

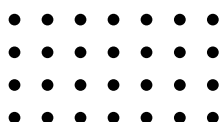


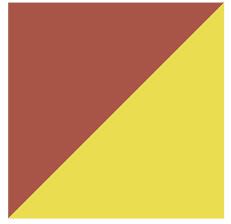
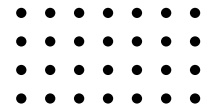
Hólar University



May
2026

Annual quality report





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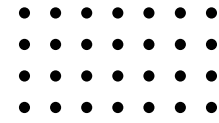
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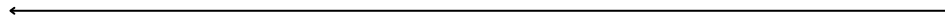
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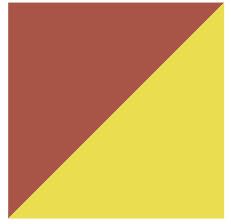
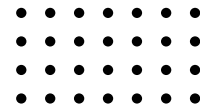


Introduction



The report discusses current developments and progress on areas for improvement based on previous institution wide review (IWR) as well as internal quality assurance reviews in the 2025-2026 school year and plan for internal monitoring and reviews in the coming school year.



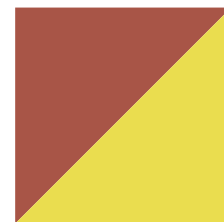
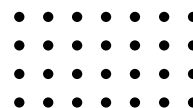


Current developments

Currently, a university system with University of Iceland and University of Hólar is being prepared. For this, the possibility to create a university system will need to be added to the law of public universities no.85/2008. A bill proposal is currently under discussion in parliament. It is proposed that the university system will begin operations on July 1st, 2026.



Hólar University and University of Iceland are working on preparations for implementation of the university system. The project plan includes work packages on governance and quality, finance and housing, infrastructure, human resources, teaching and learning, marketing and communications, research and innovation, and IT. Specialists from both universities participate in the working groups for each work package in addition to temporarily hired experts. A steering group oversees the project, and four members of the steering group make up an executive group that meets each week. Workdays with members of all the groups has met twice during the schoolyear to coordinate and discuss their work. A workshop with staff of Hólar University and the research centres of University of Iceland was conducted in October, led by the steering group for the university system implementation. Two workshops with staff and students have been conducted at Hólar by the group working on marketing and communications.

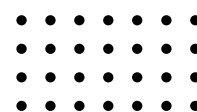


Progress has been made on work towards improved facilities for teaching and research. A memo from the Ministry of culture, innovation and higher education to the parliament committee of judicial affairs and education in connection with handling of a bill to amend the act on public universities (university system), states that the purchase of Brúnastaðir stable is in process within the ministry. Also, that finances for infrastructure and operations of facilities for teaching and research for the aquaculture and fish biology department is secured, and that the government financial plan includes funding for facilities for research and teaching at the area for equine studies.

Hólar University is currently working in collaboration with University of Iceland on a strategic plan for Hólar as a specialized rural university within the proposed university system. The timing of the different steps is arranged so that they follow slightly after the corresponding steps at the University of Iceland, allowing the strategy to align with the UI strategy. Strategy workshops have taken place with staff and with students.

A quality committee was established at Hólar University in the fall 2024. The committee has focused on approaches to internal monitoring and revision of the quality management system. The quality policy was revised in 2025-2026 with a description of the quality management system. As Hólar University is preparing to merge into a university system with University of Iceland, the quality management system is designed in a way that it can work as a unit within a larger institution, and so that it aligns with the quality management system of University of Iceland. For internal monitoring, a quality survey has been designed and conducted, focus groups with students from all study programs have been implemented, and approach to annual monitoring of academic departments has been developed.

Progress on recommendations from the previous IWR



Recommendations from QEF2 IWR

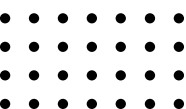
Progress and status

<p>1. The level of formality in the day-to-day running of departments and the university as well as in the institutional oversight of compliance with regulations and follow-up of action plans.</p>	<p>Structural changes were made following the IWR in QEF2 with an emphasis on hiring specialists for new roles within support services who have been able to develop procedures. There is still work to be done in documenting procedures in some areas and adding them to the quality manual. A quality committee was formed to oversee compliance with regulations and follow-up of action plans. The committee will also review and implement procedures of the University system with University of Iceland where applicable. Status: In progress, significant steps taken Responsibility: The quality committee</p>
<p>2. Improved formal connection and definition of the department of academic affairs and the department of graduate studies within important structures and decision-making processes at the institutional level.</p>	<p>The divisions of research, academic affairs and graduate studies were merged into one division of research, innovation and academic affairs in structural changes in 2021. The CEO has had oversight of the division and has been a part of the management team. The committees for academic affairs and for graduate studies are both chaired by the head of academic affairs, and coordination is ensured through monthly meetings. The quality committee meets bi-weekly and includes the head of academic affairs and the research manager. Status: Closed</p>
<p>3. Enhancing institutional infrastructure to relieve the heavy administrative and student support load on departments and individual staff.</p>	<p>Roles within central administration have been established to enhance institutional infrastructure and relieve some of the administrative and student support load on departments. Going into the university system will significantly enhance support for students and staff. When the university system will be formed, our students will have full access to the student services of the University of Iceland. Status: In progress, will be enhanced with implementation of the university system. Responsibility: The management team</p>

Recommendations from QEF2 IWR

Progress and status

<p>4. The possible benefits of including the head of the division of graduate studies on the research committee to ensure that research is appropriately considered in the development of graduate curricula.</p>	<p>The division of graduate studies and academic affairs was merged with the division of research in structural changes in 2021. The responsibility of curriculum development is with the academic departments. The research committee and the committee for graduate studies have representatives from all departments, so there is good connection between the committees and the departments. The quality committee connects all key managers, such as the department heads, the research manager and the head of academic affairs.</p> <p>Status: Closed</p>
<p>5. The development and utilization of a full range of key performance indicators related to student satisfaction and student learning experience more broadly.</p>	<p>Key performance indicators on student satisfaction and learning experience have not yet been implemented at the institutional level. These variables are monitored in the quality survey and considered in internal reviews. A new strategy for Hólar University is being formed, and key performance indicators will be established to monitor the strategy.</p> <p>Status: In progress, will be completed when the new strategic plan will be formed</p> <p>Responsibility: The management team</p>
<p>6. Taking deliberate steps to capture the full student voice across cohorts and departments, as well as finding formal and informal ways to bring the student body more closely together.</p>	<p>Enhancing student engagement is an ongoing task of the university. The departments have very different student profiles, and most students are distance learners, which makes student engagement a challenge. Student representation is integrated into the management structures of Hólar University and students are provided with ways to provide feedback, for example with focus groups and workshops.</p> <p>Status: In progress, steps taken.</p> <p>Responsibility: The management team</p>
<p>7. The lack of consistent understanding and practice across those interviewed on how to refer students issues safely and in a confidential but documented manner, e.g., student support or misconduct.</p>	<p>This remains an issue. There are rules for student issues regarding assessment, but not in other areas. When Hólar University will be a part of the university system, University of Iceland's rules (nr. 569/2009 article 50) on student complaints will apply to Hólar University. Creating a consistent understanding of the rules remains a task for management.</p> <p>Status: In progress. Will be finalized as part of implementation of university system</p> <p>Responsibility: The management team</p>

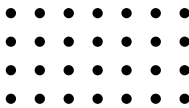


**Recommendations
from QEF2 IWR**

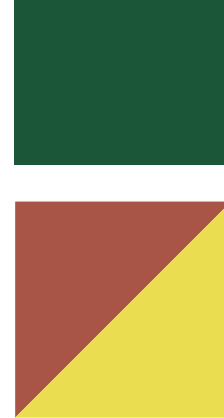
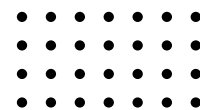
Progress and status

<p>8. A need to better market the brand of Hólar University and to further raise its profile nationally, with an emphasis on the impact of its current research and teaching.</p>	<p>A marketing firm was hired for rebranding, creation of marketing material and for marketing campaign in 2023, and since then material has been updated as needed. Hólar University shares stories of the impact of research and teaching on the website and social media platforms. However, there could be a more systematic approach to collecting information and analysing and sharing the impact of research and teaching in collaboration with departments. As part of preparation for the University system, the University of Iceland has led work on branding. The division of communications and marketing at University of Iceland will manage the marketing of Hólar University within the University system, while there will be a position at Hólar dedicated to marketing. Status: Significant steps taken, will be further enhanced with implementation of university system. Responsibility: The management team</p>
<p>9. The levels of interdisciplinarity in Hólar's research and teaching.</p>	<p>There has been significant emphasis at Hólar University on seeking research funding and participating in collaborative projects. Project funding is on the agenda of the management team meetings every week. Multiple projects are ongoing, in collaborative and interdisciplinary research and teaching. Status: Closed</p>
<p>10. A need to increase the use of strategic data in the day-to-day running of the University, for example through regularly updated dashboarding.</p>	<p>There have been efforts to increase the use of strategic data, but this remains an area for improvement. In relation to the work on a new strategy, key performance indicators will be defined, and the relevant data will be monitored. Data dashboarding will be implemented as part of the university system. Status: In progress, part of implementation of university system. Responsibility: The management team</p>

<p>11. Strengthening the current capacity for blended learning development and ICT support to benefit both students and staff, and to facilitate future curriculum development.</p>	<p>Developments in ICT support for blended learning since the last IWR include the implementation of the Inspera examination system, Microsoft office programs and Canvas LMS. The university system will provide Hólar University with enhanced resources for ICT and pedagogical support for blended learning f.e. with access to the services of the UI teaching centre.</p> <p>Status: Significant steps taken, will be further improved with implementation of university system.</p> <p>Responsibility: The management team</p>
<p>12. Creating more practical support for research, exemplified by the staff sabbatical process.</p>	<p>The research manager provides researchers with support for research funding, finding resources and information. When the University system will be established all the services and funds will be available to researchers at HU like subscriptions to journals and grant writing. Examples of practical support is assistance with grant-writing and data management.</p> <p>Status: Steps taken. will be further improved with implementation of university system</p> <p>Responsibility: The management team</p>



Internal monitoring and reviews completed since the last annual quality dialogue



Internal monitoring in the past 12 months included an annual quality survey, focus groups with students from all study programs, review of support services and annual monitoring of departments.

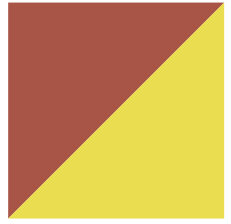
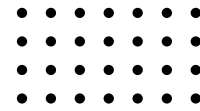
The annual quality survey for students was conducted for the second time in April 2026. The survey collects student views on satisfaction, learning experience, organization of teaching and programs, support services and information / communication. The results from 2025 suggested that improvements are needed in organization of teaching. The teaching office has been working on improvements in collaboration with departments. Results for the 2026 survey are still being analysed but preliminary analysis shows increased satisfaction since last year, but there is still work to be done in some areas.

A major initiative since the last quality dialogue is conducting focus groups with students from every study program. In the focus groups, students get an opportunity to provide feedback on their studies and the learning and teaching environment. The focus groups have been helpful to gather student feedback and will be a part of ongoing monitoring every year.

A review was done on support services at Hólar University as part of the preparation for the implementation of a university system. The review included a survey sent to students on their preferences regarding student services for Hólar University students within the University system. In addition, an overview was made on current services of both Hólar University and University of Iceland to evaluate which changes would be made and implemented.

Other feedback from students and staff is also part of the review, such as from strategy workshops, and surveys made by external parties, such as the surveys of the public universities and the “institution of the year” survey.

Departments are currently finalizing their first annual monitoring reports, which are due in June. The process has been under development and includes evaluation of study programs, teaching and learning, human resources and research. Departments use statistical data, results from the quality survey and focus groups, and other feedback from students and staff as input.



Internal reviews planned for the next 12 months

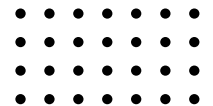
Departments perform annual monitoring of departments and study programs. Ongoing monitoring activities follow an operational calendar for internal monitoring. Activities include extracting key statistical data, conducting focus groups, the quality survey and other surveys. A review are on research management is planned in the 2026-2027 schoolyear.





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