

# Report on the Internal Evaluation of the Quality of Educational, Creative and Related Activities at the UHK

2023



## The internal quality evaluation report was:

Prepared by the UHK Internal Evaluation Board and discussed on 19 April 2023

Discussed by the UHK Research Board on 15 May 2023

Approved by the UHK Academic Senate on 17 May 2023

Discussed by the UHK Board of Trustees on 20 June 2023

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## Introduction

This report on the internal evaluation of the quality of educational, creative and related activities (hereinafter referred to as the *Internal Evaluation Report*) is prepared on the basis of Act No. 111/1998 Sb., on higher education institutions and on amendments and supplements to other acts, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the *Higher Education Act*), which requires higher education institutions to prepare an internal evaluation report within the time limits set by internal regulations, but at least once every five years, and to update it annually with an addendum describing changes in quality and management measures. The internal regulation *Rules of the System of Quality Assurance and Internal Quality Evaluation at the University of Hradec Králové* specifies that at the University of Hradec Králové (UHK), the report is prepared once every five years.

The first report on internal evaluation was prepared by the UHK in 2018. The report included mainly the period 2013-2017. In accordance with the internal regulation, the present report focuses on the period 2018-2022 and aims to indicate what evaluations have been carried out at the UHK, what their main results were and what measures have been taken. It also includes an evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks and an indication of recommendations for the further development of the University's activities and the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation. The report is prepared as a qualitative self-evaluation of own activities. The annex contains quantitative data tracking the progress of the UHK over the five-year period according to selected indicators. The report focuses on the University level and does not include other quality assurance and evaluation activities that take place only at individual faculties.

As external evaluations were carried out at the UHK in addition to internal evaluations during this period, the main results and measures resulting from them are presented in this report. The Institutional Evaluation Programme (*IEP*) which is linked to the European University Association (*EUA*) was the most extensive evaluation that the University underwent during this period of time. While the UHK chose an evaluation that focused mainly on research and use of its results, it was still a comprehensive evaluation that covered the whole spectrum of university activities, including management and decision-making processes, educational activities, quality assurance, the third role and internationalisation. The process was initiated in 2021. A self-evaluation phase was the first step. It resulted in a self-evaluation report that was sent to the evaluators. This was followed by two visits to the UHK by the international evaluation team (26-28 April 2022, 31 May-3 June 2022). The evaluation report was sent to the University in August 2022. It contained a total of 26 recommendations. The results of the self-evaluation process and of the evaluation as presented in the final evaluators' report are presented in the relevant chapters for each activity. In the period covered by the present report (until the end of 2022), the UHK has not yet taken actions or decisions on the implementation of the recommendations based on the results of the IEP EUA evaluation, especially due to the fact that the actions will be formulated in the context of the recommendations resulting from the other evaluations that were not completed until the autumn of 2022.

The report is divided into five chapters. The aim of the first chapter is to present the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation at the UHK and its changes in the relevant period. It presents the main internal regulations, managing acts, basic documents and actors of the internal quality evaluation system. The second chapter focuses on quality assurance and

quality evaluation of educational activities, the third chapter focuses on quality assurance and quality evaluation of creative activities and the fourth chapter is devoted to related activities. The fifth chapter focuses on the position of the UHK in international rankings, which is also included according to the internal regulation in the quality evaluation at the UHK.

In some years of the period in question, quality assurance and evaluation were also affected by the epidemic situation and the emergency measures taken to prevent the spread of covid-19. The University managed to respond to these changes and to adapt its processes adequately to the emergency situation, in particular by transferring them to an online format.

# 1 Quality Assurance and Internal Evaluation System

The aim of this chapter is to present the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation at the UHK and its changes in the relevant period. It presents the main internal regulations, managing acts, basic documents and actors of the internal quality evaluation system. It concludes with an evaluation in the form of a summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks, as well as recommendations for further development of the quality assurance and internal evaluation system.

## 1.1 Documents in the quality assurance and internal evaluation system

### 1.1.1 Internal regulations

The system of quality assurance and internal evaluation is enshrined in internal regulations. The *Constitution of the University of Hradec Králové* which, among other things, establishes the Internal Evaluation Board of the University of Hradec Králové (IEB UHK) and determines its competence is the basic internal regulation for the system of quality assurance and evaluation. It also enshrines internal regulations pursuant to Section 17 (1) (k) of the Higher Education Act.

Details of the quality assurance and internal evaluation system are provided in the internal regulation *Rules of the System of Quality Assurance and Internal Quality Evaluation at the University of Hradec Králové*. It lays down the basic concepts, background and principles of quality assurance and internal evaluation; it also sets out the bodies and persons in the quality assurance and evaluation system, supports and sources of information for evaluation and basic documents, and regulates the rules for quality assurance and internal evaluation of educational, creative and related activities.

The *Accreditation Code* is another key regulation which, among other things, regulates the internal procedures for reviewing and approving applications for granting, extending or renewing the validity of accreditation of study programmes.

The *Rules of Procedure of the Internal Evaluation Board of the University of Hradec Králové* also belong to the key internal regulations. They set out details on the activities and actions of this self-governing academic body which is the key actor in the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation at the UHK.

Other internal regulations are also related to the system of quality assurance and internal quality evaluation, e.g., the *Rules of Procedure of the Academic Senate of the University of Hradec Králové*, the *Election Code of the Academic Senate of the University of Hradec Králové* and the *Rules of Procedure of the Research Board of the University of Hradec Králové* as both of these bodies are involved in the processes of quality assurance and evaluation.

We cannot forget about the *Code of Studies and Examination of the University of Hradec Králové* which also contains a number of provisions that are part of quality assurance (e.g., the role of the study programme guarantor, the study programme boards, rules for determining the supervisors of qualification theses, etc.).

The system of quality assurance and internal evaluation was partially modified during the period under review, which resulted in the adoption of new forms of some internal regulations. The key changes in the setup of the quality assurance and internal evaluation

system in the internal regulations were approved and registered in 2020. They concerned the Constitution, the Rules of the System of Quality Assurance and Internal Quality Evaluation, the Accreditation Code and the Rules of Procedure of the Internal Evaluation Board. These modifications to the internal regulations responded mainly to the results of the evaluation of the application for institutional accreditation of the UHK in 2018 and reflected the UHK's previous experience with the quality assurance and evaluation system. Other changes were triggered by the situation related to the epidemic of covid-19 and concerned, for example, the possibility of holding the meetings of self-governing academic bodies using means of remote communication (they concerned the Internal Evaluation Board, the Research Board and the Academic Senate).

The fact that the UHK evaluates continuously the setting of internal regulations and, if necessary, responds flexibly by modifying them, the current anchoring of the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation is set to reflect the current needs of the University and no changes to internal regulations in this area are currently in preparation.

### **1.1.2 Managing acts**

The system of quality assurance and internal quality evaluation is completed by the relevant managing acts. In the field of educational activities, this includes, for example, the Rector's Decree No. 07/2020 *Guarantors of Study Programmes* which establishes university rules specifying the role of study programme guarantors at the UHK in more detail.

The Rector's Decree No. 06/2021 *Educational Activities Evaluation by Students* is also a relevant document. It follows the internal regulation *Rules of the System of Quality Assurance and Internal Quality Evaluation at the University of Hradec Králové* and establishes a framework for the evaluation of educational activities by students in all accredited Bachelor's and Master's study programmes at the University of Hradec Králové. It establishes the evaluation of courses teaching and the method of evaluating their results throughout the University. Rector's Decree No. 15/2021 *Evaluation of Educational Activities by Students of Doctoral Degree Programmes*, issued in connection with the same internal regulation, establishes the University's rules for obtaining feedback on the evaluation of educational activities from doctoral students and for evaluating the results of this evaluation.

The *Accreditation Code of the University of Hradec Králové* is followed by the Rector's Decree No.08/2021 *Standards of Study Programmes of the University of Hradec Králové* which sets out the requirements binding for the granting of authorization to implement a study programme under institutional accreditation for a field or fields of education and determines substantial changes in a study programme in the course of its implementation. The Rector's Decree No. 07/2021 *Organisation of the Process of Proposals and Application Draft for Accreditation of Study Programmes at the University of Hradec Králové* which is also related to the Accreditation Code sets out the organisational guidelines for the process of submitting these documents to the Internal Evaluation Board.

From the point of view of quality assurance and internal evaluation of creative activities, the establishment of a new advisory body of the UHK (the International Advisory Board, IAB) and the definition of its scope and rules of procedure (*Rules of Procedure of the International Advisory Board of the University of Hradec Králové*) was crucial in 2020. The scope of this body includes advice on, for example, the evaluation of the quality of doctoral studies, the system of internal evaluation of creative activities at the UHK, the evaluation of the international



dimension of creative activities, the system of involvement of postdocs, etc. In 2020, there was also a partial modification of the science and research support programmes at the UHK, the purpose of which is to support conceptually the development of science and research (Rector's Decree No. 15/2020 *Science and Research Support Programmes at the University of Hradec Králové*).

In 2021, some managing acts aimed at developing and improving the quality of creative activities of the UHK were issued. These include the Rector's Decree No. 02/2021 *Motivation System to Stabilize/Develop Doctoral Study Programmes and Procedures to Attain Associate and Full Professorships at the UHK*.

In connection with the development of the University staff, a new managing act, the *Career System and Regular Evaluation of Academic Staff of the University of Hradec Králové*, was issued in 2020. Its main objective is to support the career growth of academic staff. It is an important part of ensuring the quality of educational activities and is primarily related to the staffing of teaching in accredited study programmes. A new evaluation system has been introduced for staff in other positions (*Rector's Decree No. 10/2020 Evaluation of the UHK Employees*). It aims to contribute to the professional and personal development of employees and to strengthen their motivation for this development.

In 2021, the University adopted a new *Code of Ethics of the University of Hradec Králové* which formulates the ethical principles of the University and represents a moral obligation for the actions of its students and employees. An Ethics Committee was established to consider complaints regarding violations of the principles of the new Code of Ethics. The rules for its composition and conduct are set out in the *Rules of Procedure of the Ethics Committee of the University of Hradec Králové* issued in the same year. By completing the ethical infrastructure, the University strengthens the cultivation of its internal environment and perceives it as a component that also contributes to ensuring the quality of activities at the UHK.

The University is currently preparing a managing act that will enshrine the organisational details for the evaluation of study programmes. The University is indebted to the completion of the University's evaluation of creative activity. The 2020 internal regulation states that the details of internal evaluation of creative activity, including its provision, are set out in a managing act of the Rector but this has not yet been issued.

### **1.1.3 Strategic documents of the UHK**

The UHK system of quality assurance and internal evaluation also includes strategic, conceptual and other documents such as the Strategic Plan and the annual plans for its implementation, the balance report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, the annual report on activities and the annual report on the financial management of the UHK. The University publishes all these documents on its website.

The University's current Strategic Plan was approved in 2021 and sets out the University's strategy for a ten-year period. It sets out the vision and mission of the UHK, as well as the priorities and goals the UHK aims to achieve and the actions that will lead to their fulfilment. In its vision, the UHK emphasises the attractiveness of study programmes and other forms of education; highly valued and socially beneficial creative activities and valued scientific research results; social responsibility and openness of the institution which contributes actively to the shaping of the public space; firm anchoring in the region and cooperating with external partners and contributing to meeting the needs of the city, the region and their

inhabitants; internationalisation and development of global potential in the field of international cooperation; continuous improvement of the environment for students and staff. The mission of the UHK that is also stated in the Strategic Plan is to disseminate knowledge within the regional and global community, which reflects the character of the University and its ambitions. The UHK is a regional university and is aware of it but it does not renounce its global character and places considerable emphasis on the internationalisation of its activities.

The Strategic Plan includes four strategic priorities. The first priority, UHK Attractive and Inspiring, focuses on educational activities. The second priority, UHK Dynamic and Excellent, concerns creative activity and doctoral studies. The third priority, UHK Open and Responsible, formulates objectives and measures, particularly in the areas of social responsibility, care for employees and building the UHK community and shared identity. The fourth priority, UHK Modern and Efficient, covers strategic management, efficiency of internal processes and infrastructure. The Internationalisation Strategy of the University of Hradec Králové 2021+ which elaborates the international dimension of the UHK activities forms an annex to the Strategic Plan.

Annual plans for the implementation of the Strategic Plan form an integral part of the implementation of the set strategy. They specify the individual measures and steps that the UHK will take in a given year. The fulfilment of the objectives is evaluated by means of balance reports on the implementation plan fulfilment for each calendar year. The reports are discussed by the Academic Senate. Quantitative indicators are also formulated in the Strategic Plan and evaluated annually; where relevant, the targets that the University wishes to achieve are indicated. During the implementation of the Strategic Plan, the UHK plans to ensure an independent evaluation of its implementation which will focus on assessing how the set objectives have been achieved and what impact the implemented activities have had.

The UHK also plans to adopt a research organisation strategy which builds on the Strategic Plan and elaborates in more detail the key topics related to the activities of the UHK as a research organisation and sets more specific goals to be achieved in the medium term, by the end of 2025. A draft of this research strategy was submitted by the UHK to the International Advisory Board (IAB, see Chapter 1.2.2) and also in the framework of the IEP EUA evaluation (see Chapter 3.3).

There is a close link between strategic management and quality assurance at the UHK. Not only is the evaluation based on strategic documents but the connection is also evident from an organisational point of view, as the Quality and Strategy Office which creates the background for both strategic management and the quality assurance system, is headed by the Vice-Rector for Strategy and Development who is also responsible, according to internal rules, for coordinating the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation of educational, creative and related activities.

#### **1.1.4 Other documents**

Other documents that play a key role in the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation of the UHK include internal evaluation reports and their annual supplements and self-evaluation reports.

In accordance with the Higher Education Act, self-evaluation reports describing and evaluating the fulfilment of individual requirements resulting from the relevant standards for accreditation are part of each application for accreditation of a study programme.

The self-evaluation was an integral part of the unsuccessful application for institutional accreditation submitted by the UHK in 2018. The application included one area of education (Historical Sciences) and covered all types of study programmes (Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral). The visits of evaluation sub-committees (the institutional environment committee and the committee for the respective field of education) took place in October. As the sub-committee for the educational area recommended the granting of institutional accreditation for the Bachelor's degree only and the sub-committee for the institutional environment did not recommend the granting of institutional accreditation, the final opinion of the evaluation committee was not recommendatory, as were the opinions of the rapporteurs. The UHK withdrew the application for the institutional accreditation. On the basis of the evaluation committee's evaluation of the institutional environment, the UHK took a number of measures concerning the set-up of its quality assurance and internal evaluation system.

A comprehensive self-evaluation report was prepared by the UHK in connection with the IEP EUA evaluation. In autumn 2021, a seven-member self-evaluation group was set up at the UHK. It was headed by the Vice-Rector for Strategy and Development, other members were the Vice-Rector for International Relations, the Vice-Rector for Science and Creative Activities, the Head of the Strategic Projects Office of the Faculty of Science and an employee of the Technology Transfer Office of the UHK, the Quality Manager and two student representatives (one member of the University Academic Senate from the Faculty of Education, one PhD student from the Philosophical Faculty). The group was deliberately composed to include a variety of perspectives and experiences to allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of the current situation. The group prepared a self-evaluation report which was submitted to the relevant bodies (Rector's Board, Academic Senate, Internal Evaluation Board) for consideration in 2022 and subsequently sent to the evaluators. The main results of the self-evaluation process are reported in the following sections of this report.

## **1.2 Bodies in the quality assurance and internal evaluation system**

A wide range of actors are involved in the quality assurance and evaluation system. These include authorities of the UHK, authorities of the UHK faculties and employees of the University who are supposed to strive to support the continuous improvement of the quality of activities.

The competence, powers and responsibilities of the UHK bodies, UHK faculty bodies and other UHK departments in the system of quality assurance and internal quality evaluation of the UHK are governed by the Act, the Constitution, the Rules for the Internal Governance of the UHK and other internal regulations and managing acts of the UHK and faculties.

As the UHK Internal Evaluation Board is the central self-governing academic body for quality assurance and internal evaluation, its activities are evaluated in more detail below. Attention is also drawn to the International Advisory Board (IAB) which was established by the UHK in 2020 and which provides the UHK with the perspective of international experts on its activities and makes recommendations based on international good practice.

### **1.2.1 UHK Internal Evaluation Board and its activities**

The UHK Internal Evaluation Board guarantees the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation. The Internal Evaluation Board was originally established as an eighteen-member body whose members were appointed mainly from among the academic staff of the faculties, taking into account the representation of the individual areas of education and scientific disciplines, as well as from among the university management (Vice-Rector) and faculties (Vice-Deans).

Based on the results of the evaluation of the application for institutional accreditation and after an evaluation of the IEB work to date, the number of members was changed in 2019 and reduced to 12. By modifying the internal regulations, the incompatibility of the membership of the IEB with the position of Vice-Rector, Dean and Vice-Dean was introduced, and measures were also set to prevent conflicts of interest in voting.

In 2019, a new office (the Quality and Strategy Office) was established at the Rectorate of the UHK. It provides the Internal Evaluation Board (and other relevant bodies) with the organisational and administrative support that was previously lacking in the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation of educational, creative and related activities. From September 2021, a change in the position of the Secretary of the UHK IEB has resulted in a more effective link between the activities of the Internal Evaluation Board and its support facilities, as the position of Secretary is now filled from among the members of the Quality and Strategy Office.

The IEB met a total of seven times in 2018 (17 January, 21 February, 26 March, 20 June, 19 September, 21 November and 12 December), seven times in 2019 (24 January, 13 March, 15 May, 20 June, 2 October, 12 November and 17 December), four times in 2020 (14 January, 12 February, 13 May and 10 June), ten times in 2021 (21 January, 22 February, 24 March, 21 April, 19 May, 22 June, 22 September, 20 October, 24 November and 15 December), and eight times in 2022 (26 January, 23 February, 16 March, 20 April, 18 May, 22 June, 21 September and 15 December).

The lower number of meetings of the UHK IEB in 2020 was due to the absence of meetings in the second half of the year because of the end of the term of office of the members of the UHK IEB and the long process of forming the Board for the next term (which was more demanding in terms of organisation due to the anti-pandemic measures against the spread of covid-19). The UHK has already taken measures of an organisational nature and changes to its internal regulations to ensure that this situation is not repeated and that this key body is not prevented from carrying out its activities for some time in the future.

The current term of office of the members of the Internal Evaluation Board began in December 2020. In addition to the members listed in the Higher Education Act (Rector, Chairman of the Academic Senate, a student member), the members are appointed from among the academic staff of the individual faculties. No external member is represented. During the current term of office of the Board, there have been two changes in its composition, due to resignations (during 2021, an IEB member from the Philosophical Faculty resigned from his membership, and in 2022, a student representative resigned from his membership). The process of filling the Board with a new member took several months in both cases and the IEB had 11 members only for a transitional period.

The meetings of the UHK IEB in the five-year period in question were focused on the discussion of applications for the granting, renewal or extension of accreditation of study programmes that are sent to the National Accreditation Office for Higher Education (NAO) after approval by the Board as the UHK has not been granted institutional accreditation. The IEB also discussed draft plans for accreditations and information on changes in the current study programmes. It also dealt with the success rate of accreditation applications to the NAO and the most frequent comments that evaluators have on the UHK applications.

The IEB prepared the first University Internal Quality Evaluation Report in 2018 and prepared a supplement to it in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 for every previous year.

At its meetings, the IEB also dealt with the setting up of the quality assurance and internal evaluation system – it discussed, for example, relevant changes in internal regulations (i.e., the Rules of the System of Quality Assurance and Internal Quality Evaluation at the University of Hradec Králové, the Accreditation Code and the Rules of Procedure of the Internal Evaluation Board), the related relevant managing acts or the setting up of the method of obtaining feedback from participants of lifelong learning programmes. It also dealt with the establishment of the Quality and Strategy Office, the scope of its activities and the way of cooperation with the IEB. It discussed internal methodological materials on accreditation of study programmes.

At its meetings, the IEB discussed continuously the results of evaluations resulting from internal processes (e.g., evaluation of teaching of courses in Bachelor's and Master's studies, evaluation of doctoral studies and/or feedback from students who have completed their studies without graduation). The recommendations of the International Advisory Board (IAB) were presented.

The IEB was also involved in the preparation of external evaluations, e.g., evaluations within the Methodology for the Evaluation of Research Organisations and Programmes of Special Purpose Support for Research, Development and Innovation (M 17+), where it discussed, among other things, the self-evaluation report of the UHK on the evaluation of research organisations in the higher education segment. The IEB was kept informed about the preparation and progress of the international evaluation of the IEP EUA, discussed the self-evaluation report and was informed about the results of the evaluation.

More detailed information on the matters discussed is available in the published minutes of the IEB meetings.

### **1.2.2 UHK International Advisory Board**

In 2020, a new advisory body of the UHK – the International Advisory Board (IAB) – was established and its scope and rules of procedure were defined. It is a five-member body, its members are appointed by the Rector. Each faculty submits a proposal to the Rector for one international expert to be appointed as a member of the IAB. The term of office is three years.

In the years 2020-2022, the IAB was composed of: prof. Ing. Radovan Hudák, PhD (Technical University of Košice, Slovakia), prof. John R. Anchor, PhD (University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom), Teresita Maria Sevilla Peñuela, PhD (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Colombia), prof. Teodorico de Castro Ramalho (Universidade Federal de Lavras, Brazil), prof. dr hab. Anna Wypych-Gawronska (Uniwersytet Humanistyczno-Przyrodniczy im. Jan Długosz in Częstochowa, Poland) (until May 2022), and prof. Ts. Dr. Ali Bin Selamat (Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Malaysia) (from May 2022).

This body's powers include advising on the following areas: support for the strategic direction of the University and fulfilment of the strategic goals of the UHK; evaluation of the quality of educational activities, especially the quality of doctoral studies; evaluation of the scientific and research development of the University and optimisation of the internal evaluation system of the UHK as a research organisation; evaluation of the system of postdoctoral students' involvement at the UHK; evaluation of the internationalisation of the University and support for the development of its international cooperation; support for the University's activities in the area of its third role; support for creativity, entrepreneurship and cooperation with practice at the UHK; and sharing good practice and experience with universities abroad.

Meetings of the IAB are usually attended by the Rector of the University, other members of the University management according to the topics discussed, representatives of the faculty management and possibly other guests. The first IAB meeting was held in December 2020. Due to the epidemic situation and travel restrictions, it was held online. The first meeting of the Board included an introduction of the University and its individual units, especially in terms of focus in educational and creative activities, presentation of the main activities of the IAB and discussion of the topics raised by the Rector. In 2021, the IAB met twice (the first meeting was held on 17 and 18 June 2021, the second one on 29 and 30 November 2021). On both occasions, the meetings were held online. In 2022, the IAB meeting was held in the premises of the University, from 6 to 8 June 2022. The IAB members visited the premises of the Rectorate and the buildings of all faculties. The last meeting of this term was again held online (10 and 11 November 2022).

The IAB made a number of recommendations to the University in several areas of activity. The IAB stressed the importance and effectiveness of *internal evaluation*. It should take into account national or international criteria for university evaluation, national university funding rules, accreditation standards, career development criteria, academic staff evaluation, and the quality management system. The internal evaluation of faculties based on the university evaluation strategy can be a tool for the allocation of funds among faculties. The evaluation of humanities outcomes should follow the rules for the humanities, and attention should be paid to evaluating the societal impact of the humanities.

In the area of *excellence*, the emphasis should be put on recognising outstanding teams or departments and their ability to transfer technology into practice. An effective tool for excellence evaluation should be based on a local software tool or rating portal that works with relevant tools such as Publons, Researchgate, SciVal, Web of Science databases, and should be linked to internal university and faculty evaluations.

In the area of *research and research strategy*, the IAB recommended paying more attention to the area of research impact. It suggested considering the development and review of impact indicators as well as more systematic monitoring of the impact of results on the community/society. Incentives for research and publications should be applied consistently across the four faculties and could include the benefit in form of research leave. The IAB also recommended strengthening inter-faculty collaboration to enhance the scope, effectiveness and impact of research. Other recommendations focused on comments on the text of the research organisation strategy, a draft of which was presented to the IAB members. These suggestions were taken into account and the strategy was amended in parts on the basis of these suggestions.

In relation to the issue of *doctoral studies*, the IAB emphasized the importance of internationalization (e.g., organization of conferences in English for doctoral students, internal grant competitions for doctoral students in English, etc.). Furthermore, the IAB stressed the importance of regular evaluation of PhD students by a special committee, not only at faculty level. The IAB considers equally important the existence of a contact point for PhD students which would provide support in studying, comprehensive information on funding opportunities for research activities, support in grant applications processing, and offer of specialized training for PhD students. From the point of view of the IAB, the formalization of the position of postdocs at the university is crucial. Postdocs are expected to bring their know-how to the department to move the department forward. Such a position should be a matter of some prestige and the best candidates should be selected. The IAB recommended to pay attention to the adaptation of international postdocs at the UHK and to create an *International Welcome Office*.

Several other IAB recommendations were made in the area of internationalisation. *Strategic partnerships* are an important tool for internationalisation. These should be developed at both university and faculty level. Evaluation criteria should focus on both existing cooperation and its future potential. Criteria and mechanisms for the eventual termination of cooperation should also be considered. A tool should be developed to support cooperation with excellent universities or institutions complementary to the UHK. It is important to monitor and evaluate the established cooperation. One of the recommendations was to consider an international cooperation fund which could generate interesting projects.

The IAB recommended integration of *virtual mobility* as a tool to enhance internationalisation opportunities, not as a substitute for physical mobility (e.g., guest lectures, project consortia discussions, student and academic mobility, etc.). The role of virtual activities in the international strategy of the UHK should be clarified. Such activities may include the use and recognition of massive open *online* courses (MOOCs) and a greater systematisation of virtual mobility opportunities for students.

Mechanisms should be put in place to increase proactively the number of *international students*. The IAB recommended that the same fees be charged for all study programmes taught in English.

The number of domestic (mainly Czech) students could be increased by introducing measures to *reduce the drop-out rate*. There should be systematic identification and increased support for students at risk of failure. The application of information systems in this respect could be useful.

Regarding the structure of the UHK, the IAB said that the number of academic departments should be reduced to reduce the administrative burden on academic staff and to create space for research and internationalisation. This should be achieved through a participatory approach, not by force. The new organisational structure should not have "*winners and losers*" but should promote a new and common space for activities.

In the area of *human resource management*, the IAB recommended a greater focus on employee *wellbeing* and workforce planning. The aim is to increase the range and effectiveness of activities (e.g., keeping in touch with female employees during their maternity leave). A recommendation was also made to explore the possibility of an on-campus childcare service.

The recommendations of the IAB are gradually implemented at the UHK, e.g., in the formulation of criteria for the so-called Premium for Quality (PFQ). The criteria are applied in the creation of the university budget which also takes into account the specifics of social sciences and humanities. The monitoring of specific indicators of scientists, teams and comparisons within universities has also been expanded. Overview rankings of the best scientists have been created, e.g., according to the h-index, ResearchGate or citations on Web of Science. The UHK is a member of a consortium of universities seeking support for European university alliances from the Erasmus+ programme. This consortium has submitted project applications to the European Commission calls for proposals announced in 2021 and 2022.<sup>1</sup> The University has also evaluated existing partnerships with foreign institutions and selected and approached potential university-wide strategic partners. The offer of virtual mobilities has also been expanded. Suitable regions have been selected to be targeted for the promotion of studies. Some of the actions responding to the IAB recommendations have been incorporated into the 2023 Implementation Plan of the Strategic Plan.

The UHK also evaluated the activities of the IAB and decided on its composition for the next term of office.

### **1.3 Evaluation of the IEP EUA in the field of quality assurance**

#### **1.3.1 Self-evaluation report**

The self-evaluation report stated that the UHK has been developing its activities in quality assurance and evaluation in recent years, and the previously missing organisational background for these activities has been established. There is also a growing experience with self-evaluation and related external evaluation that increases awareness of these topics among members of the academic community and non-academic staff, and thus contributes to the dissemination of quality culture at the UHK.

The UHK has established an international advisory body (the International Advisory Board) which includes representatives from universities abroad, and an international advisory body is also active or being established at some faculties. Through these bodies and other international evaluations, the UHK is gaining an international perspective on its activities, which the UHK considers essential for its further development.

The internal evaluation also includes feedback, including through questionnaire surveys. This agenda is gradually being developed, centralised and systematised at the UHK. As regards obtaining feedback from students, it is necessary to increasingly build trust in the evaluation process and its purpose among the target group, to communicate better with students and to inform them better about the results and measures taken. Their participation in the evaluation of course teaching is relatively low.

The UHK still has room to learn to better evaluate itself, to think critically about its own activities, not to hide weaknesses, but rather to look for ways to eliminate them. The importance of evaluation and self-evaluation should continue to be emphasised so that processes are not perceived as a necessary obligation arising from the legislative framework

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<sup>1</sup> Involvement in the creation of the European University Alliance was evaluated positively also in the IEP EUA evaluation where the evaluators recommended continuing to apply for such and similar partnerships because it is an effective means of expanding the international network of contacts.



and increasing the administrative burden but as a real means to help the institution improve and streamline its activities.

The rules laid down in the internal rules are in some cases followed by managing acts; some of which have not yet been finalised. The whole system is thus being implemented gradually, taking also into account the time of its creation, and some steps are being prepared for the future. The UHK has, therefore, not fully completed its new evaluation system and must continue to work intensively on it.

For monitoring and evaluation of activities, data acquisition is often quite difficult. Data sources are not interconnected and some processes are not automated. Therefore, the UHK has set the goal of developing a key management information system (MIS) that will link data sources and enhance the availability and clarity of data for monitoring and evaluation of activities.<sup>2</sup>

### **1.3.2 Report of the evaluators**

The evaluators formulated several recommendations in the area of quality culture for the UHK. The first is that the UHK should clarify its institutional concept of quality and design a quality assurance strategy that encompasses all internal activities (educational, creative, management and administrative). Processes for quality assurance should be set ex-ante.

The evaluators recommend rethinking the mission of the Quality and Strategy Office. It should play a proactive role in accreditation applications and provide quality and standards-related input early in the design of the curriculum. The evaluators also recommended that the UHK make better use of its Internal Evaluation Board and involve it more in the development and oversight of the quality culture.

The evaluators also recommended that the UHK apply for institutional accreditation. This could help the UHK to implement an overarching quality strategy and a purposeful quality culture and provide UHK with a quality label.

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<sup>2</sup> A key implementation of the MIS was underway in 2022, and the results of this implementation will not be seen until 2023 and beyond.

## 1.4 SWOT analysis and recommendations for further development

### SWOT analysis of the quality assurance and internal evaluation system

<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embodiment of the system of quality assurance and internal quality evaluation in internal regulations;</li> <li>• Dynamics of the recent development of activities in the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation;</li> <li>• Existence of the International Advisory Board;</li> <li>• Inclusion of internal and external stakeholders in the evaluation processes;</li> <li>• Learning from growing experience with internal and external evaluation;</li> <li>• Improvement of the availability of data evaluation through the management information system.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low return rates for some feedback questionnaires;</li> <li>• Incomplete university internal evaluation system, especially in the case of creative activities;</li> <li>• Not fully clarified concept of quality;</li> <li>• Distrust of some actors towards the activities of the quality assurance and evaluation system;</li> <li>• Unwillingness of some actors to accept the administrative and organisational burden of quality assurance and evaluation;</li> <li>• Insufficient resources for some activities (human, financial);</li> <li>• Insufficient information on evaluation measures;</li> <li>• Lack of institutional accreditation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rules laid down by national legislation;</li> <li>• Ample opportunity to share experiences and learn from good practice;</li> <li>• Existing recommendations from the international evaluation for further development.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase of administrative burdens;</li> <li>• Unpredictability of public universities funding.</li> </ul>

### **Recommendations for further development of the quality assurance and internal evaluation system**

- Issue a managing act based on the Rules of the Quality Assurance and Internal Evaluation System and setting out the details of the University's evaluation of creative activity.
- Continue activities aimed at building trust in evaluation processes. Increasing trust would also contribute to a greater willingness to provide feedback.
- Following the results of evaluations, take actions more quickly and communicate them better within the University to make the benefits of evaluation processes more visible to the University and its students and staff.
- Implement the recommendations from the IEP EUA evaluation report.

## 2 Educational activities

The aim of this chapter is to present the results of the internal evaluation of educational activities that took place at the UHK during the period in question and that was based mainly on feedback obtaining. This chapter also focuses on the preparation of further evaluations to be launched in the following year. In accordance with the internal regulation of the UHK *Rules of the System of Quality Assurance and Internal Quality Evaluation at the University of Hradec Králové*, the quality evaluation also includes national or international surveys carried out by institutions within the Czech Republic or the European Union, and, therefore, this chapter also provides brief information on the involvement of the UHK in these surveys in the time period in question. It also presents the view of external evaluators on the University educational activities (in particular the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education when evaluating applications for granting, extending or renewing accreditations of study programmes and also the IEP EUA evaluators).

### 2.1 Internal quality evaluation

Within the framework of quality assurance and internal evaluation of educational activities, the UHK regularly monitors and evaluates indicators related to educational activities. Standardised data are collected mainly in the framework of annual activity reports (data on the number of students, drop-out rate, graduates, prospective students, participants in LLL courses). Indicators related to educational activities identified by the Strategic Plan are also monitored, especially in the framework of the annual balance reports evaluating the implementation of the strategy. More detailed data on the course of studies are available in the STAG information system and now also in the management information system. The conditions, progress and results of the admission procedure are monitored and evaluated in the annual faculty reports on the admission procedure. Through the Information, Counselling and Career Centre (ICCC), the UHK monitors and evaluates data on the unemployment of the UHK graduates twice a year. The evaluation also includes feedback from members of the academic community and alumni.

#### 2.1.1 Evaluation of the teaching of subjects

The evaluation of educational activities by students was carried out at the beginning of the period in question separately at the individual faculties. The Philosophical Faculty (FF) implemented student evaluation of educational activities through printed forms distributed during course teaching, while the Faculty of Informatics and Management (FIM), the Faculty of Education (PdF) and the Faculty of Science (PřF) used the STAG information system to obtain feedback. The deadlines for completing the questionnaires for student evaluation of teaching also differed across the faculties, as did the form of the questionnaires or the way they were evaluated. The evaluation of the organisation of the student teaching evaluation process showed that this method was not optimal in view of the inter-faculty teaching which is quite extensive, especially between the PdF, PřF and FF in the provision of student teaching. Thus, at the end of 2019, the preparation of a proposal to unify the method of obtaining feedback on the teaching of courses from Bachelor's and Master's students began. It was completed in 2020. The framework for obtaining feedback is determined by Rector's Decree No. 06/2021 *Educational Activities Evaluation by Students*. As the covid-19 epidemic and the associated restrictions on contact teaching significantly impacted teaching in the

summer semester of the 2019/2020 academic year, it was not until the winter semester of the 2020/2021 academic year that the use of this uniform feedback was initiated. It has been implemented regularly every semester since then.

The unified university student evaluation of educational activities takes place in the form of feedback on teaching of individual subjects through IS/STAG. The evaluation is available in both Czech and English so that international students can also participate. The evaluation usually occurs in the last weeks of teaching in every semester and possibly also in the exam period. Each semester, a university report is prepared on the basis of the faculty reports and submitted to the Rector's Board, the Internal Evaluation Board and the Academic Senate. It is then made available on the website to all members of the academic community. The main purpose of this process is to raise awareness among members of the academic community, including students, of the results of the evaluation of individual courses teaching and the resulting measures, and to strengthen students' motivation to participate in the evaluation of educational activities.

The adoption of measures is the responsibility of individual faculties. Due to the nature of feedback, measures can be taken by teachers, course guarantors, programme guarantors, heads of departments, etc.

The experience of the five semesters when the feedback collection was implemented shows a decreasing interest of the students. Attendance is always higher in winter semesters than in summer semesters. While in the winter semester of the academic year 2020/2021 33% of students participated, it was 19% in the summer semester of the academic year 2021/2022. Due to the decreasing interest, the relevant questionnaire was modified (significantly shortened) and the deadline for completing the evaluation was also modified. Nevertheless, participation was the lowest compared to the winter semesters of the previous two academic years.

Representatives of the student chamber of the Academic Senate are included in the evaluation of the setting of feedback on the teaching of courses. The evaluation revealed two main issues that may be causing students' lack of interest in completing the course evaluation questionnaires. The first is the distrust of the anonymity of the evaluation and the fear of possible identification of the respondent and subsequent sanctions. Although the evaluation is completely anonymous (except for comments that the respondent may choose to sign), the fact that respondents provide feedback under the log-in information system is a particular concern. The second problem identified is that students perceive a lack of feedback from lecturers, supervisors and departmental and faculty management on the evaluation results. Thus, they get the impression that completing the evaluation is useless as it does not lead to any changes anyway. Thus, the UHK, in cooperation with staff and students, needs to look for other ways to increase students' interest in feedback on the course teaching and to strengthen their confidence in the evaluation process and its purpose, to communicate with students in the best possible way and to convey the results of the evaluation and the measures taken to them. At the same time, other ways of obtaining feedback on teaching from students will be sought (e.g., through focus groups held within individual study programmes).

### **2.1.2 Evaluation of doctoral studies**

University rules for obtaining feedback on studies from doctoral students and for evaluating the results of this evaluation are set out in Rector's Decree No.15/2021 *Evaluation of Educational Activities by Students of Doctoral Degree Programmes*. This is a form of an anonymous questionnaire for the evaluation of doctoral studies, especially in relation to its organisational support, the obligations imposed on doctoral students and the creative activities of doctoral students. The evaluation takes place once every two years, usually at the end of the teaching part of the summer semester. The results of the evaluation are compiled in summary form, by faculty and, depending on the minimum number of participating doctoral students, also by study programme. The university report compiled from the evaluation is submitted to the Rector's Board, the Academic Senate and the Internal Evaluation Board. The framework results of the evaluation of educational activities by doctoral students are made available to the members of the academic community on the UHK website. The method of discussing and adopting measures at faculty and programme level is the responsibility of the faculties.

The first evaluation took place in 2021 and the next one is planned for 2023. The evaluation took place from 6 May to 31 May 2021 electronically through a questionnaire available in two language versions (Czech and English). A total of 193 PhD students were contacted and 90 questionnaires were submitted (78 of which were in Czech and 12 in English). The return rate at UHK was 46.6%. The evaluation concerned the organisation of doctoral studies during the study and the facilities available, the obligations set within the doctoral studies and the creative activity and publication of its results.

In some issues, inter-faculty differences were evident in the evaluation, e.g., motivation of doctoral students for creative activities, their involvement in research projects or the structure of doctoral studies. One of the measures at the UHK is thus to intensify the use of platforms for sharing good practice between faculties. In view of the evaluation results, the UHK will also provide joint training activities for doctoral students, focusing in particular on publishing the results of creative activities and on writing applications for research grants/projects or international scholarships. In autumn 2021, the first year of the *PhD Summit* was held at the UHK for incoming students of Czech and English doctoral programmes. The three-day seminar focused mainly on ethical principles in scientific work, preparation of publications and publication strategy, research promotion, project preparation and career development. The intention is to repeat this activity annually, and so a second year was held in 2022.

Another measure emerged from this feedback, namely the need to continue to look for ways to increase funding for doctoral scholarships to improve the financial conditions of PhD students so that they can devote more time to fulfilling their study-related obligations and complete their studies on time. Taking further measures is the responsibility of the faculties that have accredited the relevant studies.

### **2.1.3 Reducing drop-out rates**

In an effort to better understand the causes of drop outs and to take measures that will help reduce it more effectively, the UHK is collecting feedback from students whose studies were terminated without graduation. Data collection is carried out through the STAG information system. A link to the questionnaire is sent automatically to all students who drop out and to

those who have their studies terminated due to failure to meet the conditions of the Study and Examination Code.

The questionnaire was launched at the UHK in July 2020. It started to be fully functional in September 2020 due to technical problems. The survey cycle was completed at the end of 2020 and the first results of this pilot phase were processed for 2020. In 2021, the survey was available for the first time for a full calendar year. In the calendar year 2022, the survey continued but the design of the questionnaire and the range of possible answers have been modified partially. The results are evaluated for the calendar year at the beginning of the following year; a university report is submitted to relevant university bodies and made available to students and university staff and employees on the website.

In 2020, the UHK received 199 completed questionnaires. In 2021, 411 completed questionnaires were received and in 2022, 351 completed questionnaires were received.

In 2020, the three most frequently cited factors that influenced students to drop out were family, health or other personal reasons, the time demands of the study and its combination with personal and professional life, and unmet expectations of the study programme. The ranking of these factors varied according to the form of study. Similarly, in 2021, the three factors most frequently cited by respondents in the context of their drop out were: family, health or other personal reasons, the time demands of the study and its combination with personal and professional life, and unmet expectations of the study programme. The order and frequency of mentioning these influences varied by form of study, by type of study and by faculty, but these were always the three most frequently mentioned factors for dropping studies out (with the exception of respondents from the Faculty of Science and respondents from Master's study programmes, in whom too much demanding study was represented among the top three most frequently mentioned influences for dropping out the studies).

The factors most frequently cited by respondents in the context of their study termination in 2022 were: the time demands of the study and its combination with personal and professional life, family, health or other personal reasons, other reasons, unmet expectations from the chosen study programme and too much demanding studies. The order and frequency of mentioning the different influences varied by form of study, type of study and by faculty. Compared to the previous year, the percentage of respondents who mentioned time demands of the studies and the combination with personal life, employment, etc. among the influences on termination increased by nine. The percentage of respondents citing the influence of family, health or other personal reasons increased by three. The percentage of respondents reporting unmet expectations of the degree programme increased by three. The percentage indicating the demanding content of the study increased by fourteen.

All three cycles of evaluation show that the UHK should focus on further development of activities and services provided by the counselling centre and on increasing students' awareness of its offer so that students have adequate support in breaking down any barriers to completing their studies. The UHK should further develop opportunities to facilitate the combination of studies and personal and professional life and other activities. Last but not least, the University should continue to find ways to better inform applicants about the content of study programmes and careers and to expand the range of guidance available for the selection of a suitable study programme.

In terms of providing information to applicants, a new information line for applicants was established in 2021. It was launched between 1 August and 20 September 2021. During this period, the coordinator of the information line answered 68 questions, mainly on topics related to the application process, selection of fields of study, results of the admission procedure and other areas. A similar activity was carried out in 2022.

#### **2.1.4 Graduate investigations**

In 2020, the UHK Information, Counselling and Career Centre (ICCC) worked intensively on a comprehensive survey of graduates' employability. First, a questionnaire survey was conducted among employer representatives, and all employers cooperating with the ICCC were contacted. The aim was mainly to find out which employers are interested in cooperation with the UHK, what services they are interested in and what knowledge and skills they expect from the graduates they wish to approach with an offer of cooperation. The questionnaires were collected from 7 July to 8 August. A total of 457 employers were contacted, of which 103 completed the questionnaire (22.5%). The results of this survey help the Career Centre not only in developing cooperation with employers and streamlining the way job offers are published, but also in developing career counselling and preparing graduates for employment. Employers expect graduates to have good professional knowledge as well as practical skills, teamwork, analytical thinking and problem solving. In particular, their own inventiveness, creativity and creative thinking, communication and presentation skills and PC skills are also important. The results of the survey also showed that according to employers, graduates most often lack experience and the ability to work in practice; the employers also believe that the graduates lack sufficient communication skills, responsibility, independence and others. Therefore, it is desirable for the UHK to focus on further development of practical experience and on the development of soft competencies (communication, teamwork, independence, etc.), which has been incorporated by the University into its strategy for the next period.

As part of a comprehensive survey of the employability of graduates, a questionnaire survey was conducted in 2022 among the UHK graduates. All 2020/2021 graduates of all study programmes (Bachelor's, Master's, Follow-up Master's and Doctoral programmes) were contacted. Data collection took place from 29 June 2022 to 31 July 2022. 891 graduates of the UHK were contacted, of which 133 completed the questionnaire. Feedback was obtained from 14.9% of alumni. Of these, 4 persons responded that they did not graduate from the University in the given academic year and the questionnaire was automatically closed at this point. Thus, a total of 129 valid responses were received. The graduates who completed the questionnaire were most frequently from the Faculty of Education (56), followed by the Institute of Social Work (25), the Philosophical Faculty (19), the Faculty of Informatics and Management (18), and the Faculty of Science (11). The aim of the survey was to obtain feedback on the employability of graduates, to determine the perceived quality of the specialization, the faculty and the university as a whole by graduates, to obtain information on the competencies of graduates, the behaviour of graduates on the labour market, and to determine the wellbeing and satisfaction of graduates.

The findings of the survey included, for example, the fact that less than a third of respondents maintain contact with the UHK. The most frequently cited reasons why the survey respondents chose to study at the UHK were: interest in a particular field of study, obtaining a degree, accessible geographical location of the UHK (e.g., minimizing commuting distance



and thus reducing the financial costs of student life). The following acquired competencies were rated strongly positively by the respondents: problem-solving competencies, work competencies, cultural competencies, and competencies within writing. According to the respondents, personality configuration had an influence on their acquired competencies during their studies, with a higher influence reported by a total of 91.5%. The respondents also cite the influence of their own department, classmates, family, and attribute the least influence to the faculty or the entire UHK. On the other hand, the following competencies are perceived as the least valued ones: advanced digital competencies, language competencies (up to 44% of respondents perceive a low level of competencies), competencies for creativity, presentation competencies and field-specific competencies. Only a minimum of respondents used the services of the Counselling Centre during their studies, and up to 56% of graduates were not aware of the existence of the Centre services during their studies. Other findings related to, for example, wellbeing, graduates' preparedness for the labour market, their current employment, etc.

The findings from the questionnaire will be followed by the qualitative part of the survey (focus group). The results will then be summarised and possible measures will be proposed.

### **2.1.5 Evaluation of lifelong learning programmes**

The quality assurance and internal evaluation system includes also the evaluation of the quality of the provided lifelong learning programmes. The evaluation of the lifelong learning programmes consists usually of feedback from participants and graduates as well as of monitoring and evaluation of data collected mainly within the preparation of the annual report on the activities of the UHK and the opinion of the faculty implementing the lifelong learning programme.

The collection of feedback from participants of LLL programmes has not been coordinated between faculties for a long time. In 2022, a proposal for a university-wide system for collecting feedback from participants in LLL programmes was prepared and a common questionnaire was developed and discussed by the Internal Evaluation Board. It will be launched in 2023. However, these rules are not yet based on a managing act which would, therefore, be desirable to adopt and issue in the near future.

### **2.1.6 Comprehensive evaluation of study programmes**

The rules of the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation establish procedures for the comprehensive evaluation of study programmes during the period of their accreditation. This has not been carried out at the UHK so far, mainly because the amendment to the Act in 2016 changed the accreditation rules significantly. The accreditation of the original programmes (divided to fields of study) expires at the end of 2024 and these programmes are perceived as gradually terminated programmes, allowing completion of studies of enrolled students, while the study programmes accredited under the new rules have not yet been implemented for a sufficiently long period of time to allow for a comprehensive evaluation, including the evaluation of the completion rate, the employability of graduates, etc. In 2022, organisational procedures and a timetable have already started to be prepared for this comprehensive evaluation of study programmes to start in 2023.

## **2.2 Involvement of the UHK in national and international surveys**

During the period in question, the UHK participated in several national and international surveys focused on students and graduates. The surveys were carried out in the Czech Republic on the basis of the assignment of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

In 2018, the Graduate 2018 survey targeted 2013-2017 graduates who, at the same time, had not completed further studies at the University in 2018 and were not studying at the University at the time of the survey. These were graduates of all forms of Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral studies. The UHK received an individualised report from this survey in early 2020. The findings from this report were used, among other things, in the preparation of the UHK Strategic Plan for the period from 2021 onwards.

In 2018, the UHK also participated in a pilot Eurograduate survey which focused on graduates finishing their Bachelor's or Master's studies in 2012/2013 and 2016/2017. The aim of the survey was to determine the employability of graduates and the evaluation of the education received and to compare data from the different countries that participated in this survey. In 2022, the next round of the Eurograduate survey collected data, this time involving graduates of Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral programmes who graduated in the academic years 2016/2017 to 2020/2021. The data collection has been extended until 2023.

In spring 2019 and in 2022, the UHK joined the Eurostudent VII survey and the Eurostudent VIII survey, respectively. These are surveys aimed at monitoring the study and living conditions of students studying at universities in European countries and concern students of Bachelor's and Master's study programmes.

In 2021, the UHK participated in PhD Students Survey 2021, national survey of students studying doctoral programmes in the Czech Republic which is aimed at reflecting on the study conditions of doctoral students at Czech universities.

All of the above mentioned large-scale questionnaire surveys provide a number of valuable findings that the University continues to reflect in the evaluation and implementation of its activities.

In 2020, the UHK also paid attention to the document Study and Life in the Czech Republic through the Eyes of International Students, a report on research at Czech universities which presents the results of a questionnaire survey carried out at the end of 2019. This survey was carried out by the Czech National Agency for International Education and Research in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and higher education institutions and its main purpose was to evaluate the promotion of the Czech Republic as a study destination, the quality of study programmes and the availability of services provided by the higher education institutions, and thus improve the conditions of international students. The survey was also attended by 51 respondents from the UHK. Its results are also available to the UHK and were one of the bases for further reflection on the internationalization of studies, mobility planning, promotion of study programmes, etc.

The UHK students, together with students from six other Czech higher education institutions, took part in an international survey on the impact of covid-19 on students, conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University. Data collection took place in spring 2020. The questionnaire focused on the quality of teaching after the introduction of measures against the spread of covid-19, satisfaction with information about these measures provided to

students, study load and information provided by teachers. The questionnaire also included stress levels, concerns about the successful completion of the academic year and whether students had contacted counselling services. The results of this survey which were received by the UHK in June provided valuable insights into the situation of students, which could then be reflected in the planning of teaching or the provision of counselling services in the following semesters that were also affected by the measures taken to counter the spread of covid-19.

## **2.3 Accreditations granted by NAB**

From the point of view of evaluating the quality of educational activities, the opinions of the evaluators of the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAB) in assessing applications for accreditation of study programmes and the decisions of the NAB Board on granting accreditation to these programmes can be considered as key external feedback. Successful accreditations demonstrate that study programmes meet national accreditation standards and meet the quality requirements.

In the period 2018-2022, 116 study programmes were granted accreditation, of which 64 were Bachelor's study programmes, 1 Master's degree programme, 33 follow-up Master's study programmes and 18 doctoral study programmes. Seventy-three and 43 study programmes were granted accreditation for 10 and 5 years, respectively. Eight study programmes had their accreditation extended during their period of validity. Fifteen study programmes had their accreditation prolonged during the period in question. In the case of 93 study programmes, the NAB required an audit report when granting accreditation. An audit report was also required for all study programmes whose accreditation was to be prolonged and for four extensions of accreditation. Twenty-two applications for accreditation of study programmes were withdrawn by the University, mostly due to the non-recommendatory opinions of the evaluators for the accreditation granting.

The UHK IEB continuously analyses and discusses the current course and results of the evaluation of applications for accreditation of the UHK at the NAB and incorporates suggestions from the decision-making practice of the NAB into its approval mechanisms. In particular, it looks at the reasons why accreditations are granted for shorter, five-year periods. The lack of guarantees of proper staffing for 10 years is the most common reason and, in some cases, the reason is that the accreditation is being granted for the first time. The IEB also looks in detail at the reasons for withdrawal of accreditation applications.

## **2.4 IEP EUA evaluation in the field of educational activities**

### **2.4.1 Self-evaluation report**

Extensive self-evaluation of the UHK educational activities was carried out in the framework of the preparation of the self-evaluation report for the international evaluation within the IEP EUA. Below are the main results of the self-evaluation process in this area.

The current Strategic Plan of the UHK places great emphasis on doctoral studies. The UHK is aiming for a slight increase in the number of doctoral students and feels the potential especially in increasing the number of international doctoral students which it has not yet fully exploited, although many programmes are accredited in English. There is a lack of a

comprehensive University strategy to attract international PhD students although partial steps are already being taken by the UHK (e.g., modification of the rules on tuition fees for PhD programmes in foreign language).

The potential of profession-oriented programmes has so far been unused as academically oriented programmes have so far been preferred – also with regard to the ambiguous definition of study programme profiles in the relevant standards. However, the perception of profession-oriented programmes is beginning to change in the national context. The UHK is preparing new professionally oriented study programmes within the framework of the National Renewal Plan funded by the European Union (EU). The UHK has also not yet fully exploited the potential of interdisciplinary study programmes. Another task that the UHK is currently facing is to implement in practice the signed agreements with universities abroad concerning cooperation in the implementation of a study programme (*double degree*), and thus to fulfil this cooperation in practice.

The approach to accreditation of study programmes in a foreign language is a certain weakness. The UHK has accredited a number of study programmes taught in English. In most cases, however, this is just a translation of the Czech version into English without any link to the potential attractiveness of the programme for international applicants. Some of these study programmes are very much linked to the national context. Many study programmes are not taught in English at all. There is, therefore, a need to prepare a review and optimisation of the offer of study programmes taught in a foreign language. The UHK does not yet have a unified offer of scholarship frameworks for international students enrolled in English-taught programmes, which may also be a disadvantage in attracting applicants.

The UHK does not have university recommendations for the development of study programmes, which may prove to be a weakness in some areas. For example, in terms of internationalisation, the UHK could consider introduction of recommendations that would allow study programmes to be designed in such a way that students have a higher level of motivation to participate in international mobility (e.g., *mobility windows*).

The UHK has not developed university methodologies, recommendations or manuals for the design of study programmes, for the selection of teaching methods or for the evaluation of students that would reflect the institutional approach to the integration of a student-centred approach. Each application for accreditation should include, inter alia, the learning objectives and graduate profile, the method of verification of learning outcomes and student requirements for each course, etc. The UHK recommends that the learning outcomes of the courses and the graduate profile be designed according to the learning results, i.e., focusing on professional knowledge, professional skills and general competencies. However, experience to date shows that some teachers may not always be sure how to best formulate knowledge, skills and competencies, which may just be related to the lack of methodological guidelines at the UHK, as well as to the fact that the development of competencies for teaching at the UHK has not yet been addressed systematically. In its Strategic Plan, the UHK has set out to change these issues and has set itself the goal of systematising the requirements for academic staff training in teaching methods and reflecting them in the Career System. Furthermore, the aim is to motivate academic staff to develop their competencies for teaching and to strengthen the methodological and organisational background for these activities at the University. The UHK does not yet have a university centre for the development of teaching competencies and needs to strengthen the methodological and organisational background. Another goal of the UHK is to involve more

experts in university pedagogy and curriculum design in the development of study programmes and to support methodologically academic staff in the preparation of applications for accreditations, which still remains more at the level of an intention due to the lack of sufficient capacity.

The internal evaluation also includes feedback, including through questionnaire surveys. This agenda is gradually being developed, centralised and systematised at the UHK – university-wide evaluations of teaching of individual subjects have been introduced, questionnaires for regular evaluations by students of doctoral studies have been introduced, surveys have been carried out among residents of the Halls of Residence, and feedback is collected continuously from students whose studies have been terminated without graduation. Regarding the feedback from students, there is a need to build increasingly confidence among the target group in the evaluation process and its purpose, to communicate better with students and to inform them better about the results and measures taken. Their participation in the evaluation of course teaching is relatively low.

In terms of formal rules, the participation of graduates and experts from practice is not guaranteed in the preparation of study programmes and during the review of applications for accreditation of study programmes. While there are ways in which the perspectives of these actors can be included (use of Study Programme Boards, if established at the faculty, Council for Cooperation with Practice, inclusion of students, alumni, experts from practice or other relevant actors outside the formalised structures), it would be desirable to formalise and systematise the activities in order to guarantee the inclusion of all relevant actors in the preparation of study programmes, which could also be linked to the systematisation of study programme boards.

The UHK Code of Studies and Examination is the key internal regulation determining the rules of study. It is valid for all faculties and gives all students uniform rules of study regardless of the faculty they are enrolled at. The provisions of the Code of Studies and Examination are followed by the managing acts of the Deans that are mainly of an organisational nature. The organisational set-up of studies is, therefore, primarily the responsibility of the faculties, and differences in the different approaches and processes of the faculties can be a complication, especially for students in inter-faculty study programmes with students preparing for the teaching profession, who, depending on their chosen subject combinations, may move between up to three faculties in the course of their studies. The creation of teaching schedules in this area of study is also more problematic.

The Code of Studies and Examination sets out the rules of study from which the rights and obligations of students are derived; however, there is no established process for how students should proceed if teachers do not fulfil their obligations and do not provide them with what they are entitled to under the internal regulations. Although such cases are rare, it would be desirable to set up such processes and inform students about them.

In terms of drop-outs, the UHK does not yet have a common comprehensive set of measures to reduce it but it perceives the level of drop-outs as a problem and is looking for ways to reduce it effectively and is taking partial measures. Since 2020, it has been collecting systematically feedback from students who have terminated studies without graduating (see above), and the UHK is now also focusing on testing mathematical models in selected programmes to assess successful pathways through the first year of study and to focus on interventions for at-risk groups of students. The UHK does not have processes in place to

determine the effectiveness of the counselling services provided. The aim is to begin to evaluate the effectiveness of the counselling services provided and to develop them further, including with regard to student counselling and efforts to increase graduation rates.

#### **2.4.2 Evaluators' report**

It is mentioned in the evaluation report received by the UHK from the IEP EUA that the UHK does not have a clear quality concept for study programmes; therefore, the evaluators recommended that the faculties together with the central quality assurance department of the UHK define a common quality concept that goes beyond the mere compliance with prescribed national standards. At the same time, the evaluators noted that some of the ESG concepts (*Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area*), such as the emphasis on competencies rather than knowledge transfer, student-centred learning, research reflected in teaching and consistent progression and articulation of programmes, have not yet been clearly internalised. The potential offered by e-learning methods is implemented partially only, and evaluation is not aligned systematically with quality parameters. There is no documentation of oral examinations.

The evaluation team recommended that ESG should be reconsidered in the design of the curricula and that qualitative features such as development of competencies, student-centred learning, research reflected in teaching and consistent progression and articulation of programmes should be developed fully and evaluation practices aligned accordingly.

The evaluators also recommend that the UHK re-evaluate its study programmes and reduce their number and use the concept of modularisation in the design of study programmes. This recommendation for modularisation was also seen as a benefit in the area of internationalisation, specifically for the design of joint study programmes.

The evaluators also made a recommendation to establish a teacher training centre that could provide organisational support in the administrative aspects of training of future teachers. The centre could also provide courses or workshops for teachers and for the UHK teachers on didactics and new teaching methods. This would also be useful for PhD students.

In terms of doctoral studies, the evaluators stated that the scope of the taught courses is relatively high compared to international practice and recommended that the UHK should look for ways to place more emphasis on doctoral students' own research.

The evaluation group also recommended promoting collaboration between faculties to exploit the potential for innovative study programme offerings that would reflect the strategic priorities of the UHK.

The team evaluated positively the expansion of study programmes in English and, in terms of internationalisation of educational activities, recommended that priority be given to cooperation with such partners where this is intertwined with research interests. Recommendations were also made regarding processes for the recognition of foreign results and the introduction of mobility windows in the design of study programmes (e.g., in the third semester of the Bachelor's degree).

Another recommendation on internationalisation was that the UHK should proactively take measures to support the mobility of its students, based on consultations with the IAB and other means. The evaluators also recommended that the University should consider whether there is/is not an imbalance between its internationalisation efforts and the prospect of

attracting sufficient numbers of international students. The UHK might consider whether the best option is to optimise its strengths, particularly its links in Latin America and Africa or with regard to specific Masters’ or PhD programmes, rather than following the standard pattern of reaching out primarily to EU students at the Bachelor’s degree level. The evaluators appreciated the efforts that the UHK has successfully made to strengthen its links with Latin America and Africa and encourage the UHK to continue it. Collaboration with these partners is primarily in the educational sphere at this time, and the team recommends exploring opportunities to link research projects.

**2.5 SWOT analysis and recommendations for further development**

**SWOT Analysis of Educational Activities and Quality Assurance at UHK**

<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A wide and stable range of study programmes in all types of study;</li> <li>• Interest of the student representation in the inclusion of students in the preparation and evaluation processes;</li> <li>• Emphasis on the internationalisation of educational activities;</li> <li>• New programmes and activities for doctoral students.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining interest of students in providing feedback on teaching;</li> <li>• Lack of a guarantee of the involvement of graduates and experts from practice in the preparation of study programmes;</li> <li>• Lack of a systemic set-up of study programme boards;</li> <li>• Lack of processes to monitor the effectiveness of counselling services;</li> <li>• Lack of a central methodological and organisational background for the development of pedagogical competencies of academic staff;</li> <li>• Lack of a coherent set of measures to reduce the drop-out rate;</li> <li>• Lack of coordination of faculty organizational settings for students enrolled in inter-faculty programmes;</li> <li>• Lack of central methodologies for curriculum development (including measures to strengthen internationalisation);</li> <li>• Ineffective offer of study programmes taught in a foreign language;</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not exploiting the potential for the creation of interdisciplinary study programmes;</li> <li>• Not yet carried out comprehensive evaluation of study programmes;</li> <li>• Lack of consistent and systematic feedback from graduates.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing interest in the quality of educational activities at the national level;</li> <li>• International cooperation in educational activities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in the interest of applicants to study at the UHK;</li> <li>• Unpredictable funding of public universities.</li> </ul>

### **Recommendations for further development of educational activities and its quality assurance**

- Continue to involve students in the preparation and evaluation of evaluation processes.
- Continue to emphasize the internationalization of educational activities.
- Develop doctoral programmes and seek higher numbers of international PhD students.
- Seek other ways to ensure feedback from students on study programmes (e.g., conduct focus groups on a regular basis).
- Anchor uniform rules for the role of study programme boards at the University and their composition that should guarantee the involvement of students, graduates and employers.
- Establish processes to monitor the effectiveness of counselling services.
- Ensure sufficient university professional capacity for the development of teaching competencies of academic staff.
- Continue to monitor the drop-out rate and develop systematic measures to reduce it.
- Coordinate more the organisation of studies for students enrolled in inter-faculty programmes.
- Develop methodologies for curriculum design that both focus on student-centred learning and include measures to enhance internationalisation.
- Streamline the offer of study programmes taught in a foreign language and target them to specific regions.
- Promote interfaculty and interdisciplinary cooperation in the development and implementation of study programmes.
- Immediately initiate the comprehensive evaluation of study programmes required by the internal regulation.



- Set up a unified system at the University for obtaining feedback from graduates.
- Anchor the agreed rules for obtaining feedback from participants in LLL programmes in a managing act.
- Implement the recommendations resulting from the IEP EUA evaluation.

### 3 Creative activities

The aim of this chapter is to present the internal and external evaluation of the quality of creative activities that took place at the UHK during the period in question. In particular, it focuses on explaining the internal evaluations and processes and presents the results of the two most important external evaluations that took place during the period. The first was carried out within the framework of the national methodology for the evaluation of research organisations in the higher education segment, the second within the framework of the IEP EUA evaluation.

#### 3.1 Internal evaluation of the quality of creative activities

Quality assurance of creative activities at the UHK includes processes of evaluation of creative activities at the level of the University, faculties and individual departments, and at the level of academic and scientific staff involved in creative activities.

At the university level, *benchmarking* is used and various indicators related to the allocation of funds for research activities or incentive schemes are monitored. Data is also collected for annual reports, academic meetings or for monitoring of the fulfilment of indicators identified in the Strategic Plan. In particular, the UHK evaluates centrally the University programmes to support science. University evaluation also includes self-evaluation reports on creative activities of the faculties that are to be drawn by the faculties at least once every five years and submitted to the Internal Evaluation Board. Self-evaluation reports were drawn as part of the 2020 University evaluation (see chapter 3.2).

The indicators monitored by the University reflect the national approach to the evaluation of research activity and the criteria used to fund research organisations. More detailed evaluation of research results occurs at the faculties where detailed criteria for such evaluation are also established. Activities and outputs of research activity are included in the annual evaluation of academic staff. Faculties autonomously set rules for rewarding the research output of their staff, thereby motivating them to develop their creative activity, as well as applying a minimum standard for publication output.

The details of the internal evaluation of creative activities, including its provision, are to be – on the basis of an internal regulation – determined by a Rector’s managing act, on which the IEB of the UHK expresses its opinion. However, this managing act (following the new internal regulation) has not yet been issued and the University's system for the evaluation of creative activity is not yet fully developed.

##### 3.1.1 Science support programmes

The University programmes for the support of science and research, enshrined in an internal regulation as part of the system of quality assurance and internal evaluation of creative activities at the UHK further specified by a Rector's decree are one of the key tools for the conceptual development of creative activities at the UHK. The Rector's Decree currently enshrines the *Excellence* programme which is aimed at building excellent research and is implemented by a University grant competition, with its last run implemented in 2018-2020. The second programme is called *Postdoc* and is aimed at support of promising postdoctoral researchers and is implemented by the University competition for postdoctoral projects. The programme has been currently running continuously under a new framework since 2021. The

third programme is called *Best Scientists* and consists of an annual award for the best researchers at the UHK. There is also the *Faculty Research* programme which is aimed at developing discipline-specific research at the faculties and is implemented by the research activities of the faculties in the scientific disciplines they develop. The fifth programme called *All-University Research Directions* is designed to support the development of university-wide multidisciplinary research directions.

These programmes are evaluated continuously. For example, the excellence projects carried out between 2017 and 2019 were evaluated in 2020, in particular in terms of costs incurred and delivery of the planned approved outputs. In 2019, one team of researchers of a project to promote excellence at the UHK was awarded an external prestigious project in the framework of the EXPRO Grant Projects of Excellence in Basic Research competition of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic. This success demonstrated that the University's excellence programme contributes to improving the quality of creative activity at the UHK. There was also an evaluation of the performance of postdocs who held positions at the University between 2018 and 2020, both through questionnaires for postdocs and questionnaires addressed to representatives of the faculties/departments where the postdocs concerned were based. Of the nine postdocs contacted, five evaluated their activities, and nine forms were completed by faculty representatives. The evaluations were mostly positive (except for one evaluation from the faculty) and mentioned the benefits of the placement for both parties, i.e. for both the postdoc and the faculty. The evaluation also included an opportunity to make a recommendation for a possible next competition for new postdoctoral positions.

### **3.1.2 Benchmarking**

In order to monitor the progress of the UHK in scientific and research activities, an annual evaluation of the UHK's publication activity is carried out. The trend in the total number of publications is monitored, as well as the development in quality which is defined in the University's so-called Premium for Quality (PFQ) and in the internal allocation of funds for the long-term conceptual development of a research organization (LTCDRO), i.e. a decline in conference publications and an increase in journal publications, especially of the Jimp and Jsc type. Within these trends, scientific growth is also observed in comparison with other universities of regional character and similar size of academic community. In the period under review, the UHK has achieved a very good position. The monitoring of this trend is particularly relevant in terms of its impact on growth in research activities and its impact on various university rankings (see Chapter 5 for details on the position of the UHK in international rankings).

In addition to the *benchmarking of* publishing activities, reviews of success rates with external providers and grant agencies are essential for monitoring developments within the UHK.

## **3.2 Evaluation of a research organisation in the higher education segment**

### **3.2.1 Course of evaluation**

In 2020, the UHK, as well as other universities in the Czech Republic, was evaluated according to the Methodology for the Evaluation of Research Organisations in the Higher Education

Segment. In January 2020, the Constitution and Rules of Procedure of the International Evaluation Panel of the UHK (IEP) came into force. The IEP members were appointed in March (one partial change in the composition of the IEP took place in June). The evaluation started in May when the evaluators received the UHK's self-evaluation reports of Module 3 (i.e. faculty self-evaluation reports) and Modules 4 (M<sub>4</sub> – viability) and 5 (M<sub>5</sub> – strategy and concepts).

The IEP was originally scheduled to meet at the UHK from 8 to 11 June 2020 but due to the epidemic of covid-19 and travel restrictions, it was not possible to hold this meeting at the University. Due to the situation, the IEP allowed for a rescheduling of the evaluation and prolongation of the process. The first meeting of the IEP members was held online in June. Its aim was mainly to introduce the UHK and its faculties, to provide information on the context of evaluation in the country and to answer the evaluators' questions about the institution and the evaluation.

The *on-site* visit has been rescheduled for 21-23 October 2020. Due to the epidemic situation and travel restrictions in the Czech Republic and abroad, this meeting could not take place fully on-site and was conducted in a hybrid manner. Most of the members were connected online and a representative of the Ministry of Education and the IEP Secretary were present on-site at the University. During this meeting, the evaluators interacted with representatives of the faculty and management of the University, academic staff, research staff and students.

At the December meeting of the IEP members, draft evaluations of the University were completed and provided to the UHK Rector for comments in accordance with the established process. The evaluation process continued in January 2021 when the Rector gave his opinion on behalf of the University and, after incorporating modifications, the evaluation report was approved by the IEP members and was sent to the relevant Ministry.

### **3.2.2 Main results of the evaluation**

The final protocol for the evaluation of research organisations in the higher education segment in 2020 sent by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) included results in all five modules:

- Module 1 (hereafter M<sub>1</sub>): Quality of selected outcomes;
- Module 2 (hereafter M<sub>2</sub>): Research performance;
- Module 3 (hereafter M<sub>3</sub>): Social Relevance;
- Module 4 (hereafter M<sub>4</sub>): Viability;
- Module 5 (hereafter M<sub>5</sub>): Strategy and Concepts.

The evaluation in Modules 1 and 2 was carried out by the Research, Development and Innovation Council at the national level, while the evaluation in Modules 3-5 was carried out by the international evaluation panel mentioned above.

In M<sub>1+2</sub>, the UHK was proposed the following evaluation of individual subject-area groups:

- Natural Sciences – grade C;
- Technical disciplines – grade C
- Medical disciplines – grade C;
- Agricultural disciplines – grade B;

- Social Sciences – grade C;
- Humanities – grade B-.

The aggregate score in M1 and M2 was C.

In M3, three faculties (PdF, FIM, FF) were rated as very good, and PřF as good. The overall rating of M3 was very good. Among the strengths of the UHK, it was mentioned that the UHK has a young team of academic and administrative staff who are actively working to improve the academic and scientific quality. The considerable national and regional societal impact of the University's activities was also cited. On the other hand, weaknesses included the fact that faculties do not cooperate much with each other, the UHK is not active in commercialising the results of interesting research topics, there are significant differences in the quality of research conducted in different departments, not many spin-off companies are established, and the UHK does not cooperate much with the private sector.

Both M4 and M5 were rated very good overall. The extensive verbal evaluation included several recommendations: to develop long-term collaborations within the Czech Republic (in line with the vision of the UHK), to increase the number of doctoral and postdoctoral positions, to introduce a study programme focused on collaboration with industry, to provide more support in filing patent applications and publishing articles, to create an external advisory body for strategic planning and evaluation of the UHK in the field of research, development and innovation. Recommendations were also made based on the current situation at the University (taking into account performance, objectives, etc.):

- 1) The creation of an International Research Board of the UHK which could help identify appropriate indicators for comparison and could help guide the UHK towards excellence in science and education.
- 2) Financial incentives (as well as incentives through career development opportunities) for authors of research articles in impacted journals ranked Q1 or Q2 in the Web of Science database, especially in Tier 10, 5, or even 1.
- 3) Increasing the attractiveness of doctoral studies by creating excellent research teams at the UHK.
- 4) Sending the best graduates of doctoral programmes to the best foreign universities or research institutions with the aim of them becoming excellent postdoctoral fellows and then returning to the UHK (ideally with a European research project of their own).
- 5) Allocation of funds for an internal grant competition to fund three to five-year projects, with the aim of attracting postdoctoral fellows (especially foreign ones). Their task would be to prepare and submit prestigious European research projects.
- 6) Ensuring a balanced age structure of professors and associate professors at faculties and promoting gender balance.
- 7) Support for the transfer of research results into practice (e.g., sale of patents and software licences to external companies, establishment of spin-off and start-up companies).

The overall rating of UHK was C – average.

### **3.2.3 Measures taken**

The above seven IEP recommendations have been implemented at the UHK in the following way.

An International Advisory Board (IAB) has been established at the UHK; it continues the evaluation process started under the IEP by focusing on examples of good practice from the individual members' departments. Thus, it continues to identify appropriate indicators for comparison and to guide the UHK towards excellence in science and education. (For details on the IAB, see subsection 1.2.2.)

The criteria for the so-called Premium for Quality (PFQ) which serves to distribute part of the budget among the faculties of the UHK, and for the distribution of funding for the long-term conceptual development of a research organisation (LTCDRO) were modified partially to take more account of excellent outputs. This encourages faculties to support outputs in impacted journals ranked Q1 or Q2 in the Web of Science database and to focus on TOP excellence in publication outputs, especially in Tier 10, 5, or even 1. At the faculty level, excellent research teams and postdoctoral projects are created through excellence grant schemes.

As part of the allocation of the LTCDRO, a defined financial framework is allocated at the university level for each faculty for the continuous support of postdoctoral positions, the quality of which is ensured by a standing committee. In addition to excellent publications, their task is to prepare and submit prestigious European scientific projects (such as Horizon Europe, international projects of the Czech Grant Agency, etc.).

Ensuring a balanced age structure of professors and associate professors is linked in particular to supporting the qualification growth of academic staff, including in relation to the career regulations and the evaluation system. The promotion of gender balance is linked to the gender equality plan (see subsection 4.1.4).

Support for the transfer of research results into practice is fulfilled by the stabilisation of the Technology Transfer Office and its continuous financial support. Newly, it is necessary to highlight the making of a cooperation agreement with specialists in technology transfer – Charles University Innovations Prague a.s. (CUIP) where selected results with good commercialization potential are further prepared for the market and an active search for partners is underway. The implementation of the GAMA2 project of the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic was also very beneficial. It ended successfully in 2022 with a total of 15 implemented projects and over 40 applied outputs.

## **3.3 Evaluation of the IEP EUA in the field of creative activities**

### **3.3.1 Self-evaluation report**

The main outputs of the self-evaluation of creative activities carried out by the UHK as part of the IEP EUA evaluation process are summarised below.

From the point of view of central management of science, the way of distribution of funds intended for long-term conceptual development of scientific activities among individual faculties is one of the key activities. Its purpose is to motivate faculties to improve the outputs of their scientific activities. The distribution is based on criteria set by the University, based on relevant national criteria. However, they place more emphasis on the University priorities

and its character, in particular the fact that a significant part of the scientific output comes from the humanities and social sciences. This way of distributing funding creates a motivational environment and contributes to faculty improvement, but it also poses a challenge in that stable and longer-term criteria need to be defined and made the subject of university consensus. Another challenge posed by such a system is to find sufficient incentives to strengthen inter-faculty research activities and to prevent inter-faculty rivalry from prevailing over collaborative interest in the distribution of funds.

The UHK has been developing successfully its staff capacity for research activities and the number of researchers has increased significantly in recent years. However, the fact that a significant part of the best research results is generated by a relatively small number of individuals can be considered weakness of the UHK. Academicians and researchers are burdened with a considerable administrative burden (e.g., in dealing with scientific projects). Academicians also have a relatively high teaching load, which can take away time for research activities and dissemination of their research results (as shown in the staff survey).

Technology transfer is a relatively new agenda at the UHK; the UHK is newly building its own capacities and beginning to improve in this area. This area has the support of senior management and is one of the priorities of the University, and it is necessary to continue to develop the University's capacity in this area. However, due to its predominantly social science and humanities orientation, the UHK does not have such a high potential for commercialising its research outputs.

Research activities reflect the mission and goals of the University. The UHK strives to develop highly valued and socially beneficial creative activities and to achieve valued research results. Strengthening interdisciplinarity and internationalisation of research are also among its strategic objectives. The fact that the UHK has not yet fully exploited the potential for inter-faculty cooperation can be considered a certain weakness. The inter-faculty cooperation is naturally taking place and joint projects are being addressed or prepared for submission but there is a lack of sufficient targeted institutional mechanisms to support its development (bonus systems, incentive schemes). The only current means of promoting inter-faculty research collaboration is the bonusing of inter-faculty projects for each participating faculty in the framework of the Premium for Quality programme which serves to distribute part of the funding to the faculties in budgeting. The space devoted to the development and support of scientific activity varies from faculty to faculty, which also leads to an imbalance in the production of creative outputs between faculties. The current arrangements may not motivate sufficiently inter-faculty cooperation as the way in which funds are distributed among faculties creates a competitive rather than a cooperative environment. If the UHK wants to fulfil its mission and strategic objectives, strengthening the central level and University coordination seems beneficial. The University-wide research directions formulated by the University already help to overcome these weaknesses but specific measures to support them and incentives for their further development still need to be developed in line with the thematic orientation of the faculties.

In University funding schemes, publications with foreign co-authors get bonuses, especially those involving an equal number of authors from the UHK and abroad. Scientists are, therefore, motivated to collaborate abroad in the production of scientific outputs. Without projects, it is more difficult to involve foreign scientists, and lower competitiveness of the UHK in terms of financial offer is its disadvantage in this respect. Another weakness of the UHK is that it has not yet been a principal researcher of any grant awarded by the European

Research Council (ERC). The UHK is aware that it does not currently have sufficient staff and administrative resources for project support to assist researchers in the preparation of such projects.

### **3.3.2 Report of the evaluators**

This section summarises the evaluation on the management and use of research results that was included in the evaluation report of the IEP EUA.

The evaluators considered the draft research strategy of the UHK that was submitted to them. They found the strategy to be credible, feasible, and systematically structured. It analyses the status quo, i.e. weaknesses and aspirations. The evaluators had four recommendations on the strategy. The first was that more attention should be paid to entrepreneurship and research should be more linked to society, business and employability. The second recommendation recommended removing sustainability from the strategy as it is generic (and not a subject of research) and applies to all activities in all parts of the University. Sustainability should be retained as an objective of good practice at the institutional level. The reviewers also recommended that specific performance indicators should be included in the research strategy, together with detailed action plans indicating the required inputs, schedules, responsibilities and intended outcomes (using the SMART tool: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound). Another recommendation concerned the timeline and prioritisation of actions, as the deadline for achieving the set objectives is too ambitious.

The evaluators recommended that the University build a central, professionalized research support unit that would benefit all faculties. It could provide a wider range of services and support work on a relevant concept of research collaboration, perhaps through the recommended expansion of the mission of the Technology Transfer Office. Knowledge transfer could and should involve all faculties of the UHK; one of the faculties may not be fully aware of its potential in terms of research and transfer opportunities. Strengthening the transfer of knowledge gained through research was also emphasised by the evaluators in the context of service to society (the third role).

The reviewers noted that the award system, such as the Rector's Award and research support and bonuses, is working. The number of publications has increased sharply in recent years, as has the number of PhD students. Funding received from national research grant and technology agencies and private partners was also increasing, and the UHK was improving in international rankings. There is some collaboration between faculties, although there is untapped potential in this respect. According to the evaluators, the UHK is on the right track to increase its research achievements and use them to increase its international visibility. As research is high on the strategic agenda, there is a strong institutional drive to strengthen it, supported by incentive measures. This is also reinforced by the UHK's ongoing reflection on strategy, with a generally high level of ownership of strategy across the University, although not necessarily equally balanced across faculties. The evaluators see potential for the UHK to expand its research activities by promoting targeted international research collaborations through its partners in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

## **3.4 SWOT analysis and recommendations for further development**

### **SWOT analysis of creative activities and assurance of their quality at the UHK**



<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on research in the University's strategy and activities;</li> <li>• Incentives and motivational measures for the development of research activities;</li> <li>• Increasing numbers of projects and the volume of funding from external sources;</li> <li>• Increasing numbers of publications;</li> <li>• Increasing numbers of researchers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent research results are achieved by a relatively small group of employees;</li> <li>• Insufficiently utilized potential of interfaculty cooperation in research;</li> <li>• Insufficient central tools to manage and support research;</li> <li>• Unbalanced research activity among faculties;</li> <li>• Absence of a university research evaluation system;</li> <li>• Lack of experience in solving large international projects;</li> <li>• Lack of central administrative and professional support for research;</li> <li>• Unfinished and unpublished research strategy;</li> <li>• Insufficiently utilised knowledge transfer potential.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National and international funding opportunities for creative activities;</li> <li>• Cooperation in an international environment;</li> <li>• Cooperation within the region and involvement in regional partnerships</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of state funding for the development of research activity;</li> <li>• Reduction of the amount of funding allocated to national or international grant competitions;</li> <li>• Organisational and administrative complexity of employing international workers resulting from national legislation.</li> </ul>

**Recommendations for further development of creative activities and its quality assurance at the UHK**

- Further develop incentives and motivational measures for the development of research activities.

- Continue to encourage the submission of projects to national and international grant competitions.
- Support more interfaculty and interdisciplinary research collaboration, e.g., through university-wide research directions or internal grant competitions. This could help to reduce the imbalance of research activity between the faculties and increase the number of outstanding scientific results.
- Strengthen central tools for managing and supporting research.
- Establish a comprehensive university system for the evaluation of creative activities at the UHK.
- Strengthen central administrative and professional capacity to support research, knowledge transfer and international project submissions.
- Finalise and publish the research strategy.
- Implement the recommendations of the IEP EUA evaluation.

## 4 Related activities

This chapter focuses on quality assurance and quality evaluation of related activities. It includes all activities that are supportive and help to fulfil the first and second role of the UHK, i.e., the educational and creative activities. The focus is on areas where internal evaluation was carried out in the period under review, including the HR Award, the view of the IEP EUA evaluators that focused mainly on the management and administration of the University, and other external evaluations.

### 4.1 Internal quality evaluation of related activities

Quality assurance of related activities means quality assurance of all university activities of the UHK that create and maintain conditions for the implementation of educational and creative activities. According to the internal regulations, the following are mainly subject to evaluation: a) management and administration of the UHK and its faculties, b) use of resources (especially personnel and financial resources), c) infrastructure, d) information systems, e) information and advisory services, f) knowledge and technology transfer services, g) library services, h) editorial activities, i) services provided by the Halls of Residence, and j) facilities for sports activities.

In accordance with the UHK internal regulation (*Rules of the System of Quality Assurance and Internal Quality Evaluation at the University of Hradec Králové*), an internal evaluation of related activities was initiated in 2020 in connection with the preparation of the UHK Strategic Plan. The evaluation was completed in the areas of management and administration of the UHK, information and advisory services, knowledge and technology transfer services, library services and editorial activities. The results of the evaluation were reflected in the development of the University's strategy for the period from 2021 onwards and resulted in some partial measures as well.

#### 4.1.1 Evaluation of employees

The evaluation of academic staff is carried out annually at the individual faculties of the UHK. In 2020, the process was standardised by a new university managing act (*Career System and Regular Evaluation of Academic Staff of the University of Hradec Králové*) which linked the system of evaluation of academic staff with the Career System and introduced partial modifications to the relevant evaluation form.

A new evaluation system has been introduced for employees in other positions (Rector's Decree No. 10/2020 *Evaluation of the UHK Employees*). It aims to contribute to the professional and personal development of employees and to strengthen their motivation for this development. It applies to all other employees of the University, i.e. technical, economic and administrative staff, workers and auxiliary and service staff or scientific and research staff who are not involved in teaching activities. The evaluation is tailored to the needs of each category of staff member and, depending on this, includes the completion of an evaluation form and an evaluation interview with the supervisor or just an evaluation interview with the supervisor. The evaluation takes place once a year and applies to all University staff, but the dates on which the evaluation takes place may vary from unit to unit.

### 4.1.2 University Library

An internal evaluation of library services and editorial activities was conducted in autumn 2020. This was an evaluation of the activities of the University Library (UL), as Gaudeamus Publishing became part of the UL in 2016. The evaluation used, among other things, data that is regularly collected as part of the library's annual reports, information from library staff evaluations, and an evaluation interview with the library director. A SWOT analysis of the University Library was prepared, and the results of the evaluation were reflected in the preparation of the UHK Strategic Plan as well as in the *Strategic Plan for the Development of the University Library of the University of Hradec Králové from 2022 onwards*.

The Library's strengths include, for example, information education for students and academic staff in the field of citation standards, search strategies, work with databases and *open access* publishing, the ability to respond flexibly to the educational needs of individuals, groups and institutions, partnership with colleagues from the Association of University Libraries (AUL) and monitoring of all current trends, including cooperation in professional sections and working groups (IVIG, EIZ, Open Science). The weaknesses of the University Library include, among other things, the space capacity of the Central Library which may limit the development of a modern library in the future (that would have, for example, a training room or separate study boxes), the fear of the departure of staff with higher education to positions with higher financial remuneration, the decline in users of the University Library due to the pandemic, etc.

The evaluation of the library is also based on feedback from its users. In 2022, the library conducted a satisfaction survey of the university library users. The questionnaire was designed in 2021 already but was not sent out due to service restrictions as part of the anti-epidemic measures during the epidemic of covid-19. Thus, data collection was conducted from 11 April to 11 May 2022 and all library users, i.e. students, academic staff, other staff and external users, could participate. The questionnaire was available in Czech and English versions and could be completed in both electronic and paper formats.

A total of 130 submitted forms were processed. 128 responses were completed online, 2 in paper form. 125 completed questionnaires were in Czech, 5 in English. The largest group of respondents were students (79 Bachelor's students, 20 Master's students, and 6 PhD students); academic staff submitted 23 forms. External users, university staff and other categories each submitted one questionnaire. The return rate was 5.7% (the total number of active library users during the survey period was 2,251).

Respondents expressed a relatively high level of satisfaction with the library facilities. However, verbal responses indicated, among other things, that students lacked a separate room for presentations, projects and group learning, and lacked individual study rooms for independent learning. Thus, the library will continue to seek additional study rooms, rooms for presentations and training, and individual study rooms for independent learning.

Regarding the library collection, the questionnaire survey showed that students are concerned about the lack of recommended study literature. They would like the Library to buy more copies of study literature, and they would like to cancel long-term loans by teachers. The University Library will seek to increase funding for the purchase of specialist literature for the UL, encourage the purchase of e-books with unlimited user access and share the open educational resources of the National Library's Kramerius digital library.

Users appreciate the training provided by the University Library; many consider it frequent enough; in particular, academic staff appreciate the training. There were quite frequent suggestions from students who would welcome further training on databases, how to write term papers, citation ethics and the formal editing of theses. The library will continue the existing training and include additional training (on citation management, identification of predatory journals and safe publishing principles, citation ethics and formal editing of theses).

The overwhelming majority of respondents (90% to 98% in individual statements) rate the work of the staff as professional, their approach as helpful and accommodating. They perceive that the staff is well informed, appreciate the librarians offering alternative solutions, and appreciate that the librarians can give advice. The library will continue to pay attention to the individual needs of users and look for ways to help them, particularly in enabling literature loans from teachers.

The library conducted another survey in 2022 on the issue of *blended learning*. Only 16 respondents completed the questionnaire for academic staff, which is too small a number to take any measure. However, the questionnaire revealed that the cooperation between teachers and the University Library was largely broken during the pandemic period, so the library will focus on restoring and expanding the cooperation. A total of 233 respondents participated in the questionnaire survey investigating the needs of students. It focused primarily on the sources from which students obtain information and the tools they use in their studies, their preferred form of learning, their satisfaction with the library's services in this area and, where appropriate, their suggestions and comments on these topics. Findings indicated, among other things, that students prefer electronic or digital resources to printed resources to a greater extent. Students also mentioned, for example, that they missed having a space where they could follow online instruction, training (e.g., information literacy, citations), and borrowing laptops and portable devices. Students would also appreciate more study rooms or lecture theatres and classrooms and would also welcome breakout areas and expanded refreshment options.

### **4.1.3 Halls of Residence**

In the context of the evaluation of services provided by the Halls of Residence, a questionnaire survey was prepared in autumn 2020 already for the accommodated students, focusing on satisfaction with the quality of accommodation, with the processes, rules and prices of accommodation, with the availability of information on the website, with the equipment and facilities of the Halls of Residence, outdoor facilities, etc. The survey did not take place in 2020 due to restrictions on the provision of accommodation services in the Halls of Residence due to government measures to prevent the spread of covid-19 and was rescheduled for 2021. A section of the questionnaire was newly added; it dealt with the evaluation of outdoor spaces and their currently planned refurbishment.

The data collection took place from 11 November to 25 November 2021 via an electronic questionnaire which was available in two language versions (Czech and English). The language versions differed slightly in that the English version included some extra questions aimed at international students.

Respondents sent a total of 415 questionnaires, 374 in the Czech version and 41 in the English version. A total of 42 respondents (37 in the Czech version, 5 in the English version) answered

that they had not stayed at the Halls of Residence during the period under evaluation (September 2020 to the present), so they were not asked any further questions. Thus, 337 respondents answered further questions in Czech and 36 in English, 373 totally.

A substantial part of the questionnaire involves rating the level of satisfaction with the accommodation at the Halls of Residence in various aspects using a rating scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest level of satisfaction and 5 the lowest. The results show that the highest level of satisfaction is with the speed and quality of rectification of reported defects, the cleanliness of the common areas of the Halls of Residence and the web interface where residents have an overview of their payments and other necessary data. On the other hand, the lowest level of satisfaction is with the speed and quality of the internet connection, the observance of the night-time hours and the facilities at the Halls of Residence (sports facilities, study facilities, social activities), and in the case of the English questionnaires also with the clarity of the orientation system in the Halls of Residence and the English language skills of the Halls of Residence staff.

The measures taken concern, for example, adding information to the website, preparing the digitisation of some documents, training of the Halls of Residence staff, improving information for residents, etc. The results of the survey on the outdoor space were used for a concept study on the renovation of the outdoor space.

The UHK will repeat similar surveys at regular intervals to monitor how the level of satisfaction of residents evolves over time.

#### **4.1.4 Gender Equality Analysis and Gender Equality Plan**

In the period in question, the UHK was preparing a gender equality analysis; the main part of its preparation took place in 2022. The purpose of this analysis was to review the institutional environment of the UHK with a focus on equal opportunities. The analysis focuses mainly on gender equality; however, in some areas equal opportunities are also addressed in the inclusion of other persons (e.g., persons with special needs, carers). As part of the preparation of the gender equality analysis, a working group was set up consisting of male and female employees of the UHK (representatives of both academic and administrative and managerial positions) and one female representative of students.

The development of the gender equality analysis and the subsequent gender equality plan was motivated both internally and externally, and was also related to the commitments of the UHK within the framework of its subscription to the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (see subsection 4.2).

The benefits of the implementation of measures to promote equality include an increase in the quality of care for employees, staff and students, the development and support of the professional growth of academic and research staff, the creation of conditions for a more attractive career in research and development for early career researchers, the guarantee of a transparent selection procedure for the recruitment of new staff, and others.

The analysis included five recommended areas of gender equality: work-life balance and the organisation's culture, gender balance in leadership and decision-making, gender equality in recruitment and promotion, gender mainstreaming in research and teaching, and measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

The analysis of gender equality at the UHK is followed by the Gender Equality Plan which is a set of accepted recommendations that the UHK is committed to implement over the next three years. The plan was finalised in 2022 and, following discussion in the relevant university bodies, should be published in early 2023.

Measures are formulated in all five areas of gender equality mentioned above. In the area of work-life balance and organisational culture, the measures include, for example, seeking out and engaging in activities to promote equality within the organisation, supportive administrative assistance for those going on maternity/paternity/parental leave and gender-sensitive communication. In the area of gender balance in leadership and decision-making, measures concern the organisation of training and development programmes and the evaluation of gender representation in leadership positions and decision-making bodies. Measures in the area of gender equality in recruitment and promotion include, inter alia, equal pay or a mentoring programme. In the area of gender mainstreaming in research and teaching, measures include, for example, the development of methodological materials. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, include, among others, raising awareness of the ethical infrastructure of the UHK and assessing the functionality of the current set-up of the ethical infrastructure of the UHK.

#### **4.1.5 Information and counselling services**

The UHK provides students with counselling services that are provided by internal or external staff of the University's Information, Counselling and Career Centre (ICCC). The services offered are focused on career counselling, social counselling, psychological and therapeutic counselling, and support for students with specific needs. During the covid-19 pandemic, the demand for psychological support has increased significantly, so there is a need to expand and standardise these services, especially to set up processes for longer-term care and to adjust processes so that those in need get to the service earlier. The Counselling Centre does not yet provide counselling in the field of studies (how to study effectively, how to choose a topic for a thesis, etc.) which it plans to cover in the future. The Counselling Centre keeps a record of the counselling provided but no processes are yet set up to determine the effectiveness of the services provided.

ICCC's strength lies in its staff with high personal commitment and alignment with the Centre's mission, but its weakness is that it is dependent on project funding.

#### **4.1.6 Questionnaire survey of barriers at the UHK**

In 2022, the working group of the Open UHK strategy conducted quantitative questionnaire surveys to collect data on study and professional barriers at the University of Hradec Králové and to gather data related to possible barriers and factors affecting the wellbeing of students, employees and staff of the UHK. The aim of the survey data analysis is to identify areas in which the UHK can provide support services and measures to all persons in the university community with the intention of improving their sense of overall well-being in their studies and professional performance.

Data collection among the target group of the UHK students was carried out through a questionnaire survey in the MS Forms environment in the period from 18 May 2022 to 30 June 2022 with a result of 673 valid responses. The questionnaire aimed at collecting data from the target group of employees was conducted between 19 August and 1 October 2022 with 193 responses. Both questionnaires contain model questions on wellbeing issues and barriers

that the target groups may experience at the UHK. These areas include the topics of stress and mental health, social support, availability of support services, satisfaction, etc.

The results show, among other things, that stress, anxiety and greater fears are common feelings among most respondents, and that the quality of relationships at the workplace and the evaluation (financial, verbal praise, awards, etc.) is the most important factor for employee satisfaction. According to most respondents, the environment at the UHK is open and accessible to different groups, but unfortunately, the number of respondents who report that they have personally experienced disadvantage based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc., or some type of bullying, or disadvantage based on health, specific needs, etc., during their studies or in their profession is not negligible.

The findings of the investigation will be gradually used to set up inclusive measures at the university.

#### **4.1.7 Communication**

In order to streamline internal and external communication, the UHK commissioned an external analysis of its social networks (Facebook and Instagram) in 2020. The analysis evaluated how the UHK communicates with students and the public through selected social media. The analysis resulted in a number of recommendations that UHK has taken into account in its use of these platforms.

In 2021, the UHK paid intensive attention to the evaluation of its internal and external communication. The UHK has undergone a comprehensive audit of its communication, performed by an external body. The data for this audit were collected mainly up to the end of May 2021. Based on the results of the audit and the resulting recommendations, the UHK wanted to prepare a university communication strategy in 2022. In the end, however, the development of the communication strategy was postponed to 2023, especially due to the need to incorporate the results of the staff and process audit that took place at the UHK and that included recommendations on communication (see subsection 4.4.1).

Following the above-mentioned external audit of communication, UHK conducted a questionnaire survey among its employees. The survey focused on the evaluation of internal communication. Data collection took place in December 2021 and early January 2022 via an electronic questionnaire available in Czech and English. The questions covered awareness of the activities of the UHK, communication tools used, satisfaction with communication, availability of information, effectiveness of communication flows, etc. 236 questionnaires were completed in Czech and 8 in English. The results of the questionnaire survey will contribute to the preparation of the internal news system of the UHK and the internal discussion forum for the UHK employees.

The UHK also conducted an internal analysis of the student recruitment campaign which was conducted between January and April 2021 via the internet (websites, social networks) and other forms (radio, posters, etc.).

In addition to the internal analysis of the student recruitment campaign, an external analysis was carried out by an external company in autumn 2021. This analysis included questionnaire surveys of first-year students, secondary school students and admitted applicants who, however, did not start their studies. The questionnaire surveys were complemented by focus group discussions with these groups of respondents.



Both of the above analyses of the student recruitment campaigns resulted in recommendations for communication with prospective students, focused on effective ways of conveying information about the offer of studies at the UHK and its study programmes. The results are reflected, for example, in the newly created website for applicants [mojeuhk.cz](http://mojeuhk.cz).

An internal analysis of the student recruitment campaign was also carried out by the UHK in 2022. It evaluated the period from December 2021 to March 2022.

For the purpose of further development in the area of popularisation of scientific outputs and internationalisation, the UHK also evaluated internally its social media presence in English in 2021 and 2022.

## 4.2 HR Award

During the period in question, the University was seeking the prestigious HR Excellence in Research Award (HR Award). In 2020, the necessary steps in this process were underway. One of these was a large-scale questionnaire survey that sought feedback from staff and doctoral students in the following areas: professional and ethical aspects, working conditions and welfare, development and training, and staff performance evaluation. The questionnaires were available for completion from 12 November to 30 November.

The target group included the UHK employees – academic staff, researchers and technical and administrative employees (TAE), as well as students of doctoral study programmes. A total of 969 respondents were contacted and a total of 578 questionnaires were sent out, resulting in a return rate of almost 60%. Among the respondents, academic staff were the most represented (52% of the total respondents), followed by TAE (29%), PhD students (14%) and the least were researchers (4%).

The results of the questionnaire survey were used especially in the development of the internal process analysis (gap analysis) and the action plan that form an essential part of the process of applying for the HR Award. All the necessary documents were sent by the UHK to the European Commission at the end of March 2021; the documents included not only the internal process analysis and the action plan but also the evaluation of the implementation of the principles of open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (*OTM-R checklist*).

The UHK received the results of the evaluation in July 2021. The evaluation required partial adjustments and resubmission of documents in two months. The necessary adjustments were mainly related to more detailed elaboration of indicators and target states in the action plan, submission of some of the managing acts in English, elaboration of the OTM-R policy, clarification of some content issues, completion of the form and results of the questionnaire survey and publication of some relevant documents on the website (at a visible place). On the basis of the revised documents, the UHK was informed at the end of November 2021 that the submitted analysis and action plan met the requirements and the University received the HR Award.

The adopted action plan formulates activities, objectives, deadlines and responsibilities for their implementation. They respond to the weaknesses identified in the analysis of internal processes. The activities relate to professional and ethical aspects, selection and recruitment of new staff, working conditions, staff appraisal and training and development. The Action Plan is thus a key document of the HRM strategy at the UHK.

With the HR Award, the UHK has confirmed its commitment to continuously strengthen and improve conditions in the field of human resources management in accordance with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

### **4.3 Evaluation of the IEP EUA in the area of related activities (in particular the management and administration of the institution)**

#### **4.3.1 Self-evaluation report**

In terms of the management of the institution, the UHK considered the relatively high level of decentralisation in some areas (e.g., internationalisation, research activities) to be a weakness that may not always optimally allow the university to fulfil its potential, as some activities could be more effective in a common university approach. In some areas, there is still a lack of uniform university recommendations or procedures, and in some cases some processes are not unified or completed. It is desirable to assess the current level of de/centralisation of the management of individual activities and to strengthen central coordination in areas where this would be useful, including ensuring better coordination and systematisation of activities. Strengthening communication channels between the Rectorate and faculties at the level of the administrative staff could also be beneficial (e.g., introducing regular meetings of representatives of the administrative staff in various agendas).

Greater degree of cooperation within the UHK, particularly the need to strengthen mutual understanding between the Rectorate and the faculties, to build a common vision and to weaken the emphasis on the particular interests of individual units, is another area where the University felt there was an opportunity to strengthen the alignment between goals and activities. Measures of an organisational nature could help to achieve this, improving communication and also creating more resources for joint activities and joint efforts, and contributing to the fact that the two levels will not be perceived as separate so much, but rather as interconnected in the pursuit of common university goals.

The higher level of decentralisation and the lower level of central coordination of activities are also related to the fact that the UHK does not fully exploit the potential for interfaculty and interdisciplinary cooperation (especially in the development and implementation of study programmes and research activities) and in some aspects, a more cooperative environment needs to be encouraged. The UHK needs to develop measures to strengthen cooperation between faculties in educational and creative activities (through organisational measures, incentive schemes, etc.).

The University also sees room for better coordination and systematisation of activities at the administrative level. For example, there is a lack of a matrix of responsibilities or an internal knowledge database.

The UHK is aware that in some areas, a better alignment between its objectives and the activities aimed at achieving them can be achieved. This is primarily in the area of social responsibility and sustainability where the University is aware of a certain discrepancy between the ambitions it has and the financial and staff resources it is devoting to this area. This is mainly due to the limited financial resources available to the University and the way in which budgeting is carried out. The solution is mainly to seek funding for specific projects within the framework of sustainability.

### **4.3.2 Report of the evaluators**

In terms of management and institutional decision-making, the evaluators mentioned that the UHK has a clear mission, vision and profile, that its regional role with global ambitions is fulfilled in various ways, and that the UHK selects its partners in a strategic way. The evaluators said that the challenge for the UHK at the moment is its central role vs. interests in decentralisation. According to the evaluators, a strong, unified central university policy supported by central management is needed in areas such as: funding mechanisms, quality assurance processes and procedures, research support schemes and the establishment of a "*teacher training centre*". The evaluation team recommended that the UHK consider ways to strengthen central management in these areas – in particular to show the benefits of the reforms and illustrate the drawbacks of the status quo. The evaluators also recommended maintaining and actively using collaboration between Vice-Rectors and Vice-Deans together with members of the administrative staff. Other recommendations related to the Board of Trustees – the evaluators recommended that the University clarify the role of the Board of Trustees and align the selection of appointees accordingly to make best use of their expertise, and to ensure that the Board of Trustees has timely and ongoing entry into University affairs so that its expertise can contribute fully to the development of the vision and strategic issues. The evaluators also noted that there is functional student representation and that students are listened to in the bodies. The UHK makes an effort to improve the strategic management of the institution and effective management of internal affairs is not mere rhetoric and is able to identify weaknesses.

## **4.4 Other evaluations**

### **4.4.1 Personnel and process audit of Rectorate workplaces**

In the context of quality assurance of the management and administration of the UHK and the use of human resources, the University underwent an external process and personnel audit of the Rectorate in 2022. It took place from March to September 2022. The audit methodology included, among other things, analysis of internal documents, semi-structured interviews, comparative analyses (benchmark) and questionnaire surveys.

The main findings of the audit include understaffing and underfunding of some processes and poorly competitive pay resulting in difficulties to attract new quality employees. Other findings include the absence of comprehensive human resource management. The system of evaluation of employees is perceived rather positively but some managers are not sufficiently trained in how such appraisals should be handled. Some employees lack real results from these evaluations. Senior employees are missing in some departments. Some agendas are too fragmented between several departments, which can lead to lack of clarity or overlapping activities. Some agendas are too decentralized among faculties, which can lead to inefficient allocation of resources.

Other findings concerned sub-optimal communication, both in terms of communication and cooperation between departments in the Rectorate and between the Rectorate and the faculties. Faculty staff perceive insufficient methodological and conceptual support from the Rectorate and a lack of unification of procedures.

In recent years, a large number of development activities and projects have started to be implemented at the UHK, which brings increased administrative requirements for some

other departments that, however, do not hire more staff in connection with this, and such requirements take away time from their primary work. Moreover, some of the results of the projects are not very visible. In the future, it would be advisable to focus on fewer development topics, which will allow for faster and smoother implementation. A significant part of the processes in the Rectorate's departments is not mapped or defined in any way, and the digitisation process is also perceived as insufficient.

The audit report recommended changes in the organisational set-up (transfer of some departments under different leads, creation of head of department positions in some departments, creation of a new department) and subsequent stabilisation of the organisational structure which should not be changed by means of a change in management. It also recommended ensuring that some positions are fixed in terms of hours, updating the career system or wage regulations and seeking wage increases. Greater centralisation was recommended in some areas and outsourcing of some activities in others. To improve communication, regular meetings of the Rectorate's senior staff were suggested, as well as the introduction of a system of internal thematic updates, a platform for an internal communication forum and the development of a communication strategy. As to departments that have counterparts in the faculties, it was recommended to introduce regular meetings not only with the relevant Vice-Deans but also directly with the relevant heads of faculty departments. As much information as possible on departmental activities and services should be added to the intranet. It is also recommended to identify the most recurrent processes, map them and define the different owners, actors and responsibilities, which should lead to greater automation and speeding up of these processes. It would be advisable to further strengthen strategic planning and management at the level of the entire Rectorate, financial management, planning and controlling, and adherence to project management principles, and to pay more attention to the training of managers.

As the results were received by the UHK in autumn 2022, actions incorporating the evaluators' recommendations had not been taken by the end of 2022.

#### **4.4.2 Evaluation of internationalisation**

In 2019, the UHK was evaluated as part of the *Monitoring Internationalization of Czech Higher Education (MICHE)*. The evaluation included a self-evaluation report which the UHK prepared in spring 2019. In June of the same year, a monitoring visit of international experts took place at the UHK, conducting evaluation interviews with representatives of the university management, faculty management, staff of the Foreign Office, representatives of student associations and students from abroad. The evaluation also included strategic documents, relevant managing acts and annual reports of the UHK. The final report of the evaluation and the evaluators' recommendations were received by the UHK in February 2020.

This evaluation was followed by the preparation of a three-year action plan reflecting the recommendations formulated by the evaluators and approved by the expert panel. The results of the evaluation were also reflected in the preparation of the Strategic Plan of the UHK (in particular its annex, i.e. the internationalisation strategy) for the period from 2021 onwards.

### **4.5 SWOT analysis and recommendations for further development**

#### **SWOT analysis of related activities and quality assurance**

<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR Award;</li> <li>• Gender Equality Plan;</li> <li>• A standardised staff evaluation system;</li> <li>• Services provided by the University Library;</li> <li>• Services of the Halls of Residence;</li> <li>• Professionalization of the PR agenda.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decentralisation of management in certain areas;</li> <li>• Financial and staffing undersizing of some activities;</li> <li>• Insufficient digitisation of activities;</li> <li>• Wages;</li> <li>• Deficiencies in internal communication (between the Rectorate and faculties, within the Rectorate).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project opportunities and challenges;</li> <li>• Cooperation within the region;</li> <li>• International cooperation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unpredictability of funding;</li> <li>• Resource shortfalls from projects;</li> <li>• Insufficient interest in administrative positions at the UHK.</li> </ul>

**Recommendations for further development of related activities and quality assurance**

- Implement the HR Award action plan and develop all activities to extend the award for the next period.
- Implement the Gender Equality Plan and monitor regularly the achievement of gender equality at the UHK.
- Continue and further develop the standardised employee evaluation system and educate managers in the area of employee evaluation.
- Continue to develop the services of the Halls of Residence, the University Library, counselling and other services in related activities.
- Strengthen central management in areas where appropriate to make more efficient use of resources.
- Strive to increase wages, inter alia, to ensure the competitiveness of the UHK as an employer.
- Improve internal communication, both between the Rectorate and the faculties and within the Rectorate.
- Strengthen the digitisation of activities.
- Implement recommendations from external evaluations.

## 5 UHK in international comparison

International comparisons of the UHK with other higher education institutions is offered by various rankings that are often an important marketing tool and play a role, for example, in attracting international students or partner institutions abroad. The UHK pays considerable attention to its position in relevant rankings. In its adopted strategy, the University lists the pursuit of the best possible ranking in international university rankings among its objectives. In accordance with its internal regulations, the UHK also includes international university quality rankings in its quality evaluation.

In the period covered by this report, the UHK has expanded the number of international rankings in which it is included.

The *Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings* can be considered one of the most prestigious rankings. For the first time, the UHK appeared in the main ranking in the *QS World University Rankings 2022* which was published in 2021. The UHK ranked 801st-1000th. It maintained the same position in the *QS World University Rankings 2023*. The criteria evaluated include mainly academic reputation, the university's reputation as an employer, the number of students per one academician, citations of scientific and creative outputs and the number of international students.

For a long time, the UHK has been ranked in the regional *QS EECA University Rankings* that compares universities from selected European and Central Asian countries (EECA = Emerging Europe and Central Asia). In the 2019 ranking, the UHK ranked 151st-160th. A year later, it ranked 168th. In the 2021 ranking, it was 176th and in the 2022 ranking, it was 185th. The decline is mainly due to the increasing number of universities represented but in relative comparison, the UHK has improved. While in the 2019 ranking it finished in about half of the top universities, in the 2022 ranking it was among the top 41% of universities.

The UHK also participates in the *Times Higher Education (THE) ranking*. It has been represented in the main *THE World University Rankings* since the 2020 ranking (published in 2019) when it ranked 1001+. It repeated the same ranking in the following year. In the 2022 ranking, it ranked 1201+, and in the 2023 ranking it ranked 1201-1500. Also in the case of this ranking, the number of universities represented increased, with a related change in the shared positions to more categories (the aggregate 1000+ category was divided into 1001-1200 and 1200+, and the 1201-1500 and 1500+ categories were added later). Thus, the UHK has stayed in the same range in recent years. The comprehensive evaluation methodology consists of 13 indicators that address the following areas: teaching, research, knowledge transfer and internationalisation.

In the ranking of *THE Young Universities* which includes the world's universities that are less than 50 years old and focuses on indicators in the field of education, research, knowledge transfer and internationalisation, the UHK has twice ranked 351st-400th place (2020 and 2021 rankings). In the 2022 ranking, it dropped to position 401+. The UHK appeared in *THE Emerging Economies* ranking three times (2020, 2021, and 2022) and remained in the same position throughout the period, i.e. in the 401st-500th position. The UHK also appears in several THE thematic rankings by subject focus (*Computer Science, Physical Sciences, Education, and Life Sciences*).

The UHK is also represented in the ranking that assesses the sustainable approach of universities to the environment (*UI GreenMetric*). The criteria evaluated include the size and

location of the university, transport and infrastructure, energy and water consumption, waste management, as well as education and research related to the environment and sustainable development. The UHK is represented from 2018 when it ranked 350<sup>th</sup>. In 2019, it has moved up to 314<sup>th</sup> position. In 2020, 2021 and 2022, it ranked 438<sup>th</sup>, 543<sup>rd</sup> and 582<sup>nd</sup>, respectively. However, the decline must again be seen in the context of the growing number of institutions involved.

## Conclusion

Between 2018 and 2022, the UHK has made significant shifts in the area of quality assurance and internal quality evaluation. It has modified the settings enshrined in internal regulations. The key changes were mainly related to the Rules of the System of Quality Assurance and Internal Quality Evaluation at the University of Hradec Králové, the Accreditation Code and the Rules of Procedure of the Internal Evaluation Board. The amended regulations were followed by several managing acts that complete the quality assurance and internal evaluation system. However, the completion of the University's evaluation of creative activities is lacking. The activities in the quality assurance and internal evaluation system have become more professionalised and have received the necessary organisational and administrative support in the form of a new Quality and Strategy Unit, thus confirming the increasing emphasis placed by the University on these activities and their assurance.

In this period, the UHK also systematised and strengthened the feedback from students, staff and other target groups. In this way, it better maps the needs of the academic community and other stakeholders and obtains valuable information that helps to improve continuously the quality of its activities.

Since the publication of the first internal evaluation report, the UHK has strengthened and expanded its experience with self-evaluation processes that have taken place in the framework of national and international evaluations, thus also reaching a deeper reflection and evaluation of its activities and institutional self-knowledge.

This internal evaluation report shows that the UHK is aware of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks of its quality assurance and internal evaluation system and individual activities. The recommendations for further development formulated in the individual chapters show that the University has a clear vision of the direction it should take.



## List of abbreviations

<b>CUIP</b>	Charles University Innovations Prague a.s.
<b>LLL</b>	Lifelong learning
<b>CR</b>	Czech Republic
<b>LTCDRO</b>	Long-term conceptual development of a research organisation
<b>CNAIEA</b>	Czech National Agency for International Education and Research
<b>EECA</b>	Emerging Europe and Central Asia
<b>ERC</b>	European Research Council
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FF</b>	Philosophical Faculty
<b>GA CR</b>	Grant Agency of the Czech Republic
<b>FIM</b>	Faculty of Informatics and Management
<b>HR</b>	Human resources
<b>IEP EUA</b>	Institutional Evaluation Programme – European University Association
<b>ICCC</b>	Information, Counselling and Career Centre
<b>IEP</b>	International Evaluation Panel
<b>MICHE</b>	Monitoring Internationalization of Czech Higher Education
<b>MIS</b>	Management information system
<b>IAB</b>	International Advisory Board
<b>MEYS</b>	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
<b>NAO</b>	National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education
<b>OTM-R</b>	Open, transparent, merit-based recruitment
<b>PdF</b>	Faculty of Education
<b>QP</b>	Quality premium
<b>PřF</b>	Faculty of Science
<b>QS</b>	Quacquarelli Symonds
<b>IEB</b>	Internal Evaluation Board
<b>SJR</b>	Scimago Journals Rank
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
<b>THE</b>	Times Higher Education
<b>TAE</b>	Technical and administration employees
<b>UHK</b>	University of Hradec Kralove
<b>UL</b>	University Library

**ISW**

Institute of Social Work

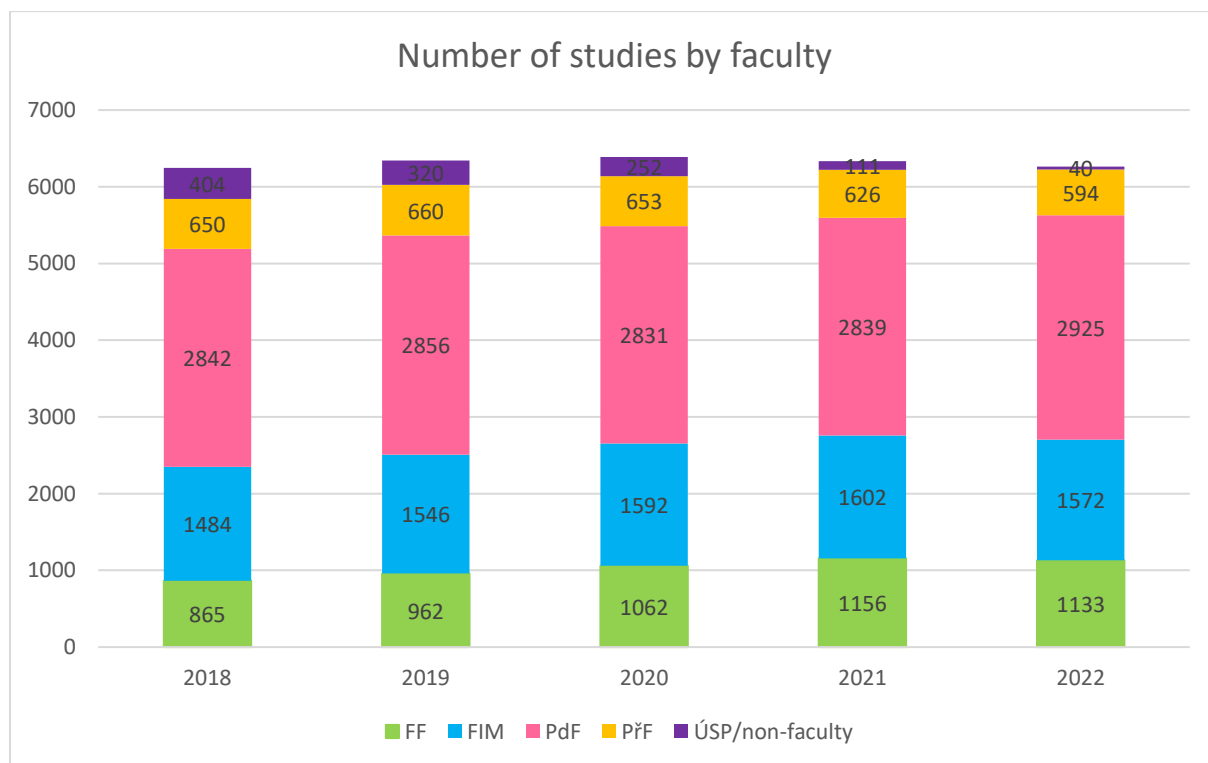
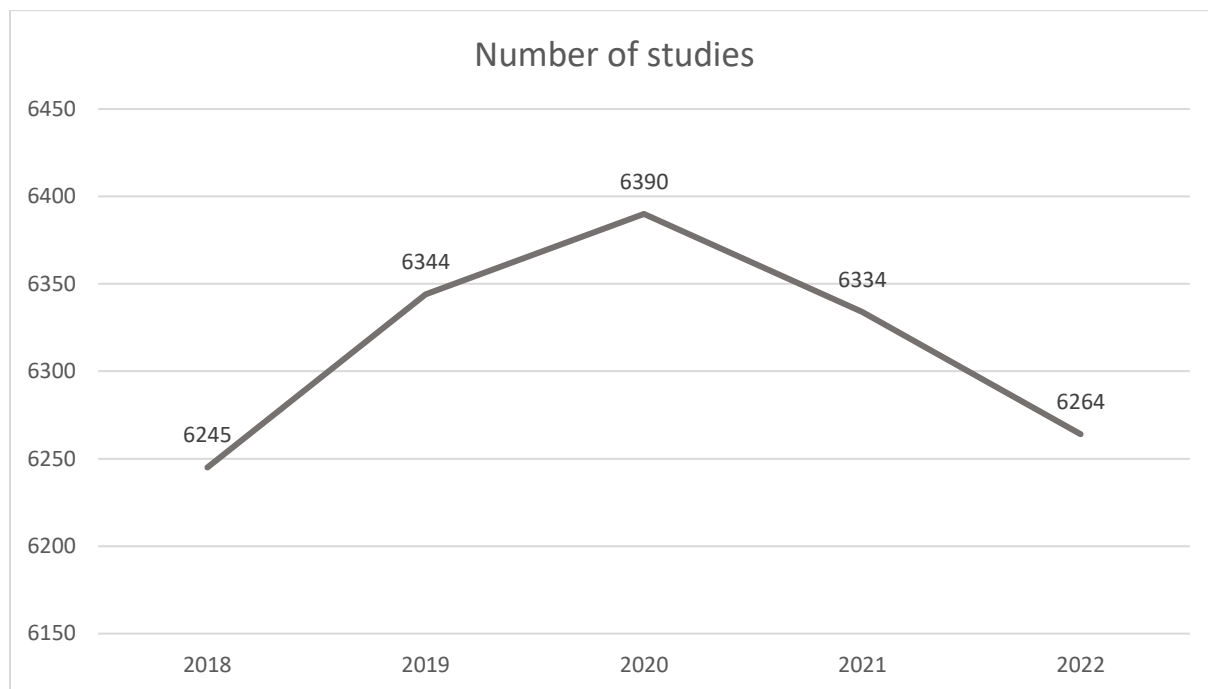
**WoS**

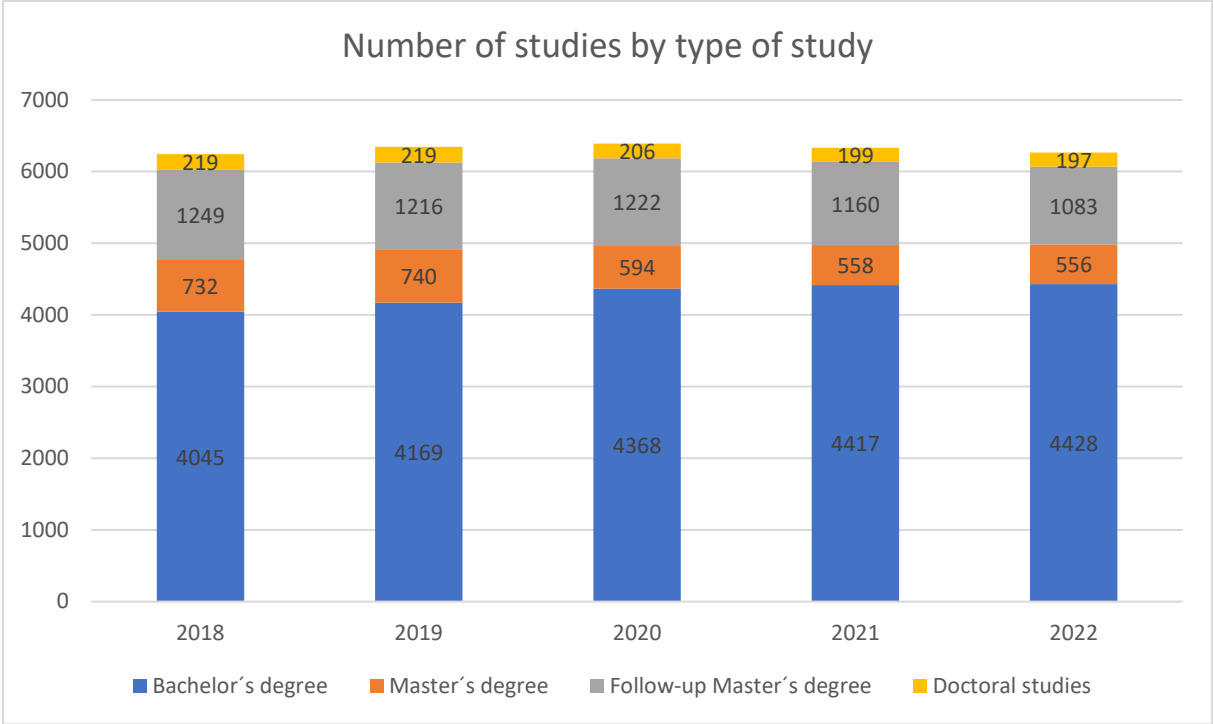
Web of Science

# Attachments

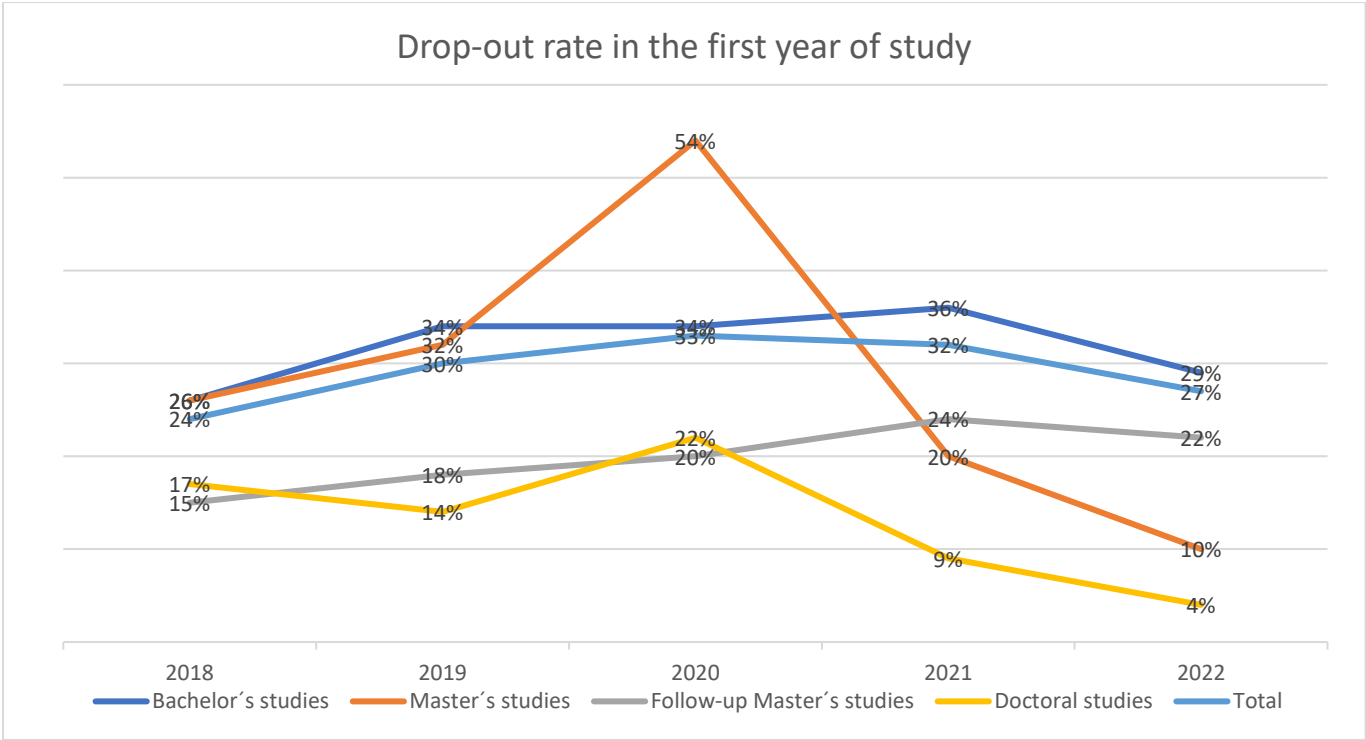
## Data on Educational Activities

### Number of studies

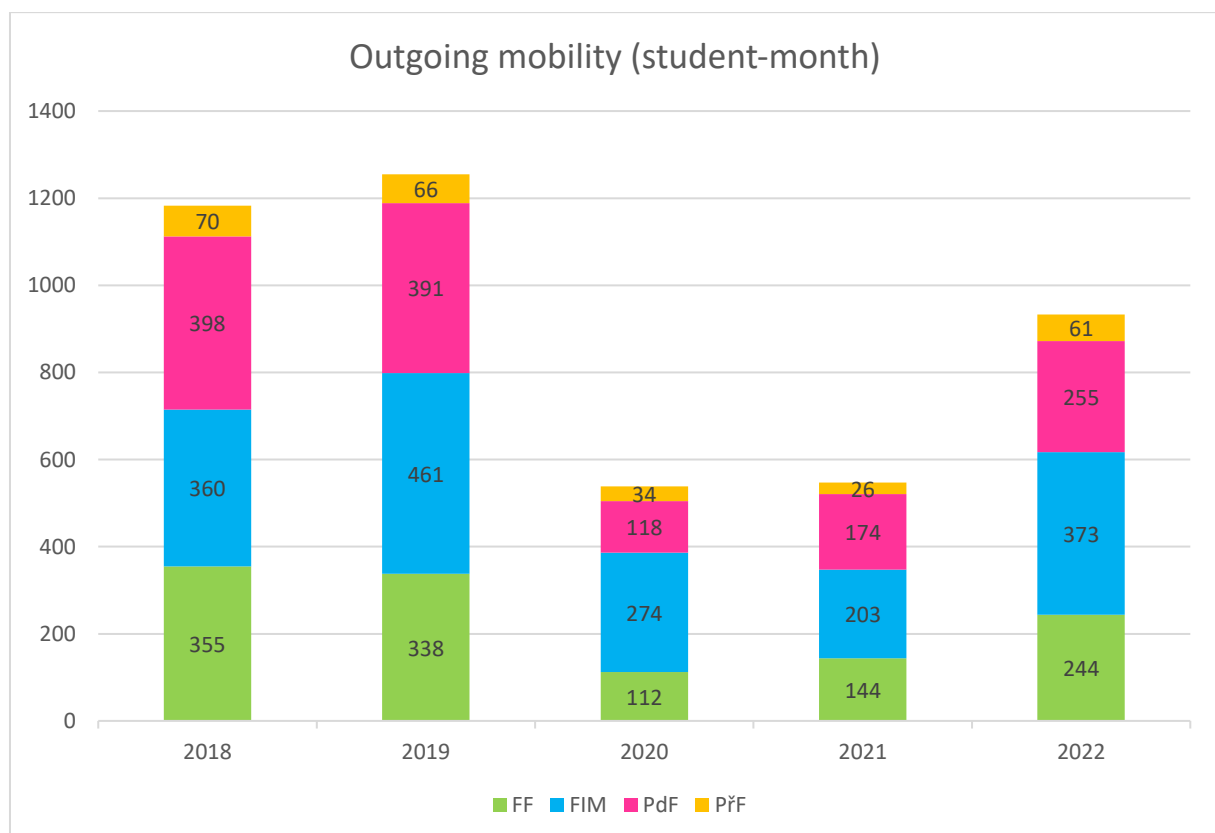
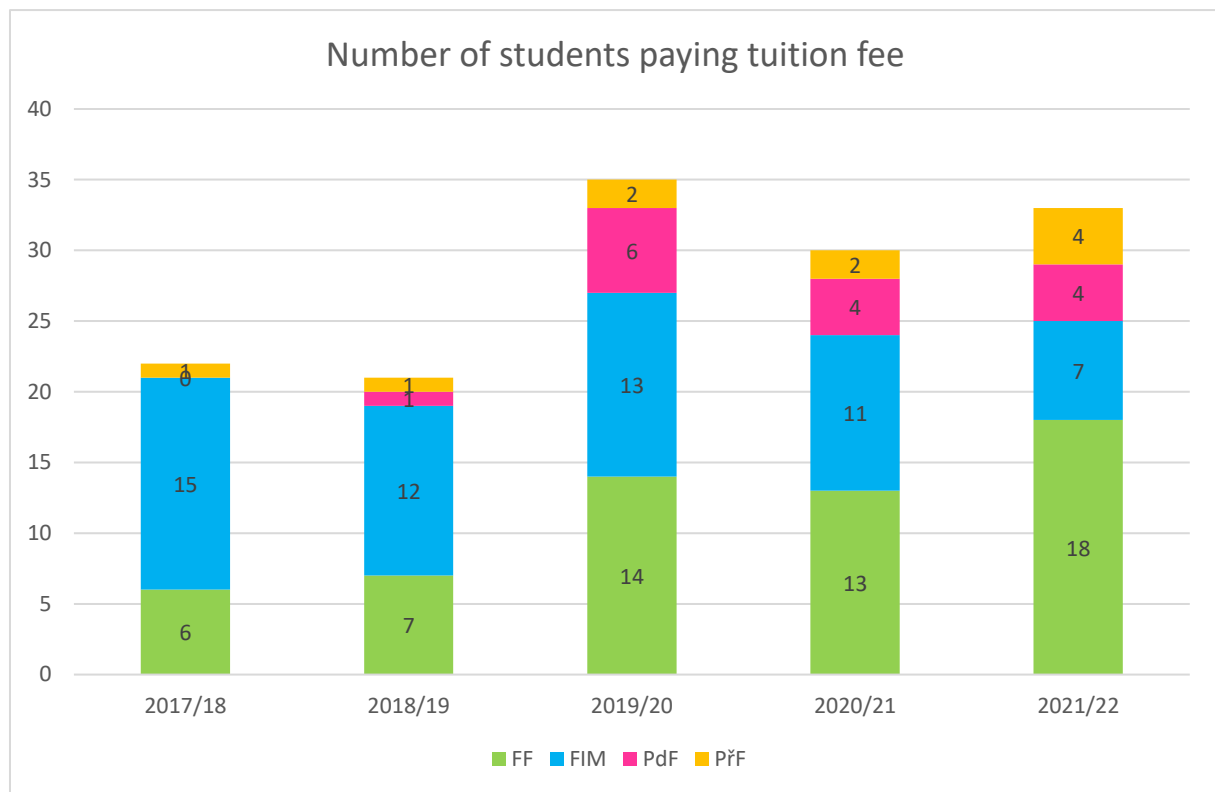


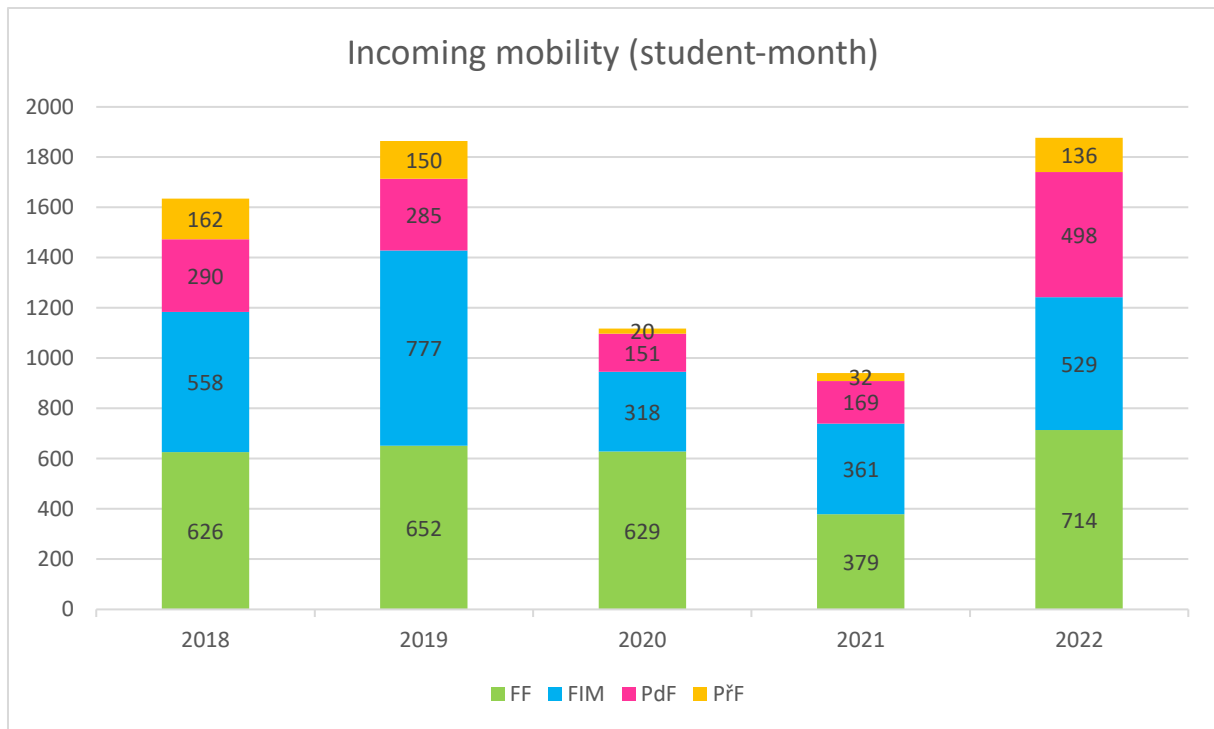


**Dropout rate**

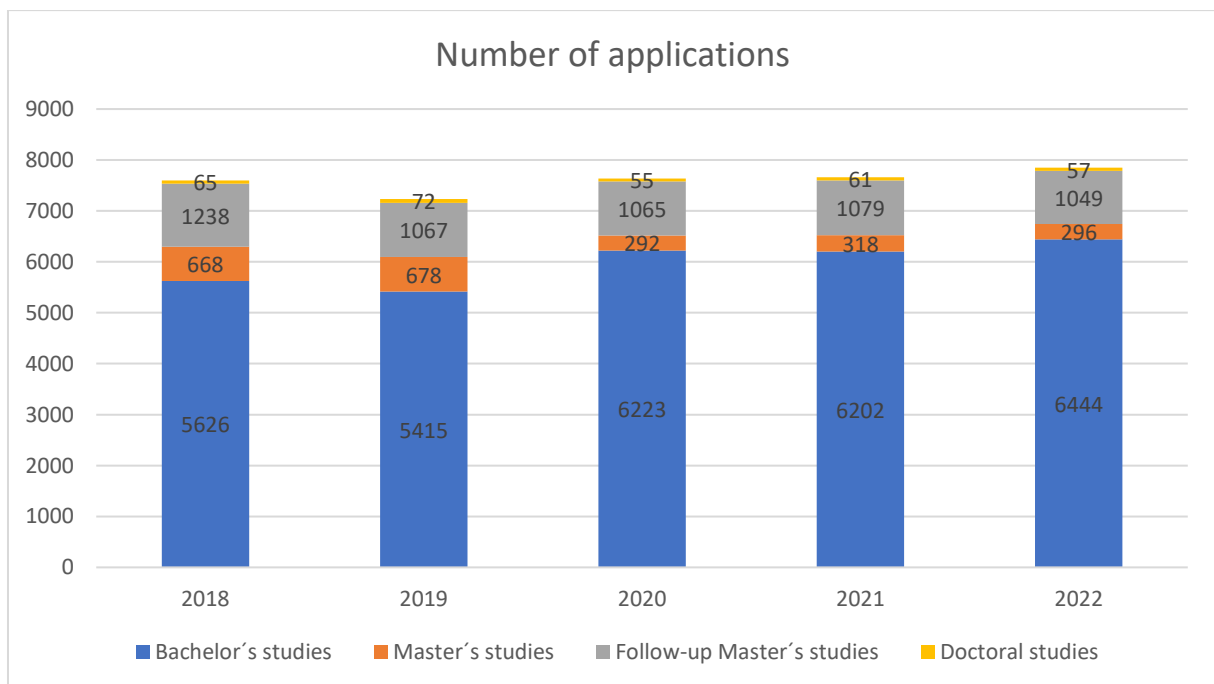


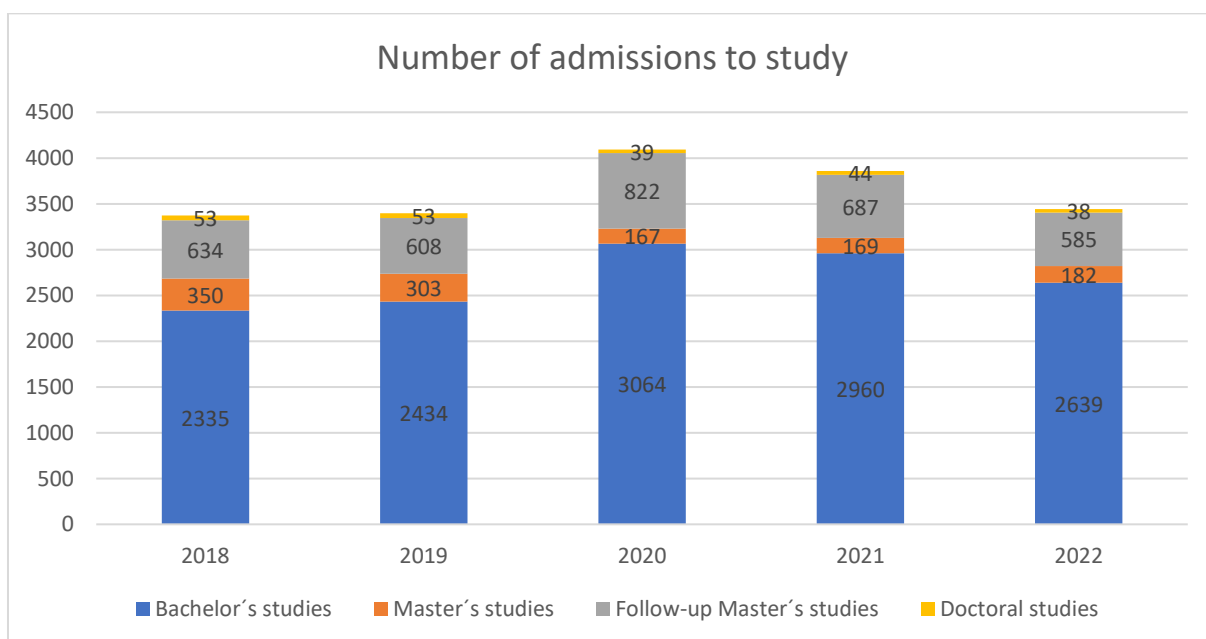
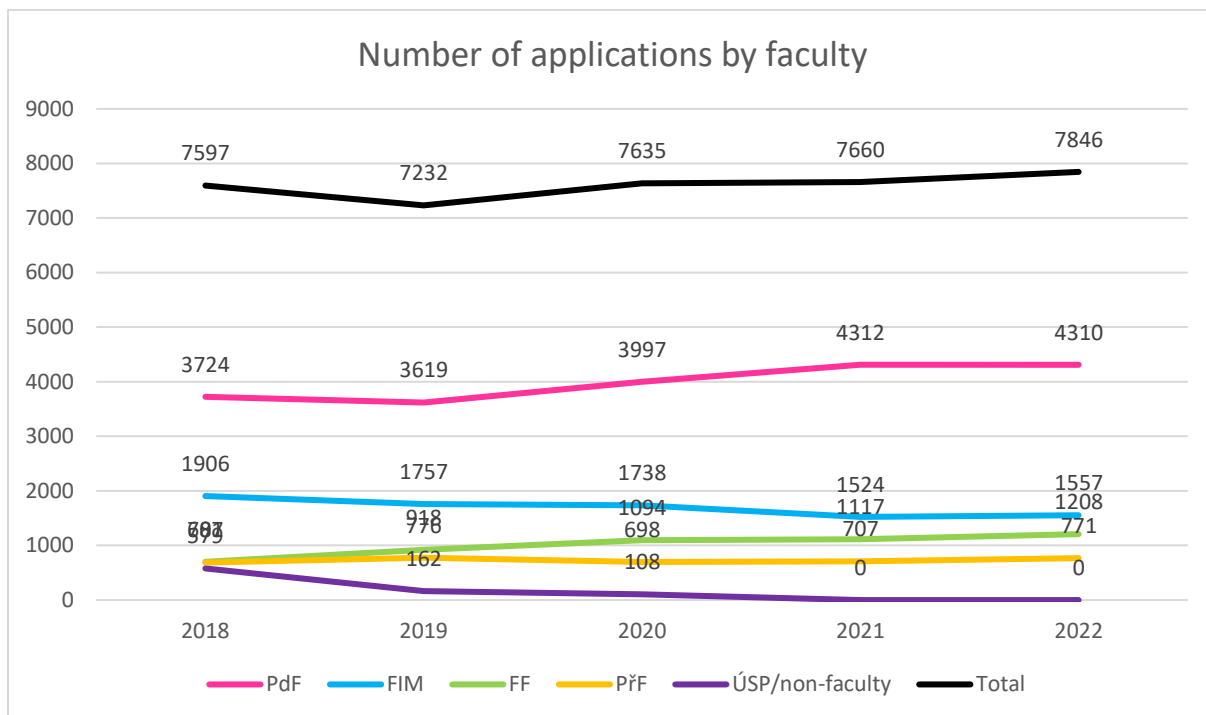
## Internationalisation of studies

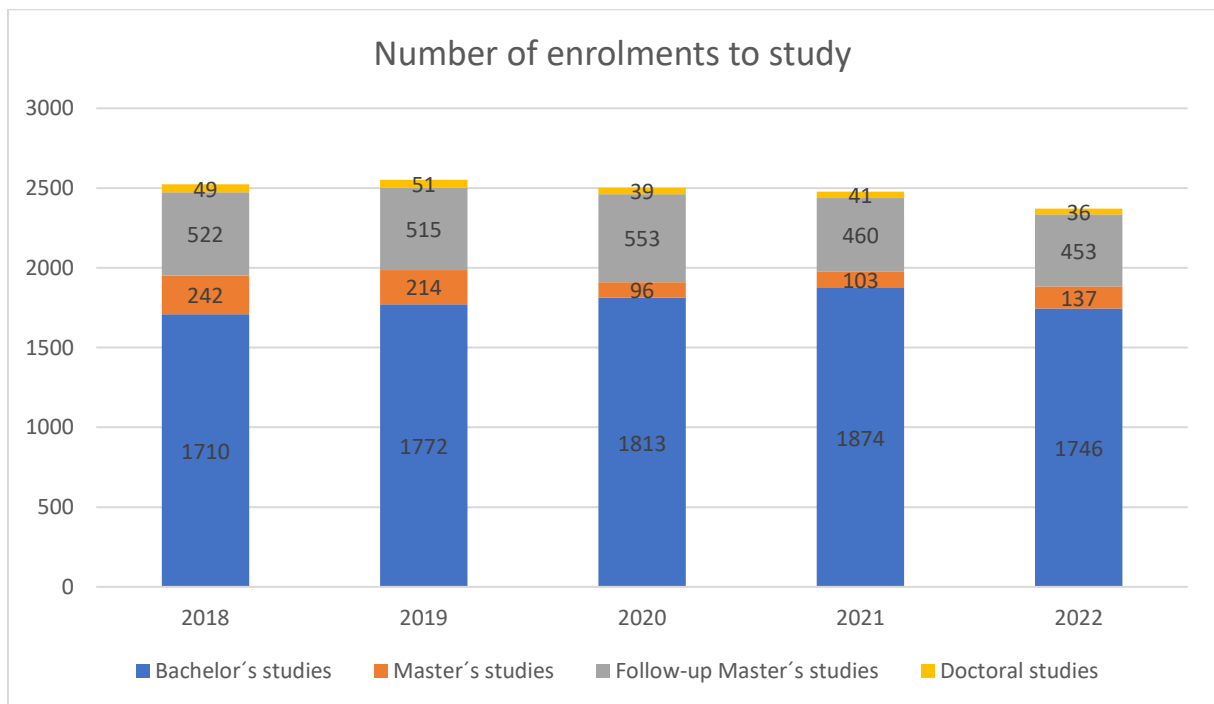
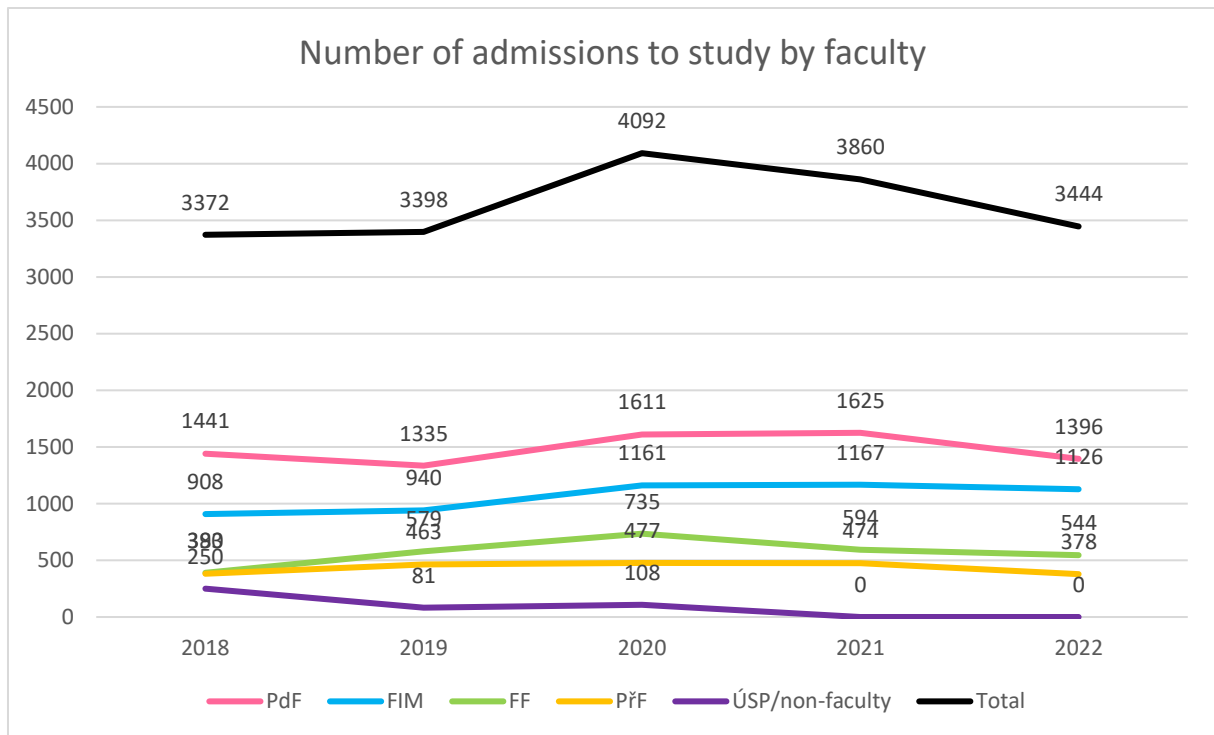




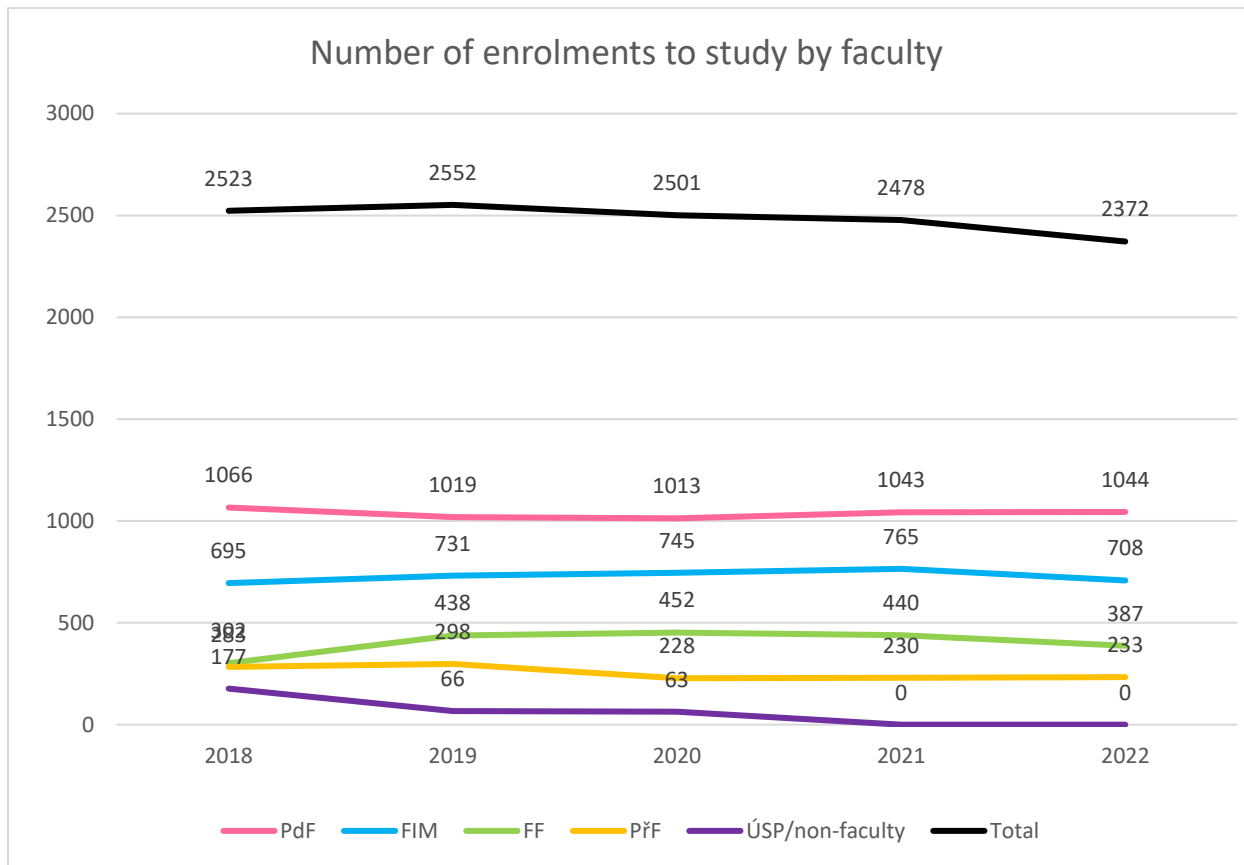
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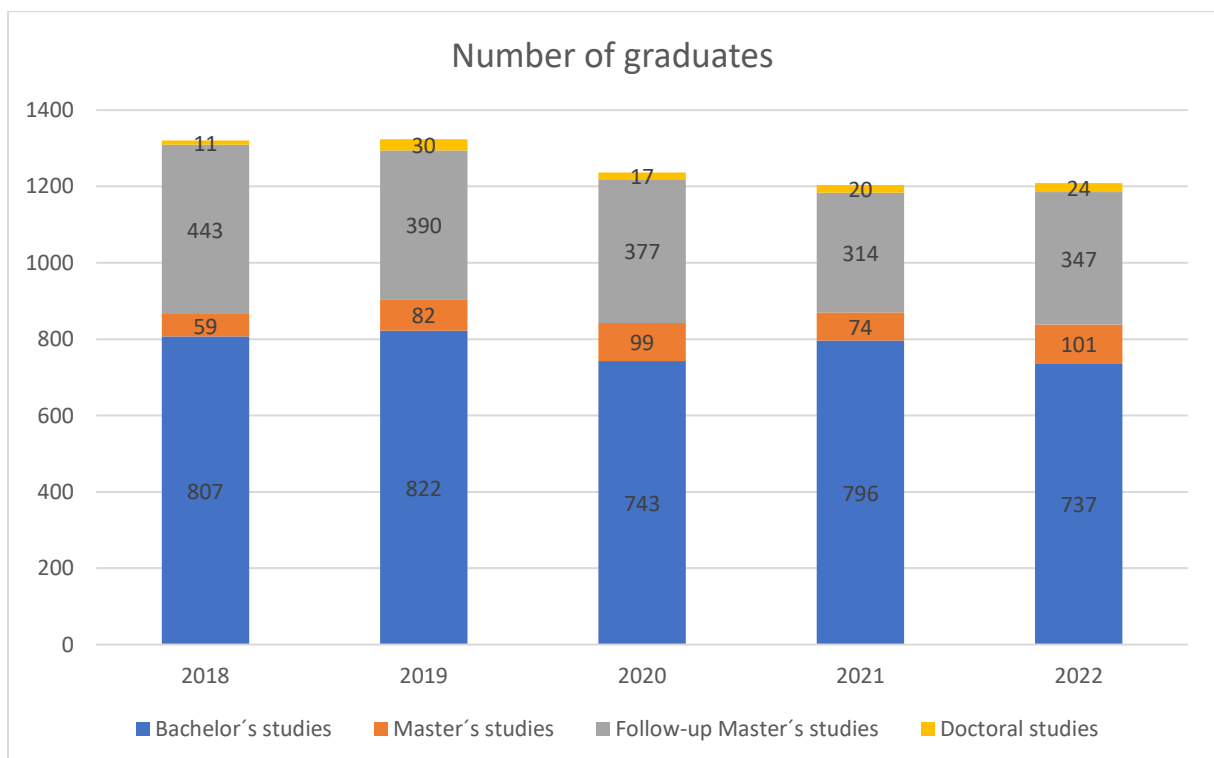


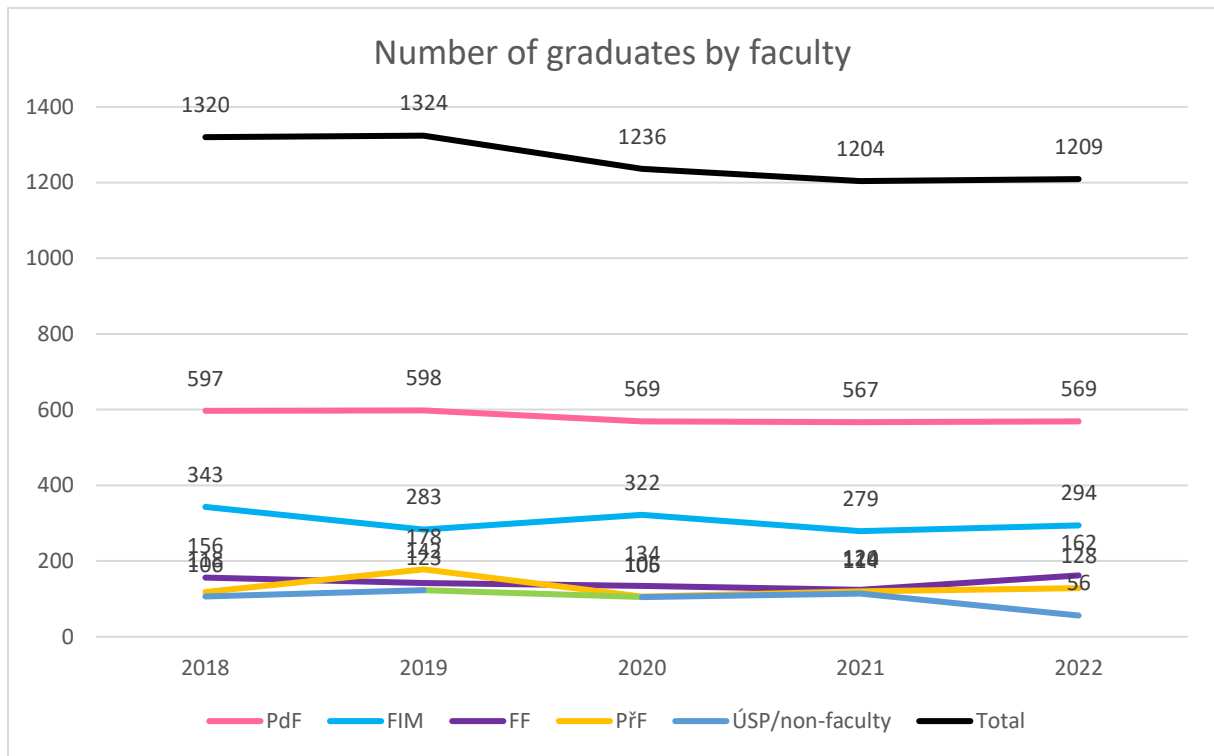




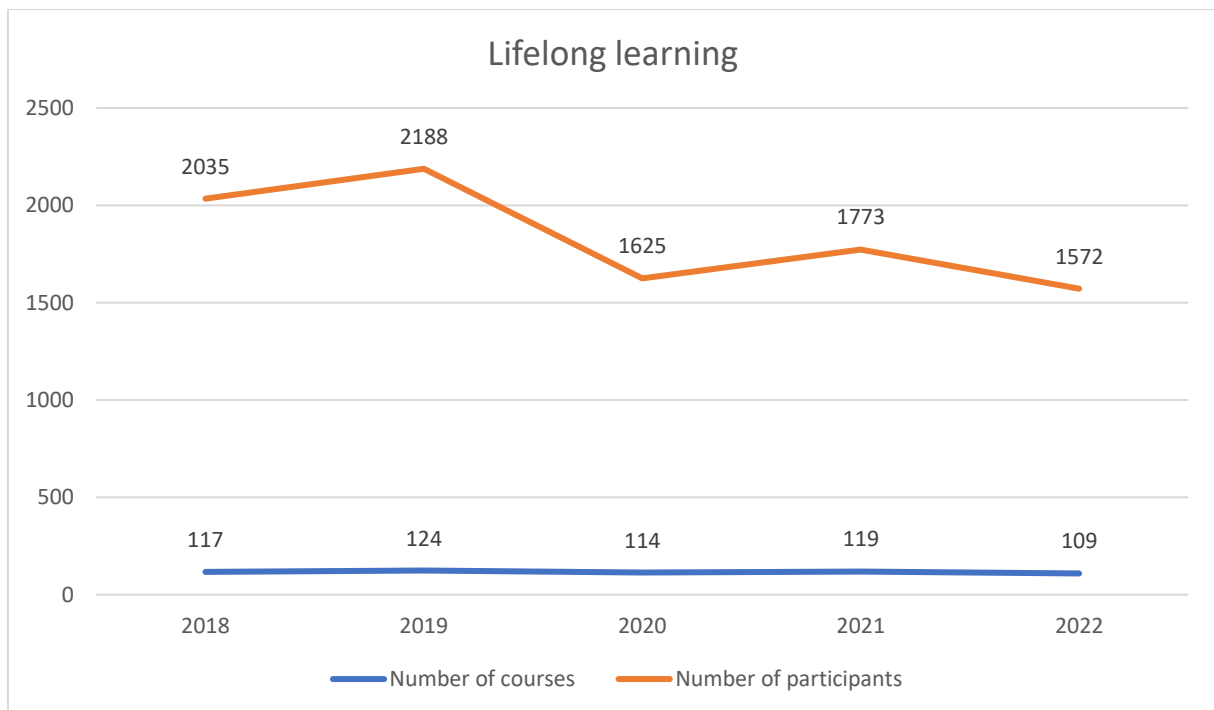


## Alumni



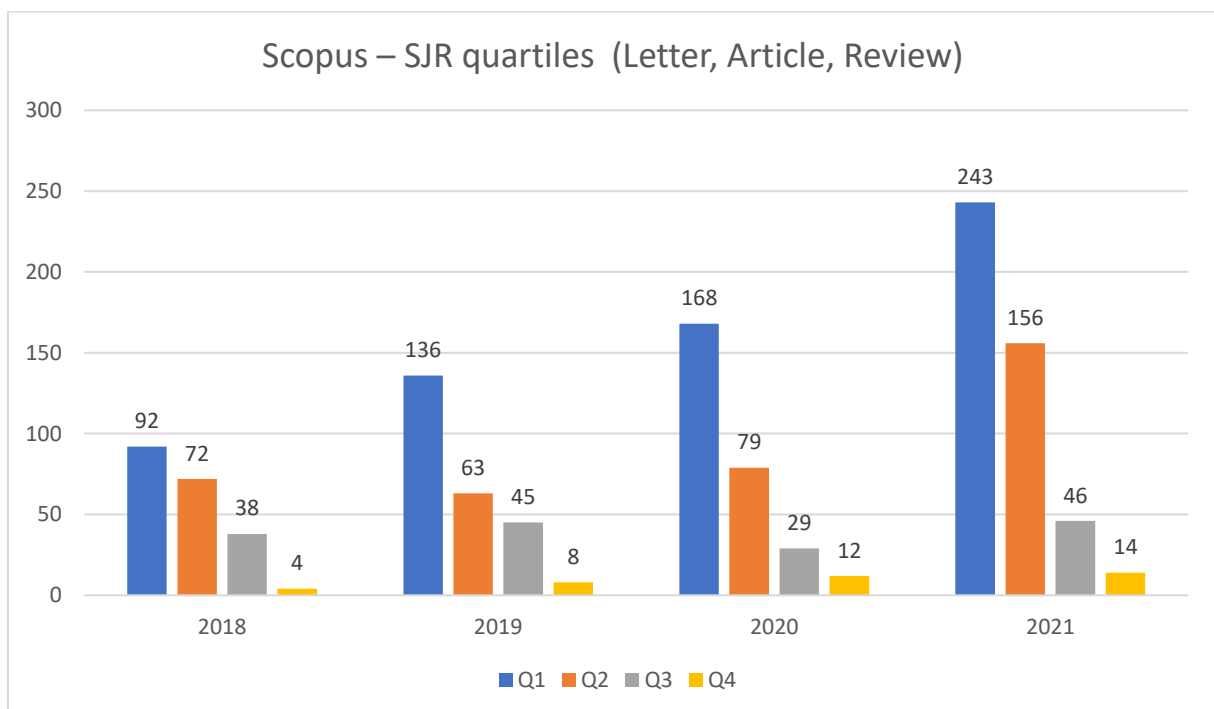
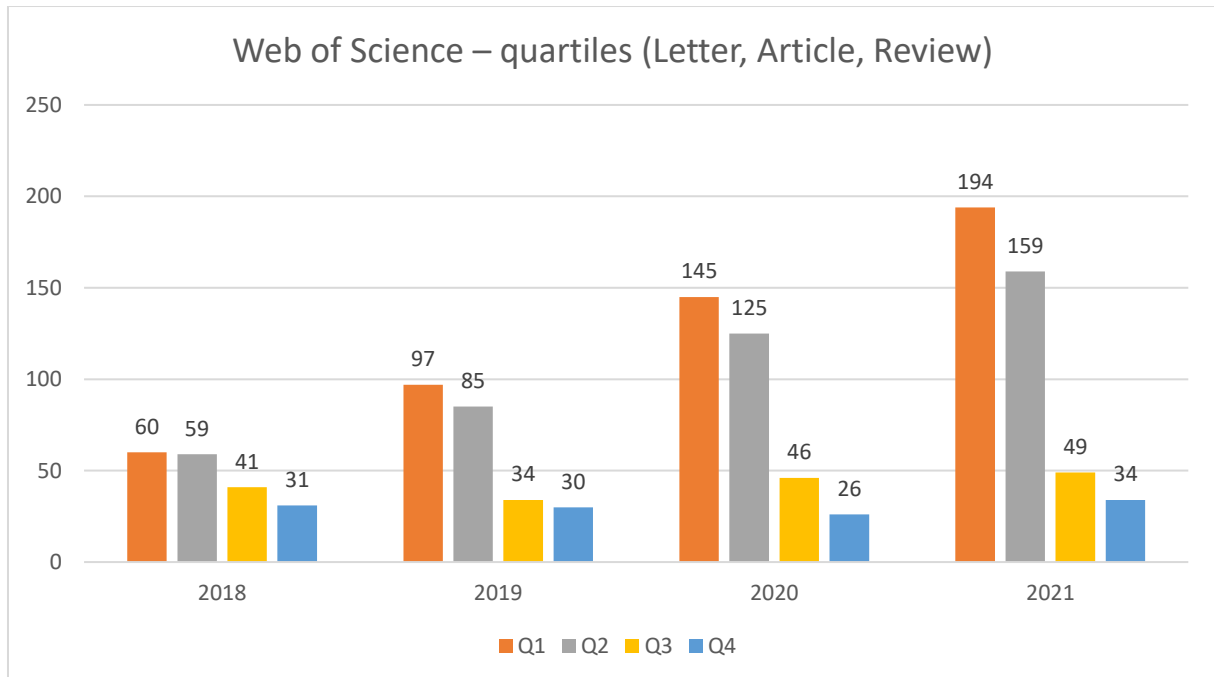


## Lifelong learning

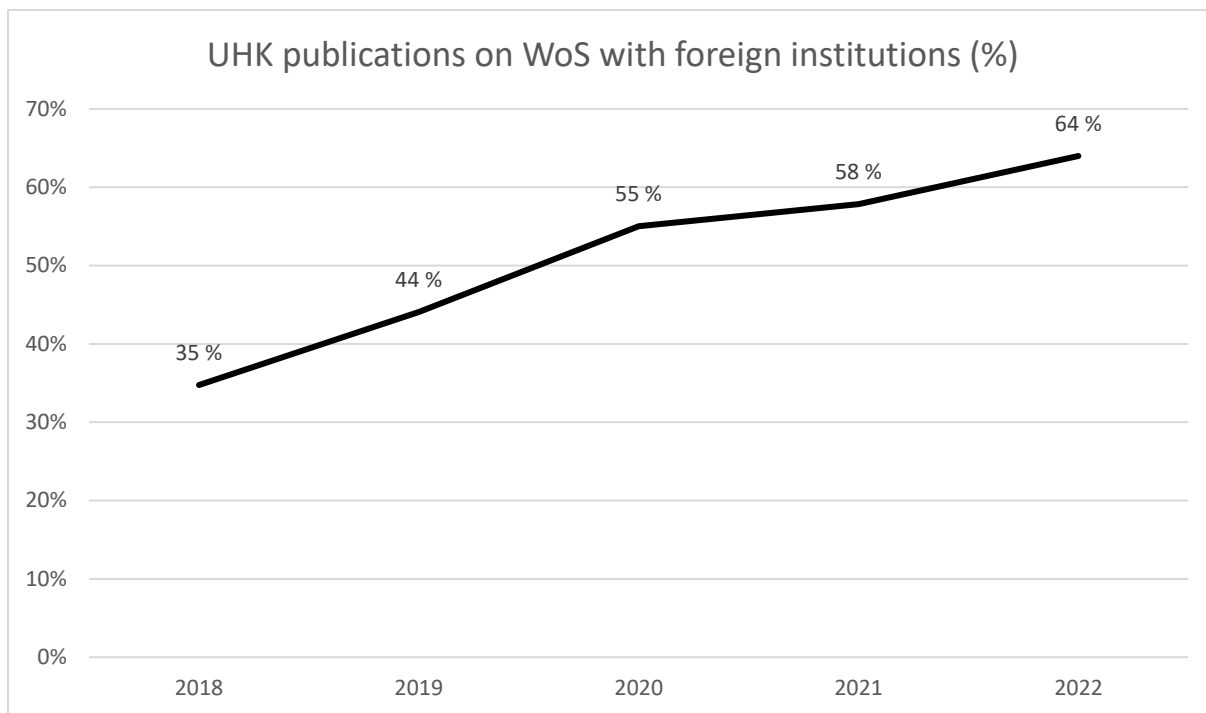


## Data on creative activity<sup>3</sup>

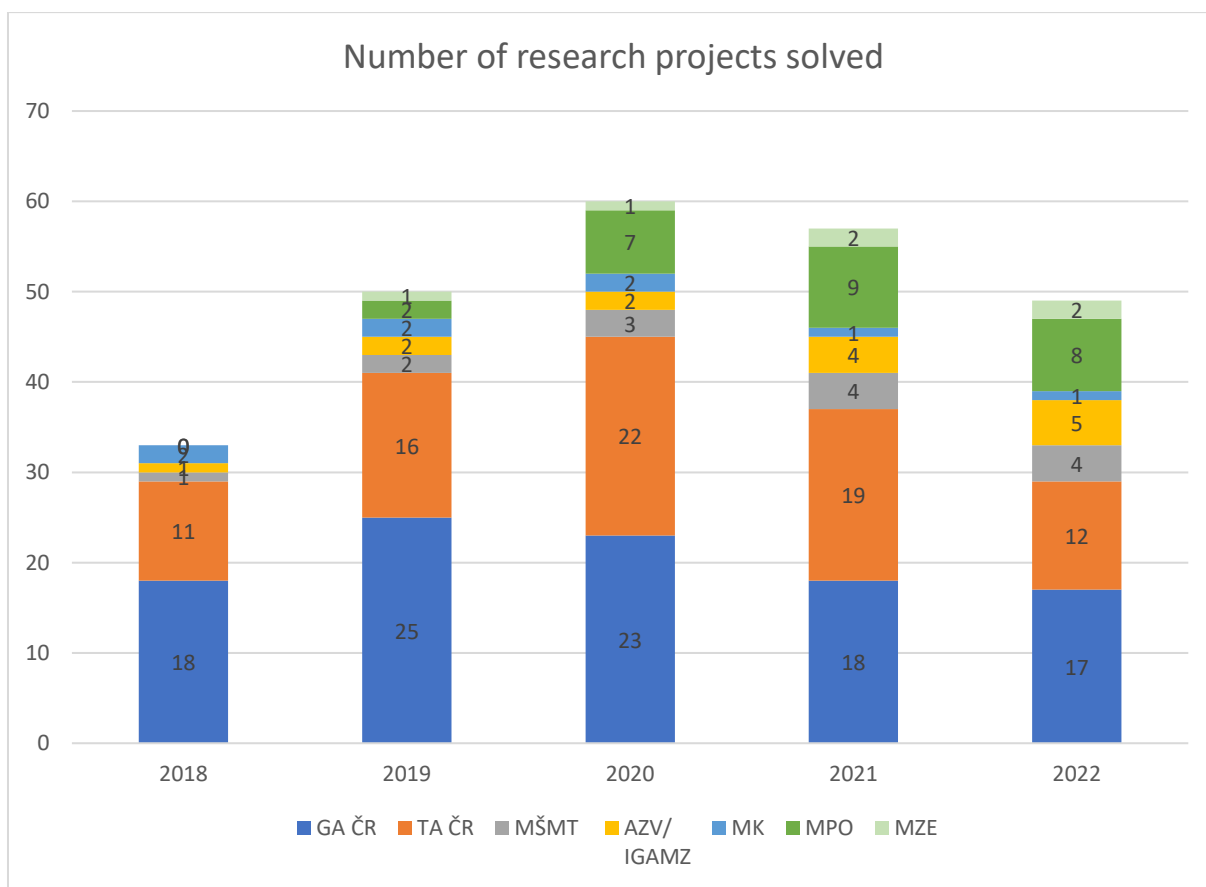
### Publications



<sup>3</sup> Data for 2022 for WoS and Scopus will not be available until July 2023.

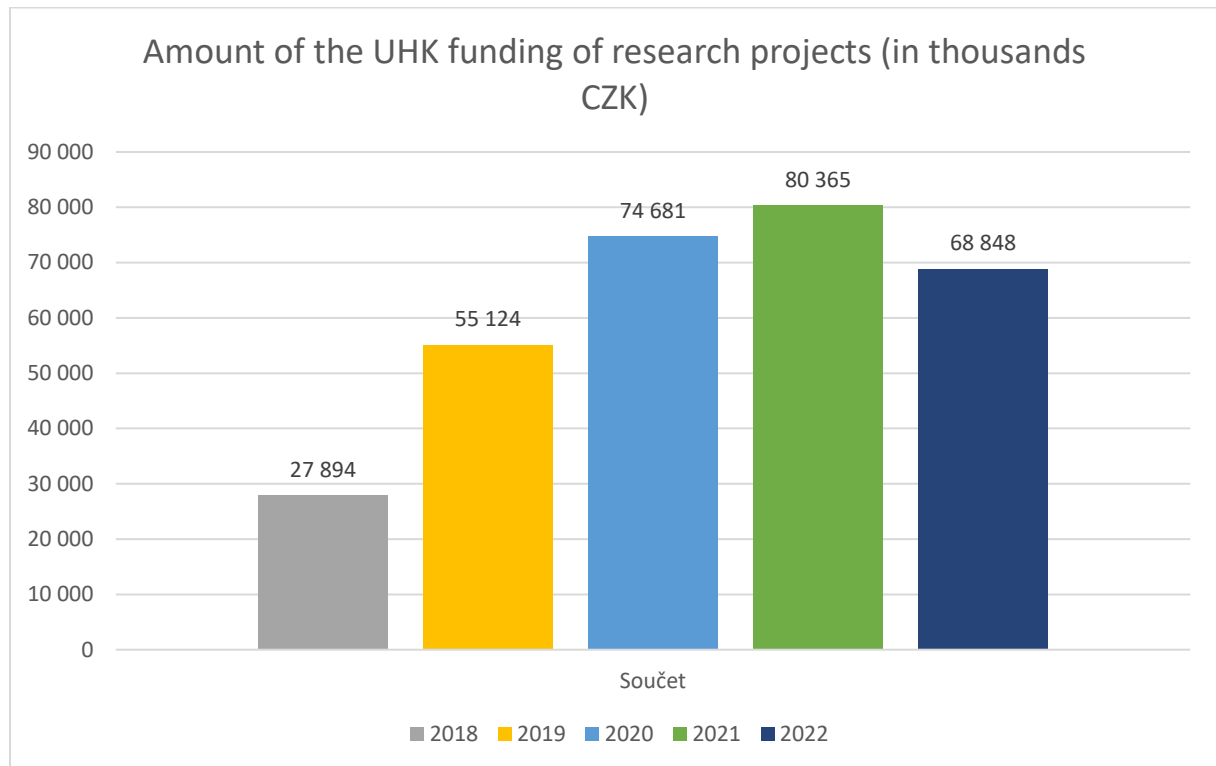


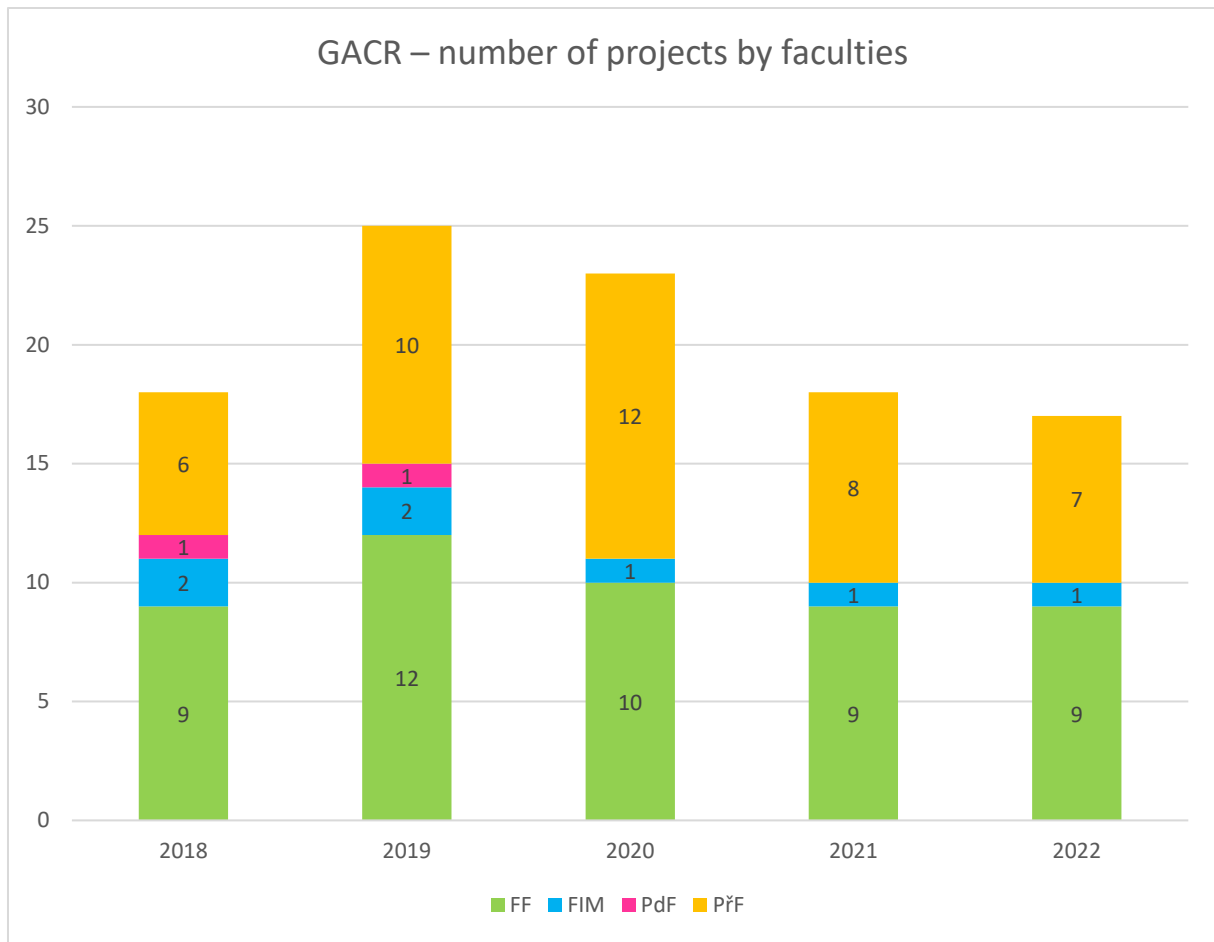
## Solved projects



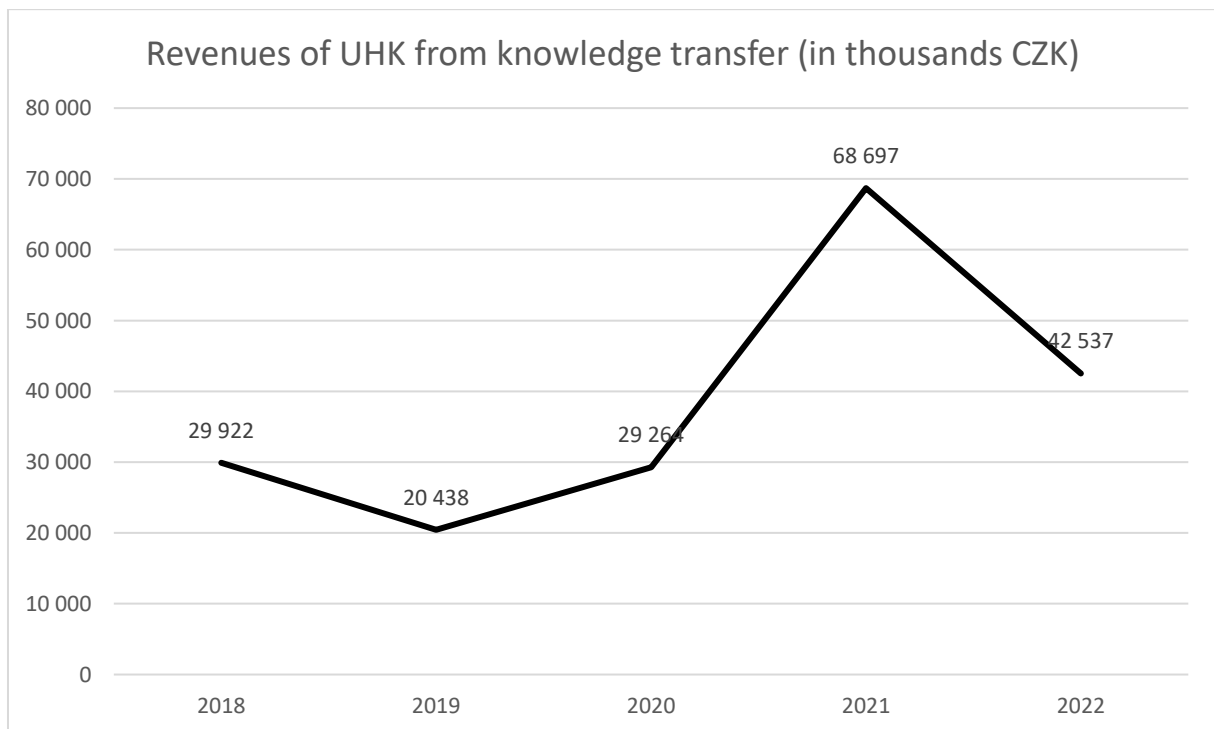
- GA ČR – Grant Agency of the Czech Republic
- TA ČR – Technology Agency of the Czech Republic

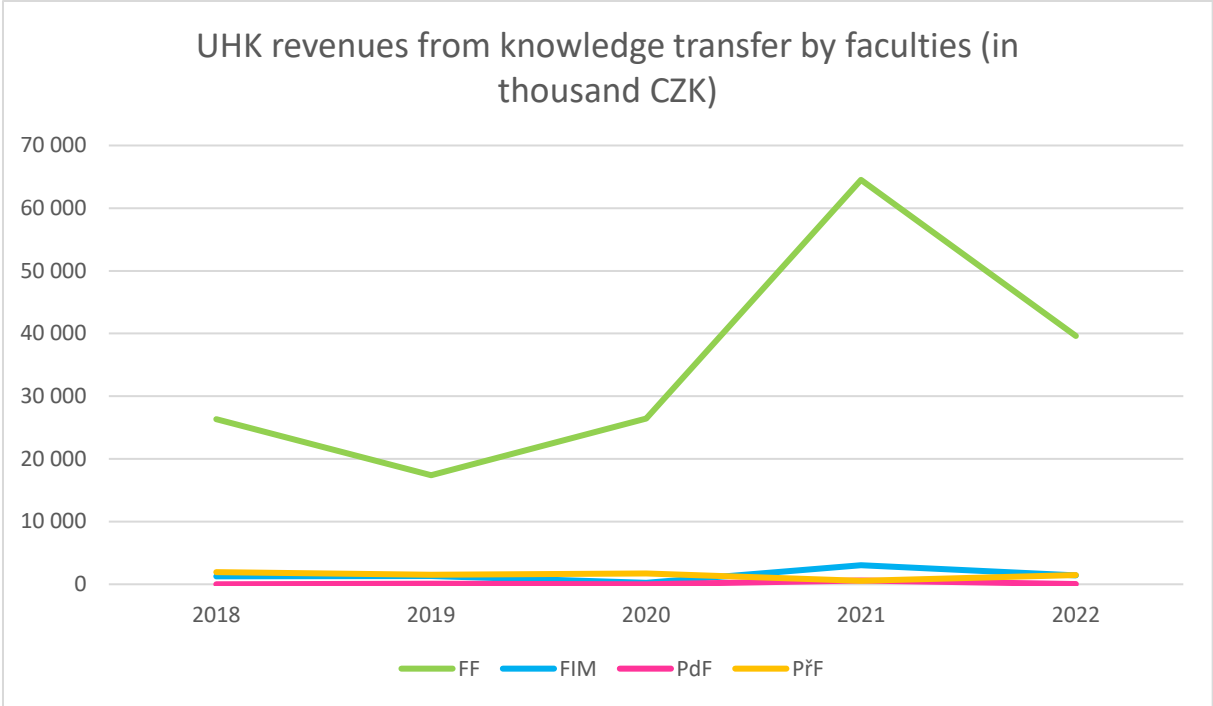
- MŠMT – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
- AZV/IGAMZ – Agency for Medical Research of the Czech Republic/Internal Grant Agency of the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic
- MK – Ministry of Culture
- MPO – Ministry of Industry and Trade
- MZE – Ministry of Agriculture



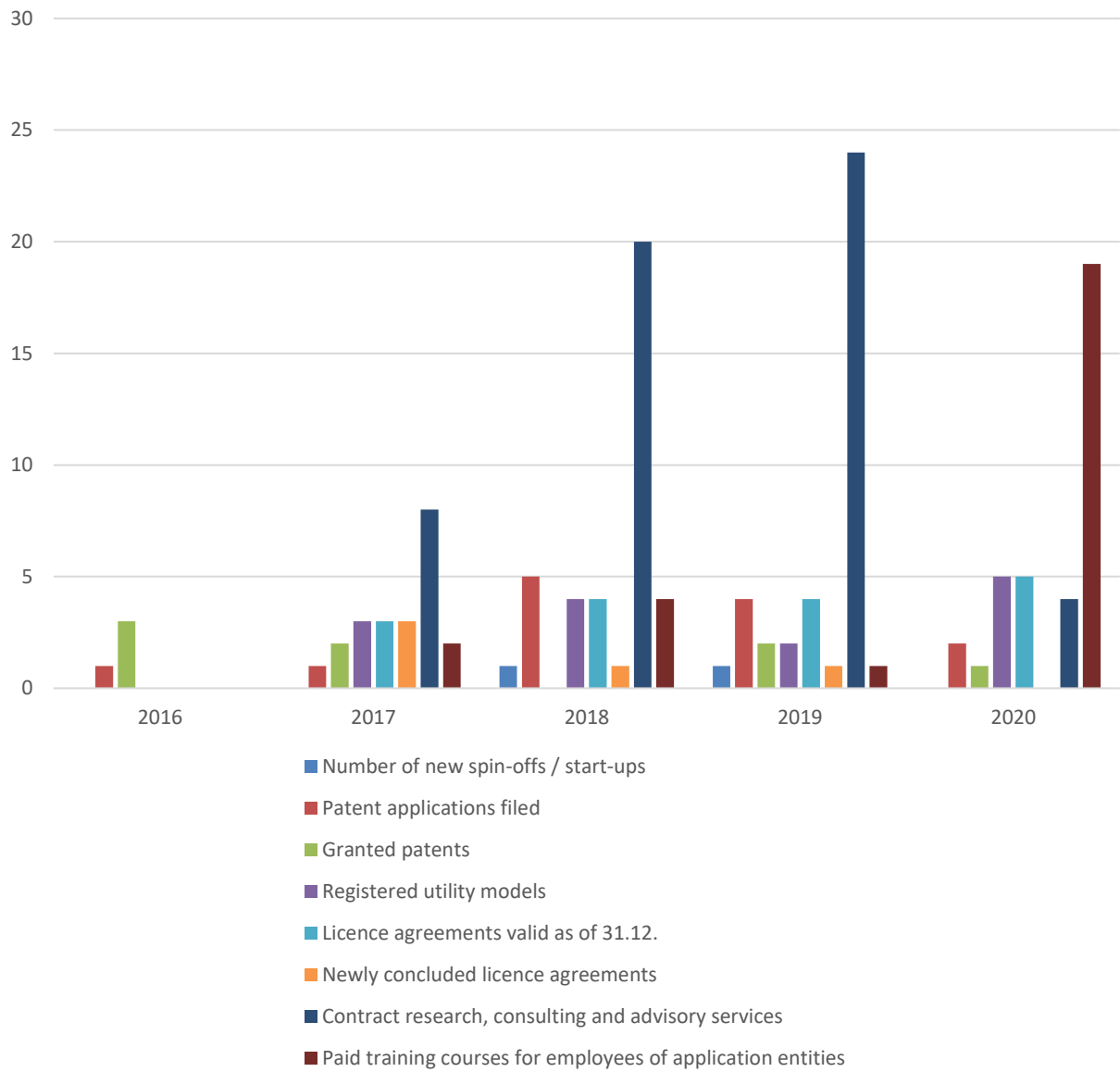


## Knowledge transfer





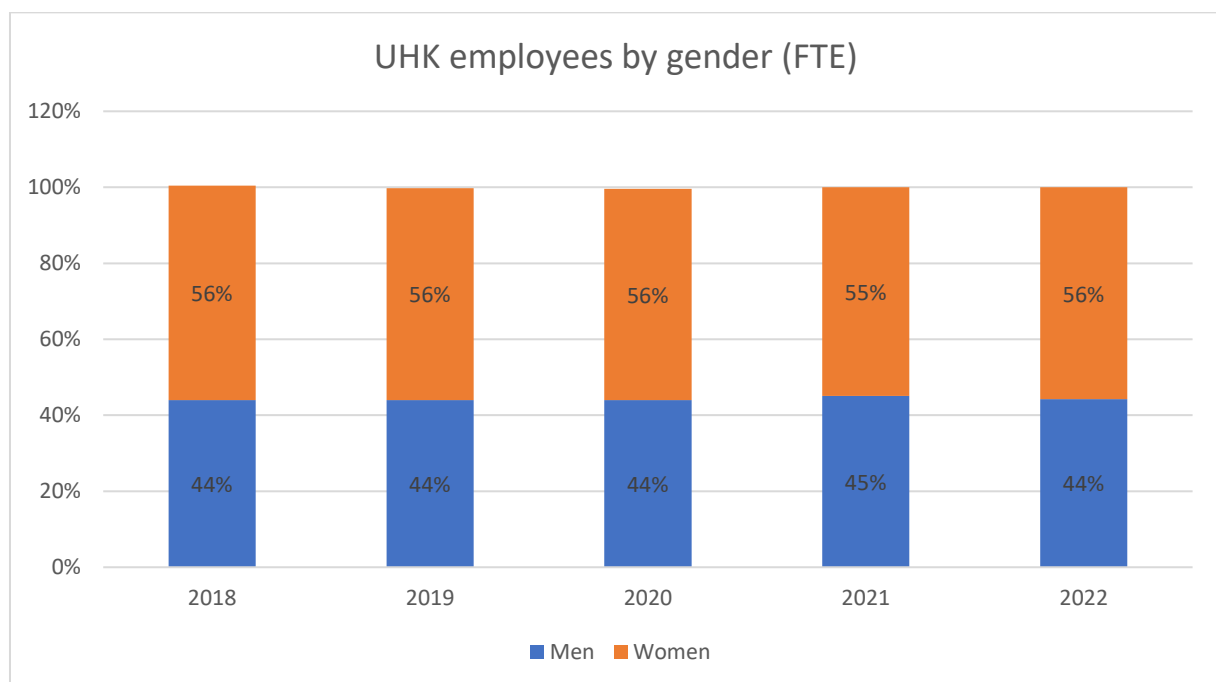
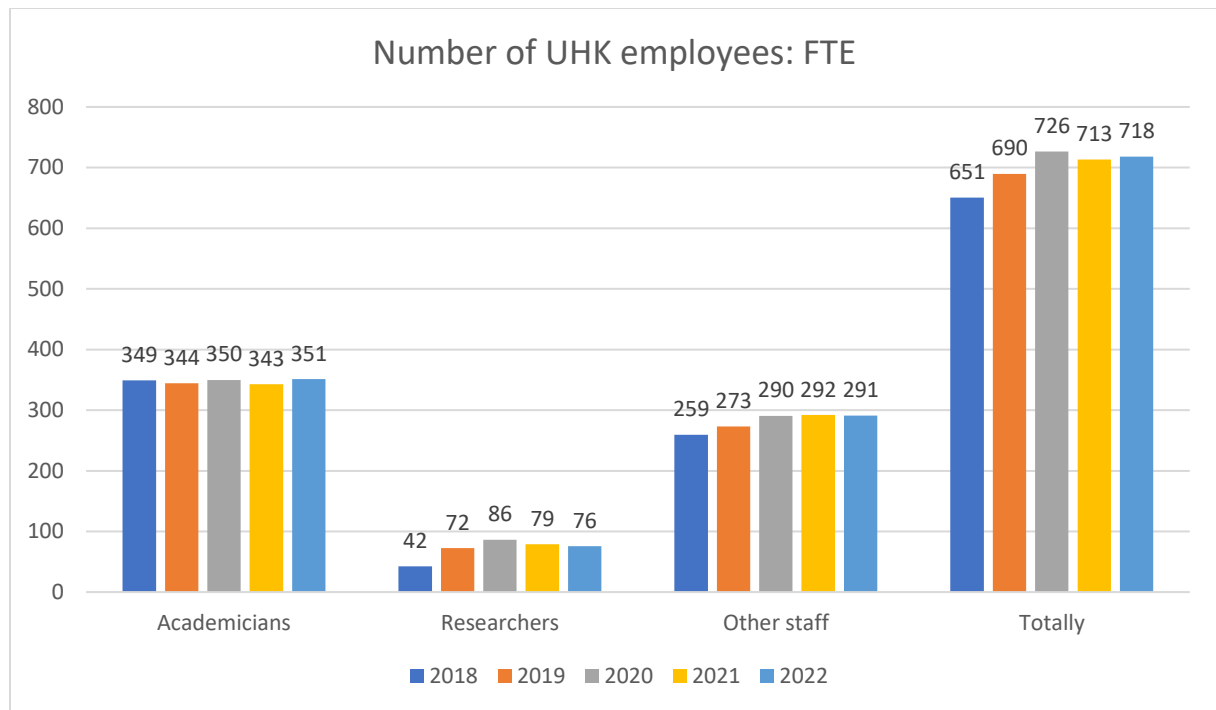
## Transfer of knowledge and research results into practice

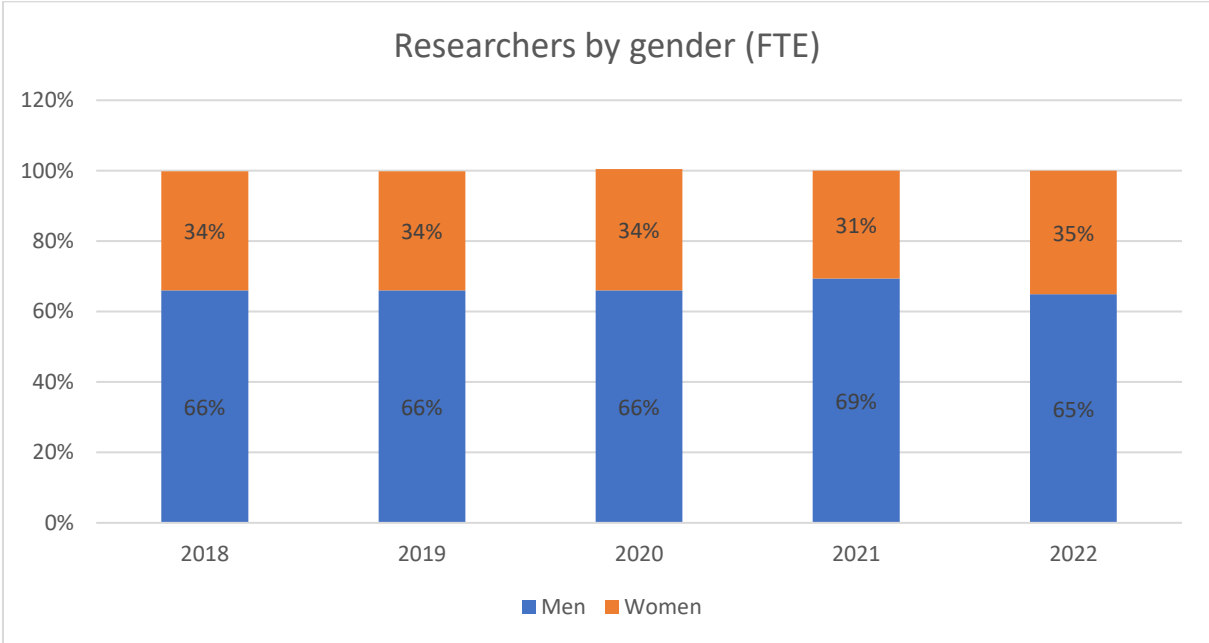
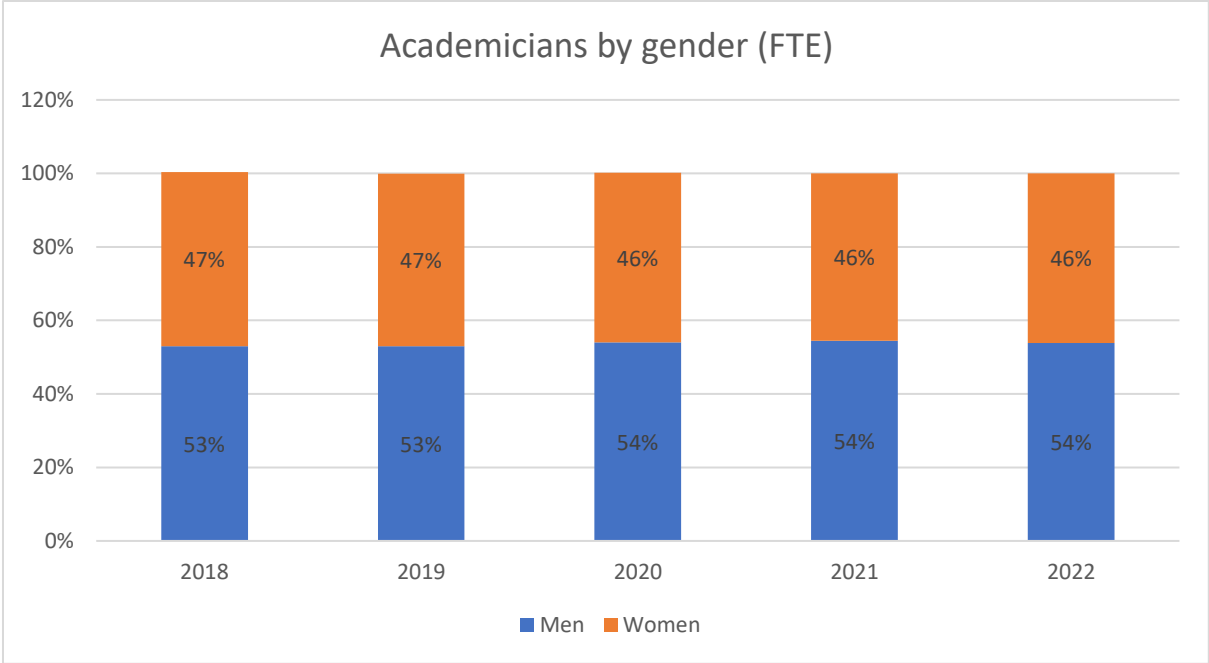


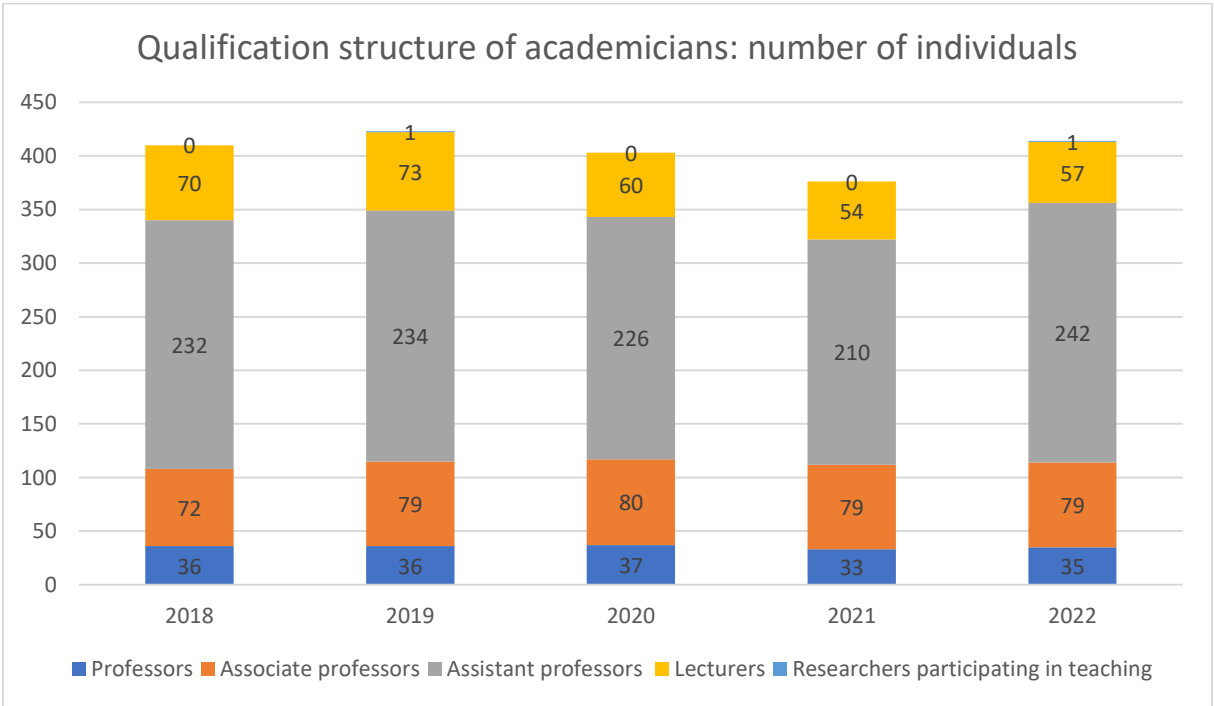
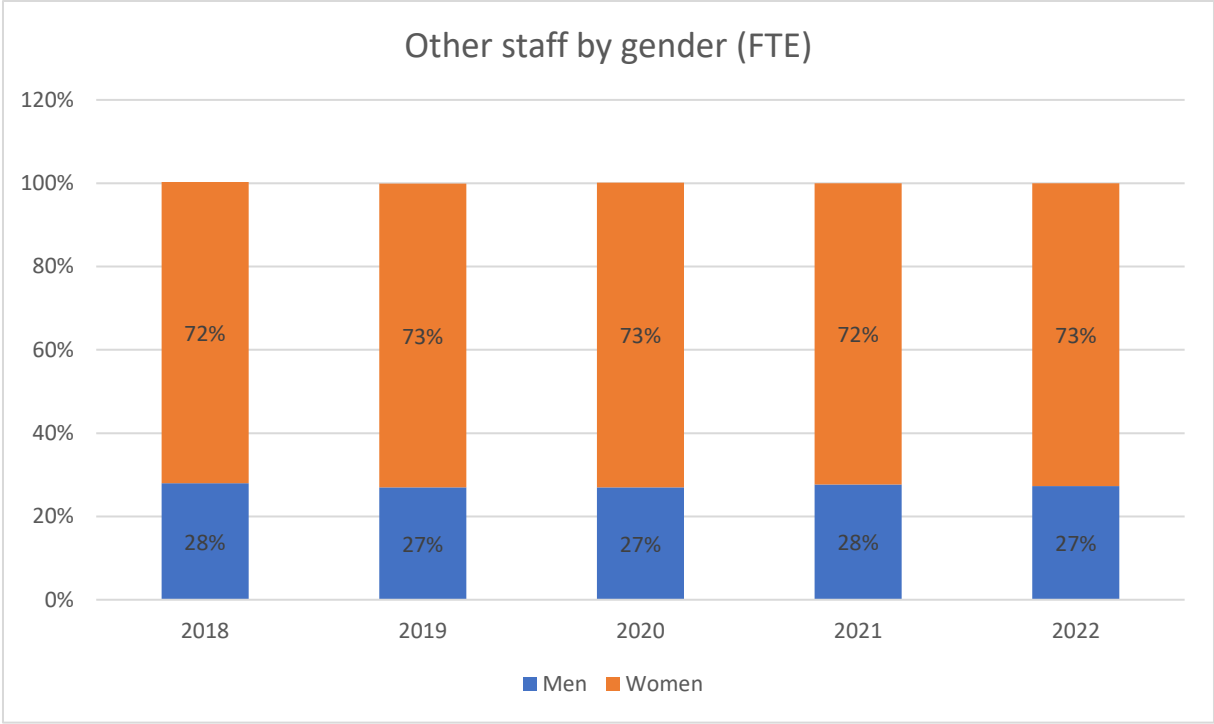


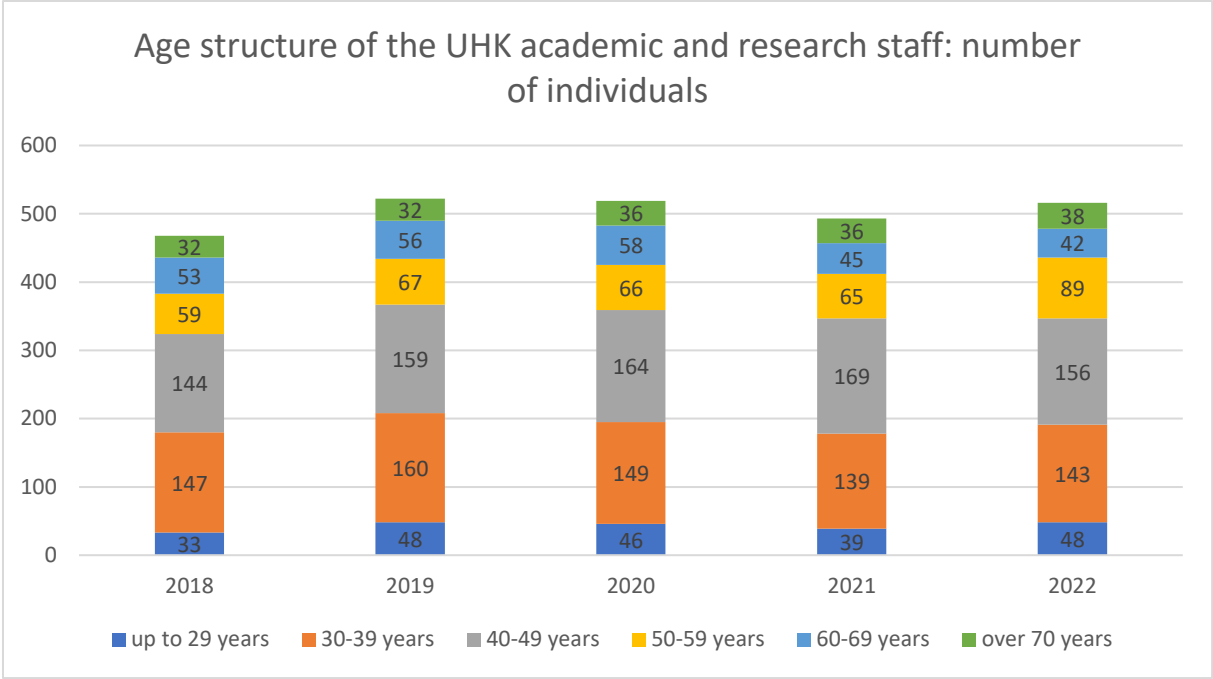
## Data on related activities

### Employee data

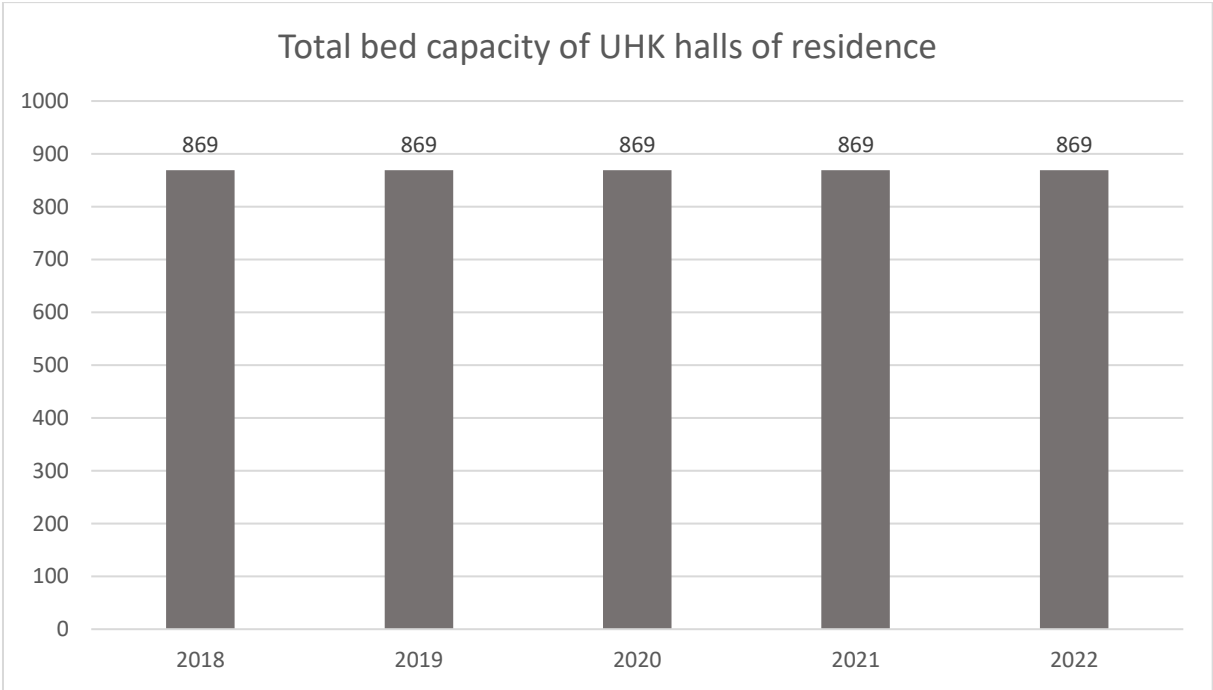


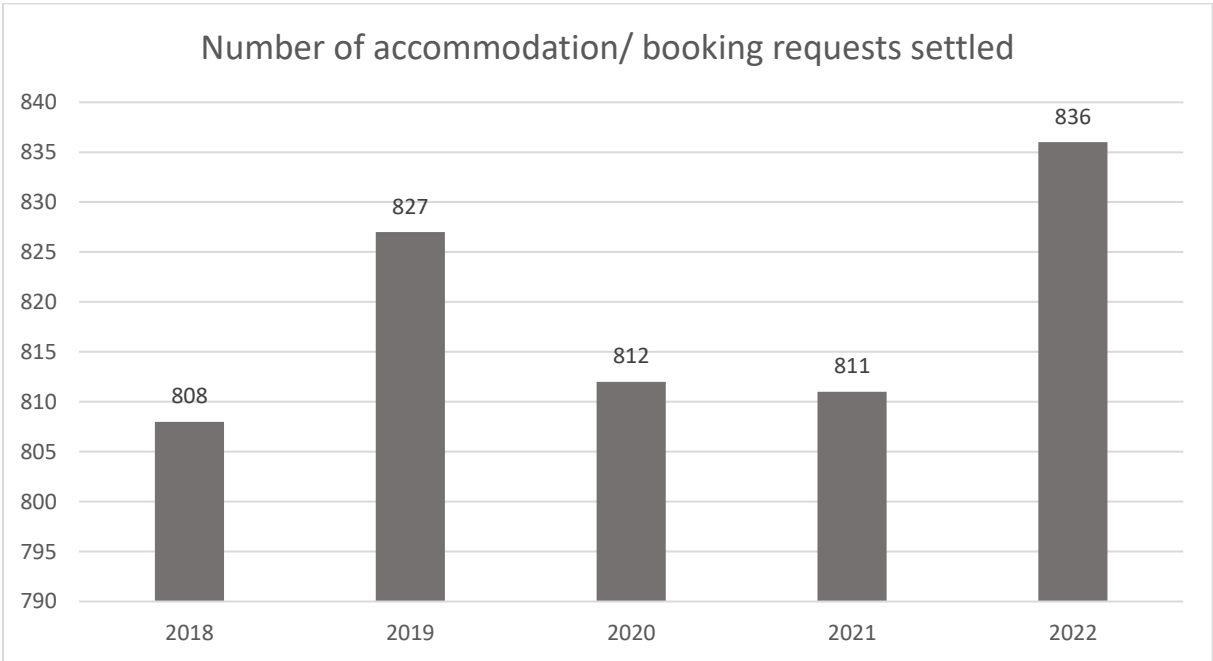


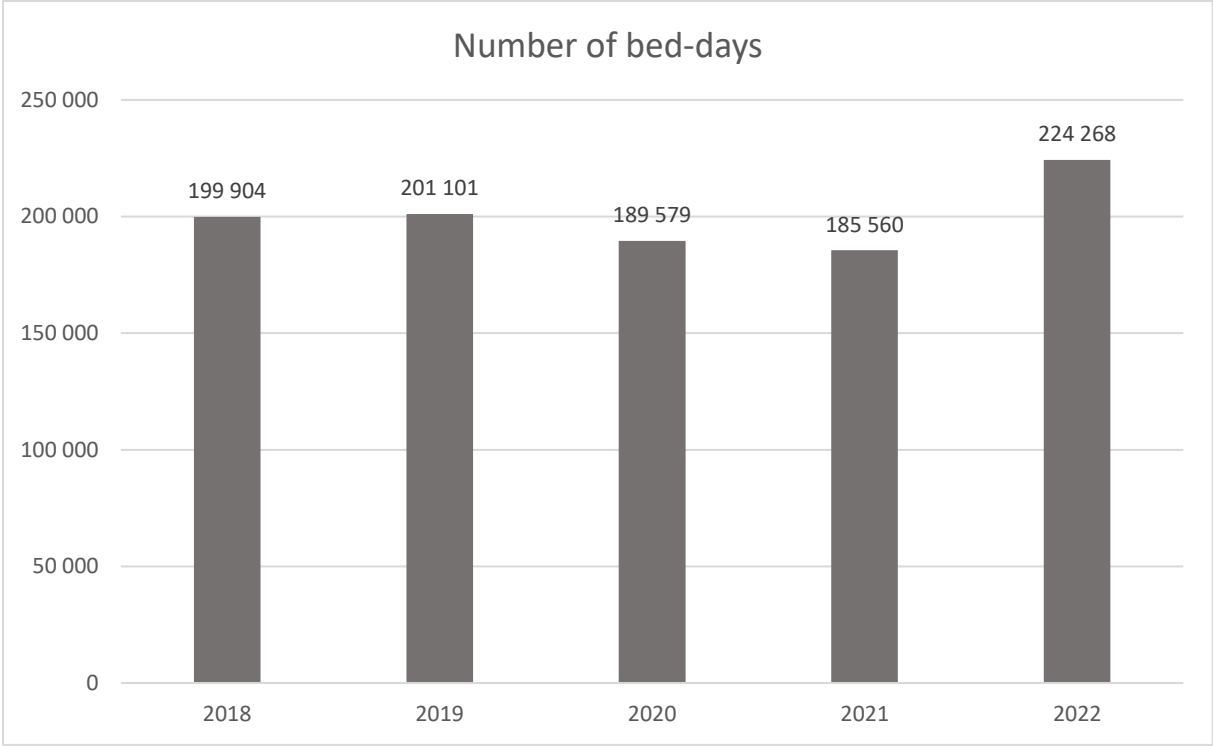




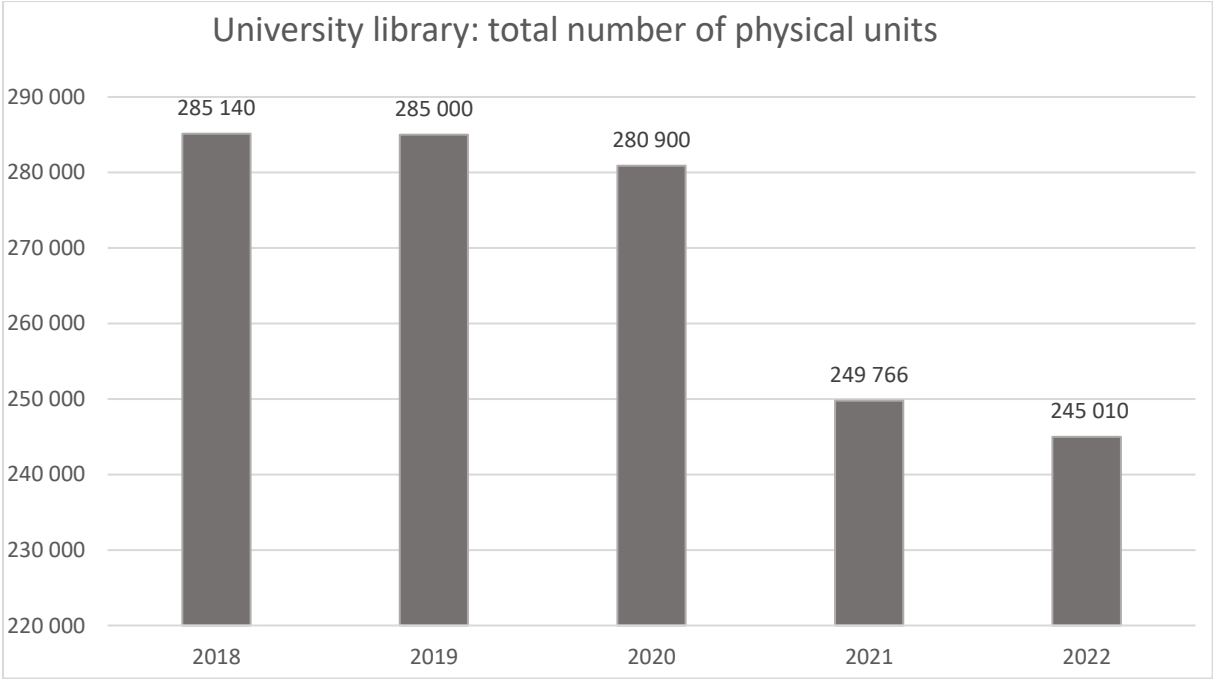
**Data on accommodation services of UHK halls of residence**

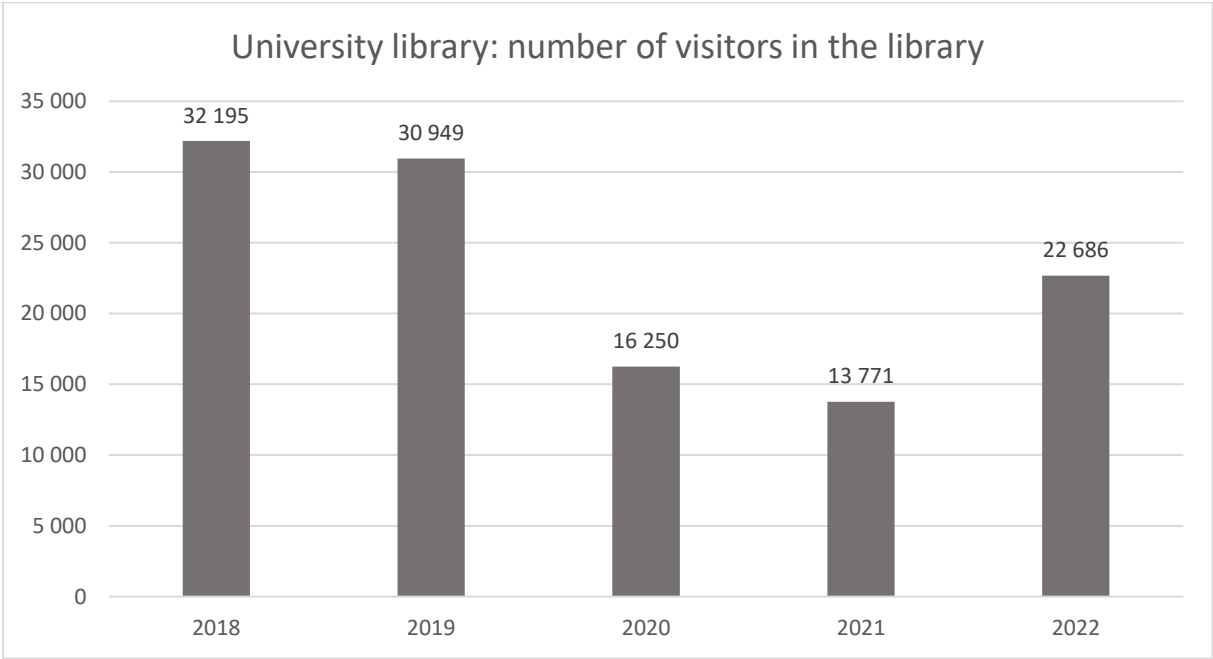
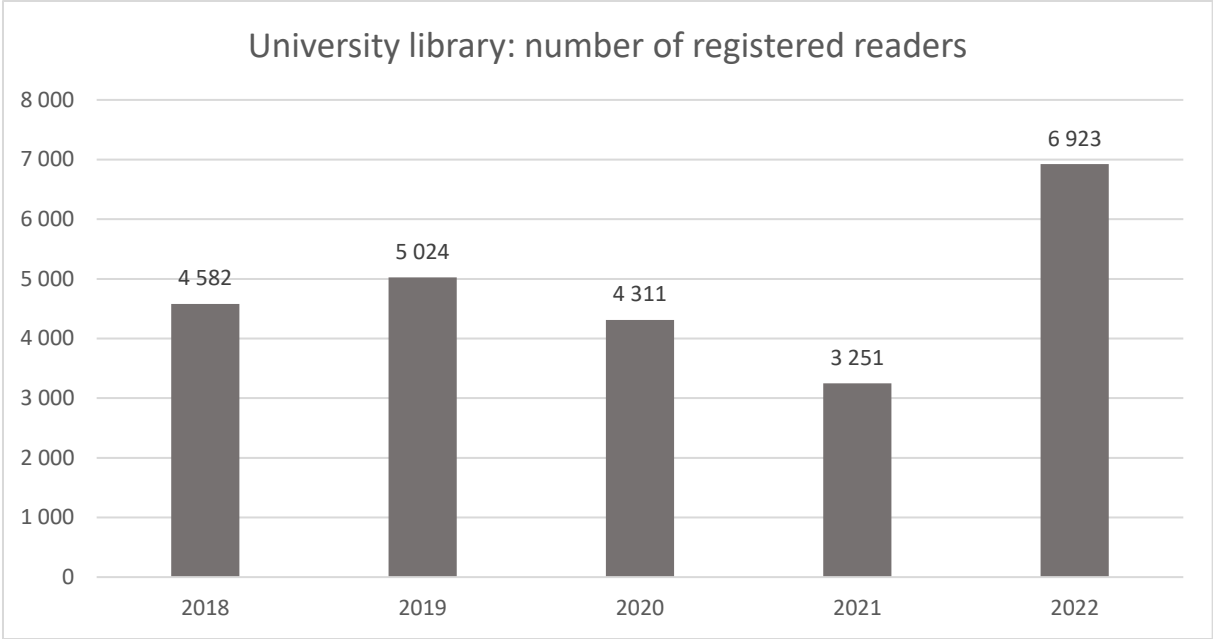






**Data on the UHK Library**





## Overview of UHK's position in the main international rankings<sup>4</sup>

### QS Rankings

QS World University Rankings	2022	2023
UHK ranking	801.–1000.	801.–1000.
Number of universities rated	1 300	1 422

QS EECA University Rankings	2019	2020	2021	2022
UHK ranking	151.–160.	168.	176.	185
Number of universities rated	305	353	400	449

### THE Rankings

THE World University Rankings	2020	2021	2022	2023
UHK ranking	1001.+	1001.+	1201.+	1201.–1500.
Number of universities rated	1 526	1 526	2 112	2 345

THE Young Universities	2020	2021	2022
UHK ranking	351.–400.	351.–400.	401.+

THE Emerging Economies	2020	2021	2022
UHK ranking	401.–500.	401.–500.	401.–500.

### UI Green Metric

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
UHK ranking	350.	314.	438.	543.	582.
Number of universities rated	718	780	911	956	1 050

<sup>4</sup> The labeling in years differs for each ranking. Sometimes the rankings are published with a label for the following year. The rankings retain the way they are labelled, regardless of the year in which the ranking was published.