

UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, TOULOUSE I FRANCE

First some facts about the University of Social Sciences:

- 19 011 students in 1996, 9 per cent of them from other countries;
- 447.5 teaching posts;
- 259 engineering, administrative, technical, manual and service staff (IATOS);
- 16 research centres;
- a combined surface area of 80 968 m² (University plus the Institute of Political Studies);
- in the past academic year, there have been 45 guest or associate lecturers from other countries and 47 international conferences.

The main subjects on offer are Law, Economic Science, Political Science and Management Science, as well as mathematics, computer science, foreign languages and sociology.

Besides the conventional university courses (the initial two-year DEUG, bachelor and master's, post-graduate studies and doctorates), the university also offers:

- two DEUST courses (university diploma in scientific and technical studies), one in collaboration with the University of Toulouse 3;
- the diploma specific to the Institute of Political Studies (IEP), which is attached to the university;
- the University School of Management (ESUG) diploma;
- one "magister" (a 3-year master's diploma after two years at the university);
- engineering diplomas awarded by three IUPs (vocationalised university institutes);
- courses for the Rodez IUT.

At Toulouse 1, international outreach activities are twofold. The University works in a diversified partnership with several countries in western Europe and north America in the field of education (joint teaching networks and qualifications, exchanges for both teachers and students) and research (joint projects within the EU). It also undertakes development co-operation based on longstanding ties with Tunisia and Morocco, ties extended to the Lebanon and Palestine, and new ties with south-east Asia and Latin America.

1. EVALUATION

The past three years -- 1994, 1995 and 1996 -- have been particularly interesting for the university in terms of evaluation.

- The university was assessed by the CNE (National Committee for Evaluation) (autumn 1993-spring 1994).
- The assessment had just begun when the current President of the University was elected in 1993. The CNE described the changes as follows: “The President has a team of 12 Vice-Presidents and four *Chargés de mission*, plus the Director of the University Information and Guidance Service, all of whom form the Bureau. While the number may seem large, universities actually need to mobilise the greatest possible number of research-teaching fellows willing to devote themselves to administrative and organisational duties both centrally and in the University Training and Research Units (UFR). More importantly, the current rise in the number of officials probably stems from a determination to break with the previous situation and the isolation in which the Executive had found itself” (page 26).

Far from undermining the President’s authority, responsibility-sharing ensures that work is prepared and discussed in such a way as to leave more scope for quality assessment. Defining a policy to combat failure among first-year students, for instance, means accurately measuring failure, selecting appropriate countermeasures and then assessing their impact.

- Over the three years, the University gradually moved into new premises that catered to its more pressing needs but also necessitated a space-management policy. This was another opportunity -- duly seized -- to define an overarching policy and take steps to measure its development and impact.
- Finally, the three years were particularly valuable in terms of institutional evaluation:
 - the University was given an interim endorsement, half way through the first four-year development contract in June 1994;
 - in October 1995 a new development contract was signed for 1995-1998. For the first time this covered all the University’s activities, both in education and research;
 - an interim assessment of research was made in November 1996 at the half-way stage.

Development contracts are an opportunity for the University to refine its policy, and they encourage it to support resource requests with a statement in which it describes its needs but also points out the relevance of its current or future activities. By submitting a serious evaluation of past action or a rationale for discontinuing specific practices, the University clearly strengthens its case when negotiating with the Ministry.

All these internal and external factors have helped to develop quality assessment. The report will describe specific aspects of assessment, which is an integral part of the University’s drive to enhance the quality of education, research and management. There will be more emphasis on features specific to Toulouse 1 and less on schemes such as tutelage, which are common to many French universities.

2. ADMISSION, GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION

Every year the University admits several thousand school-leavers. It is now acknowledged that the problems they experience in settling into academic life and study play a significant role in failure and

dropout. In its latest development contract, the University has accordingly reaffirmed its determination to give genuine priority to receiving and guiding students.

2.1. Tutelage for first-year students

Introduced by the SUIO (university information and guidance service) at the start of the 1995 academic year, this initiative aims to improve the reception of first-year students.

When they register in September and on the open day in October, new students are welcomed by “tutors” (bachelor/master and post-graduate students) who help them to select their seminars and options, assist them in filling out registration forms and provide them with some of the information they need.

The scheme, systematically assessed every year with the findings submitted to the President and Registrar of the University, has proved highly beneficial. It is one way of providing more first-year students with information, and tutelage is fully achieving its goals.

2.2. Open day

The annual Open Day, organised by the SUIO and the Education Service on the eve of the first term, is for first-year students embarking on two-year DEUG courses (who can visit the University and attend information sessions on each type of course). An annual assessment of the event is sent to the President and the Registrar every year.

2.3. Receiving students

In early 1993 a study was launched at the Registrar’s request to take stock of student reception services at the University. It was commissioned from an occupational psychologist, also a lecturer at the University, assisted by students on the specialised diploma course (DESS) in personnel management.

2.3.1. Existing arrangements

Student survey

First a semi-open questionnaire was used to find out how students felt they were received (impersonal processing, inconvenient opening hours, inadequate staffing, compartmentalisation, unsuitable premises). Subsequently, a more precise questionnaire enabled in-depth analysis.

Observation of reception services

A study was made of existing arrangements, based on observation. Satisfaction levels were measured and proposals made by staff (greater co-operation with the SUIO, improving the status of reception duties, etc.).

2.3.2. *New arrangements*

A number of practical proposals were put to reception staff and heads of department (*e.g.* training staff, restructuring reception services, renovating premises, redistributing work). Reactions to these proposals revealed a clash between the wishes of heads of departments and those of reception staff.

Before any solutions were introduced, an in-depth analysis was made of the posts involved:

- the Education Bureau was re-organised, *i.e.* the premises were redecorated, work was redefined and redistributed, opening hours were changed, a display unit was installed to provide students with forms to fill out and leave in a letter-box;
- the Reception Desk in the main hall of the University was re-organised;
- improvements were made to the information network.

The arrangements have proved to be a success, in that reception staff now feel happier with the situation. Unfortunately there has been no follow-up to the remainder of the survey, owing to problems with staff availability at exam times, financial resources and the departure of the person in charge of the survey, who was on a fixed-term contract. Work outstanding includes another survey to assess the situation and the introduction of other arrangements that were part of the original plans.

2.4. Other incoming students

Among the incoming students are a considerable number from the classes preparing for entrance examinations to major business schools, as well as those who have already obtained their DUT or BTS diplomas. The University has been formalising and publishing its entry requirements for each level, particularly for students entering directly into Year 2 of the DEUG, so that the relevant admissions procedures are seamless and transparent.

3. EDUCATION AND TEACHING

The goals here are to combat failure, achieve more consistent and equitable certification, and enhance the quality of teaching.

3.1. Support tutelage (or “library tutors”)

“Library tutors” can be found throughout the year in every university library. They explain to first-year students how the libraries work, show them how to use the reference section and help them with their study methods. The scheme is assessed on the basis of the datasheets completed by the tutors (*e.g.* number of requests, information requested), and the assessment is forwarded to the President and the Registrar.

The University also organises **study method seminars** for first-year students reading Law, Economic and Social Administration (AES) and Economics. These last five weeks and show students how to perfect their study methods regardless of subject (taking notes and using lecture notes, organising study) and act as a foundation course in some subjects, *e.g.* mathematics and statistics or logical

reasoning in AES, formalised micro-economic reasoning in Economics. An assessment will be conducted at the end of the contract.

3.2. Modular system in first-year economics

In academic year 1994-95 the Faculty of Economics decided to introduce a modular system that differs somewhat from the statutory one.

The system is built around three modules in each year of the DEUG course. If a student has validated one or two modules, they are deemed to be permanently acquired.

The objectives are fourfold:

- to reduce the non-completion rate per cohort by dividing up the work and spreading the effort over the year;
- ultimately, to alleviate the examination burden, since the only students obliged to re-sit examinations or take the year again will be those not allowed to proceed to the next year;
- to offer students transferring into or out of Economics the chance to validate their learning and draw up a personal learning plan, while avoiding the inconsistencies of the credits system;
- to give less confident students the chance to spread the two-year DEUG course over three years (or more if the rules permit), by allowing them to validate only some of the modules every year if they so wish.

Since the launch of the scheme, there has been a marked improvement (some 10 percentage points) in the completion rate.

3.3. Examining boards

Since 1995 examination marks have been made available to examining boards prior to deliberation.

Examiners have thus had access to statistical information, *i.e.* for each of the subjects in each group, a breakdown of marks by band and by average and median marks, which enables them to harmonise marking.

Simulated results produced by the educational management software application give the board an overall picture of the examination session.

The application also gives an individual picture of borderline students (those with an overall score only just above or below the minimum requirement).

In spite of some initial reluctance, teaching staff have concluded that access to such information promotes objective, consistent decision-making and does not diminish the powers of the examining board.

Just one day now elapses between the board's deliberations and the results being issued, and the new scheme has also speeded up the scheduling of oral examinations.

Students and teaching staff have considered the experiment successful enough for it to be repeated and extended to all other years and courses.

3.4. A successful study support project: the "ODS" programme

3.4.1. Problems

Observation has shown that some students with no serious mental problems are facing failure or may do so in the future, and have not reacted as they should to the offer of study method courses, tutelage, etc.:

- either because they are aware of the opportunities but fail to take them up;
- or because they derive no benefit from the schemes they join.

Working hypothesis: these students, in temporary difficulties for various reasons, are in a state of personal doubt and uncertainty. This has a paralysing effect which not only undermines their capacity to undertake academic study but also prevents them from making decisions and taking steps to succeed.

3.4.2. Goal

The goal of this project is to ensure that students in this kind of situation but with no personality disorders are given the tools and counselling they need:

- to improve their self-knowledge -- their abilities, capacities and limits.
- to enable them to build on that knowledge and acquire some basic strategies (*e.g.* time management) that will put them on the path to successful study.

Key words: Method - self-management - autonomy

The O.D.S project provides learners with the initial keys to self-management, enabling them to become more autonomous vis-à-vis their own education.

Rather than helping students to master the concepts and analytical tools presented in their university course, the scheme focuses on helping them discover where they stand in relation to their course so that they can manage their own education more autonomously and more effectively.

If they are to derive the full benefits of educational support, they must first discover what “successful study” is.

3.4.3. Study phase

The O.D.S. programme is a voluntary programme open to students encountering temporary academic difficulties who are seeking to regain their self-confidence and know where they stand in relation to their course.

- it is not a career-guidance programme;
- it currently takes the form of one-to-one discussion and a three-day seminar.

a) One-to-one discussion

- to diagnose problems;
- to implement individually tailored strategies.

b) Seminars

Each day is divided into a series of observational tasks focusing on the student's personal learning experience. It comprises written work, followed by experience-sharing and discussion.

The facilitator is present only to help interpret student perceptions of their personal experience.

The three-day seminar, still in the experimental phase, is organised as follows:

Day 1: Observation

- Personal reactions in a learning situation.

Day 2: Energisation

- Personal realities: abilities, capacities, limits.

Day 3: Strategies

- Adjusting to a learning situation
- Organisation: time and space management

The Day 3 session will only benefit students who have already attended Days 1 and 2.

Goal of the study phase: an experimental structure that is flexible -- *i.e.* demand-responsive -- and operates in liaison with the student health service and the SUIO.
It will be followed by an assessment phase, the aim being to put forward a proposal for inclusion in the next four-year plan.

3.4.4. Situation as at 4 November 1996

- creation of a “network” within the student health service and the SUIO;
- functions: discussion group;
 - identifying and guiding potential participants in the programme;

- joint monitoring of students;
- monitoring students on a one-to-one basis and producing a personal appraisal;
- contacts with the University of Paris VI (Jussieu) in connection with its on-going experiment “successful study workshops”;
- participation in the INFO-SANTE (Health Information) working party on stress.

3.5. Course assessment

Only a small number of the University’s courses are currently subject to assessment.

3.5.1. Masters in Management Science (MSG)

Course assessment was introduced in 1992.

Its purpose is to provide academic staff with “feedback” on their teaching, based on student perceptions of the course. These are viewed in terms of the goals set by the staff themselves in terms of skill development and future career requirements. Measuring career relevance is important, given the vocational nature of the course. Students also express a view as to the teaching method used and give the course a general satisfaction rating.

When more than one member of staff is involved, students assess the general coherence of the course and, where appropriate, complementarity between lectures and seminars.

The assessment findings have been broadly satisfactory.

- Student reactions to the more formal components of the course (statistics, econometrics, data-processing, etc.) have enabled staff to give them a more managerial focus.
- Teaching by outside professionals, particularly in Year 2, is highly appreciated.
- Adjustments to ease the timetable and to re-organise teaching stem partly from these assessments.
- By and large teaching staff agree with the procedure and listen to constructive criticism by students.
- 40 to 50 per cent of the students complete the non-compulsory assessment questionnaires.

3.5.2. Proposals for the future

Course assessment has always been anonymous and optional (because it is hard to force students to give their opinions). There are plans to refine it and make it compulsory, asking students to complete the questionnaire at the end of lectures, when they are all present. The reason for putting assessment on a broader, more formal footing in this way is to obtain more meaningful findings.

3.5.3. DESS in Education and Employment System Engineering

This course stems from the observation that the expansion of initial and further education is creating far more interfaces between education and employment systems. The idea is to train people capable of meeting these new needs.

The DESS is primarily a further-education course (two-thirds of all entrants) and includes students on sandwich courses. A modular course, it is interdisciplinary (Economics, Sociology, Management, Law, Education Science) and based on a partnership between the University, the Research Centre, schools of agriculture and the world of work.

This is why the staff in charge of the course have, from the outset, focused on student-led assessment. Some of the further-education students first prepare a University Diploma in Educational Engineering, and their final examinations include one half-day on collective course-assessment. The DESS course also includes a training period where students can put into practice the theory learned on the course. The training period is combined with a construction and support module lasting six half-days to enable students to assess the courses they have attended.

3.6. Decision support system for student admissions

The software application used by the University includes a system handling student admissions.

It currently handles applications:

- for post-graduate admissions:
- from first-time applicants from abroad
- for transfers
- for validation.

For post-graduate admissions, the system:

- records course requests, in order of preference, and the qualifications meeting entry requirements;
- ensures follow-up of places offered (by the head of department), places accepted and waiting lists.

For students not yet enrolled at the university, the system is used to enter administrative information concerning the student (name, date and place of birth, address). Each student is given a file number which will be used to monitor applications and subsequent progress through the university.

For students already enrolled at the university, the system generates a file and records all the marks obtained by the student, to serve as a basis for discussion when examining applications.

Heads of department therefore have at their disposal, along with student application forms:

- a recapitulation of the application, showing the student's order of preference, entry requirements, the decision given after an initial selection and the student's reply;
- information on the student's academic record;

- statistics concerning the number of applications received, places offered and places accepted.

Admission services have at their disposal:

- overall statistics on admissions in terms of:
 - courses requested;
 - order of preference;
 - qualifications meeting entry requirements;
 - places offered to date and offers pending;
 - daily enrolment figures to update waiting lists;
- automatic follow-up: each decision relating to admissions generates a standard letter offering or refusing a place, to notify the applicant;
- systematic checking of pre-requirements: to register on a post-graduate course, the student's application must be recorded and a place offered.

This system has simplified the work of the teaching staff who examine applications and students are now informed more rapidly of the outcome of their application.

4. RELATIONS WITH THE WORLD OF WORK

4.1. Vocationalisation

4.1.1. Vocationalised courses

IUPs and new DESSs have been introduced. These courses include one or more compulsory training periods subject to an assessment that counts towards the final diploma. The Economic and Social Administration course includes a further training period during the 2nd cycle.

Professionals sit on the panels convened to examine or mark the training-period assignments.

One example of a successful partnership with business is the DESS in European Banking and Finance. Created four years ago by the University, this course is recognised by the French Banking Association (AFB).

The review *Espace Universitaire* wrote, in July 1996:

“First a Further Training Council was set up bringing together academics, the regional branch of the AFB, the Crédit Agricole bank and the Banque de France. As an assessment and advisory body, the Council can make changes in course content. The AFB too plays an active role in training, drawing up in November a list of training-course opportunities in the subject areas covered by the DESS. Being more closely targeted, training periods are better suited to the theoretical course work, and some training-course supervisors come and lecture at the University.

The AFB provides new DESS graduates from Toulouse with support and references, not only for banks but for other firms. Encouraged by the banks, firms have realised that the DESS is a good qualification for financial analysis in general, and are showing a lively interest in graduates who are familiar with the banks they use.

The AFB has substantial documentation (in which it has invested FF 225 000 over the past 4 years), available to the banking industry, students and the general public.

The partnership has naturally extended to cover research, and AFB now awards an annual economics prize worth FF 50 000 to a doctorate student completing a thesis or just embarking on a career in teaching and research.”

4.2. Entry into employment

4.2.1. Help for job-seekers

For several years now the SUIO has been holding job-seeker workshops for bachelor/master and post-graduate students. These are intended to help students build a career plan, obtain information on job openings and develop the skills they need to find a job.

In 1995 the SUIO conducted an assessment covering target populations, actual attendance and workshop content, which subsequently led to a complete overhaul of the scheme:

- the duration was doubled to a total of 16 hours (*i.e.* two workshops each comprising two half-day sessions lasting four hours);
- the content was revamped to meet student expectations and labour-market trends (the first workshop focuses on self-appraisal and a career plan, the second on tools, *i.e.* letter, CV and interview). At both workshops, the emphasis is on the importance of practical training courses in building a career plan and preparing to enter the job market;
- the workshops are now held earlier in the year (from November onwards, instead of January as before) and more frequently, by calling on outside speakers;

The President and the Registrar are kept informed of the SUIO’s work and its annual assessment.

4.2.2. Observatory of student life (see below)

This monitoring unit conducts annual surveys on entry into the job market, and the SUIO makes substantial use of the findings.

4.2.3. Post-graduate yearbooks

Six DESS Graduate Yearbooks have already been published jointly by the SUIO and the relevant student associations.

Sent to the President, the Registrar, the Observatory of Student Life, DESS teachers and graduates, they give a good picture of how DESS graduates fare on the job market.

They are also sent to recruitment consultancies and enterprises, thereby helping to promote the University and its courses and attract offers of jobs and practical training courses.

5. RESEARCH

A -The university has three research teams affiliated with the CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research), comprising a combined research unit (*Unité mixte de recherche* or UMR) in economics and two associated research units, one specialising in law and one combining law, economics and management.

Moreover, thirteen research teams that train doctoral students are recognised by the Ministry of National Education.

Over the past two years, the surface area of the premises devoted to research activities has been increased by 86.7 per cent (with the opening up of a new campus site and the renovation of the university's former premises), which has made it possible to expand the use of research facilities by doctoral students (the number of doctorates completed during this period has risen by 23 per cent).

An administrative body (*Délégation à la Recherche*) is responsible for:

- designing and managing a system for monitoring research activities that will provide the information necessary for decision-making (*i.e.* enrolment data: demand for training, inflows, output, doctoral enrolments, doctorates completed; data on resources available to research teams: surface area, staff, contracts, budget, etc.);
- overseeing the financial management of research activities;
- gathering and disseminating information on calls for tenders (research team funding derived from outside contracts has risen by 20 per cent);
- promoting the use of new communications technologies: creation and maintenance of a Web server and E-mail (328 teachers are connected via E-mail).

B -The bulk of the Ministry grant for research is allocated directly to research teams. However, a portion of the grant, known as the Bonus for the Quality of Research (*Bonus Qualité Recherche*, BQR) may be used by the university to fund its own research policy. The Scientific Council recently made the following changes in the rules governing the awarding of the BQR, to improve the assessment procedure:

- working groups must be set up in each academic field to set research priorities and select the projects presented to the Scientific Council;
- all those who receive BQR funds must account for how they are used.

Yearly reports must be filed explaining how these funds were used, and will be used in assessing the university's scientific policy.

C -Among recent initiatives to improve assessment, we should mention that the Scientific Council and those in charge of doctoral programmes have acknowledged the need to be stricter in granting the highest honours (“*mention très honorable avec félicitations*”): they are currently granted in 61 per cent of cases, which is lower than in previous years, and should be brought down to 45 per cent during the coming three years.

Moreover, a survey carried out by the Observatory of Student Life on students who received a doctorate between 1986 and 1995 shows that their job prospects were above average despite difficult economic conditions. The unemployment rate was nil for those who received their doctorate between 1986 and 1990 and was in line with the national average (8.1 per cent) thereafter. In any case, the university has a monitoring unit that follows up the graduate employment of all former students, including those with doctorates.

D -Research has developed considerably in recent years.

In economics, there is a long tradition of team research based on the model of the exact sciences.

Two research centres are recognised by the CNRS. The most important of these is the Group for Research in Mathematical and Quantitative Economics (GREMAQ), which has close ties with an association governed by private law, the Institute for Industrial Economics. This research institution has achieved a worldwide reputation and four of its professors are members of the *Institut Universitaire de France*.

This centre, like others, has been able to expand into some of the new premises that have been made available for research activities. The Economics Library is moving to a location nearby and will be organised so as to meet researchers’ needs (open access via magnetic card, etc.).

In law, professors of the University of Toulouse have a long-standing reputation, but research has traditionally been an individual affair.

Major efforts have just been undertaken to organise this research more effectively. As a result, one research team has become affiliated to the CNRS and research has been strengthened in a number of other centres. These steps seem to have created appropriate conditions for research in law to develop.

As in all French higher education institutions, research is primarily evaluated through external assessment. This assessment is mainly of two kinds:

- Research teams and centres are evaluated by the Ministry of National Education (through the *Direction et Mission de la Recherche*) and by the CNRS for centres recognised by this body. The basic funding of research teams is determined on the basis of this assessment.
- The career progression of the various levels of teaching staff is primarily determined by a body made up of academics, the National Council of Universities, which is divided into different sections covering the various academic fields. The council plays a role in appointments and promotions. Its main selection criteria are an academic’s publications. This individual assessment of research plays an important role.

However, research is also assessed internally. In particular, some contracts with public bodies such as the regional authorities must be approved by the University’s Scientific Council, which provides a

kind of “quality control” of a project presented by one of its research teams. In such cases, the Scientific Council evaluates these projects.

6. PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Given the diversification and growing complexity of administrative tasks and procedures and the new kinds of jobs and skills that have emerged, but also given the lack of resources, especially for technical and administrative staff, since the early 1990s the University has made an effort to implement an innovative internal training system that has now become an essential component of its modernisation policy.

This plan, which takes into account both the expectations of those who receive training and the need for new job skills as defined by various university services, has the two-fold objective of enabling staff to perform a broader range of tasks and of improving their skills. Except for language courses, training is intended for technical and administrative personnel rather than teaching staff.

6.1. Performing a broader range of tasks

In addition to providing some 150 hours of language courses (English and Spanish) at different levels for over 80 people (technical, administrative and teaching staff), the internal training plan has focused on ensuring that technical and administrative staff are more fully informed about the functioning of the university, and also its local environment. The purpose is to enable staff to carry out a broader range of tasks more independently by giving them a fuller understanding of how higher education works within the national education system.

6.2. Improving staff skills

Since public services can only be transformed if all their staff acquire the necessary new job skills, a special effort has been made to provide all relevant staff with computer training in order to ensure that services are managed more efficiently; the training programmes offered include introductory and advanced courses in word processing, use of spreadsheets, new software such as CAP or advanced programming techniques for the computing management centre.

The initial results obtained suggest that this innovative plan should be stepped up over the next few years, since it has enabled some staff members to be promoted to jobs for which they would previously not have been qualified, for example, because they lacked adequate foreign language training.

More often, this training made it possible to redefine staff members’ duties, so that they can carry out a more complex set of administrative tasks more independently.

Other staff members were able to contribute to defining the specifications for computer equipment adapted to their services’ needs, and even to take part in creating specific tools such as software for managing the use of classrooms or student enrolments.

On a more basic level, these training programmes have created new ties of solidarity among staff members, who have come to know each other better and to understand more fully how other services worked, or have simply become aware of the need for co-operation and synergies.

Lastly, this programme has led some staff members to pursue a more ambitious goal by enrolling in training programmes preparing them to sit for internal and external competitive examinations for various National Education posts. The results achieved show the effectiveness of the University's training plan:

Year	Successful candidates in internal or external competitive examinations
1992	4
1993	5
1994	12
1995	6
1996	17

In all, there have been 44 successful candidates over the past five years.

7. EVALUATION AND DECISION-MAKING TOOLS

Every university needs information to manage its resources, define its policies and evaluate its outcomes. The Ministry is well aware of this problem and helps universities to acquire the tools they need to gather and analyse the information they require. Two projects implemented by the University of Social Sciences are presented below.

7.1. The observatory of student life: an assessment and planning tool for university policy

Created as part of the University's four-year development contract (1992), the Observatory of Student Life (*Observatoire de la Vie Etudiante* or OVE), which is one of the first of its kind, was designed as a decision-making and information-gathering tool. OVE, which has been operational for nearly three years, has a director and two full-time employees, a research assistant (a "*chargée d'études*" on secondment) and a research technician. Depending on the study being carried out, additional staff may be hired on temporary contracts.

The Observatory carries out research and analysis in three fields:

- students' academic life;
- students' social life;
- students' occupational life.

"**Academic life**" covers the processes of student guidance and counselling, students' progress through the university and "internal performance": completion rates, attrition rates, drop-out rates,

etc., and the numbers and performance of students who continue in higher education after completing a cycle.

“**Social life**” covers student life patterns: housing, leisure activities, transport, working conditions, etc. This field of investigation, which is being surveyed in co-operation with the Regional Student Welfare Centre (CROUS), has not yet been studied directly at UT1. (However, UT1’s Observatory did participate in the national survey organised by the National Observatory of Student Life on students’ living and working conditions).

“**Occupational life**” covers graduate employment: how graduates find jobs, what categories of jobs, geographical mobility, sectors of employment, etc.

Within the University of Social Sciences, the University Information and Guidance Service (SUIO) is a close partner of the Observatory. SIOU in turn uses the Observatory’s work, which helps it in its job counselling and student information and guidance activities; it also organises roundtables to discuss the findings of the Observatory’s studies both with guidance counsellors and with those in charge of the various academic programmes.

The Observatory, which receives technical advice from LIRHE (Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Human Resources and Employment, a research team affiliated to the CNRS), helps shape educational policy at different levels:

- **The local level:** it helps develop the university’s education and research contract. It does so mainly by co-operating with university services and with those in charge of academic programmes.

Within the university, in carrying out these studies the Observatory co-operates (focus and methodology of studies) with the specialised research laboratories in these fields, in particular with LIRHE and CIRESS (Interdisciplinary Centre for Research on Social Systems), with the CEREQ Centre (Centre for Studies and Research on Skills) and with the teaching staff of the programme leading to the Diploma of Specialised Higher Studies (DESS) in “training and employment systems engineering”.

- **The regional level:** this is the level at which partnerships are formed, first and foremost with the other universities located in Toulouse, *i.e.* the University of Arts and Human Sciences and the Scientific University. This partnership involves regular working meetings in which methodologies and findings are compared and common approaches are proposed to the Ministry and to regional partners. The Observatory is a partner with other regional actors, such as the Rectorate (which supervises all Toulouse universities, which comprise the Toulouse “academy”), INSEE (the National Office for Statistics) and the regional and local authorities, through its participation in the work of CRIES (Regional Committee for Statistical Information and Studies) chaired by the Director of INSEE. A recent example of a regional partnership was a co-operation project between all Toulouse universities and ONISEP (National Bureau of Information on Education and Occupations) and SAIO (Academy Information and Guidance Service) in which regular seminars for guidance counsellors were held on topics studied by the Observatory.

- **The national level:** a partnership is being organised between the other university observatories, CEREQ, the General Directorate for Higher Education and the National Observatory of Student Life. UT1's Observatory is regularly asked to share its expertise with other universities that wish to set up a similar body -- recently, for instance, the universities of Aix-Marseille II and Paris V and INSA (National Higher Institute for Agronomy).

7.2. Management of teacher's services and the information system on teaching

7.2.1. Management of teacher's services

Since the 1984-1985 academic year the University has had computerised management of the services provided by teaching staff, which later made it possible to set up the information system on teaching (1989). The system of managing teacher's services¹ makes it possible to monitor with great accuracy the teaching services provided by tenured staff (427) and outside instructors (1 714). This system is based on information recorded on the smallest instructional unit in which the hours were taught and the subject matter and type of course taught (lecture or seminar) in a given year of a specific cycle leading to a national diploma or to a level equivalent to a university diploma.

Information is gathered by the enrolment services at the beginning of the academic year (lecture courses are assigned to teaching staff in June) when seminars are assigned once student enrolments are known after final enrolments have closed. The lectures and seminars assigned (some 3 399 in all) comprise the different courses taught (1 835) in all programmes leading to national diplomas (82) and university diplomas (31).

Teaching services are automatically broken down into hours taught as part of the teacher's regular teaching load and overtime hours according to the diploma programme in which they are taught (national or university diplomas), the cycle and year in the cycle (in ascending order), taking into account the different required teaching loads of various categories of teachers. This makes it possible to classify overtime hours using the same criteria as previously and to pay them subsequently in instalments.

The software used generates information that raises the productivity of the administrative staff involved and provides fuller information to teaching staff, such as a record of their teaching services sent to teachers, a register of all teaching staff, whatever their status, listing all the lecture courses or seminars they teach, and electoral rolls for each training and research unit (UFR), all of which saves a great deal of time and makes information considerably more reliable.

7.2.2. The information system on teaching

An automatic monitoring system (180 p.) makes it possible to compare the use of available teaching services with expenditure on teaching (the equivalent of 124 894 hours of seminars).

Teaching expenditures are broken down for the various training and research units, cycles and programmes, distinguishing between hours taught as part of a regular teaching load and overtime and

1. These figures are for the 1996-1997 academic year.

between teachers' status (tenured or outside staff), the category and rank of tenured staff and the sections of the National Council of Universities (CNU) to which they belong. This makes it possible to evaluate what percentage of teaching needs in a given field can be met by the tenured teaching staff of each section of the CNU. This percentage is calculated for each cycle, year of cycle, programme and training and research unit to identify where needs are most pressing. It is supplemented by breaking down teachers' services by the CNU division and section to which they belong and forecasting expected attrition due to retirement over the coming 10 years.

Data showing the balance between appropriations granted and expenditures clearly show any deficits or surpluses in programmes, cycles and training or research units.

8. ASSESSMENT BY THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EVALUATION

Before concluding, let us return to the main recommendations of the National Committee for Evaluation (CNE) and see how the University responded to them.

- The functioning of the statutory councils. In the period preceding the evaluation, the two councils fairly often met in a joint session. This somewhat unorthodox practice was eliminated and each council now meets more frequently.
- Management of teachers' services and teacher overtime is now well monitored and each training and research unit is now responsible for paying any hours over and above the amount it has been allocated.
- Continuing training has been reorganised. The central service manages contracts, but the training and research units are responsible for the actual training programmes. The units find training providers and organise the relevant training.
- CNE recommended that the computer science teaching and research unit develop projects integrating its curriculum with that of other teaching and research units. This has now been done since two diplomas of specialised higher studies (DESS) have been created, one in computer science applied to law and the other in computer science applied to economics.
- CNE wondered about the role of departments, which have no real administrative status. Two departments have subsequently been eliminated.
- In the field of libraries and documentation, the university created, in accordance with the national regulations, a Common Documentation Service (SCD). As its name indicates, it is responsible for co-ordinating the University's overall documentation and library policy.
- Organisation of research. The main effort had to focus on law, and this has been the case.

All things considered, assessment by the CNE was useful to the university, and in particular supported the policy choices proposed by the new president, who was elected while the assessment was in progress.

9. CONCLUSION

Quality assessment as a tool for University policy is becoming an important objective, which is explicitly referred to by the administrators of the University of Toulouse 1.

This assessment will continue to reflect the specific characteristics of the University, which are as follows:

- teaching and research are highly concentrated in a small number of major fields: law, economics, management, political science and computer science applied to management;
- the University comprises a small number of highly independent components -- faculties, the Institute for Political Studies and the Higher School for Management;
- administratively, it is highly centralised.

Given these characteristics, quality assessment is the outcome of a process of interaction between these components and the University administration. The components have broad autonomy in the fields of teaching and pedagogy and carry out most of the quality assessment. There may be differences from one component or programme to another. At present, the President of the University does not seem to be in a position to impose a uniform quality assessment policy on the components, and perhaps this is not desirable.

On the other hand, the President and his team can develop the quality assessment tools that will be beneficial to all concerned and can rely on certain components or units within components to promote innovations that will hopefully set an example and be adopted throughout the university.

What is more, the University administration plays a key role in negotiations with the Ministry, and this is an effective means of promoting initiatives aimed at improving quality through quality assessment, whatever their origin.

The University is well aware of the role that quality assessment can play in the preparation, implementation and even the assessment of its policies. The Ministry of National Education has recently encouraged universities to reflect on their long-term strategy (ten years). It is clear that one of the key aspects of this strategy should be the issue of quality.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

To facilitate the use of this document, this supplementary note presents our main findings in terms of the analytical matrix provided in the OECD-IMHE note on the preparation of case studies, which distinguishes between “channels” and “areas” of change.

University administration

The central government lays down the general framework of the organisation of universities. However, universities retain considerable autonomy in this regard. The organisation of their system of governance is largely determined through internal self-evaluation. For example, in the case of the University of Social Sciences, the election of a new president in November 1993 provided an opportunity to reorganise managerial responsibilities. Consequently, the channel of change is participation and consensus.

Resource allocation

The bulk of financial resources are supplied by the central government via complex procedures. Some of these resources are earmarked (for example, to research teams), while the rest are in the form of a block grant that the University can to some extent allocate at its discretion. However, most expenditures are preordained: maintenance, heating and payment of teachers (overtime). As a result, the three channels of change are used: policy intervention plays an important role in the negotiations conducted by the president of the university to obtain resources; the participation and consensus of the statutory councils and of components also play a role in resource allocation; and lastly, status allotment in the wake of the periodic assessments of academic programmes and research teams is also a factor that influences resource allocation.

Teaching and learning

The section of the report devoted to teaching and pedagogy shows clearly the interdependence of external assessment and self-evaluation, policy intervention and participation of the institution: for example, both tutelage and the organisation of modular programmes in the first cycle are the result of local initiatives promoted (financially) by the public authorities. When these kinds of practices become sufficiently widespread, the public authorities tend to extend them throughout the system, but universities retain a certain autonomy.

Research

We have seen that research is primarily evaluated through external assessment. However, we must emphasise the importance of “status allotment”: in economics, for example, the University of Social Sciences has one very large research centre that created a special body, the Institute for Industrial Economics, which is funded through government grants and contracts from major firms. It is obvious that this kind of institution’s survival is based on its reputation and its ability to maintain it.

Students

In the French system, the general first-cycle programmes are open to all students who have received their *baccalauréat*, and the university may not set additional admission standards. In the second cycle *i.e.* for bachelor and master's studies, the university controls admission into the vocationally oriented programmes. This is also true at the post-graduate level.

In practice, however, the situation is not so simple. For example, the University has a well-established reputation in economics, and the first-cycle courses are considered very difficult, which has discouraged some students who think they would be demanding. However, this reputation has been a positive argument in negotiating agreements with *lycées* that have post-*baccalauréat* classes preparing students for *grandes écoles* specialising in management. These agreements make it possible to admit some high-quality students in a specially tailored course of study.

At post-graduate level, the reputation of certain programmes attracts students from other French universities. Lastly, the mechanism of self-evaluation through consensus sometimes leads to the elimination of programmes in which too few students are interested. Furthermore, in the section on guidance and information and in the section on pedagogy, the report shows how the University tries to meet student needs.

Staff

The report shows what is being done for technical and administrative staff. This mainly involves self-evaluation and the channel "participation and consensus". As regards teaching staff, in the section on research we have seen that assessment was primarily external. However, the University still has primary responsibility for the recruitment of teachers and senior lecturers. It would be difficult for the Ministry to force it to hire someone against its will, although the University may only recruit teachers who have been approved by national bodies, in particular by the National Council of Universities.

Recruitment policy is set primarily by the individual fields, such as private law, public law, economics, management, etc., rather than by the components themselves, *i.e.* the law faculty, economics faculty, etc. This policy is obviously of decisive importance for the future of the field in question and the University itself. The University as a whole has not, for the time being, adopted binding rules regarding qualitative recruitment criteria.

Buildings and equipment

The search for quality regarding buildings and facilities is carried out through the channel of **external assessment**.

An inspection agency, which is not part of the university, is asked to appraise all renovation or construction projects.

The building safety board of the city or the *département*, depending on the building's size and capacity, then makes recommendations and may, if it thinks that the building does not meet safety standards, refuse to grant authorisation to use the premises.

In this context, following visits by safety board inspectors, since 1995 the University has undertaken a four-year plan of work to ensure the safety of buildings and equipment; this work is being funded partly by the Ministry, but the University is also providing over FF 8 million in funding from its own resources.

Legislation also provides for **internal assessment** through the **Health and Safety Committee** that all institutions must set up and the health and safety engineer advising the university president. This staff member, who is responsible for enforcing health and safety standards, must normally have separate status from the staff responsible for the management and maintenance of buildings and facilities.

LIST OF ACRONYMS USED:

- AES: *Administration économique et sociale* (Social and Economic Administration).
- AFB: Association française des banques (French Banking Association).
- BQR: Bonus Qualité Recherche (Bonus for the Quality of Research).
- BTS: Brevet de technicien supérieur (Advanced Technician's Diploma).
- CEREQ: Centre d'études et de recherche sur les qualifications (Centre for Studies and Research on Skills).
- CIRESS: Centre interdisciplinaire de recherche sur les systèmes sociaux (Interdisciplinary Centre for Research on Social Systems).
- CNE: Comité National d'Evaluation (National Committee for Evaluation).
- CNRS: Centre national de la recherche scientifique (National Centre for Scientific Research).
- CNU: Conseil national des universités (National Council of Universities).
- CRIES: Comité régional d'information et d'études statistiques (Regional Committee for Statistical Information and Studies).
- DESS: Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées (Diploma of Specialised Higher Studies).
- DEUG: Diplôme d'études universitaires générales (Diploma of General University Studies)
- DUT: Diplôme universitaire de technologie (University Diploma of Technology).
- ESUG: Ecole supérieure universitaire de gestion (University School of Management).
- GREMAQ: Groupe de recherche en économie mathématique et quantitative (Group for Research in Mathematical and Quantitative Economics)
- IATOS: Personnels ingénieurs, administratifs, techniques, ouvriers et de service (engineering, administrative, technical, manual and service staff).

- INSA: Institut national supérieur d'agronomie (National Higher Institute for Agronomy).
- IEP: Institut d'études politiques (Institute of Political Studies).
- INSEE: Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies).
- IUP: Institut universitaire professionnalisé (vocationally oriented university institute)
- IUT: Institut universitaire de technologie (university institute of technology).
- LIRHE: Laboratoire interdisciplinaire ressources humaines et emploi (Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Human Resources and Employment).
- MSG: Maîtrise de sciences de gestion (Masters in Management Science).
- ODS: Observation, dynamisation, stratégies (Observation, energisation and strategies).
- ONISEP: Office National d'information sur les études et les occupations (National Bureau of Information on Education and Occupations).
- OVE: Observatoire de la Vie Etudiante (Observatory of Student Life).
- SAIO: Service académique d'information et d'orientation (Academy Information and Guidance Service).
- SUIO: Service universitaire d'information et d'orientation (University Information and Guidance Service)
- TD: travaux dirigés (seminar).
- UFR: unité de formation et de recherche (training and research unit).
- UMR: unité mixte de recherche (combined research unit).
- UTI: Université Toulouse 1 (University of Toulouse 1).