course Directive on Equivalence and Adaptation Guidelines”.

###### Certification

Students receive a Diploma Supplement on completion of their studies in English and Turkish. The Diploma is based on the model developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO and provides a standardized description of the nature, level, context and status of the studies completed by its holder.

##### **Experts' Evaluation**

Formal procedures concerning the student-life-cycle are in place and are working well. IGU receives students via the central placement examination test carried out by the Higher Education Council; the university decided against an individual talent test for admission which may be applied for study programmes of artistic or sports-related content. Qualitative and quantitative data on the admission of past cohorts (e.g. number, composition) is available.

Vertical and horizontal transfer from other universities and within the university is regulated. The university offers the possibility of studying a double degree, which the panel of experts considers very favourably. Several students make use of this opportunity, especially by combining the two programmes in Interior Architecture.

Great support is granted for students wanting to go abroad. IGU participates in Erasmus+ and offers a network of partner universities for study abroad. English language courses as preparation are offered free of charge. Formal procedures for recognition of learning achievements are established and work well; learning agreements are used. The department of "Interior Architecture and Environmental Design" has received incoming and sent outgoing students to European universities, in particular 4 incoming and 3 outgoing students, which the experts appreciate. The panel encourages the university in further expanding the network of partners.

Upon graduation students receive a diploma supplement.

### **Conclusion**

The criterion is fulfilled. Well-designed procedures for aspects of the student-life-cycle are implemented.

## **5. Teaching Staff**

*The composition (quantity, qualifications, professional and international experience, etc.) of the staff is appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.*

*Staff involved with teaching is qualified and competent to do so.*

*Transparent procedures are in place for the recruitment and development of the staff.*

*[ESG 1.5]*

### **Description**

As outlined by the university, human resource management is supported by the "Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Office" with the aim of a consistent distribution and equal workload of members among the faculty. Currently, IGU employs overall 466 full time academic staff, according to the numbers given in the self-evaluation report. Among those are professors, associated professors, assistant professors, teaching and research assistants as well as lecturers.

Based on the information given by the university, teaching staff for both programmes includes 1 professor, 1 Assistant Professor and 1 instructor. Additional lecturers shall be hired each semester.

IGU provides an orientation programme for newly hired professors under the guidance of the Heads and supported by research assistants. Regular training programmes shall be offered to staff as well as English courses especially for administrative staff.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

Committed and engaged teaching staff is surely among the strengths of the university. The experts commend the university on their well qualified and enthusiastic instructors. The Heads of department show a strong commitment to educate and support students as best as possible.

Staff of the departments is composed of experienced as well as younger instructors which constitutes a favourable mixture of talents and experience from the point of view of the experts. The teaching staff is predominantly assigned to one of the programmes, but it is possible that instructors teach courses in the other department. The experts welcome this collaboration.

Sufficient teaching capacities are available. The university has been successful in increasing the number of well qualified instructors since the handing in of the self-evaluation report. With regard

to rising student numbers – especially in the new programme – the university should continue its efforts in hiring further personnel. Procedures for recruitment and hiring of teaching staff are in place and adhere to national regulations. As interior architecture requires a considerable amount of individual student advising and counselling, the availability of instructors for students is important. Generally, students feel well taken care of by their instructors and they reported very positively on the good relationship between themselves and their teachers.

Procedures are in place to ensure appropriate didactic qualifications of the teaching staff, e.g. via the Centre for Continuous Learning. Conference participation is supported by the university by covering travel costs.

### **Conclusion**

The criterion is fulfilled. Teaching staff is sufficient for the deliverance of the programmes. The experts met committed and well qualified instructors who receive ample support by the university.

## **6. Learning Resources and Student Support**

*Appropriate facilities and resources are available for learning and teaching activities.*

*Guidance and support is available for students to advise on achieving successful completion of their studies.*

[ESG 1.6]

### **Description**

#### Facilities and resources

IGU is distributed over 3 campuses in the neighbourhood of Avcılar, Istanbul. Overall, facilities shall comprise 24.400 m<sup>2</sup> of indoor areas with classrooms, conference rooms, reading rooms and exhibition rooms. Students can benefit from 13 fully equipped computer laboratories and several libraries, as defined by the university. In addition, the campuses host cafeterias, health centres, a fitness club and a radio and television studio.

Students can access learning material and online courses via a Learning Management System provided by IGU. A Student Information System and a Student Mail System facilitate registration and the information exchange. The Department of Information Technology monitors all soft- and hardware systems and IT areas for students and staff.

IGU Library and Documentation Centre currently contains ca. 115.000 items of learning material, including electronic sources such as E-Books and online journals. The seating capacity amounts to 200. According to the university, the library and documentation centre is designed to meet all kinds of information and documentation requirements of its students, academic and administrative staff.

The study programme is financed mainly by tuition fees. According to IGU, the financial resources of the university are determined and distributed in the budget period every year considering the physical and technical requirements for the sustainability of programmes as well as student and teaching staff numbers.

#### Information, consultation and guidance

Information to interested students is distributed in so-called Promotion Days, in which the university presents its programmes and schools. During registration, students receive guidance and support by the Directorate of Public Affairs as well as by the Head and research assistants.

According to the self-evaluation report, IGU aims to support students' individual, social and academic development during university life. The university applies an academic advisor support system in which advisors help students with all academic as well as administrative issues during

their studies. Instructors offer regular consultation hours. The university highlights the Psychological Guidance, Counselling and Research Center, the Centre for Continuing Education as well as the Office of Career Development as further support units which offer guidance in personal as well as professional development and growth of students' personalities.

Among the services offered by the Office of Career Development are consultation, seminars and conferences, the invitation of experts and specialists as well as the allocation of internships. The Psychological Guidance, Counselling and Research Center holds meetings, seminars and organizes social activities to help students adapt.

Students who wish to do a semester or internship abroad may apply for Erasmus+ or Mevlana, an international student and teaching staff exchange programme established by the initiative of Turkey. Support is provided by the International Relations Office and by research assistants. According to the university, the budget allocated by the National Agency to IGU is used in its entirety for financial support to students.

The university offers assistance to a diverse student body: Working students benefit from courses carried out via distance education. International students receive support by the International Relations Office, which organizes an orientation programme and offers guidance concerning visa and other administrative issues. Students with disabilities are supported by a Disabled Student Unit within the framework of the "IGU Regulation on the Advisory and Coordination of Higher Education Institutions". The unit provides guidance and makes arrangements to facilitate the student life of disabled students. For example, special examinations are offered which address the individual need of the student. According to the university, the campus and its facilities are suitable for disabled students.

IGU actively supports students in their effort to found student clubs and student councils. Moreover, it organizes summer schools and conferences. These bodies invite various experts and specialists from private and public sectors to the university and they also organize technical visits.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

Course descriptions are available which contain learning outcomes, teaching and assessment forms. Workload is assigned accordingly. Courses are offered so that no overlap occurs.

Learning material is available in several libraries distributed over the campus. A specialized library at the Faculty of Fine Arts provides textbooks and reading material. Access to databases is granted via the campus computers as well as home devices of students.

The departments offer special rooms for model-preparation, drawing and other programme related activities. A 3-D printer is available.

However, as sufficient working space is essential for the achievement of the learning outcomes, the experts have a critical perspective on the amount of space currently allocated for students. Further space is required for students to work individually as well as in groups, both in class and via self-study outside class. Providing additional design studios and co-working places offers several benefits: 1) group work that is important for the later professional activity is promoted. The coordination with others as well as the development of solutions with the consideration of other opinions and ideas, the definition of a common goal and the communicative abilities are trained; 2) students can improve their skills in model-making and support each other; 3) and finally interdisciplinary work, as an important part of later professional life, may be facilitated by offering common working space to students of different programmes. In addition, students can benefit from the knowledge of the other departments and an understanding of joint work on projects is trained early on. The university has to provide a plan for the provision of sufficient working space for mandatory courses as well as for self-study (**Finding 6**). The expansion of the campus, entailed by the impressive purchase of a new building of considerable size, will surely offer opportu-



nities to create new spaces. Furthermore, students would benefit from a wider spectrum of hand-crafting tools and machines in the design studios.

All basic services for student support are being offered by IGU on a high level. Introductory offerings are available for new and potential students. Teachers offer counselling hours and are furthermore available to students outside these time slots. Several administrative units provide guidance and counselling, among them the Psychological Counselling Unit and the Career Service. The Career Service helps students in finding internships; these internships are credited according to the regulations by the Higher Education Council. Students wanting to go abroad receive information and support by the Erasmus office. The panel is convinced that students are well taken care of and the university offers any kind of service and support needed for successful studies.

Student diversity is considered when allocating, planning, and providing learning resources and student support.

### **Conclusion**

The criterion is partly fulfilled. Learning resources and student support are provided with the exception of further working space for students. The university has to outline a plan for the provision of this working space.

## **7. Information**

*Data is collected from relevant sources and stakeholders, analysed, and used for the effective management and continuous enhancement of the programme. [ESG 1.7]*

*Impartial and objective, up-to-date information regarding the programme and its qualifications is published regularly. This published information is appropriate for and available to relevant stakeholders. [ESG 1.8]*

### **Description**

According to the university, IGU gathers information from internal and external stakeholders and holds regular meetings with academic staff, students and local, regional and national stakeholders. Questionnaires among students are regularly distributed and analysed. Deans, the Heads of department and lecturers are supposed to monitor the scope of programmes with regard to changes in the business world. The Office of Career Development regularly examines the potential employment opportunities of graduates.

The university publishes information on study programmes on its website. Students and staff receive information via the Student Information System, the Student Mail System and the Personnel Information System. The university confirms that it collects data on students' profiles and progression, their satisfaction as well as on the effectiveness of teachers with the help of an information system.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

The data collection system at IGU is elaborate; data is made available to the management, the Dean and programme specific to the Head of department. Trends in student and staff development are thus monitored well. The department on "Interior Architecture and Environmental Design", as the programme is already running for several years, keeps statistics about the employment situation of its graduates. Similar procedures will be applied for the new programme on "Interior Architecture".

Potential employment fields of students are defined and labour market feedback is collected via internship reports and internship collaborations. As reported by labour market representatives, there is a growing demand for interior architects, especially in Istanbul. The panel would suggest increasing the collection of feedback from the labour market (see Chapter 1).

Statistical data on students includes the composition of the student body, the graduation rate as well as the amount of time needed for the completion of the programmes. The departments can thus monitor students' progression and evaluate its own performance.

Course descriptions are available. In addition to the standardized descriptions accessible online, instructors hand out more elaborate syllabi on the first day of class, a practice which is welcomed by the experts. A revision of course descriptions will be needed in case the curriculum is restructured. The panel would recommend outlining the learning paths concerning different skills and subjects in a graphical way so that the progression of the curriculum and the achievement of the learning outcomes become more transparent (see Chapter 2).

General information on the programmes and the university is available in a coherent manner. This includes the learning outcomes, the qualification awarded and the teaching and assessment forms. Admission criteria and procedures are centrally provided by the Higher Education Council.

### **Conclusion**

The criterion is fulfilled. The information management, both internally and to externals, works very well.

## **IV. Recommendations of the panel of experts**

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The panel of experts recommends to accredit **with conditions** the study programmes

- **“Interior Architecture”** (Bachelor of Science),
- **“Interior Architecture and Environmental Design”** (Bachelor of Science)

offered by **Istanbul Gelişim University**.

Findings:

1. The collaboration with labour market representatives should be strengthened.
2. The learning outcomes of each programme have to be defined more clearly.
3. The intended learning outcomes in each programme have to be reflected more prominently in the design of the curricula; learning paths have to be outlined.
4. Theoretical and practical applications of three-dimensional design and the basics of architectural design have to be strengthened in the curricula. Their use needs to be documented in the course descriptions.
5. Opportunities for group work should be expanded. This could also include interdisciplinary group work with students from other programmes.
6. The university has to outline a plan for the provision of further working space for students.