Report on the Accreditation of Study Program

"Civil Engineering" (B.Sc.)

at Ishik University, Erbil, KRG/Iraq

Reference Number 1547-xx-1

Meeting of the ZEvA Commission for International Affairs on January 23, 2017

Item 2.2

Study Program	Degree	Program Duration	Type of Program	Maximum annual intake
Civil Engineering	B.Sc.	8 semesters	Full-time	70

Accreditation contract signed on: 10 February, 2016

Date of site visit: 4-5 October, 2016

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Expert Panel:

- Prof. Dipl.-Phys. Klaus Landwehrs (academic representative), Fachhochschule Potsdam – University of Applied Sciences, Department of Civil Engineering; Dean of the Department, Potsdam, Germany
- Prof. Dr.-Ing. Wolfgang Dickhaut (academic representative), HafenCity University Hamburg – University of the Built Environment and Metropolitan Development, Hamburg, Germany
- Dipl.-Ing. (FH) Harald Hesse (M.Eng.) (representative of the profession), Civil Engineering/Facility Management; Municipality Wedemark: Department Manager for Public Buildings and Land Management, Germany
- Alexander Buchheister (students' representative), Bachelor in Applied Geography (B.Sc., completed); Bachelors' program in Civil Engineering (B.Sc., completed), Masters' program in Economic Geography (M.Sc.), RWTH Aachen, Germany

Hanover, 9 January 2017 (amended 9 March, 2017)

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I. Final Vote of the Expert Panel and Decision of the Accreditation Commission

1. Decision of the ZEvA Commission for International Affairs (KIA), 9 March, 2017

The ZEvA Commission for International Affairs (KIA) follows the experts' report and recommendations and takes note of the university's response.

The commission refrains from taking any position regarding the political or ideological foundation of Ishik University. The KIA is solely entrusted with evaluating the quality of teaching and learning at universities outside Germany based on the reference framework of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG). Any standards or value systems beyond the scope of the ESG are of no relevance for the work and the decisions of the commission.

In due consideration of the requirements of the ESG, the KIA decides to accredit the Bachelor's programme in Civil Engineering as offered by Ishik University, Erbil, without conditions.

The accreditation of the study programme is valid for a period of five years.

2. Final Vote of the Expert Panel

2.1 Civil Engineering (B.Sc.)

2.1.1 Precondition:

The experts regard it as a prerequisite for accreditation, that Ishik University provides transparent and unambiguous information on its religious and/or political background, its possible implications for the governance and financial structure of Ishik University and on potential impacts on the program in Civil Engineering.

2.1.2 Recommendations:

- While maintaining the basic aspects of a Civil Engineering program, the Department and Faculty should measure up to its own goals by proactively strengthening competencies in the realm of sustainable and innovative fields of Civil Engineering. This should include a stronger focus on technical infrastructure and planning, but also on issues like climate-sensitive building or local materials.
- On the program level, the progression of 'Learning Objectives' to 'Learning Outcomes' should be from the more general aims of the program to more concrete attained competencies.
- The experts recommend to extend the currently 10 ECTS credits for the graduation project to give due weight to this final demonstration and assessment of Civil Engineering competencies. It would also increase the opportunities for independent research on a selected topic. In addition, special care should be given that at least the final documentation allows for an assessment of the competence of each individual student for scientific work. It is also advisable to outline a separate course description for the Graduation Project.
- It is recommended to integrate the internship in the curricular and credit structure. It might also be advisable to reserve a longer time frame for this (and other) elements of practical experience, including e.g. construction site visits.
- Existing and future co-operations with national and international higher education institutions should be more focused. Ishik University (or the Faculty/Civil Engineering Department) should concentrate on a selected number of institutions with a genuine interest in co-operating in fields like knowledge sharing, staff exchange, students' mobility or research collaboration.
- The experts support the development of a Masters' program in Civil Engineering at Ishik University, but also see some necessities like developing a broader research base, setting up specialized laboratories, putting a stronger emphasis on scientific work already on the Bachelors' level an reduce the teaching load for academic staff.

2.1.3 Recommendation to the ZEvA Commission for International Affairs:

The expert group recommends the accreditation of the program Civil Engineering (B.Sc.) for the duration of five years without conditions.

II. Evaluation Report of the Expert Panel

Introduction: Purpose, Design and Context of the Accreditation Procedure

It is the purpose of this accreditation procedure to assess the quality of the Bachelor's program "Civil Engineering" offered by Ishik University against international standards. The program is run by the University's Faculty of Engineering and located in its Civil Engineering Department.

The assessment is based on ZEvA's "Assessment Framework for the Evaluation of Study Programmes" as laid out in the agency's "Manual for Evaluation and Certification of Study Programmes". This assessment framework is in part based on the "European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)" (ENQA 2009), the "Framework for Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area" (2005) and the "ECTS User's Guide" (European Communities, 2009).

For the purpose of assessing the study program, Ishik University was asked to hand in a self-report in English, describing in detail their institution and the program, covering all aspects of ZEvA's assessment framework.

After receiving the self-report and assembling an expert panel for the accreditation procedure, a two-day site-visit was conducted at the University's main campus in Erbil, Iraq/KRG.[1] During the site visit, the expert panel had the opportunity to speak with the University's leadership board (including the quality management unit), the leadership of the Faculty and the head of the Department and Civil Engineering program as well teaching staff, including internal and external lecturers. The site-visit also included an extensive talk with a large group of students and several alumni of the program. In addition, the members of the expert panel were given a tour of the University's and Faculty's facilities, including laboratories, computer pools and administrative offices relevant for the study program.

This report is based on the experts' assessment of the University's self-report, some additional documents submitted during the site visit, and the results of the on-site talks. It will serve as a basis for ZEvA's Commission for International Affairs to decide on the accreditation of the university's study program. In the case of a positive decision by the Commission, ZEvA will award its quality seal for a limited time period, after which the university can reapply for accreditation.

The experts would like to thank the President of Ishik University, as well as all members of staff, faculty and students involved for the friendly reception, the high quality of the self-report and documentation, and the open and constructive atmosphere during the on-site talks in Erbil. It is the experts' panel intention, not only to assess, but also to support the further develop the quality of the Civil Engineering program.

[1] Ishik University is located in Erbil (Kurdish: Hawler), the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, an area in northwestern Iraq which is governed semi-autonomously as a federal region by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Ishik University and the Civil Engineering program are recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the KRG.

1. Governance, Management and Profile of the University

Ishik University was founded in 2008 as a private institution in Erbil, Iraq/KRG. In 2009 five Bachelors' programs were established and in 2010/11 it moved to a new campus at the outskirts of Erbil. As today, Ishik offers 15 Bachelors' programs in six faculties: Dentistry, Engineering, Science, Education, Administrative Science and Economics, Law. All programs are entirely taught in English, except for the Law program which is studied in Arabic. Ishik University also houses, among others, a Prep School, a Center for Continuing Education and a TOEFL IBT Test Centre. A second campus is located in Sulaimani, the second-largest city in Iraqi Kurdistan, where Civil Engineering is also offered (but not assessed in this procedure). Currently, the University is planning to offer Masters' programs, pending on the official approval by the Kurdish Ministry. The language of communication on the campus is generally English, also made necessary by a diverse teaching faculty and staff originating from Iraq, Turkey, Syria and other countries.

As a private institution, Ishik University is part of the Fezalar Education Group, which was established in Erbil in 1994 by Turkish and local investors. Besides the University and its Prep School, the Group operates about 35 private educational institutions, from Kindergarten, schools for primary and secondary education up to High Schools, all in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Ishik University does not receive state funding and raises fees from students, which amount to about 4,500 Euros a year for engineering programs. The institution and its programs are authorized by the Ministry for Higher Education and Scientific Research and its 'Inspection and Quality Assurance Unit'. While the current status gives Ishik (and other private) University a certain degree of autonomy, some central issues like tuition fees, number of places in each program per year, the hiring and assignment of full- and part-time faculty staff or the license to offer new Bachelors' and Masters' programs are regulated or at least observed by the Ministry in considerable detail.

The University is strategically governed by the Board of Trustees, The President and the University Council, the latter comprising the President, Vice-Presidents and Faculty Deans. President and Council are responsible for academic and operative planning and implementation as well as financial management. Each Faculty is headed by a Dean and has a Faculty Council as a body to develop academic strategies and planning (which then have to be decided by the President & University Council). On the lower level, each of the 15 Departments – which are responsible for one study program – also possesses a Board, responsible for evaluation and improvement of program-related aspects.

In the self-report, the University describes its vision and mission as follows:

ISHIK University Vision
To be a leading university in the country and region in the areas of education, research and development as well as service to the community by raising educated individuals with universal ethical values.

ISHIK University Mission
To raise well-prepared, productive and competent individuals with a research-oriented spirit, who possess professional ethics and sensitiveness to the realities of the country and the

world, in order to serve to fundamental human values; contribute to the improvement of the quality life of humanity based on regional and universal needs.

These general strategic aims have been developed in a strategic process from 2014 onwards with the help of a Strategy Commission, including the institution's leadership and the Deans of all five Faculties.

On a lower level, the Faculty of Engineering has also developed a distinct vision:

To be a faculty capable of leading in the scientific field, aimed to the application and theory of education, training, research and development by taking a global approach into consideration from a local angle.

The mission of ISHIK Faculty of Engineering is to facilitate its vision as follows:

- *Take scientific, ethical and universal values into consideration through local context.*
- *Pay attention to the information produced by humans to be environmentally friendly and try to find scientific solutions to social problems.*
- *Train graduates who have professional competence and professional ethics.*
- *Train free, critical, productive individuals with innovative ideas.*
- *Bring interdisciplinary studies to the fore.*
- *Build relations with international organizations and institutions to configure events.*
- *Develop projects by strengthening relationships with industry and service sectors to contribute to the development of the country.*

On an overarching level, the Fezalar Group has also defined a vision, mission and values for its institutions:

Mission: Teaching art of living together to the student having cultural diversities.

Vision: Ensuring contribution of students, who learn the art of living, for world peace and help them become integrated with the world on their educational and career planning.

Values: Fezalar embraces common universal values of

- *Faith*
- *Love*
- *Scientific thought*
- *Critical thinking*
- *Free minded, Respect to freedom of thought*
- *Collaboration*
- *Analytical thinking*
- *Artistic skills*

The University has communicate its strategic and educational goals in a variety of documents, i.e. Staff Handbook, Ishik Educator's Guide, Student Handbook, and developed it into more detailed and applicable rules, guidelines and regulations. These include e.g. sanctions for causing "polarization due to differences of language, race, color or religious sect" (cf. Student Handbook), or "using position […] for partisan political or religious purposes" (Staff Handbook).

In the academic year 2015/16, 2,635 students have been enrolled at Ishik University, of which 11 per cent study Civil Engineering. The intake in this program has been about 90 students each year since 2012, making it the second-largest program behind Business Management.

Ishik University has been audited against the ISO 9001:2008 and was certified in May 2015 by British Certification Inc. (BCI). This certification procedure had been organized by its Quality Management Division which was also responsible for organizing and supporting the present evaluation.

Experts' Appraisal

The review panel has gained an encompassing impression of Ishik University, its basic structure and workings as well as its staff and premises. Ishik has set up a modern type of educational institution in a currently volatile environment. While the obvious tense security situation in Iraq in general has surprisingly little direct impact on the Kurdish region and especially Erbil, the economic and political environment of the KRG has becoming more problematic in the last years. Despite these limiting factors, the University has developed a distinct profile that is well-described in its documents and public website.

The vision and mission of the University in general and the Faculty of Engineering in particular are geared towards a quality-oriented provision of academic programs that take international developments in didactics, discipline and academics into account. They have been developed in an still ongoing strategic process that is also supported bottom-up by the Departments and Faculties: It aims to combine a general research-oriented approach with professional competence that is directed primarily at the local labor market – which appears to be a realistic position under given circumstances.

While being a private institution, the KRG Ministry still exercises considerable oversight, which on the one hand limits the autonomy of the University, e.g. in determining the tuition fees, but on the other hand helps to ensure confidence and trust in the quality of its academic offerings. This includes provisions for internal quality assurance procedures.

As an aside, the University's leadership has communicated about the background of the Fezalar Education Group, which sees itself as part of the so-called 'Gülen Movement'. This movement, also named 'Hizmet' (the Service), is focused on the US-based former Turkish Islamic scholar and Imam Fethullah Gülen and has developed an extensive network. It has gained a considerable impact especially in the field of general and higher education, with over 1,000 schools and institutions of higher education in over 150 countries.[2] The Movement has been described as pursuing a 'moderate Islam' and is "willing to co-exist peacefully with peoples of other faiths, support democracy, cherishes freedom of thought and educational pursuits".[3] Other researchers have stressed the rather economic interests of the

[2] Including 25 (state-recognized) schools in Germany. Cf. Schenk, Arnfrid and Martin Spiewak, 2016: Die Schulen des Predigers Gülen, ZEIT (German weekly), 13 October 2016.
[3] Ebaugh, Helen Rose, 2010: The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement

Movement: "begun as charitable organisations, the Gülen schools rapidly develop into for-profit establishment catering to local élites".[4] The aims of the Fezalar Group have been described as follows: "These schools fill an important gap by creating space in which all ethno religious groups communicate with each other".[5] Since the attempted coup in Turkey in July 2016, the ruling AKP party in Turkey has advised a crackdown on (allegedly) Gülen-associated institutions and persons. However, this seems not with a direct impact of the functioning of Gülen-close institutions in other countries and in KRG.

With its partly informal and partly non-public structure, it is difficult for the experts' panel to clearly evaluate the religious and political background of the Movement in general and its eventual influence on Ishik University in particular. Neither the documentation nor the official talks during the site visit have indicated any religious or political influence that might compromise the neutrality in teaching and research at Ishik University. The curricular and educational standards apparently show no disregard to general principles and standards of the scientific community.

However, the experts regard it as a prerequisite for accreditation, that Ishik University provides transparent and unambiguous information on its religious and/or political background, possible implications for the governance and financial structure of Ishik University and on potential impacts on the program in Civil Engineering.

Student Mobility and Internationalization

Ishik University has formulated the internationalization of students and staff as one of its priorities and named several efforts to support this goal:

- English as the sole language of teaching and studying, but also providing opportunities to learn additional languages like Arabic, Kurdish or Turkish.
- Raising the number of international students (currently about 50, mostly from Turkey and Syria).
- Establishing an International Relations Office in 2013 that supports outgoing students. Expanding co-operation agreements (MoUs) with universities abroad (currently about 50 universities).
- Developing a program for staff exchange.
- Holding international conferences at Ishik University in different disciplines, including Civil and Computer Engineering.
- Re-structuring programs according to Bologna standards also to facilitate international mobility and exchange.

Rooted in Moderate Islam, Dordrecht et al.: Springer , p. 2.

[4] Dean, Jason, 2015: Book Review of „Tittensor, David, 2014: The House of Service: The Gülen Movement and Islam's Third Way, New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press", Journal of Contemporary Religion, Vol. 30 (3), 539.

[5] Esposito, John L. and Ihsan Yilmaz, 2012, Islam and Peacebuilding: The Gülen Movement in Global Action, in Lee Marsden (ed.), The Ashgate Research Companion to Religion and Conflict Resolution, London, New York, Routledge, 15-32, p. 23.

During the site visit students of the CE program also remarked positively on the co-operations with universities abroad and a general outlook that goes beyond the Kurdistan region. They were also very interested in pursuing postgraduate studies in European countries. The Department and the coordinator of the International Relations Office also described during the site visit procedure for recognition of courses/credits which include an ex post-check of the foreign and home curricula and recognition is then approved by the Scientific Committee of the Department

Experts' Appraisal

The experts conclude that Ishik University regards internationalization in general and student mobility in particular as important objectives. It has taken up distinct measures to support international mobility of staff and students and there is clearly a high interest of current students and future graduates to pursue further studies or working outside the Kurdistan region.

The general use of English as the sole language of teaching definitely gives the graduates a considerable advantage and the adaption of Bologna-oriented structures like student-centered learning or application of the ECTS-system will further facilitate student mobility. In addition, the newly established International Relations Office can provide substantial support, including aspects like visa or grants. The experts commend these initiatives and suggest that students should also been informed about offerings like the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) or the Goethe Institute that both have offices in Erbil. Yet, the experts recommend to focus existing and future co-operation agreements with national and international higher education institutions: Instead of maintaining a large number of – apparently mostly formal – inter-institutional declarations, Ishik University (or the Faculty/CE Department) should concentrate on a selected number of institutions with a genuine interest in co-operating in fields like knowledge sharing, staff exchange, students' mobility or research collaboration.

Equal Opportunities

Providing equal opportunities for students and staff has been described as one of Ishik University's 'Points of Strength' in the self-report. It is stressed that student admission and progress as well as staff hiring and promotion is solely based on performance indicators (set also by the Kurdish Ministry) and that one strictly adheres to a policy of non-discrimination regarding race, color, religion, sex, age, disabilities, national origin or ancestry.

The student and the staff handbook set differentiated rules and regulations in this regard, including rules on equal payment for staff and policies on sexual harassment (between staff and between staff and students; cf. Staff Handbook) as well as sanctions regarding unethical conduct like sexual discrimination or harassment in any form (cf. Student Handbook).

Of the 318 students in the CE program, 101 are female, thus making up for 32 per cent.

There are no special regulations or support structures for students or staff with disabilities. However, the campus buildings are barrier-free accessible.

The experts' panel commends the steps taken by Ishik University to provide a non-discriminative environment for its students and staff.

In addition, it is considered favorably that females make up a relative large proportion of CE students and graduates. During the talks, both groups were outspoken and courageous, indicating to a successful policy of equal opportunity. The same applies to the female laboratory supervisors, while at least the higher ranking CE staff is mostly male.

2. Assessment of the Study Program "Civil Engineering" (B.Sc.)

2.1 Strategic Dimension and Profile of the Program

The program in Civil Engineering (CE) offered by the Faculty of Engineering leads to Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree. It can be completed in four years/eight semesters and has an intake capacity of about 70 students per year.

All courses are taught in English language and are credited. Ishik University generally uses the American Credit System, based on contact hours, but also has now assigned ECTS credits to its CE program, which is based on the overall workload students need on average to achieve the intended learning outcomes, including self-study time. Most of the courses are credited with five ECTS credits, while the range is between two and six credits.

At completion, students attain 159 'American' credits and 240 ECTS credits. Each academic year is structured in a fall and a spring semester. The Student Handbook (Ch. 3 Article 12) sets an overall maximum of seven years for a four-year program like CE (but no limits on repetition of failed examinations). All courses in the CE program can be completed in one semester. Ishik University uses a letter-based grading system, ranging from AA (90-100 per cent) to FF (0-39 per cent), for courses and the final exam, reaching at least 60 per cent (DC) is the level for passing a course/exam.

Ishik University also offers a six-week Summer Term where students can take a maximum of three courses out of a selection of courses offered by the University and Faculty. It gives students the possibility to pre-empt later courses or repeat an already passed course to increase their overall Grade Point Average (GPA).

Entry Requirements, Student Admission and Selection

The entrance of undergraduate students into Ishik University is regulated by the results achieved in standardizes High School exams, for CE applicants need a minimum overall score of 80 or better (compared to 93.5 for Dentistry and 50 for Business Management). Furthermore, applicants have to pass a University-administered entrance exam. Students have also to prove their English language skills and therefore often attend the one-year Prep School in Ishik Campus. In the current year, 133 students applied for Civil Engineering while 49 were taken in (last year: 247 applicants, intake of 80).

Intended Learning Outcomes and Course Descriptions

Coupled with the strategic development process described above, the Faculty of Engineering and the Department of Civil Engineering have developed and documented a detailed sequence of Mission Statement, Learning Outcomes and Learning Objectives, based on the general aim to be a reputable 'pioneer in civil engineering education':

The mission of the Civil Engineering Department at ISHIK University is to develop highly competent professionals, preparing them for entry-level positions in civil engineering, further study in graduate school, life-long learning, and societal leadership.

The main aims of ISHIK University / civil engineering are to educate engineers for the purposes specified below:

1. *Providing basic engineering knowledge to apply an innovative approach within the framework of engineering problems.*
2. *Having the technical and scientific knowledge to develop partnerships with different engineering disciplines.*
3. *Capability to have sustainable development for all kinds of projects such as design, test and analysis.*

For the program, also two kinds Learning Outcomes have been formulated:

- Six 'Specialist Program Learning Outcomes' like
  - An ability to apply knowledge of mathematics, science and engineering. (PLO1)
  - An ability to identify, formulate and solve engineering problems. (PLO4)
  - Skills in project management and recognition of international standards and methodologies (PLO6)
- Six 'Social and Ethical Program Learning Outcomes' like
  - An ability to function on multi-disciplinary teams. (PLO7)
  - An understanding of professional and ethical responsibility. (PLO8)
  - The broad education necessary to understand the impact of engineering solutions in a global and social context. (PLO10)

In addition, eight 'Learning Objectives' have been set, which are rather specific, e.g. "to know about GPS and surveying in the topography of plan and subsequent design" or "to engage students in real projects and sites during the training period". The learning outcomes and objectives have been combined in matrixes, broken down unto course level. The course catalogue then states for each course the specific course objectives and learning outcomes and describes the specific skills and competencies to be achieved as well as content of the course.

This general profile of the Civil Engineering program has been a focal issue in the talks during the site visit. The leadership of the University, Faculty and Department hereby emphasized a developmental process: The course first started as a 'classic' program in Civil Engineering with the founding of Ishik University; in 2013 the Department had set up a workshop for further developing the program, it objectives and concept. The introduction of Electives and an ongoing adaptation to (international) developments in the field have been some of its outcomes.

In general, the CE program is primarily focused on the needs of the local (building) market, but the Department wants to improve regional and international attractiveness for students and graduates. While, according to the Department, the overall strategic framework is mostly set by the University and Faculty, but the Department itself has the task of developing the profile and curriculum of the program.

During the talk with students and alumni, they expressed a relatively high satisfaction with the general profile of the CE program. Positive points were the international outlook and openness of students and teaching staff, also based on using and learning different languages. In addition, the achievement of practical skills like teamwork was also seen as bene-

fits of the program. After graduation it has been possible on the base of the achieved competencies and knowledge to either start in a working place or go on with a Masters' program at a different (public) university.

However, the alumni also stressed the importance for extending aspects of practical training in the CE program. Most of them also prolonged their internship from the obligatory one month to two or three months and regarded this extra on-site training (with special leave from the University) as a valuable preparation. The present female students and alumni also stressed that engineering is generally regarded as 'a man's job', but they chose CE because of its combination of engineering work and creativity.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts assert that the Faculty of Engineering and especially the Department has taken great strengths to set up and then continuously develop a Civil Engineering Bachelors' program that not only meets the – rather classic, construction-related – demands of the regional labor market, but increasingly tries to gain a modern profile.

The intention to combine a sound education in Civil Engineering with aspects like sustainable designs, ethical responsibility and international standards is highly supported by the experts. This also applies for the detailed development of Learning Outcomes, which take basic and advanced disciplinary competencies as much into account as generic and practical skills. These outcomes are then plausibly broken down to individual courses and learning components like labs, site-visits or internship. The course catalogue and course descriptions are well developed, detailed and thoroughly competence-oriented.

The experts commend the use of an additional Summer Term; it allows for flexibility in an otherwise rather rigorously structured curriculum.

However, the experts also want to give the following recommendations that should be considered in the further strategic development of the program:

- While maintaining the basic aspects of a CE program, the Department and Faculty should measure up to its own set goals by proactively strengthening competencies in the realm of sustainable and innovative fields of CE. This should include a stronger focus on technical infrastructure and planning, but also on issues like climate-sensitive building or local materials like clay bricks, for example. In this way, Ishik University's CE program could go an impressive step beyond the classical CE education and at the same time connect with its own goal of catering for the local and regional needs beyond a short-term, employment market-driven perspective. The experts would like to propose a two-tier concept with a shared, compulsory core curriculum in the first semesters, followed by two parallel tracts – 'construction' and 'technical infrastructure' – where students can thoroughly specialize, while at the end receiving the same CE-degree.
- The Department has set up a comprehensive matrix of intended learning outcomes, objectives and competencies on the program and course level. However,

on program level, the progression of 'Learning Objectives' to 'Learning Outcomes' should be from the more general aims of the program to more concrete attained competencies. The documented 'Program Learning Objectives' are currently rather specific topics to be included in the program curriculum (knowing certain standards, engage students in site-visits etc.) than broader objectives that guide the development of learning outcomes. The obvious use of the current objectives as items in post-graduate/alumni surveys also seems less plausible.

- The experts support and recommend the development of a Masters' program in Civil Engineering at Ishik University. At the same time hint to the necessity of developing a broader research base, including the acquiring research projects, enlarging specialized laboratories and putting a stronger emphasis on scientific work already on the Bachelors' level, including the final thesis. It would also entail a reduction of teaching load for academic staff. In addition, enlarging the co-operation with regional (public) universities, which for CE is currently done with one local Polytechnic University, would be a valuable step.

As understood during the site visit, the decision to award a Bachelor of Science degree is predetermined by the Ministry. The experts, however, support the intention of the Department to rather award a Bachelor of Engineering.

2.2 Concept and Structure of the Study Program

The program in Civil Engineering is structured in four academic years with two semesters which have between six and nine courses. Each semester is credited with about 20 'American' and 30 ECTS credits.

During the first year, students take mostly basic courses in mathematics, natural sciences and get an introduction into Civil Engineering. In addition, smaller units like 'Academic Debate and Critical Thinking', 'Kurdology' (compulsory by Ministry) or English are located in this section. In the second year, basic disciplinary subjects are taught, often in successive courses like 'Fluid Mechanic 1/2', 'Surveying 1/2', 'Geology for Civil Engineering' or 'Building Material and Concrete Technology'. The third and fourth year contain more specialized topics like 'Reinforced Concrete', 'Soil Mechanics', 'Foundation Engineering' or 'Sewage Systems Engineering'.

Despite these required courses, the concept lists an extensive list of 'Technical Electives' and 'Non-technical Electives'. From the latter, one course has to be selected in each semester of the first two academic years. They deal with more generic topics like Computer Aided Design, Ecology, and Statistics for CE, Marketing or Turkish. In the third and fourth year students chose all in all six Technical Electives from a list of currently 23 courses, which include special CE-topics like 'Construction Site Techniques', 'Concrete Bridges', 'Water Resources Engineering' or 'Construction Site Management & Safety Control'.

During the on-site talks it has become obvious that the list of electives is seen by the Department as a way to gradually modernize the rather general CE curriculum. The list of

Technical Electives has been set up and then gradually expanded from 2013 onwards. Which of the electives are offered in a distinct semester is up to staff availability on the one hand and students' demand on the other. Yet, at least four electives are offered each semester and most of the time, three are then taught with about 30 to 40 students each. Taking up the recommendation for stronger inclusion of infrastructural aspects by experts (*as discussed in section 2.1above*), the Department often tries to offer Electives in construction- as well as infrastructure-related fields, but students mostly opt for construction-related topics, which appears plausible in a country and region with a lot of rebuilding activities after wartimes.

The program also includes a 30 day internship with about 10 days in office and 20 days on-site, to be carried out during a semester break. As addressed during the site visit, this compulsory practical training is not credited and not documented as a part of the curriculum (and course catalogue). Yet, as could be documented, the department applies an elaborate supervision and evaluation of each individual internship, including an ex-ante authorization, a contract, first and second evaluation of the placement by the student as well as the employer and by the Department.

The two last semesters also includes a course 'Supervised Independent Study and Research' (7th semester) and a 'Graduation Project' (8th semester). As described in the course catalogue, a 'Guide for BSc Thesis and Dissertation Studies', and according to the Department's teaching staff, both components are closely interlinked and follows defined steps: First, the student – or generally a group of three to four students – agree with an advisor on a one-year project and then in the first semester regularly develop its outline, including literature review, methodology, analysis etc. and have to present the preliminary results in front of a Department panel. In the second semester, the project and its results are then put into written form and handed in as a document (thesis) of minimum 50 pages by the group.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts conclude that the program, based on worthy general aims and a differentiated and well-documented set of Learning Outcomes, meets the standards and levels of a general Bachelors program in Civil Engineering. It serves its intention to prepare students for the local/regional labor market in building and construction and has a considerable focus on practical components, including laboratory work, on site-visits, group and project work.

The experts specifically commend the intention and spirit of the Department (and its institutional context) to envision – and already partly realize – an increasingly modern and innovative concept of Civil Engineering. The inclusion of legal aspects and topics like safety management or project management is currently done via an extensive list of technical and non-technical electives. It is acceptable that not all electives can be offered in each semester or year and the preferences of the students should be further taken into account.

In interplay with strengthening aspects of technical infrastructure (*see section 2.4 below*), the Department should also consider including or further strengthening the following aspects in the (core or elective) curriculum:

- Considering the use of local and traditional building material (including clay, brick) as

these would not only be useful in conversation projects in the Kurdish region (Erbil citadel etc.) but also might provide innovative approaches to sustainable construction besides the ubiquitous concrete buildings that dominate the built environment.

- Students should also gain fundamental knowledge of climatically adapted construction, life-cycle assessment, maintenance and facility management, as these generate the predominant share of mid- and long-term costs of buildings.
- Rules and regulations of international tendering procedures should be included. In addition, rules for occupational safety should be paid attention to.

Considering the preparation, presentation and documentation graduation project in the seventh and eight semester, the experts conclude that it generally correspond to a final thesis. Yet, they recommend to extend the currently 10 (5 + 5) ECTS credits given to give due weight to this final demonstration and assessment of Civil Engineering competencies, which would also increase the possibility for independent research on a selected topic. The experts have also learned that doing the graduation project in group-work is an educational tradition and of course has considerable benefits as a learning format. Yet, special care should be given that at least the final documentation allows for an assessment of the competence of each individual student for scientific work, which is not possible in the current format. Both measures (more time, individual assessment) might also improve the standards of the 'thesis', which appeared not on the level expected for a Bachelors' thesis in comparable (German) programs. It is also advisable to outline a separate 'course' description for the Graduation Project to be included in the course catalogue for the eighth semester.

It is also recommended to introduce the obligatory and well-supervised internship in the curriculum and credit structure. It might also be advisable to reserve a longer time frame for this (and other) elements of practical experience, including construction sites, as this also meets the needs of future work as portrayed by the – otherwise very satisfied – alumni of the program.

2.3 Teaching Faculty

Ishik University has documented and set out during the site visit encompassing rules and regulations for staff hiring, evaluation and promotion. The hiring procedure begins as in internal process in which applicants for a position are collected by the Human Resource unit and then sent to the respective Faculty which consider the applications and nominate candidates. While before Ishik and other private universities could assign professorships in its own autonomy, the Ministry of Higher Education now appoints proposed candidates. The selection of non-professorial lectures is still done autonomously.

The University has set criteria and obligatory documentations for hiring academic staff. These includes general characteristics like professional competence, academic preparation and 'knowledge of institutional practices', but also has to fulfill set minimum requirements, including holding at least a Masters' degree, a 'pedagogical formation certificate' (issued by a Kurdistan Regional Institution), a minimum verifiable level of English (B2 in the European

Reference Framework) and good computer skills.

For the promotion of academic faculty, an elaborated system of promotion has been documented, based on defined issues that take into account, among others, 'Research Quality Points', 'Profile Points' (based on teaching performance) and other evaluative instruments like class room observation by peers. Respective processes have been defined and documented via the Quality Management unit.

The evaluation cycle of teaching staff also includes a catalogue of consequences in cases of unsatisfactory performance. These include quite rigorous steps if students' evaluations of course and lecturer don't meet a certain level, e.g. warning letters and termination of contract. In addition – an explained during the site visit – Ishik University changes to more competence-enhancing measures like offering didactic trainings.

For the CE program the following staff has been documented and CVs provided:

- 11 full-time academic staff
- 7 part-time academic staff
- 6 technical lab assistants
- 1 secretary
- 5 laboratory supervisors

The CE program is taught by 24 lecturers, including academic staff from other Departments or Universities. The tables of assignment of teaching staff to individual courses demonstrate that four full or assistant professor and six additional holders of a PhD currently teach the program, i.e. ten out of 24 lecturers hold a PhD or higher.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts come to the conclusion that there are a sufficient number of qualified teachers available for a Bachelors' program in Civil Engineering. The hiring and promotional criteria are well documented and provide incentives for further academic development of the present staff.

Overall, the experts come to a very positive conclusion regarding the motivation, excellent language skills and open-mindedness of the teaching staff. This was also reflected by evaluation results and especially by students and alumni during the site visit who mentioned a high level of personal support, availability and academic qualification.

The evaluation of teaching staff is comprehensive, also includes innovative instruments like peer-to-peer classroom evaluation, and sets clear measures for unsatisfactory performances. The experts commend that the rather rigid consequences in such cases are gradually supplement or replaced by more supportive forms to enhance teaching performance.

In regard to the envisioned implementation of a Masters' program the experts point out that a considerable (quantitative) easing of the teaching assignments would be necessary.

2.4 Infrastructure, Resources and Student Support

Infrastructure and Technical Equipment

The Faculty of Engineering and the CE Department are located in a central and new campus building in Erbil. The classroom and laboratory facilities could be visited by the experts. All classrooms are equipped with digital projectors with interconnected computers and some with whiteboards. The Faculty provides computer labs as well as teaching laboratories equipped with e.g. testing machines for concrete cubes and for asphalt cubes, Marshall compactor and hydraulic stimulation apparatus. Some courses can use a laboratory at a public polytechnic university.

The campus houses a central library; however, opening hours and equipment with books and journals was described as just adequate by staff and students alike.

Student Support Structures

Ishik University has established a range of services to support students in academic matters. It includes the above mentioned International Relations Office that supports students in international mobility with information on exchange programs, grants and recognition procedures. A Career Center advises students on career planning and an Alumni Office works on using graduate networks also to advise current students.

The University also regularly organizes competitions and charity projects, e.g. teaching in refugee camps outside of Erbil.

During the on-site talks, students favorably mention the starting phase of the Bachelors' program in CE when staff gave close and collegial advice and established a personal relationship between the incoming students and the University and Department. As main challenges were mentioned: the raising of tuition fees (which could later on be paid in instalments) and the crumbling local building economy due to the economic situation and the war against ISIS.

The institutional rules and regulations of student conduct, examinations etc. are comprehensively made transparent in a Student Handbook that all students receive at the start of their study and that can be downloaded via the website in an updated format each academic year. An online Student Information Systems provides information on curricula, syllabi, grades etc. In addition, Moodle was set up as an online learning platform.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts are impressed by the range and equipment of facilities of the Engineering Faculty/ CE Department. Class rooms are modern and equipped with teaching technology. The laboratories are spacious, clean, provide adequate tools for experimental learning and receive test specimens from construction sites. Competent staff for lab supervision is available. All premises give an orderly, well-kept and clean impression.

However, additional investments in laboratory facilities and equipment will be required when a Masters' program is set up.

The equipment standard of the library could not be assessed during the site visit. However,

feedback from staff and students hint to a need for enlarging the library stocks and widen the opening hours.

Overall, the support and advice of students appears very positive, obviously sustained by an engaged and committed teaching staff and program leadership. This includes extra-curricular social and civil activities of both staff and students.

2.5 Methods of Teaching and Student Assessment

The teaching and learning methods of the CE program are laid down in the course descriptions, often given as a range of different forms like 'lectures, presentations, project, assignment, case study'. As understood by the experts, most classes are given in a seminar format, combining lecturer's presentation, discussions and – if applicable – laboratory sessions. (Some labs combine workbenches and tables to ease the switch between lecture and experimental work.) Occasional site visits or excursions also take place.

Class attendance is checked and may not be below 80 per cent in theoretical and 85 per cent in laboratory courses (cf. Article 17 Student Handbook). Students have to enroll in the courses set for each semester plus courses that have been failed in the previous semester (except Electives). Most courses have individual prerequisites, e.g. 'Water Sources Engineering' can only be taken after completion of 'Fluid Mechanics'. Special rules exist for enrolling in courses ahead of the given semester's progression, including the use of the summer term.

All courses stipulate several examinations, usually a mid-term and a (written) final exam, each accounting for 30 and 40 per cent of the final course grade. In addition, further varied, but marked assignments are set like attendance, quizzes, projects and presentations or laboratory reports. The percentage weight of each is stated in the Coursebook. For each semester a Semester Point Average is calculated and a continuous Grade Point Average is computed during the course of study, relating grades to accomplished (American) credit hours – it can also be improve by taking a course and its exams again. Failed exams can be repeated without any limits; for these make-up exams specific dates are set by the administration. However, an overall number of study years are determined for each program.

The regulations provide for an appeals procedure (cf. Article 27 Student Handbook): A student may submit a petition to the Directorate of Student Affairs; the petition will then be assessed by the respective examination committee and Faculty Board.

During the on-site talks, students and alumni mentioned no structural problems with the overall examination system. The relatively high number of small and larger assessments was rather commented favorably as fostering learning progress. Problems just arose when too many examinations were scheduled for the same day or period – but teaching staff often offered flexible solutions in these cases.

Experts' Appraisal

Based on the information provided by the different stakeholder groups during the site visit, the experts conclude that the Department has implemented a student-centered learning process. There is a notable competence-orientation not only in the Learning Outcomes on program and course level, but obviously implemented in educational practice. The achievement of Learning Outcomes is assessed by a wide variety of forms of examinations, including standard written exams as well as project reports, presentations etc., so supporting a variety of disciplinary and general skills.

The course descriptions and the regulations give clear and transparent information on firms, regulations and procedures for examination. The given overall grading results of graduates in CE from 2013 to 2015 showed a range of GPA between 2.07 and 3.89.[6]

The relatively high number of small and graded assessments together with small courses (two to six ECTS-credits) results in a quite high examination load. While for mid-term and final exams special weeks are assigned, the overall quantity might prove to be a burden, that, on the one hand, is not needed in a competence-oriented understanding of teaching and learning. On the other hand, the experts see the given flexibility and student support in the implementation of teaching and assessment as positive.

2.6 Quality Assurance

General Aspects

With the self-report and during the site visit, Ishik University has provided detailed information on processes, responsibilities and results of its quality assurance system, regarding the University in general and the CE program in particular.

Ishik University has set up a Quality Assurance Committee with members of each department and headed by the Vice President.[7] The committee meets twice a semester and is on the one hand responsible for applying the KRG Ministry's quality assurance rules that comprise

- administrative quality assurance,
- research quality assurance,
- teaching quality assurance.

On the other hand, the Committee develops procedures for internal and external quality assurance processes. In 2013, Ishik University has been successfully audited against ISO 9001:2008 requirements; a first surveillance audit has taken place in May 2016 (report included in self-report). In the course of this audit, Ishik University has set up a Quality (Assurance) Policy, defined and documented about 20 processes, including 'Teaching procedures',

[6] On a GPA scale with 4.0 as highest value, 2.0 would be a 'satisfactory', 3.0 'good' and 4.0 'very good' (German grades: 3, 2, 1).
[7] The organizational charts show instead a Total Quality Management Board. It is not clear (but rather to assume) that both are identical body.

and developed matching forms and regulations. The Quality Assurance Unit is administratively responsible for implementing, supervising and organizing the QA-processes and supplies respective data and results.

Internal Monitoring and Review of CE program

During the site visit, procedures and results of the internal quality management had been discussed intensively, especially on the level of the CE program. It was demonstrated (and documented readily with additional material) that a range of QA-processes are in place for this program, including a general surveys on students' satisfaction, alumni satisfaction and results on benchmarks related to performance criteria. Each course and teacher is evaluated with a questionnaire that includes items on course objectives and their attainment, teaching quality and overall behavior of lecturer, provided resources and materials and student support.

Also significant data on student success rates, grades, and place of employment after graduation were available. In 2015/16 academic year, from 52 graduates of the CE program, 50 completed in nominal time (4 years). Drop-out rates seem rather low, according to information from the Department and students. The evaluation results of general satisfaction survey in the Department showed quite high satisfaction (between 3.1 and 3.82 on a 4-point scale). The highest scores referred to the impartment of basic disciplinary knowledge (mathematics, science, and engineering), students' communication skills and classrooms while the lowest regarded the inclusion of modern engineering tools and contemporary issues in the courses as well as the library.

In addition to these procedural evaluations and monitoring, the leadership and academic staff of the CE Department described a continuous process of reviewing and developing its Bachelors' program. It has more or less started in 2013 with the inclusion of Electives and thus a wider variety of specialized topics in the course of study and is taken up at least once a year in a Department-wide self-evaluation.

Students' representatives are formally included in a variety of University and Faculty processes, but also informally participated and participate in the development of the CE program by direct communication with an open-minded teaching staff.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts have gained a very positive overall impression of the structure and functioning of Ishik University's general quality assurance system as well as on the level of the Civil Engineering Department and program. The whole University obviously conceives quality development as an ongoing process ('journey') and has engaged the Faculties and Departments not only in formal procedures but inspired a strategic and quality-enhancing process that combines bottom-up initiatives and ideas with a more top-down strategic leadership.

The Quality Assurance Unit appears as a pivotal point of quality assurance, including the provision of support, data and ideas.

The certification against ISO 9001:2008 which defines requirements of a quality manage-

ment system has obviously been very helpful in defining procedures, responsibilities and benchmarks on a wide variety of quality-relevant issues. However, with its focus on formal procedures, this certification might have limited impact of the core aspects of higher education quality – all the more the experts strongly appreciate the implementation of communicative, quality-improving routines especially on the Department level. They see a strong will to further development and continuous improvement of the Bachelors' program in Civil Engineering.

2.7 Transparency and Public Information

Ishik University has presented a comprehensive profile of the institution, Faculty of Engineering and especially the CE Department. Some of these official documents – all in English language – are readily accessible via the University's website, some are provided to enrolled students and faculty staff. All documents, forms and regulations are primarily in English language, even if accessed through the Arabic version of Ishik's website.

The Students' Handbook provides detailed information regarding the most important study and assessment regulations (including disciplinary rules/code of conduct), the facilities on campus and extra-curricular activities.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts have gained a positive impression of the public information policy at Ishik University. All enrolled students have sufficient access to the central documents regulating the study process, while prospective students and the general public receive a more limited, but still adequate online information about the institution, Faculties and Departments.

2.8 Summary of the Findings and Appraisal

Ishik University is a modern educational institution in a currently volatile environment with a distinct, well-described profile. The vision and mission of the University, of the Faculty of Engineering and of the Department of Civil Engineering are geared towards a quality-oriented provision of academic programs that take international developments in didactics, discipline and academics into account. While being a private institution, the KRG Ministry still exercises considerable oversight. (For a final assessment of its neutrality in teaching and research the University has to provide information on its political/religious background and possible implications in regard to governance, finance and study programs.)

The adaptation of 'Bologna Standards' (ESG, ECTS etc.) and of an international perspective (English language, student mobility etc.) in the program in Civil Engineering is generally commendable – especially since Iraq/KRG is not a member of the 'Bologna process'. In addition, it is considered favorably that females make up a relative large proportion of CE students and graduates.

The experts assert that the Faculty of Engineering and especially the Department have taken

great strengths to set up and then continuously develop a Civil Engineering Bachelors' program that not only meets the demands of the regional labor market, but increasingly tries to achieve a modern profile. The intention to combine a sound education in Civil Engineering with aspects like sustainable designs, ethical responsibility and international standards is highly supported by the experts. To measure up to these goals, sustainable and innovative fields of Civil Engineering should be proactively strengthened, including a stronger focus on technical infrastructure and planning, but also on issues like climate-sensitive building or local building materials.

The experts conclude that the program is based on a differentiated set of Learning Outcomes and meets the standards and levels of a general Bachelors' program in Civil Engineering. It serves its intention to prepare students for the local/regional labor market in building and construction and includes practical learning components. Yet, the experts recommend a strengthening of independent and partly individual research in the graduation project as well as a stronger integration of practical experience in the curricular structure.

The Department has implemented a student-centered learning process. There is a notable competence-orientation on program and course level that is also implemented in educational practice. The achievement of Learning Outcomes is assessed by a wide variety of forms of examinations. There exists a sufficient number of qualified teaching staff for a Bachelors' program in Civil Engineering. The motivation, excellent language skills and open-mindedness of this staff is remarkable as is the range and equipment of facilities of the Engineering Faculty/ Civil Engineering Department. Overall, the support and advice of students appears very positive, sustained by an engaged and committed teaching staff and program leadership.

The experts have a very positive overall impression of the structure and functioning of Ishik University's general quality assurance system, including the Civil Engineering Department and program. The whole University conceives quality development as an ongoing process and has engaged the Faculties and Departments not only in formal procedures but inspired a strategic and quality-enhancing process. The Quality Assurance Unit appears as a pivotal point of quality assurance, including the provision of support, data and ideas.

The experts support the development of a Masters' program in Civil Engineering at Ishik University, but also see some necessities for that like developing a broader research base, setting up specialized laboratories, putting a stronger emphasis on scientific work already on the Bachelors' level an reduce the teaching load for academic staff.

III. Appendix

1. Statement of the University in Response to the Expert Report, 18 January, 2017

1. Introductory Provisions

The administrative and academic staff of Ishik University highly appreciates the professional evaluation done by the experts panel. Both the University Council and the Board of Civil Engineering Department have thoroughly discussed the content of the experts' report. We really appreciate all the thoughtful comments and recommendations provided, they are greatly being considered in the quality and improvement plans of the department and the university.

2. The Reply to the Precondition

The response to the precondition mentioned in chapter 2.1.1 page I-4 is provided in the document "The Statement regarding the precondition". [see below]

3. Comments on the Contents of the Report

Page II-5: "…*catering to local élites"*

Clarification: The arguments related to economic interest and the elite orientation have been circulated especially since the opening of the Movement schools abroad in early 90s. There are understandable reasons for such reflections as the schools are private institutions and do attract children from upper class segments. Though, neither fact would negate the civil society characteristic of the schools and their inclusive composition. First of all, for many years schools of the Movement outside of Turkey were subsidized by private donations of sponsors. The usual pattern in all of the Hizmet institutions has been that they rely on sponsor support for their initial capital. In many instances it takes no less than few years for the schools to become financially self-sustaining (Helen Rose). It would not make sense for an enterprise with pure profit interests to do that. Secondly, those schools that do make profits always reinvest it into their system for the same altruistic functions such as building new facilities, or launching more scholarships. Along with their fee-paying structure, yet, the schools offer educational opportunities to talented students who come from economically disadvantages backgrounds (Helen Rose). This year (2016) Fezalar Educational Institutions provided approximately 3 million dollars discount or scholarship for the needy students. Moreover, the Halabja Ishik School provides full scholarship to all of its students as a tribute to the memory of those who lost their lives in the chemical attack by the Saddam regime in 1988. The annual cost of this particular scholarship is $ 700,000. Similarly, Hizmet Movement participants operated free Study Centers (Sunday School) in Turkey's Kurdish majority regions that achieved a tremendous rise in university placement ratios in many disadvantaged communities.

Page II-06 : "*The experts commend these initiatives and suggest that students should also been informed about offerings like the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) or the Goethe Institute that both have offices in Erbil*" .

Comment: In this regard, CE department would like to let you know that Ishik University has established an agreement to promote collaboration with AJG Ingenieure Gmbh, Consulting Engineering-Munich, Germany. This agreement is applicable to the following activities:

a) Development of mutually agreed upon collaboration research project.
b) Joint proposals for international funding for research projects.
c) The exchange of research personnel.
d) Academic trips to each country to establish networking between two institutions' scholars, researchers and students.

This opportunity also is announced via the following link.

http://www.ishik.edu.iq/engineering/civil/ettc-ajg-program/

Refer to attachment ST-1. [not included here]

Page II-10 : *"The experts would like to propose a two-tier concept with a shared, compulsory core curriculum in the first semesters, followed by two parallel tracts – 'construction' and 'technical infrastructure' – where students can thoroughly specialize, while at the end receiving the same CE-degree".*

Comment: The CE department strongly agrees about this point, this suggestion will be taken into consideration in the long-term plan of CE program.

Page II-12 : *"Considering the use of local and traditional building material (including clay, brick) as these would not only be useful in conversation projects in the Kurdish region".*

Comment: The use of these traditional building materials is considered in the content of the course "Building Construction". However, CE program will draw more attention to the uses of these materials through including them in the graduation projects plans.

Page II-13: *"Students should also gain fundamental knowledge of climatically adapted construction, life-cycle assessment, maintenance and facility management, as these generate the predominant share of mid- and long-term costs of buildings".*

Comment: The CE department agrees on this point; the department is planning to apply the following in the coming academic year:

1- Provide two elective courses as the following:
    a. Introduction to International Tendering Procedure (in the sixth semester).
    b. Sustainable construction (in the fifth semester).

2- Improve and develop the current courses "Construction Management" by adding the topics and the knowledge of climatically adapted construction, life-cycle assessment, and maintenance and facility management.

Page II-13 : *"Yet, special care should be given that at least the final documentation allows for an assessment of the competence of each individual student for scientific work, which is not possible in the current format".*

Comment: Although CE program is paying attention to the individual assessment through the supervisor's direct assessment and the evaluation panel debates, more special care would be paid regarding the individual assessment through improving the evaluation procedure of the final projects.

Refer to attachment ST-2. [not included here]

Page II-13: *"It is also recommended to introduce the obligatory and well-supervised internship in the curriculum and credit structure".*

Comment: CE Program is subject to the regulations of Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Affairs in Kurdistan Region. So for the time being, it is not possible to include the Internship in the credit structure.

A separate statement regarding the precondition was given by Ishik University on January 18, 2017. It stated the following conclusion:

[...]

Given the historical, philosophical and the methodological foundations of the [Hizmet] Movement that it is affiliated with, Ishik University;

- Reasserts the Expert Panel that its relationship with the Hizmet Movement is based on shared principles and values. A key principle among those is the strong conviction that religion, along with other lifestyle issues, is strictly a matter of personal choice. The same philosophy Ishik University embraces suggests that blending religion into politics or employing one in the service of the other is the greatest injustice against the purity of all faiths.
- Reassures the Panel that the aforementioned affiliation will only strengthen its commitment to be a responsible stakeholder in society and shall never result in any form of influence that bypasses or overrides its legally defined modes and mechanisms of governance.
- Further stresses that, as a business enterprise with shareholders, that its financial structures are equally immune to any sort of influence or abuse that would surely violate ethical, legal and transparency standards.
- Kindly concludes that clarifications above leave no doubt that its Department of Civil

Engineering, like all other departments and units of Ishik University, functions and will continue functioning as an academic entity dedicated to quality education without compromising from professionalism and academic integrity.