

Instituto Superior da Maia (ISMAI)

EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the Instituto Superior da Maia (ISMAI), Portugal. The evaluation took place during the academic year 2009-10, with a preliminary visit to ISMAI from 9 to 11 November 2009, and the main visit to ISMAI from 28 February to 3 March 2010.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture.

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement.

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic planning
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision making and strategic planning as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a 'fitness for (and of) purpose' approach:

- What is the institution trying to do? This question refers to the mission of the institution. A clear mission is important in order to decide on priorities, strategic objectives, and the means to reach these objectives.
- How is the institution trying to do it? The evaluation investigates the way in which the institution attempts to fulfil this mission in terms of organisation, governing structures and processes.
- How does it know it works? This question points at the necessity to have sound internal quality arrangements and monitoring systems in place. The evaluation team looks at the institutional policies and practices regarding quality and other relevant processes, in terms of actors, structures and procedures.
- How does the institution change in order to improve? This is a key question for the IEP. It is the institution's capacity for change and improvement that allows it to deal with a fast-changing environment and to respond to evolving needs.

1.2 Institutional context

ISMAI is a young higher education institution, dating back to the early 1990s, a period in which there was a rapid expansion in Portuguese higher education, including the creation of many private institutions. ISMAI is situated on the outskirts of Maia town, part of the densely-populated metropolitan area of Oporto in the northwest of Portugal.

ISMAI is a private higher education institution, governed by a cooperative structure known as Maiêutica which owns ISMAI, employs the ISMAI staff and provides ISMAI with most of its non-academic management support. While private and autonomous, ISMAI operates under the legislation governing higher education institutions and therefore requires state accreditation in order, for example, to provide doctoral programmes, and must follow the same regulations as all other HEIs in Portugal, public or private, for example regarding the length of the new Bologna degree cycles, or the criteria for the promotion of academic staff.

1.3 The self evaluation process

In accordance with the IEP guidelines, ISMAI appointed a self-evaluation committee which was chaired by José Quieroz Marques dos Santos. This committee was composed of eleven academic and administrative staff and a student representative, and was supported by a secretariat of three persons. The committee produced a 26 page self-evaluation report, accompanied by appendices and other supporting documentation, which was sent to the IEP team in advance of the preliminary visit.

The ISMAI community was well informed and became actively engaged in the process of compiling the self-evaluation report. The evaluation team found the report itself to be quite informative; however, it offered relatively little depth with respect to addressing the identified challenges.

The first visit by the evaluation team took place from 9 to 11 November 2009. At the end of this visit, and in order to complement the information received through the self-evaluation report, the evaluation team asked ISMAI to provide additional information on a number of important topics. These included the statutes of ISMAI, Maiêutica and of the ISMAI student union, more information regarding the ISMAI governing board and ISMAI's educational, scientific and cultural project, its plans to create a new academic department, and its budget allocation. Additional analytical information was also requested regarding students, alumni and various ISMAI committees. This additional information was provided in advance of the main visit, which took place from 28 February to 3 March 2010.

During its two visits, the evaluation team met the ISMAI chairman; vice-chairmen; self-evaluation committee; external stakeholders; heads of department, academic staff and students from psychology and communications sciences, and from physical education and sport; central staff from

the finance office, the quality office, the secretary's office, the international office and the student ombudsman.

1.4 The evaluation team (later Team)

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Prof. Sokratis K. Katsikas, former Rector of the University of the Aegean, Greece, team chair
- Prof. Luc Van de Velde, Rector of the Hogeschole Brussels, Belgium
- Prof. Richard Lewis, former Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Open University, United Kingdom
- Ms. Rahel Imobersteg, Secretary General of the Swiss Students Union, Switzerland
- Mr. Lewis Purser, Director of Academic Affairs, Irish Universities Association, Ireland, team coordinator.

The Team would like to thank the ISMAI chairman, Domingos Oliveira e Silva, and all the staff and students for their warm welcome and generous hospitality provided in Maia, as well as for the many interesting and useful discussions during its preliminary and main evaluation visits. The Team would particularly like to thank Alexandra Neves, Marta Maia and Cristina Lima who, as liaison persons for the Team, provided friendly and efficient support in preparation for and during the visits.

2. Methodology

The methodology used by the Team was based around an in-depth examination of the short and long term objectives of ISMAI, as contained in its mission statement and other strategic and operational documents, and presented to the Team in the self-evaluation report. These objectives were explored further with the full range of persons, both internal to ISMAI and external, whom the Team met during its visits to Maia.

This process also allowed for an examination by the Team of the external and internal constraints facing ISMAI, building on the analysis already undertaken in the self-evaluation report, as well as of ISMAI's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Based on the above, and having explored its emerging findings fully through the series of discussions in both visits, the Team was able to develop and propose a series of recommendations contained in this report, to assist with ISMAI's own objective of improving the quality of its activities.

It should be emphasised that the recommendations made by the Team are not standardised solutions transferred from any other higher education institution, nor are they requirements which ISMAI must imperatively follow. The recommendations have been developed specifically for the unique situation of ISMAI, by the Team, based on its experience from across a number of higher education systems. These recommendations are put forward as proposals which the Team believes will support ISMAI in its own improvement. This is in keeping with the voluntary nature of the Institutional Evaluation Programme which ISMAI has entered into.

3. Mission, vision and strategy

The ISMAI self-evaluation report provided clear mission and vision statements for the institution. The report also identified a number of other key ISMAI strategic goals, including the objective of attaining university status.

As with other higher education institutions, these mission and vision statements should be the starting points for an institutional strategic plan, and specific operational plans, annual plans, etc. In order to be effective and to have a better rate of implementation, these plans should be specific, measurable, attractive, realistic, timetabled (SMART).

The Team found elements for such plans during its visits to ISMAI, including annual plans. The existing form of strategic planning, in so far as it is explicit at ISMAI, appears to be based on annual activity plans. However, these and other planning elements had been developed by a very small group at the head of the institution, and were not well known outside of this small group of persons. The Team considered that in terms of ISMAI's overall objectives, it would be necessary for a broader group of institutional actors to be involved in their development.

As discovered by ISMAI in the SWOT analysis it undertook as part of the self-evaluation process, the institution has challenges to overcome regarding its internal organisation and communication processes. This is reflected in the finding by the Team of the lack of knowledge across ISMAI regarding the strategic and operational plans, and the fragmented nature of these. During its discussions, the Team found that this lack of awareness of the institution's strategy was not limited to the academic community, but was also prevalent among many of ISMAI's main external partners, with whom it has strong and well developed operational links. The Team considered that it would be very beneficial to ISMAI for its main stakeholders to be more aware of and connected with the institution's strategic plans.

The Team therefore recommends that ISMAI enter into a careful and full consideration of the following:

- ▶ Work towards developing a comprehensive strategy to reach its goals.
- ▶ Develop a process and procedures for strategic planning, involving the whole academic community, and with input from external stakeholders. This process should be the responsibility of a standing committee, as proposed in the self-evaluation report.

4. Governance and management

The Team devoted a considerable amount of time during its two visits to trying to understand the governance and management structures, policies and practices at ISMAI. The areas explored by the Team included the relationship between ISMAI and Maiêutica; the relationship between the ISMAI governing council and the academic departments, research units and various service units; the manner in which leaders and managers are identified, selected and developed at ISMAI; and the decision making processes at each level within ISMAI.

The fact that ISMAI has successfully developed and grown over 20 years indicates that its leadership during these years has been effective. However, the institution has changed considerably during these years, both in terms of overall size, in terms of its structures – both academic and other, in terms of its strategic goals, and in terms of its relations with the external environment. In particular, the strong emphasis currently placed at ISMAI on reaching university status and on obtaining doctoral awarding powers, means that – if successful - more changes will occur.

Having considered these questions at length, the Team was of the considered opinion that these changes in ISMAI's size, structures and strategic goals will require rethinking the governance and management model which has served ISMAI well during the first twenty years of its existence.

The Team therefore recommends that ISMAI enter into a careful and full consideration of the following:

- ▶ Clarify the relationship between ISMAI and Maiêutica, so as to make more explicit the decision making process
- ▶ Explore the benefits of greater devolved responsibility to academic and other structures, and the consequent redistribution of decision making powers to these devolved levels
- ▶ Change the way Heads of Departments are selected, giving them a greater role in the governance and management of ISMAI
- ▶ Enhance and exploit the full potential of ISMAI's academic community, including students, by widening their participation in advisory and decision making processes. This should include the widening of formal student participation in Department-level advisory and decision-making bodies.

5. Financial management

The Team also examined the broad situation regarding financial management at ISMAI. Given ISMAI's status as a private higher education institution and the need to ensure its own future, this aspect assumes even greater importance than might normally be the case. The relationship between ISMAI and Maiêutica is particularly important in this context. The Team was pleased to note that despite the difficult external economic environment, ISMAI appeared to have a good financial standing.

Having considered the strategic developments underway at ISMAI, and the changes these will mean for current ISMAI governance and management structures and practices, the Team came to the conclusion that these changes will also need to be mirrored at institutional and departmental levels in terms of financial management and the financial decision-making process. This will require greater levels of devolved financial responsibility within ISMAI. Achieving this will require substantial change from the current financial management practices.

In addition, as ISMAI has identified, pursuing its main goal of achieving university status will require significant long-term investment and changes in the way expenditure is currently allocated. There was evidence of awareness of these requirements within ISMAI's most senior leadership; however, the potential real costs of these investments and changes did not appear to have been fully considered.

In this context, given that ISMAI's finances are currently based almost entirely on income derived from its students, it is clear that ISMAI will need to consider much greater levels of income diversification than is currently the case.

The Team therefore recommends that ISMAI enter into a careful and full consideration of the following:

- ▶ As part of the proposed changes in governance and management, plan for greater levels of devolved financial responsibility within ISMAI
- ▶ Undertake a full financial planning exercise to assess the future costs of achieving ISMAI's main strategic goals
- ▶ Put in place a strategy to achieve increased diversity of ISMAI's income.

6. Human resources management

The Team spent a considerable amount of time during its two visits discussing issues relating to human resources management, both with ISMAI senior management and with academic and non-academic staff. The Team was informed by most of the staff it met that they were pleased to work at ISMAI, and that a large majority of them were motivated. The Team heard a number of direct statements from staff that “ISMAI respects their work”, and that the relations between staff and students were good.

However, despite these overall positive sentiments, the Team was not able to identify clear human resource policies in place across ISMAI, in particular regarding recruitment and promotion criteria for various categories of staff, and regarding possibilities for staff to develop their career paths at ISMAI. Given the overall strategic objectives of ISMAI, these policies and practices will be necessary in order to achieve the sustainable development of the institution, including an increase in the number of PhD holders among the academic staff.

The Team however learned that ISMAI has developed a draft Teaching Career Statute, but that it was waiting for national legislation in order to start using this statute on a formal basis. The Team was repeatedly informed that the current heavy teaching loads at ISMAI leave little time for other important activities, such as research, including the time needed to work towards a PhD. However, it was also noted that many staff were teaching additional hours because of the financial advantages of doing so. In parallel, the large number of part-time staff at ISMAI is also a limiting factor in terms of developing more research activities. This *de facto* situation would appear to be in contradiction with ISMAI’s stated strategic objectives and ambitions, which will require a considerable development of its research activities.

The Team therefore recommends that ISMAI enter into a careful and full consideration of the following:

- ▶ Establish a staff development policy, including clearer policies to develop a significantly larger cohort of PhD holders
- ▶ Strengthen auxiliary support staff across ISMAI
- ▶ Increase the proportion of full-time staff employed at ISMAI, especially at senior levels.

7. Teaching and learning

Given its specific mission and role, the most important activities at ISMAI are those associated with teaching and learning. The Team was delighted to find that staff members were actively engaged with the range of activities in this overall area, that the atmosphere across the campus was positive, and that the feedback from stakeholders was encouraging.

The students met by the Team during the two visits were generally happy, confirming the satisfaction rates from various surveys which were provided to the Team. In particular, the students expressed satisfaction with IT services, including online resources at ISMAI. However, there were lower general satisfaction rates with the library, the adequacy of which was reported as varying by subject area.

During its discussions with students and staff, the Team noted that ISMAI does not appear to have institution-wide policy and practices regarding assessment of students. Thus, although regulations on the matter are issued by the Pedagogical Committee, a number of divergent practices, with little apparent overall pedagogical coherence, were taking place across the institution, and also within the same academic departments and on the same programmes. Given that some of these reported assessment practices are of greater pedagogical value than others, it is important for ISMAI to ensure that assessment is undertaken in an effective and coherent way across the entire institution in accordance with the agreed regulations, which should also respect the need for diversity of academic practice.

Given the continued growth of student numbers at ISMAI in recent years, a number of general problems have emerged. These include a disconnect between decisions regarding student numbers, the availability of suitable staff numbers (academic and non-academic), and the necessary physical facilities. In particular, the situation regarding the Physical Education and Sports facilities and their multiple locations across the municipality are the cause of a number of problems for students, including transportation. In addition, heavy teaching loads and large class sizes put at risk the quality of learning, teaching and the assessment of students.

ISMAI has started implementing the Bologna Process reforms across the institution. Course coordinators play an important role in these reform processes, but student involvement has not been systematic. In particular, the Team considered that there was limited understanding and use of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) among staff and students at ISMAI. Linked to this, there also appeared to have been only limited development of a “learning outcomes approach” to pedagogical policies and practice at ISMAI in recent years.

Given the importance of teaching and pedagogy at ISMAI, and the necessity of encouraging high quality activities in these fields, the Team considered that ISMAI should put in place an institution-wide mechanism to disseminate and reward excellent teaching practices, as a useful and positive measure to raise the profile of the good work which is taking place.

The Team therefore recommends that ISMAI enter into a careful and full consideration of the following:

- ▶ Ensure greater coherence between decisions regarding student numbers, staff deployment and physical facilities.
- ▶ Improve understanding of the key features of ECTS among staff and students
- ▶ Develop a learning outcomes approach to teaching and learning
- ▶ Instigate a teaching excellence award to reward high quality pedagogical practice.

8. Research

The Team was repeatedly informed that the development of research has now become an ISMAI priority, as one of the necessary conditions for achieving its main strategic objective. In this context, several research centres and networks have begun to operate over the last three years, and a positive start has been made in evaluating these. Scientific output has begun to increase, and the number of staff engaged in research has also increased. ISMAI provides some incentives for staff to engage in research.

The Team was informed that almost half of staff are now cooperating in some way with the new research centres at ISMAI. Such involvement is supported through a salary supplement for research activity. For governmental purposes, only PhD holders can be formally counted as part of research centres, but other staff members and students can also be involved in research activities. These research centres are needed to ensure governmental recognition of research activity. Bringing together small groups from different institutions is encouraged through the research centre structures. Since private research investment in Portugal is very low, these centres are designed to help address this by ensuring increased visibility and coherence for research.

While the current overall investment by ISMAI in research is low (approx. €250,000 in 2010), this has increased substantially over the last three years. The major obstacles to more research at the moment appear to be lack of time due to large teaching loads, and the additional work now appearing due to increased cohorts of Masters students.

In order to overcome these obstacles, the Team was informed of plans under development to put in place a reduced teaching load model for 2011 for those staff members engaged with research.

However, the Team identified the lack of a professional research support structure in ISMAI to assist with project preparation or project management as another potential obstacle to increased research activity. The limited support available until now in ISMAI was in the provision of information regarding research possibilities and calls. The lack of more specialised support was highlighted by the example of one research centre hiring a short-term external person to assist with the application for an EC-funded project.

The Team therefore recommends that ISMAI enter into a careful and full consideration of the following:

- ▶ Significantly increase the overall ISMAI research budget
- ▶ Establish research support structures
- ▶ Provide more incentives, including sabbatical leave, to encourage research, so that a higher proportion of staff engages in research.

9. Cooperation with industry and society

The Team was pleased to note that very positive relations existed between ISMAI and a range of social, cultural and economic regional and national actors. The relationships appeared very strong and mutually beneficial with some partners, notably with TECMAIA and with local schools. Other relationships are equally important but appeared possibly to be less developed, but, in the opinion of the Team, offer many exciting opportunities and potential for the future of ISMAI and the surrounding region. Examples include ISMAI's involvement in the development of *Porto Digital*, in the development of new multimedia learning products with private partners, in *MaiaNova*, and in the ongoing training and preparation of high-performance sportspersons and athletes in Portugal.

Apart from contributing to local and regional development initiatives, and to staff development at ISMAI, these relationships also provide very important opportunities for student internships and alumni employment. These opportunities are particularly important in the context of ISMAI's mission and vision, and should be developed further.

Although ISMAI involves its range of external partners and stakeholders in a variety of events, including academic events and professional congresses, in the opinion of the Team there appeared to be little overall structure to these important relationships. There appeared to be no involvement by stakeholders in ISMAI's own structures or even in formal advisory functions, although when asked by the Team there was clear support from stakeholders for such ideas, including the idea of contributing to research. These same stakeholders were pleased to have been able to contribute to the evaluation of quality at ISMAI.

The Team therefore recommends that ISMAI enter into a careful and full consideration of the following:

- ▶ Transform the existing personal and informal contacts with external stakeholders into a more structured and formalised framework.
- ▶ Reinststate an external advisory committee composed of relevant external bodies.

10. Internationalisation

Enhanced internationalisation was identified as a main goal in the self-evaluation report, both for students and staff. The Team was pleased to find a very enthusiastic and dedicated international office already in place to assist with achieving this goal.

The Team also met students from other countries in Europe and other parts of the world who were studying at ISMAI and who were pleased with their overall experience. It appeared to the Team that ISMAI values their presence and makes many positive efforts to ensure that their stay is successful. However, based on information received by the Team, it appeared that ISMAI students could not obtain ERASMUS grants; this obviously represents a financial barrier for a number of students.

In terms of staff mobility, the Team was informed that only very small proportions of ISMAI staff had been involved in any form of professional mobility, and that it was often the same staff who were mobile every year. It was also noted that the opportunities for mobility are less in private higher education institutions, given that sabbatical leave is more difficult to obtain.

Nevertheless, a small number of European projects are underway, including a new European Masters in sports management which will start in 2010-11, and which has been developed following individual staff contacts with the University of Lille.

The Team was informed by a variety of different groups that there was a need for clearer language policies at ISMAI. Greater clarity in this area would be of help in maintaining and developing ISMAI's international contacts, including research projects.

The Team was likewise informed that the outcomes of the preliminary round of evaluations of ISMAI's research centres also contained recommendations regarding the need for enhanced internationalisation and networking of ISMAI's research structures.

As a small institution with a focused range of academic programmes, ISMAI needs to target its potential international partners very carefully, so that it can achieve the most beneficial outcomes from its internationalisation efforts and investment. The Team was informed that the development of this focused strategic approach was underway in ISMAI, but that there is plenty of scope for further development.

The Team therefore recommends that ISMAI enter into a careful and full consideration of the following:

- ▶ Develop a realistic and focused strategy
- ▶ Build upon existing initiatives for joint programmes with EU partners
- ▶ Develop and implement a comprehensive policy for enhancing language skills for students and staff
- ▶ Undertake the necessary investments to allow for greater internationalisation opportunities for both students and staff.

11. Quality assurance

The Team was pleased to identify a positive attitude in ISMAI towards quality assurance. A number of important quality assurance initiatives are underway in both teaching and research activities, some of which, such as the student surveys, have been in place for a number of years. Others, such as the initial evaluations of the research centres, are more recent but are positive signs that quality is important and that monitoring and evaluations are used to support the improvement of quality. As research continues to grow and diversify at ISMAI, the institution will need to establish mechanisms to ensure the quality of its various research activities.

Given that the quality of ISMAI's activities will be a highly important factor in its ability to be successful in reaching its main strategic objectives, it is also vital that ISMAI develop an explicit institution-wide quality culture, which is known and used by all members of the institution.

In order to achieve this, ISMAI will need to cover the entire quality cycle in a more complete and thorough way. This involves moving from planning to doing, and then to checking and to acting. These steps can be achieved by diversifying the types of instruments currently used, in order to complement the existing use of surveys. Examples of other instruments which could be used include the external review of programmes.

In addition, it is necessary for ISMAI to provide more commentary and discussion of statistical data, and to disseminating these data and the results of various analytical activities more widely across ISMAI, so that different members of the institution can learn and understand what is happening. The diversification of evaluation instruments, and wider discussion of quality issues across the institution will assist with the development of ISMAI's internal quality assurance systems, to ensure these are compatible with Portuguese national accreditation requirements, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

In this context, the work of the quality office – which has begun to implement some mechanisms to gather and process data - is also vital. The Team considers that greater development and use by this office of appropriate benchmarks (e.g. drop-out rates, staff/student ratios etc.) with other Portuguese and European higher education institutions would be beneficial to the development of greater awareness of quality across staff and students at ISMAI, and would also assist in focusing on particular areas for quality improvement.

In working towards the development of an institutional quality culture, many higher education institutions across Europe have found it helpful to establish an institutional Quality Assurance Committee, representative of all parts of the academic community. This committee brings together the various interested parties and provides a forum for discussion and consideration of quality assurance activities. The Team considers that it would be beneficial to ISMAI also to establish such a committee.

As mentioned earlier in this report, while ISMAI has well developed relationships with a wide range of external partners and stakeholders, there are no formal mechanisms which allow these stakeholders to provide feedback and advice to ISMAI. In recommending that ISMAI establish such an

external advisory committee, the Team considers that such a committee could also provide valuable comments and insights regarding the development of quality assurance activities at ISMAI.

The Team therefore recommends that ISMAI enter into a careful and full consideration of the following:

- ▶ Diversify the types of quality assurance activities undertaken, and provide more commentary and analysis regarding the success of these
- ▶ Establish an institutional Quality Assurance Committee, representative of all parts of the academic community at ISMAI
- ▶ Establish mechanisms to obtain input from external stakeholders
- ▶ Establish mechanisms to quality assure research activities
- ▶ Develop ISMAI's internal QA systems to become compatible with national requirements and the European Standards and Guidelines.
- ▶ Develop and use appropriate benchmarks.

12. Summary of recommendations

Regarding mission, vision and strategy:

- ▶ Work towards developing a comprehensive strategy to reach its goals.
- ▶ Develop a process and procedures for strategic planning, involving the whole academic community, and with input from external stakeholders. This process should be the responsibility of a standing committee, as proposed in the self-evaluation report.

Regarding governance and management:

- ▶ Clarify the relationship between ISMAI and Maiêutica, so as to make more explicit the decision making process
- ▶ Explore the benefits of greater devolved responsibility to academic and other structures, and the consequent redistribution of decision making powers to these devolved levels
- ▶ Change the way Heads of Departments are selected, giving them a greater role in the governance and management of ISMAI
- ▶ Enhance and exploit the full potential of ISMAI's academic community, including students, by widening their participation in advisory and decision making processes. This should include the widening of formal student participation in Department-level advisory and decision-making bodies.

Regarding financial management:

- ▶ As part of the proposed changes in governance and management, plan for greater levels of devolved financial responsibility within ISMAI
- ▶ Undertake a full financial planning exercise to assess the future costs of achieving ISMAI's main strategic goals
- ▶ Put in place a strategy to achieve increased diversity of ISMAI's income.

Regarding human resources management:

- ▶ Establish a staff development policy, including clearer policies to develop a significantly larger cohort of PhD holders
- ▶ Strengthen auxiliary support staff across ISMAI
- ▶ Increase the proportion of full-time staff employed at ISMAI, especially at senior levels.

Regarding teaching and learning:

- ▶ Ensure greater coherence between decisions regarding student numbers, staff deployment and physical facilities.
- ▶ Improve understanding of the key features of ECTS among staff and students
- ▶ Develop a learning outcomes approach to teaching and learning
- ▶ Instigate a teaching excellence award to reward high quality pedagogical practice.

Regarding research:

- ▶ Significantly increase the overall ISMAI research budget

- ▶ Establish research support structures
- ▶ Provide more incentives, including sabbatical leave, to encourage research, so that a higher proportion of staff engages in research

Regarding cooperation with industry and society:

- ▶ Transform the existing personal and informal contacts with external stakeholders into a more structured and formalised framework.
- ▶ Reinstate an external advisory committee composed of relevant external bodies.

Regarding internationalisation:

- ▶ Develop a realistic and focused strategy
- ▶ Build upon existing initiatives for joint programmes with EU partners
- ▶ Develop and implement a comprehensive policy for enhancing language skills for students and staff
- ▶ Undertake the necessary investments to allow for greater internationalisation opportunities for both students and staff.

Regarding quality assurance:

- ▶ Diversify the types of quality assurance activities undertaken, and provide more commentary and analysis regarding the success of these
- ▶ Establish an institutional Quality Assurance Committee, representative of all parts of the academic community at ISMAI
- ▶ Establish mechanisms to obtain input from external stakeholders
- ▶ Establish mechanisms to quality assure research activities
- ▶ Develop ISMAI's internal QA systems to become compatible with national requirements and the European Standards and Guidelines.
- ▶ Develop and use appropriate benchmarks.

13. Conclusions

Many of the issues identified by the Team during the external element of the institutional evaluation of ISMAI had already been identified in the self-evaluation phase of this exercise, and referred to in ISMAI's own self-evaluation report.

However, it appeared to the Team that ISMAI was not sure how these issues should be addressed, in particular how the various elements of the strategy should be brought together, and how the required resources could be secured and allocated to achieve ISMAI's objectives successfully. The Team noted that future success in achieving these objectives and strategic developments will depend on the will and the capacity of ISMAI to change from its historical model of development so far.

The Team hopes that its two visits to ISMAI and this external report can be useful to ISMAI in its plans for future ambitious developments. This report contains a number of critical observations and recommendations which are made from an external perspective, with the purpose of assisting the institution to plan for its future. The Team hopes that these will be found useful and will positively stimulate the ongoing process of reform and change on which ISMAI has already embarked.