

Service_to_Society_at_LBU

As part of the self-evaluation process the university undertook a stakeholder analysis and the focus group for employers provided important feedback on the need for graduates to be better prepared for employment. Views from these focus groups included the need to move away from teaching activities overly based on, often outdated, theory; for improved transferable skills and general competences; the barriers to effective internships; for effective, as opposed to certified, foreign language skills; and for a greatly improved student careers service. The team had hoped to explore some of these themes in the meeting with employers. However, the employers represented at the meeting did not feel that there were any issues of substance that needed addressing at the university in terms of graduate preparedness for work. They were keen for the university to continue moving closer to companies but, on the whole, professed themselves satisfied with their relationship with the university.

The university has established an Advisory Board comprising over 15 local and regional employers, the Mayor of Sibiu and senior figures from the university. This was seen as being of value by the employers the team met during the first visit. However, the university acknowledged that the Board was not working effectively and this might, in part, be the result of the lack of a historical base to such industry partnerships in the Romanian higher education system. The university was clear that such partnerships had to be founded in a 'real' working together but it was not obvious to the team how this was being taken forward. While all agreed that this was an essential relationship, in some respects it appeared that both parties were waiting for the other to take the initiative. Equally, although there was broad agreement on the value of student internships with local companies there was little, by way of concrete examples, of broader knowledge exchange or the role of applied research in supporting the local/ regional community. This might help develop the 'real' working relationships that all wanted to exist. The partnership with Continental Automotive Systems was provided as an example of best practice and there were some department-specific applied research links with companies. This did not however appear to be part of a systematic approach to forming a partnership with the university. It was the view of the team that there was much greater potential for exploiting the 'Knowledge Triangle' of education, research and innovation (business). This can help to create a new breed of entrepreneurs, enable individuals and multi-disciplinary teams to develop breakthrough ideas and allow such innovation to be linked to business in the regional and wider economy.