

Research_at_WUT

At WUT, research is carried out in different units (within departments, outside faculties, across faculties etc.), which provides some flexibility and thus, opportunities. Research at WUT is largely responding to the national system, accounting to the national system and rated good to excellent by the national system. Still, if looking at the institutional strategic plan and the research strategy provided to the team during the second visit, it can be said that it also reflects highly on the European Research Area and related research agendas as point of reference.

WUT already has a vice-rector in charge of research. The team recommends that this post is given the authority and the responsibility to act as the research manager whose primary duty is to boost research. It is vital to identify strong points ? research foci ? of WUT to be addressed as a major player in that subject area to draw large funds of international agencies. The research manager is expected to match the potential within the university to the external conditions and bridge the departments and the research centres.

As the team could observe during the visits, WUT is highly preoccupied with the question on how to improve the research performance of their academic staff, to sustain results already reached and, even more important, how to do better. It appeared to the team that the driving question at this moment is how to set incentives to attract a larger portion of academics to engage in research.

Challenges to promote research activities

While hard sciences have quite a strong research tradition, this cannot be said for the majority of WUT academic staff. The team was told that roughly only 30% of the teaching staff is research active. A second challenge is the overload of academic staff in teaching and administrative work, which decreases the chances to put efforts into research. Previously, not as much importance has been given to research, now WUT faces the problem on how to find and/or distribute time between research and teaching. Thirdly, the team was told that funding for research highly depends on national and international research grants; furthermore, research activities are seen as unpredictable in terms of income compared to teaching activities.

Activities towards more research activities and results: How is the institution trying to do it?

Based on what the team has learned through SER and the site visits, WUT tries to change the situation by the following activities:

One important step is the monitoring of research potential and strategic areas. The team was told that WUT is currently preparing a framework in order to assess the research potential, thus clarifying strategically important research areas. From discussion with faculty members it needs to be mentioned that the evaluation of research potential should reflect on the diverse forms that research and artistic creation is carried out, as well as to integrate the diversity of output. During site visits staff members of some faculties mentioned that the evaluation of research activities seems to be highly driven by approaches from hard sciences. This puts high pressure on academic staff, but even more it is considered inadequate for doing research and sharing results in other fields (for example, arts, music, but also humanities). The team supports WUT's efforts in tackling the issue of identifying strategic research foci, emphasizing that WUT management should recognise that there are a number of models for research activities, not all of which involve external project funding. WUT should be aware of problem-focused, interdisciplinary research called Mode II. Due to the fact that national research assessment is slow (2007 results reported in SER), WUT should devise a more dynamic assessment of research at the institutional level.

Furthermore, WUT is reconsidering teaching and research loads. Here, the team would like to underline that the younger staff members need special attention, and for two reasons: first, they are less experienced in both research and teaching; second, it is harder for them to gain access to journals for publishing or applying for research grants

Research_at_WUT

as they are just starting to develop their networks and collecting experience in these activities. WUT plans to give higher teaching loads or other additional duties to academic staff not interested in doing research, thus balancing the workload between different academic profiles.

As applying for research funds is crucial, WUT has set up of the central support Department of Accession and Implementation of projects (PAID), directly bound to the vice-rector in charge of research. Another approach for stimulating further research activities is the return of 7.5% of overhead costs from research grants (until now, overhead costs from research grants have been kept at central university level). The team recommends to look further into possibilities of creating internal research funding (seed money), institutional incentives (matching funds), and supports provided like the abovementioned PAID department in order to make research activities more attractive and feasible for the academic staff. In addition to this, the team recommends to use goal-oriented staff mobility as well as attract researchers and teaching staff from other countries as well as other Romanian regions to ensure fresh perspectives on WUT's practices. Here, as it has been mentioned already in chapter 2, WUT should ensure a good coordination between the different support structures involved to use the whole