

IOB Self-evaluation 2024 report

May 2024

Evaluation of management agreement 2021-2025

Institute for Development Policy and Control

University of Antwerp



Universiteit Antwerpen
IOB | Instituut voor
Ontwikkelingsbeleid en -beheer

Terms of reference for evaluation implementation of IOB management agreement – 2024 Self-evaluation

About the template

This document is a model of self-evaluation that should allow the evaluation committee to examine in a structured manner how the IOB has implemented the provisions of the management agreement. The questions listed for the various items are not normative. It is certainly not my intention to answer these questions punctually, they have been added as an illustration.

When completing this self-evaluation, it is important that you determine how strongly a particular topic is integrated into the operation of the IOB.

Provide a short description for each topic. Refer to the necessary documentation where this is supported. Where necessary, indicate who can provide explanations about this during the visit evaluation committee.

If there are points in this self-evaluation that have recently been discussed in other evaluations, visitations, etc., it is sufficient to refer to them and attach the necessary documents.

This self-evaluation does not preclude you from providing a general descriptive evaluation in addition to this document. Where necessary, you can also refer to the correct pages from that descriptive evaluation in the present document.

When drawing up this document, the management agreement was completed from A to Z and the items are therefore discussed in that order. For the quality assurance component, we would like to ask you to bundle the answers under point 2. *Policy plan and quality assurance*. In addition to the items discussed in the management agreement, we have added a point 3, in which we inquire into *personnel policy*, and a point 4 about the *management of the institute*.

Documents

All relevant documents were collected in a [folder on the internal UAntwerp network Pintra](#).

The members of the audit committee will receive an invitation by e-mail to gain access to this folder. Where possible, direct links were made to the documents discussed.

1. CORE MISSIONS OF THE IOB

In the context of this agreement, the core mission of the IOB is considered to be: to provide post-initial education, to conduct scientific research and to provide scientific services in the economic, political and social aspects of development policy and management, including of the preparation of doctoral dissertations with a view to obtaining the academic degree of doctor at a Flemish or foreign university. (BO, 2.1.)

1.0 REVIEW

For the section 'Core mission of the IOB', provide a review of the period of the current management agreement. Also indicate here what happened to the recommendations of the previous evaluation as far as they relate to this section.

To implement the [Policy Plan 2021-25 from the Institute for Development Policy and Management \(IOB\)](#) and the [discussions on addressing the larger institutional challenges mentioned therein](#) (and which were also the subject of [the committee's concrete recommendations](#)), [to provide stronger organizational guidance](#), a broad internal overarching process of consultation on this matter was initiated as soon as possible after the lifting of the COVID restrictions, the **DNA process**, supervised by a DNA Task Force, which is still ongoing (details in section 4.4) .

For the core task of '**education**', thorough work was done on the [recommendation to respond to the rapidly changing world and international trends within development and international cooperation](#).

- For example, we have very actively focused on 'multi-perspectivity' and the 'decolonization' of our master's programs, during our **IOB DNA days in Alden Biesen** and other reflection days (and education policy days) in collaboration with, among others, Hummus Deep Democracy (Fanny Matheusen).
- The "IOB Going Global" program was **positively evaluated** and followed up by the **ICP Connect program** (VLIR financing 2022-2027), which allowed for deepening and expanding cooperation with our South partners and our alumni. In this way, we continue to build an IOB that is embedded in a South partners network where education is jointly designed and offered. In this way we also guarantee a close connection with outreach and research.
- The processes used were also positively evaluated in the recent **Education Peer Review (2023)**.

Links to education documents:

- [Alden Biesen Report 2022](#)
- Mid-term evaluatierapporten Going Global: [GOV, DEM, GLOB](#)
- [Self-evaluation report IOB education 2023](#) and [Report peer review team IOB education 2023](#)

During the past period, the IOB also worked on the expansion of its **PhD training**, with additional quality control and co-organization of a basic course for doctoral students in Development Studies ("[Flagship Course: The CERES PhD Training](#)"). [in the context of CERES, the Dutch-Flemish Research School for International Development](#).

An **updated "Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29"** was developed for the core mission '**research**'. developed, partly based on the two residential seminars in Alden Biesen.

- The new strategy deepens the principle of academic pluralism. Not only in terms of discipline, methodology or normative ideas about 'development', but also in terms of the way in which academics can be socially involved.

- The strategy also repositions the institute with regard to a number of debates in the field of development studies. This strategy also responds to the recommendation from the previous audit to think about "how do you position the IOB in a rapidly evolving landscape for development and international cooperation?" One of the consequences of our location in Antwerp is that our operations are situated in a very unequal global playing field, and in the strategy we also pay a lot of attention to the ethical implications of this, for example by proposing a number of principles of partnering.

In the new strategy we also describe the increasing importance of publications with co-authors from/from the global South, the 'southernization' of our staff (including an explicit southernization policy for ZAP appointments, see further in Chapter 3) and the implementation of projects in collaboration with Southern partners.

As part of the new research strategy, a new benchmark study was also carried out that compares the IOB with a number of peer institutes in Europe, and which confirms the IOB's excellent publication performance.

In line with previous recommendations, a lot of attention was also paid to our **outreach and social involvement**. A structure was also created around this: - After vetting by IDS Sussex, we recruited a research and

communications officer, and worked on seven different 'impact pathways' (in addition to the more obvious research-education nexus). The structure of the 'impact pathways' is also used for the evaluation of individual staff members.

- The science communication dimension is also strengthened by the development of a 'Communication Committee' (ComCom), which is also partly financed by external resources generated by large projects (ERC, VLIR-UOS Policy Supporting Program consortium).
- The IOB also invests significant staff time and energy in supporting the activities of "Global Engagement" from the University of Antwerp.

Links to research/outreach documents:

- [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#)
- Visual representation of the [Impact Pathways](#)
- [Benchmark: "Publication output in Development Studies Institutes 2018-2023"](#), November 2023 • UAntwerpen [Global Engagement Framework](#)

Finally, as recommended during the last audit, the **workability** of the individual assignments for IOB employees was also increasingly taken into account in the form of a policy of '**sustainable excellence**'.

- The institutional option for quality over quantity was recently translated into **adapted individual evaluation criteria for education, research and outreach**.
- The possibility was also created to propose a temporary reduction of assignment in a flexible manner and the principle possibility of taking a mini-sabbatical was provided.
- Within the new AAP policy, we also hope to realize an active anti-stress policy thanks to clearer expectations and agreements (including about content and supervision of the PhD).
- A process was started with Mensura to map well-being at work and where necessary to improve.

Links to 'sustainable excellence' documents:

- Adjusted ZAP job profile and [evaluation schedule for education, research and outreach](#)
- [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#)

1.1 GENERAL

1.1.1 INTERACTION

The IOB will strive for a demonstrable interaction between its three core tasks. (BO, 2.1)

• Describe the interaction between the three core tasks.

• How does the IOB take the interaction between the three into account in its assignment and mission?
core assignments?

The education – research – outreach nexus is explicitly included in our [mission statement](#).
Below we list a handful of activities that demonstrate this nexus:

- **Close link between research and education:** education is 'research-driven' – student mobility to apply the subject "Research Methods" in Tanzania, Uganda, or in the DR Congo to a research theme – student mobility to conduct thesis research in 1 of our partner institutions in the South – 'Action labs' in the DEM master's program where research is carried out by the students – ICP Connect partners conduct education and research – valorization of excellent master's theses
– Global Research Prize for the province of Antwerp – alumni activities.
- **Research – outreach:** this nexus has been elaborated in 7 'impact pathways' (see renewed research and outreach policy, chapter 2). In addition, also institutionally supported through ICP Connect programs, including 'Communities of Practice' that bring together different stakeholders and experiences, and through the [new Policy Supporting Program Social Protection, Inequality and Inclusive Growth \(SPRING\)](#) for DGD).
- **Education – outreach:** micro-credentials as part of lifelong learning, open to actors in the field – broadening basket subject "Debating Development" – short programs "M&E" – "Community Based Monitoring" – "Governance of Natural Resources".
- **HR policy:** education-research-outreach nexus is included in all vacancies, is an important element in recruitment interviews, and in goal and performance interviews. This nexus is also in the evaluation matrix of all AP, which is used for promotions, extensions, etc. The IEC/CAP/IOB Council/OWC/OZC oversee the implementation and monitoring of the nexus. In addition, we also systematically deploy postdoctoral staff for educational activities, albeit with a maximum assignment of 10% FTE.
- **Special attention to partner work:** ICP Connect (formerly Going Global): our institutional partners in the South have evolved from research partners to educational partners (South participation in master programs and in short training programs such as "Community Based Monitoring" course in Tanzania, and "Governance of Natural Resources" in Bukavu). In 2022 we also invited all our ICP Connect South partners to a partner week to also facilitate and stimulate South-South exchange.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)
- [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#) (particularly Chapter 2 on research and outreach)
- PSP policy-oriented research - [final project proposal](#)
- [ZAP job profile and evaluation schedule](#)

Contact persons:

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon)
- Chairman of the Investigation Committee (T. De Herdt)
- Chairman of the Education Committee (N. Molenaers)

1.2 EDUCATION

1.2.1 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS – FOLLOW DECRETAL PROVISIONS

In the education offered, the IOB follows the provisions of the Codex Higher Education that have been declared applicable to the Institute. The IOB makes explicit and justifies possible deviations in the policy plans and/or annual reports. (BO 2.2.1)

• Does the IOB deviate from the decree provisions in its educational programs?

• If so, how is this justified?

The IOB complies with all provisions of the **Codex Higher Education**.

The IOB also follows the **Education and Examination Regulations (OER)** of the University of Antwerp. Sometimes it gives way. IOB deviates from the standard rules within the University of Antwerp, but it always remains within the decree framework. For example, the IOB starts with an introduction week that precedes the official start of the academic year at the University of Antwerp, and exams take place at different times than the regular academic calendar of the faculties.

The teaching language is English which is permitted by Chapter 3, Art. 51 of the 'Decree on the integration of academic higher education courses in universities'.

In its education, the IOB therefore follows the provisions of the decrees that have been declared applicable to the Institute. The IOB has a thoroughly developed system of quality assurance for education that meets the UAntwerp conditions, not only for the master's programs but also for the PhD program. The Department of Education at UAntwerp monitors this in a six-year quality assurance cycle (see detailed infra, points 2.2.1. and 2.2.3.).

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- [Education and Examination Regulations \(OER\)](#) from University of Antwerp
- [Codex Higher Education](#)

Contact persons: •

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon)
- Chairman of the Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Chairman of the IOB Doctoral Committee (S. Vandeginste)
- Department of Education UAntwerp (B. Roseaux and I. Verachtert)

1.2.2 NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES

The University of Antwerp undertakes to deliver the following performance on an annual basis, on average over a period of five years:

- Deliver at least 45 final diplomas in the courses offered by the IOB within the University of Antwerp is entitled to offer,
- To have at least two new students start their doctoral work at the IOB with a view to further developing the knowledge and expertise of the IOB as laid down in its policy plan, or partly at another university with the same perspective. (BO, 2.2.2)

- Does the IOB achieve the intended performance?

If not, what is the cause?

The IOB achieves the intended performance on both points.

- It delivered an annual average of 63 over the past five-year period (2019 to 2023).
final diplomas in the 3 masters.
- On January 1, 2024, the IOB had 43 doctoral students, of which 41 with an international profile (including 28 from the 'Global South'). Over the past five-year period (2019-2023), an average of 7.2 new students started their doctoral work per year and an average of 3 doctorates were successfully completed. The annual dropout of doctoral students is limited to 2 per year
(10 in total, of which 2 due to lack of funding, 3 for personal reasons and 5 due to their failure in the mandatory doctoral training).

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- Number of final diplomas delivered and doctoral programs initiated: see IOB Annual Reports:
[Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)

Contact persons:

- Chairman of the IOB (D. Cassimon)
- Educational achievements: chairman of the Education Committee (N. Molenaers) • Master's programmes: program director of master's programs (G. Van Hecken) • Achievements regarding doctoral studies: chairman of the Doctoral Committee (S. Vandeginste)

1.2.3 ADDED VALUE AND COLLABORATION

The IOB strives for Flemish, Belgian and international added value and cooperation in its education, as well as demonstrable interaction with research and services. (BO, 2.2.2)

- *How does the IOB achieve Flemish, Belgian and international added value in the field of education?*

The IOB continues to succeed in creating added value nationally and internationally through its educational offering. We remain strongly committed to the **education-research-outreach/service nexus**. The thematic modules II and III and of course also the master's dissertation (module IV) were already strongly linked to the research carried out at the IOB and with IOB South partners, but now students can already use them during module I (Research Methods II). of the *mobility window* to conduct research in a partner institution in the South in collaboration with our partners. Since this academic year, students can also participate in the Community Based Monitoring course organized in Tanzania, where education, research and services flow together through the use of action labs and through collaboration with partners. In this sense, the nexus education – research – services is integrally intertwined with **internationalization**. The education-research nexus is additionally strengthened by giving students who deliver an excellent thesis the opportunity to convert their thesis into a publication via the valorization fund.

Between 2009 and now this has led to 29 peer-reviewed publications.

The modular approach to education (where 'subjects' consist of different units and sub-units) allows us to implement changes in the program without initiating heavy administrative processes. This makes it possible to **respond flexibly to important international trends**; to ensure that education is **properly aligned with current research/services**; and create lasting added value. Over the years, **new topics** and themes have been added to the program, such as climate

and climate finance, transformative research methodologies, value chain analysis, decolonization, multiperspectivity, etc.

The **action labs** established in 2018-2019 (where students can apply specific evaluation methods in cases (and critically reflect on them) in the module "Evaluating Development Effectiveness" have now been firmly institutionalized and are evaluated very positively by the students. This **action** has now been **lab**

format has also permeated our ICP Connect programs so that the nexus education – research – services are further strengthened.

Since the previous visit/evaluation, there has also been an even greater focus on **internationalization** (see also 1.5.2.) and **alumni activities** in particular have been further explored (see also 1.2.7 and 2.2.3), which further enhances the **added value of the IOB**. and also provides additional links with **research & services**.

With regard to alumni activities, the IOB invests in sustainable networks with its alumni. The IOB therefore has a long-term **alumni policy** developed that starts from 11 different **engagement dimensions**

(including outreach, education, employability, recognition...). Based on this vision, various 'alumni chapters' were started and a variety of alumni activities were organised. Based on a needs analysis, various alumni spaces were created, including IOB Facebook/WhatsApp/LinkedIn alumni groups, IOB newsletter, an alumni magazine '**Exchange to Change**', in addition to local '**alumni chapters**' which were founded in various countries (Tanzania, DR Congo, Philippines, Nicaragua,...). The IOB also organizes various types of **alumni activities** that encourage **interaction between** IOB staff, alumni, students and even the broader development community, including 'meet-and-greet' sessions, 'alumni in action' lunch seminars, IOB community network **events...** Alumni then often present their work (in poster sessions, presentations in seminar format, training workshops, ..) and these events also actively try to stimulate networking between the different groups of the IOB community (and beyond). The IOB cherishes the very diverse and significant contribution of its alumni to sustainable development and tries to **map this impact**.

In addition to the IOB master programs, the IOB also continues to actively invest in **additional educational initiatives**:

- Within **UAntwerp**: Several **IOB staff members teach courses at the faculties of FSW, FBE, Biology/IMDO** (e.g. "Topics in Development Studies", "Politics of International Finance", "Political Economy of Development", "Sustainable Development") or in **inter-university masters** (e.g. master Gender and Diversity). Since the 2019-2020 academic year, the IOB has also offered the only English-language course ("**Global Justice**") in the mandatory **UAntwerp basket of broadening courses** that are open to all UAntwerp students, and the IOB will be involved in the elective course on sustainable development. In this same context, the IOB (together with USOS) organizes the basket course "**Debating Development**", a series of debates that are followed annually by an average of 200 UAntwerp students, and in which an average of 300 to 500 UAntwerp students and 250 external parties (from the broader NGO sector) follow at least 1 debate.
- Based on the specific expertise of the IOB and in the context of the **IOB Going Global/ICP Connect initiative** (see above and further under 1.5.2), education is also provided in **various local master's programs and other training courses**, including in DR Congo, Tanzania, Nicaragua, Uganda.
- IOB staff members also regularly provide lessons in the PhD program CSG (Research in Social Science and Management) in Lisbon and in the Master of Science in Sustainable Development (KU Leuven).
- Since 2018, IOB has been organizing an **Evaluation Capacity Building seminar "Strengthening National M&E capacities"** together with the **Special Evaluation Service** of the Belgian Development Cooperation. where 20 evaluators (from **partner countries**) **exchange intensively for 2 weeks** and receive further training in evaluation methods, evaluation systems, elements of organizational development. Through this initiative, the IOB also maintains its ties with the evaluation community both in Belgium and internationally.

The **IOB doctoral training** in multidisciplinary development studies is **unique** in Flanders. At the request of PhD students, we are developing the specificity of the training by developing a basic PhD training course

in the context of the **CERES Research School for International Development**. We also worked on improving the quality control of the doctoral training, including the development of a buddy system, support for research in risk areas and the strengthening of the system of annual Individual Doctoral Committees around the relationship between a supervisor and their individual PhD student. A number of these adjustments have also led to a revision of the IOB doctoral regulations.

The IOB PhD has also managed to build a reputation for **high quality** in the short term, not only through the general UAntwerp quality assurance guidelines, but also through specific IOB requirements such as

- the mandatory study program during the first year (a priori quality check);
- the need for publication of at least one international peer-reviewed article; and - the presentation of the research in a doctoral seminar.

The PhDs always demonstrate in-depth and thorough empirical research, usually with extensive field research in the South. An important added value is undoubtedly the high number of successful **doctoral students from the South** (despite the difficulty in finding suitable financing).

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)
- ICP Connect: approved project proposals: [DEM, GOV, GLOB](#)
- Evaluation Debating Development [2019, 2020, 2021, 2023](#)
- [List of valorisations of master's theses.](#)
- Evaluation seminar Evaluation Capacity Building: [ECB 2023 Antwerp / ECB 2023 Uganda](#)
- Roadmap PhD students (version for [AAP](#) and [non-AAP](#))
- [IOB PhD regulations](#) (and [General Doctoral Regulations UAntwerp](#)) on website.

Contact persons:

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon)
- Chairman of the Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Chairman of the Doctoral Committee (S. Vandeginste)
- Coordinator Debating Development (G. Van Hecken); coordinator Global Justice (T. Ferrando)
- AAP representative Doctoral Committee (D. Samnick)
- Alumni/UFOO staff member (S. Dewachter)

1.2.4 QUALITY CONTROL

The University of Antwerp, together with the IOB, ensures the quality assurance of education, according to a system that is adapted to the IOB's mission and that allows domestic and international comparison. (BO, 2.2.2)

- *How is the quality of education monitored?*
- *Is there (international) benchmarking with other, similar courses?*
- *What are the concrete results of quality assurance?*

You may include the answer to this question under point "2. Policy plan and quality assurance"

1.2.5 QUALITY OF STUDENT ENTRY

The IOB itself monitors the quality of the student intake and determines the selection criteria and the manner in which it will carry out the selection. Any professional experience, skills, previous education and motivation of the students are important selection criteria. The share of foreign students must be at least 50% of the total. (BO, 2.2.3)

- *What selection criteria does the IOB use and how is the selection of candidate students carried out?*
- *Are the guiding selection criteria respected?*
- *Does the student population consist of at least 50% foreign students?*
- *If the share of foreign students is not achieved, what is the cause? What actions are being taken for this?*

Applications are submitted entirely online.

The selection of candidates is based on **5 selection criteria**: 1. background diploma

- (discipline) 10%
- 2. results achieved and quality of the studies, 25%
- 3. professional experience, 20%
- 4. motivation 20%
- 5. matching (to what extent do the candidate's expectations meet the content of the master's program) 25%

Files are screened on the basis of an assessment sheet by a **committee composed of the academic staff involved in the chosen master and track**. The selection criteria are described in detail in the assessment sheet with a corresponding assessment score. A briefing/training regarding the selection criteria is organized for new staff members. When selecting the scholarship holders, the results of the individual selections of candidate scholarship holders are compiled and discussed collectively in selection groups per track. This annual process contributes to a uniform interpretation and application of the criteria.

Since 2023, we no longer organize an intensive English course for students with a low but minimally acceptable English test score. Students are selected by [Linguapolis](#) at the start of the academic year tested via the ITACE (Interuniversity Test of Academic English). [Students](#) with a low score are strongly advised to improve their level of English through self-study or a course.

The **share of foreign students has averaged 92%** annually over the past five years. In recent years, the IOB has made efforts to attract relatively more Belgian (and European) students (through, for example, the option of a *mobility window* with our Southern partners and more promotion at sister faculties), but this has not yet been achieved with clear success. For the time being, the IOB has succeeded in safeguarding access for students from the least developed countries and at the same time attracting a larger group of non-scholarship students from the South.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- [Selection procedure for master students](#)

Contact persons:

- Student secretariat staff member (G. Annaert)
- Program director (G. Van Hecken)

1.2.6 ADMISSION OF NON-MASTERS

Post-initial education is primarily open to persons who already have a master's degree.

Persons who do not have a master's degree may be admitted if the application file shows that the university studies followed, the duration of study and the results achieved, the nature of the professional experience and the motivation of the student guarantee successful completion. participation. (BO, 2.2.3)

- How does the IOB check in the application file that the student can successfully participate in the course?
Participate? Has a procedure been developed for this?

We refer to the **extensive selection criteria and selection procedure as discussed under point 1.2.5**.

Candidates must have a master's degree in development studies or a similar discipline.

Candidates with at least a 4-year Bachelor's degree are not automatically excluded, but they must demonstrate on the basis of the curriculum of their Bachelor's degree program that they have taken sufficient research-related subjects and/or have taken relevant additional courses or training and/or have taken very relevant have work experience.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Contact persons:

- Student secretariat staff member (G. Annaert)

1.2.7 REGULATIONS

The IOB records the organization of education in general and course-specific regulations. These regulations include at least:

- the training program
- the education and examination regulations, including an internal appeal procedure
- the scope and final objectives of the course components
- the admission requirements and selection criteria
- the cost price
- the teaching, working and examination methods used
- the diplomas and certificates that are awarded.

The IOB provides these internal regulations as information to prospective students. (BO, 2.2.4)

- *Are these regulations available to (prospective) students? How are they made available?*
- *How are these regulations drawn up? Is there student participation?*
- *Have there been any adjustments to these regulations in the past?*

Prospective students receive information regarding the programs, admission requirements and registration procedure through various promotional channels and via the [IOB website](#).

The **Education and Examination Regulations** (OER), including an internal appeal procedure, are laid down annually in the UAntwerp Education Council, in which UAntwerp students are also represented. There is an English translation of the OER ("Education and Examination Regulations"). With regard to student participation, IOB counts on the feedback that students provide through the standard evaluation instruments (surveys and focus group discussions), through the representation of the students in the Education Committee and the IOB Council and through the alumni surveys (see below and further in points 1.2.8 and 2.2.3.).

At the start of the academic year, IOB students receive information regarding general and course-specific information elements via the **Academic Survival Guide (ASG)**. The ASG bundles information about the educational programs, academic research, library, rules for citation and referencing, the master's dissertation, exams, student participation, *code of conduct* and IOB employees. This document is updated annually before the start of the academic year based on input/feedback collected throughout the academic year.

The ASG is further supplemented with **course information** (the 'course information sheets'), which provide **detailed information** per subject regarding the content, organization, intended learning outcomes, work and examination methods. These are available before the start of each semester and also via Blackboard (the UAntwerp online learning platform). The 'course information sheets' are drawn up by the team of teachers responsible for a subject (and under the supervision of the 'course coordinator'). An important source of input from the students comes via feedback from CIKO, which organizes evaluations on a regular basis (surveys and focus groups). In addition, the students are represented in the **IOB Education Committee** and in the **IOB Council**. To further increase the input of the students, it was decided at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year to also invite the student representatives to the 'small OWC' (the consultation with coordinating educational staff in preparation for the Education Committee).

Another important source of input is the **alumni surveys**. Every 4 to 5 years, an extensive alumni survey is conducted in which alumni are asked about the IOB master's programs, in particular their quality, relevance to their professional career, as well as satisfaction with the IOB alumni policy. The [alumni barometer project](#) investigated the extent to which alumni built up new knowledge, skills, attitudes and networks during their IOB studies, as well as the extent to which they acquired the proposed 'learning competencies' have indeed acquired, and how they could make a social contribution.

Regarding the doctoral training, there are [additional regulations, on top of the](#) General Doctoral Regulations of the University of Antwerp. These regulations have recently been thoroughly reread and amended. Two important innovations are the mandatory annual meeting of the Individual Doctoral Committee with the PhD student - for better follow-up - and the description of the new role of PhD ombudsperson. One of the feedback channels is also an annual focus group during the PhD day. For a good flow of information to students

became a '[Roadmap](#)' developed with all important information. The ATP member responsible for PhD administration also gives a personal introduction to all PhD students at the start assisted by the PhD representatives and the research coordinator.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- Master's program brochures: [DEM / GOV / GLOB](#) _____
- [Academic Survival Guide](#)
- Course information: [DEM / GLOB / GOV](#) _____
- Profiles of IOB students: [DEM / GOV / GLOB](#) _____
- [Education and Examination Regulations](#) (OER)
- [IOB doctoral regulations](#) (and [General Doctoral Regulations UAntwerp](#)) on website.
- Roadmap PhD students (version for [AAP](#) and [non-AAP](#)) _____

Contact persons:

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon)
- Chairman of the Education Committee (N. Molenaers) •
Chairman of the Doctoral Committee (S. Vandeginste)
- Education Quality Officer/CIKO (E. Godderis)
- Program director (G. Van Hecken)
- Student Secretariat Staff Member (G. Annaert)
- Alumni/UFOO staff member (S. Dewachter)

1.2.8 LEGAL POSITION REGULATIONS

The IOB applies the [UAntwerp student legal status regulations](#), which include the mutual rights and obligations of the board and the students and the consequences of non-compliance. The IOB also outlines the way in which students participate in the policy in internal regulations. (BO, 2.2.4)

- *Have these regulations been drawn up?*
- *Are they regularly evaluated?*
- *Are the results of such an evaluation taken into account?*
- *How does the student participation process work?*

With regard to the rights and obligations of students and the internal **appeal procedures**, IOB follows the provisions of the Education and Examination Regulations (OER) of UAntwerp.

In implementation of these regulations, IOB determines at the start of the academic year who the **ombudspersons** are and this decision is communicated to the students.

The OER is **evaluated** annually at university level. With regard to student participation, we refer to the previous point 1.2.7. and to the IOB Organizational Regulations in which the representation of students within the official bodies is laid down. The students are also represented with two votes **in the IOB Council and in the Education Committee**.

The **student committee** is formed through elections in October. Students can submit their candidacy for the various positions of the student committee (chairman, class representative, secretary, student representatives IOB Council and Education Committee) via the standard UAntwerp procedures.

Students are informed of all regulations and rights and obligations via the **Academic Survival Guide** (see 1.2.7). Based on the observation that communication and mutual respect pose many challenges in a very diverse group of students, the IOB provides a 'Gender and diversity' workshop for students at the start of each academic year. This is supervised by an external expert. Then via a participatory process, a **code of conduct** drawn up by a working group of students, based on input from the entire student group.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- [Education and Examination Regulations](#) (OER)
- [Academic Survival Guide](#)
- [Code of Conduct 2022-2023 en 2023-2024](#)
- [IOB Organic Regulations](#)

Contact persons:

- Student secretariat staff member (G. Annaert)
- Education quality officer/CIKO (E. Godderis)

1.2.9 STUDY FEES

The University of Antwerp is taking measures to ensure that the level of registration fees does not constitute a barrier for students from less well-off socio-economic groups. If necessary, the University of Antwerp makes scholarships or student loans available. (BO, 2.2.5)

- *What measures does the University of Antwerp take to ensure that the size of the tuition fees does not constitute a barrier for students from financially less strong socio-economic groups?*

The regular registration fee for students without a scholarship is 2,750 euros (for 60 credits, namely 350 euros + 40 euros per credit). Students can request a payment plan according to the student's financial capabilities (an amount of 400 euros must be paid immediately, i.e.

before September 30, and the full registration fee must be paid before June 30 of the current academic year). The registration fee for students with a VLIR-UOS and BTC grant (60 credits) is an annually fixed amount (currently 1,092.10 euros); students with other scholarship financing pay 5,150 euros (for 60 credits, namely 350 euros + 80 euros per credit). Reduction is possible if there is an agreement between the financier of the scholarships and IOB.

Through the VLIR-UOS we are entitled to **30 ICP Connect grants per year (10 grants per master)**. In addition to a monthly allowance, the registration fee is also paid through this grant.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- [Website IOB: tuition fees](#)

Contact:

- Student secretariat staff member (G. Annaert)

1.3 RESEARCH

1.3.1 POLICY PLAN

The IOB records the themes and disciplines of its research in a policy plan. (BO, 2.3)

- *How is the research policy defined?*
- *How are decisions made about lines of research?*
- *How is the achievement of the objectives monitored?*
- *How is research integrated into the staff workload?*

IOB uses external evaluations and monitoring by the UAntwerp Research Council to outline and adjust its **research policy** .

Based, among other things, on the previous evaluation by the Flemish Government and on the basis of internal reflection and (residential) seminars, we wrote a new research policy plan "[Research and Outreach Strategy 2024-29](#)" (which is also for discussion at the [UAntwerp Research Council](#) of June 2024) in which the main lines of the research policy are set out.

The new research plan perpetuates the previous adjustment to three **lines of research** within one research group, and also defines two transversal themes that each also connect with the three lines of research: One theme is the "Great Lakes of Africa Center", which represents the (approx. 50%) researchers brings together those working in this region and also provides specific channels of outreach (yearbook, seminar series, etc.).

The other is about "the politics of data and digital development", developed with the aim of connecting the recently acquired ERC project by Moisés Kopper (2023-8) with the existing research expertise at IOB.

Both the research lines and the transversal themes function as functional, and not as administrative, platforms. This also means that the recruitment policy (of AAP and postdoc BAP on IOB resources) became de facto more centralised; ie much more is done according to institute-wide quality standards. In fact, institutional resources are used more to strengthen the research agenda of individual ZAP members, who, conversely, also bear greater responsibility for pre- and post-doctoral staff in their daily operations.

In the past 4.5 years, three **ZAP vacancies** were filled, two of which were to replace ZAP members who left the institution and a third was a 10% ZAP appointment within a FED-tWIN mandate (financing of a 10-year postdoctoral position on the bridge between the RMCA Tervuren and UAntwerp). These new ZAP members were appointed as research professors (TTZAPBOF) during the five-year trial period.

The ZAP framework thus stabilized to 11.7 FTE ZAP (incl. 50% TT-ZAPBOF) at the end of 2023.

All ZAP, AAP vacancies and postdoc vacancies at institutional resources are discussed in the research committee before a decision is made in the IOB Council. After appointment, the IOB office organizes target interviews and evaluation interviews with all those involved.

To support researchers in communicating research results, a **communications and outreach employee** was recruited from June 2018 who supported IOB's communications and was the basis for the development of seven 'impact pathways'; which now also form the basis of Chapter 2 of the new research policy plan. This position has now been redefined into a position of **communications and research coordinator**, where the range of tasks also includes an important bridging function to the central research department and support with project applications and attracting external financing. As a science communicator, he also supports the formulation of valorization components in larger projects and can contribute ideas about the formulation of research results to a non-academic audience. He also functions within the broader IOB Communications Committee (ComCom).

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)
- Research policy plan [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#)
- **Benchmark-studie:** "Publication output in Development Studies Institutes 2018-2023", November 2023
- Reports of [target conversations with individual](#) ZAP members
- [Vacancy texts ZAP vacancies](#)

Contact persons: •

Chairman of IOB (D. Cassimon) • Chairman
of the Research Committee (T. De Herdt)

1.3.2 FLEMISH AND INTERNATIONAL ADDED VALUE

The IOB strives for Flemish and international added value in its research, based on quality, relevance and specificity. Where relevant and possible, the IOB collaborates with Flemish universities and international institutions. (BO 2.3)

- What is the added value, both Flemish and international, of the research activities of the IOB?

The **international** (and *a fortiori* Flemish) added value is evident from the publications in the most leading journals with high impact factors. This is also evident from the regular **benchmark studies** in which the publication output of IOB's senior staff is compared with that of a number of excellent European peer institutes. The latest study compares the output and impact of IOB's research publications for the period between 2018 and 2023 with those of seven comparable European institutes, as well as with those of the previous benchmark study (2013-7). The main conclusion is that IOB continues to perform excellently in terms of output and impact and can indeed consider "the best European development institutes as a reference", as our mission statement indicates. On average, an IOB staff member publishes more than 2 Web-of-Science papers per year, which is more than any other institute in our field, and we achieve an impact of approximately 20 citations per year by our scientific peers in Web-of-Science Science journals (which is comparable to a number of top institutes in the UK and the Netherlands).

This is also increasingly reflected in participation in international research programs funded by DFID, [Belmont](#) or the EU (in which IOB sometimes also takes the lead, cf. [EPICC](#)), see also 1.4.1.

The IOB research also shows its relevance at **Flemish and national** level, as evidenced by extensive participation in the public debate through opinion pieces, popularizing activities and services to governmental and non-governmental bodies (see IOB annual reports). The IOB wants to be academic also valorize added value by focusing on collaboration with other faculties (on education) and research groups (e.g. by participating in the AIPRIL consortium on inequality, in the FWO-EOS research on winners and losers of globalization or hosting the consortium on Social Protection and Inclusive Growth).

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)
- Research strategy [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#)
- [Benchmark](#): "Publication output in Development Studies Institutes 2018-2023", November 2023

Contact persons:

- Chairman of IOB (D. Cassimon)
- Chairman of the Research Committee (T. De Herdt)
- Research coordinator (F. Huybrechts)
- Library staff member (H. De Backer)

1.3.3 QUALITY CONTROL

The University of Antwerp, together with the IOB, ensures the quality assurance of the research, according to a system that is adapted to its mission but allows domestic and international comparison. (BO 2.3)

- How is the quality of the research monitored?
- How is it ensured that the output and impact of the research is comparable to that of the Flemish universities and similar foreign institutions?

You may include the answer to this question under point "2. Policy plan and quality assurance"

1.4 SERVICES

1.4.1 AGREEMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The IOB provides scientific and social services within the field of development policy and management. To this end, it can conclude agreements with and accept orders from Flemish, Belgian and international governments, non-governmental organizations and companies. (BO, 2.4)

- Describe the services provided by the IOB.
- Have agreements been concluded or orders accepted from the institutions mentioned?

IOB continued to be very active in various areas of scientific and social services, and took steps to further clarify and manage the variety of activities more strategically. (1) mission, vision and research focus (including Central Africa focus) were further clarified in the new research policy (plan);

(2) the outreach dimension of the research was more explicitly recognized and managed (seven impact pathways, broader strategic collaboration with the University of Antwerp in the Global Engagement/Global Minds program); (3) we invested in strengthening our communications capacity (recruitment of communications staff and streamlining via IOB ComCom);

We group scientific and social service activities **into seven outreach/service categories**: (1) participation in public debate; (2) external expertise to specialized development institutions; (3) embedded expertise in specialized development institutions; (4) contributing to IOB visibility; (5) academic cooperation with Southern partners; (6) collaboration with UAntwerp; (7) establishing and/or active involvement in development 'spin-offs'.

These *impact pathways* were included in IOB's new research policy (see Research and Outreach Strategy, Chapter 2). These pathways are also the starting point for individual reporting in the target discussions and periodic evaluations. This list has been included in the updated evaluation matrix and supplemented with a manual that sets out the principles for quantifying the efforts in this area.

For some categories there is a high degree of explicitness and policy guidance, such as for the collaboration with South partners (including ICP Connect, cooperation agreements) and with UAntwerp (including in the context of the Global Minds program, the broadening basket subjects ("Global Justice" and "Debating Development") and through support for training and partner work USOS in DR Congo and Nicaragua). It will be clarified in the short term which categories require further clarification and/or more institutional support require, and in any case further work will be done on strengthening the communication strategy together with the communications staff.

IOB employees participate in the boards of EADI, HDCA, Oxfam, FIAN and CERES; and provide services as (associate) editors and reviewers of various international journals.

Consultancy is generally carried out if it can supplement or strengthen its own research agenda or that of its partner programs, but not solely as a means to secure income. In recent years we have noted a decline in the publication of consultancy reports, but also a strong increase in the publications of op-eds, blog posts, etc. in national, but mainly international publication carriers (see annual report). Based on the new five-year policy support

project SPRING (Policy Supporting Program for DGD), we can probably expect an increase in consultancy reports again.

The **externally funded policy support research assignments** were carried out in 2019-23 for a broad group of clients, including: Flemish Interuniversity Council - Development Cooperation Cell (VLIR-UOS), Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR); Connecting Research and Society (COESO); Autonomous Municipal Company Cultural Institutions Antwerp; BELSPO; World Bank; Fafo Institute for Labor and Social Research; VVOB Education for Development vzw; Belgian Reference Center for the Expertise on Central Africa (ECA/CRE-AC) and International Center for Tax and Development.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)
- [ZAP job profile and evaluation schedule](#)
- UAntwerp [Global Engagement Framework](#)
- Research strategy [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#) (particularly Chapter 2 for the impact pathways)

Contact persons:

- Chairman of IOB (D. Cassimon)
- Chairman of the Research Committee (T. De Herdt)
- Research coordinator (F. Huybrechts)

1.5 COOPERATION WITHIN AND OUTSIDE FLANDERS

1.5.1 INCREASE EXPERTISE THROUGH COLLABORATION

The IOB aims to increase its expertise and the effectiveness of its operations through collaboration with other universities and research institutions, including in low- and middle-income countries. The collaboration must provide added value for its own training, research and/or services.
(BO, 2.5)

- *How intensive is the IOB's collaboration with other Flemish universities and foreign universities and research institutions? And with institutions in developing countries?*
- *Has national and international exchange increased through government resources?*
- *What criteria are used for the selection of partners?*
- *Does the collaboration deliver added value?*

The IOB collaborates with various Flemish and foreign universities in the **global North**. The intensity of the collaboration depends on its content.

In terms of **research**, various forms of stable or varying collaboration are ongoing with centers in the North, such as LICOS, HIVA and CRPD (KU Leuven), Institute for Tropical Medicine (ITG), EU studies in Conflict Research Group (UGent), Cerami (ULB-UMons), UCL in UNamur, Université du Québec en Outaouais (Canada), University of Oxford, Global Development Institute (UK), World Bank in IFPRI.

Since the end of 2023, the IOB has also coordinated one of the three **Policy Supporting Programs** of VLIR-UOS/ARES. This five-year project -SPRING (Social protection and inclusive growth)- is a consortium with, among others ULB, KU Leuven-HIVA, Catholic University of Bukavu (DR Congo) and Makerere University (Oeganda).

With regard to **doctorates**, the IOB functions in the context of the doctoral training of the Dutch-Flemish Doctoral School in Development Studies, CERES. There are also several jobs

doctorates with partners in the North (ITG, Université du Québec en Outaouais, KU Leuven, UGent, UCL, ISS). In addition, IOB staff also regularly participates in juries for doctorates at other universities at home and abroad.

There is also **educational cooperation** with various institutions (see 1.2.3).

In addition to various one-day seminars and **conferences** in Antwerp or in collaboration with its partner institutions, the IOB organized the major international HDCA conference 'Capabilities and Transformative Institutions' in 2022 (19-22 September 2022). The IOB is also an active member of EADI and will organize the triennial EADI General Conference in 2026.

This extensive and varied collaboration with all kinds of Northern institutions provides obvious added value in various areas. It directly contributes to the quantity and quality of the publication output, the acquisition of relevant (international) funding, the dissemination of research results to various target audiences and also ensures greater international brand awareness of the IOB. These collaborations usually arise spontaneously from individual initiatives by IOB staff. The choice for collaboration grows from the **extensive international network** of IOB employees and the specific opportunities or needs that present themselves.

The IOB also has a long tradition and a solid package of **institutional partner collaborations in the global South**. Here, further concentration has been focused on a limited number of institutions, especially via the IOB ICP Connect program. In this context, IOB currently collaborates intensively to very intensively with institutions in Colombia (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana), DR Congo (UCB-Bukavu, UCC-Kinshasa), Ecuador (Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar), the Philippines (De La Salle University Manila), Nicaragua (UCA-Nitlapan) and Tanzania (Mzumbe University).

In addition, there are several institutions with which collaboration is carried out on a more **individual basis** in DR Congo (Université de Kisangani), Colombia (Universidad de Antioquia, Medellin), Uganda (Gulu, MUST, Mbarara), Peru (Universidad Nacional del Altiplano, Puno) and South -Africa (University of Cape Town).

Collaboration with Southern partners is essential to (continue to) provide research, outreach and education in the field of development studies in a responsible and sustainable manner - also in the future (see also the explanation of IOB ICP Connect). The selection of these partners is based on historical collaborations on the one hand and on an assessment of the potential of the collaboration for the academic output of the IOB in collaboration with the partner institution (also depending on the presence of promising alumni, the presence of long-term collaboration programs (VLIR IUS).), etc.).

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)
- ICP Connect: approved project proposals: [DEM, GOV, GLOB](#)
- Research strategy [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#)
- Note on [outreach incentives and contacts](#)
- [HDCA conference evaluation report](#)

Contact persons:

- Chairman of IOB (D. Cassimon)
- Chairman of the Research Committee (T. De Herdt)

1.5.2 JOINT RESEARCH PROJECTS AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The IOB pursues international cooperation in the field of education and research in the form of joint research projects, the joint organization of educational activities, and the exchange of students, with the possible prospect of bi-certification or joint certification. (BO, 2.5)

Does bi-certification or joint certification actually take place?

Since the **2017-2018 academic year**, **international cooperation in the field of education** has been most concrete and structured in the context of the VLIR-UOS ICP Incremental Funding project, and the more recent VLIR-UOS ICP Connect project, in which the South component of the master's programs is further being explored.

The partners with whom we collaborate are Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (Colombia), Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar (Ecuador), Université Catholique de Bukavu (DR Congo), De la Salle University (Philippines), Universidad Centroamericana UCA (Nicaragua), Mzumbe University (Tanzania). The **educational activities** that are organized together include:

- **Student mobility:** mobility @ IOB consists of three parts: *mobility window* during "Research Methods II", 'Community-based monitoring' in Tanzania and fieldwork for the master's dissertation (this strengthens the nexus education-research-services).
- **Staff mobility** in two directions: various IOB staff members regularly visit the partner institutions and staff members of the partner institutions teach as guest lecturers at the IOB.
- **Winter schools & workshops:** methodological workshops (including refresher courses of certain evaluation methods), training in data collection (education-research nexus) and winter schools on specific themes ('Governance of Natural Resources') were organized at various partner institutions.

Input in the development of **master's programs:** input is given in the development of the master's programs in both Nicaragua/Colombia/Ecuador and Tanzania. To date, this has not yet led to bi-certification or joint certification. Certificates are awarded for training and workshops. The most advanced in the process towards jointly offering a master's program was the collaboration with UCA/PUJ/UASB (Nicaragua, Colombia, Ecuador), but the preparations for this are facing enormous challenges due to the political crisis in Nicaragua. For the time being, the ambition to offer a Central American version of our master's programs in Managua (with one module in Antwerp, and bi-certification) was therefore shelved, and the collaboration was expanded with other partners in Latin America. The intention remains to experiment with a pilot program from 2025, and to start a full-fledged hybrid master's program from 2027 (with possible financial support through an Erasmus Mundus project). This can also be taken up by students who follow the master's programs in Antwerp.

- Another form of international research collaboration takes place through **research consortia** (bv. NORFACE-Belmont consortium-project (met NITLAPAN-UCA, Nicaragua en AgroParisTech, France), CBMS network (Philippines, Nicaragua), EPICC Biodiversa project (including Lund University, Leibniz Center for Agricultural Landscape Research, Norwegian University of Science and Technology and various partners in Brazil and Indonesia).

As far as **doctorates** are concerned, there is a structured collaboration within the Dutch-Flemish doctoral school CERES (for the training of some of our candidates) and joint doctorates are increasingly being awarded (with the Institute of Social Studies, ITM, Université du Québec and Outaouais, KU Leuven, UCLouvain, but also with UCB-Bukavu, Mzumbe Tanzania, UCC-Kinshasa) set up and completed.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- ICP Connect: approved project proposals: [DEM](#), [GOV](#), [GLOB](#) _____
- [Recent proposals UFOO 2024-27 & 2021-23 UFOO report](#) _____
- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#) _____
- Research strategy [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#) _____

Contact persons: •

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon) •
- Chairman Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Chairman of the Investigation Committee (T. De Herdt)
- Chairman of the Doctoral Committee (S. Vandeginste)

2. POLICY PLAN AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The IOB, together with the University of Antwerp, will draw up a new strategic policy plan before October 14, 2025 at the latest in which it makes the IOB's future vision explicit and in which all components as stated below are fully elaborated. This policy plan 2026-2030 will form the basis for and form an integral part of a next management agreement.

Components of that policy plan are:

- achievements over the past policy period;
- evaluation of the achievements and state of affairs;
- policy principles and policy objectives;
- policy instruments and action plan to achieve the formulated policy objectives;
- financial effect.

2.0 REVIEW

For the section 'Policy plan and quality assurance', provide a review of the period of the current management agreement. Also indicate here what happened to the recommendations of the previous evaluation as far as they relate to this section.

For the substantive aspects regarding the core tasks of the policy plan, see general review under point 1.)

To provide stronger organizational guidance for the implementation of the 2021-25 policy plan and the discussions about tackling the larger institutional challenges mentioned therein (and which were also the subject of the committee's concrete recommendations), and to ensure the **quality assurance of this 'change process'** As soon as possible after the lifting of the COVID restrictions, a broad internal overarching process of consultation on this matter, the **DNA process, was started**, supervised by a DNA Task Force, which is still ongoing (details in section 4.4). As part of this process, and in order to strengthen the **quality assurance of the personnel policy**, a process was started with Mensura to map well-being at work and improve it where necessary (see details in section 3.1.1).

In the meantime, further efforts were made to 'globalize' IOB education (IOB Going Global/ICP Connect). updated the research agenda, taken steps to clarify the 'social outreach' strategy (including recognizing different paradigms of social engagement, developing different impact pathways, strengthening interaction with the University of Antwerp, consolidating policy support for (inter)national development actors and 'spin-offs', capacity building in the South), the organization of communication strengthened through the ComCom, and a research coordinator (and science communicator) recruited. For outreach, there remains a need for more strategic guidance and more effective institutional support, especially through this new employee.

As far as **education quality assurance** is concerned, in the broader context of the decentralized quality control within NVAO, the transition was made from external quality control through a direct NVAO review to an institutional review process led by the University of Antwerp (validated as such by NVAO). After the good results in the last external NVAO review, the IOB was awarded the first interim internal UAntwerp review excellent points for the documentation and management of our educational programs. Various IOB practices were highlighted as 'best practices' for the entire University of Antwerp. In 2023, a thorough, substantive **peer review** of the 3 IOB master's programs was organized. The general findings were very positive, with some suggestions here and there

improvement. The complete self-evaluation report of the IOB education and the report of the peer review team (with both UAntwerp internal and external experts) can be found under 2.2.1.

With regard to **quality assurance for research and services**, it is worth mentioning that, on the one hand, we have adjusted the substantive output criteria for research since 2019 in line with the 'sustainable excellence' objective and, on the other hand, we have developed a template for better monitoring of social outreach activities - partly in response to a suggestion from the previous audit committee to make the research/outreach nexus more visible (see also below)

2.1 POLICY PLAN

2.1.1 FUTURE VISION AND NEXT POLICY PLAN

BO 2021-25: The IOB, together with the University of Antwerp, will draw up a new strategic policy plan before October 14, 2025 at the latest in which it makes the IOB's future vision explicit and in which all components as stated below are fully elaborated. This policy plan 2026-2030 will form the basis for and form an integral part of a next management agreement. (BO 3.1)

- Has the IOB already made the institute's future vision explicit?
- Has the IOB already started drawing up the new policy plan 2026-2030?

The ultimate goal of the ongoing DNA process is to update the IOB's vision for the future and to incorporate this into the new policy plan 2026-30. The outputs already achieved (internal *code of conduct*, ongoing educational reforms, new research and outreach strategy, Mensura process, deepened collaboration at UAntwerp via Global Engagement/Global Minds, etc.) are **interim building blocks**. Also the current one **audit** and the planned reflection on the results of this audit with our Scientific Advisory Council (**WRA**) form an important building block. The outcome of (the evaluation of) other ongoing processes, such as that of the VLIR-UOC ICP Connect program, will also further influence the concrete elaboration of the new policy plan.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- [Research- and Outreach Strategy 2024-29](#)

Contact persons: •

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon) •
- Chairman Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Chairman of the Investigation Committee (T. De Herdt)

2.2 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION

2.2.1 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

The University of Antwerp, together with the IOB, ensures the internal and external quality assurance of the research and educational activities in accordance with the regulations in Article II. 121 and II. 122 of the Higher Education Codex. The external assessments are carried out on the basis of a validated quality assurance protocol. (BO 3.2)

- *What are the most important conclusions of the assessments during the term of the management agreement?*
- *How has the IOB dealt with the results of the inspections? Are the results taken into account? held in the policy?*
- *Does the internal quality assurance ensure the quality of research, education and services to date? improved?*

At the beginning of 2016, after the suspension of the NVAO external assessment system, the University of Antwerp started developing a new training assessment to guarantee the quality of its training courses. The **University of Antwerp** has opted for a **six-year quality assurance cycle (Education Committee Script)**. within which the existing quality assurance processes **for education** have been adopted. The six-year cycle consists of three parts that build on each other:

- Systematic care for educational development (continuous internal quality assurance throughout the cycle) (see 2.2.3.);
- Internal process monitoring and control in year 3 of the cycle (see 2.2.2.);
- **Self-reflection with peer review (in year 6 of the cycle).**

In 2023, the IOB was in year 6 of the six-year cycle. In concrete terms, the IOB was asked to draw up a thorough self-evaluation report in the autumn of 2022, focusing on 3 themes. In consultation with the IOB education committee, it was decided to evaluate the 3 master's degrees in the areas of: multi-perspective, internationalization and the education-research nexus.

In May 2023, the IOB hosted an **international peer review team** for 2 days (consisting of 2 experts from the University of Antwerp, 3 external experts, and 1 international student) that discussed the 3 themes in depth with IOB lecturers, alumni and students of the IOB. At the end of the visit, the review team expressed its full confidence in the 3 master programs and discussed the strengths (high quality of education, a strong education team, a learning organization, dynamic processes, impressive network of partnerships, strong alumni relations, openness to challenges , students with diverse backgrounds) and suggestions for improvement (adjust workload for students, better inform students about possible help for mental well-being, market the 3 master's even better, continue discussions about vision and difficult themes, the "Global North " involvement, attention to group work and more interactive, practice-oriented working methods, further diversifying the staff).

The IOB was asked to respond to the suggestions with concrete follow-up actions by June 2023. These concrete actions have either already been implemented or are in full development (see thorough transformation process for the replacement of EOMPs to more group work, see continuation of the DNA process in Alden Biesen in November 2023, ...).

The full report with the strengths and suggestions, and the follow-up actions can be consulted via the link at the bottom of this paragraph.

An external research visit took place in May 2016, on behalf of the Research Council (OzR) of the UAntwerp. The IOB was then assessed as an 'internationally visible player' with research 'at an international level competitive in the field of development studies'. The IOB wrote on this basis a research strategy, which has now also been thoroughly renewed (Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29), partly based on a new benchmark study in which the research performance of the IOB is compared with a number of excellent European peer institutes.

Internal quality control is systematic

- education, research and services for each of the three core tasks with appropriate resources (cf. 2.2.3, 2.2.4., 1.4.), in
- the evaluation of academic staff, and in the annual
- reporting of activities in the IOB annual reports, which are also submitted to the IOB Scientific Advisory Council and to the Council of Board of the University of Antwerp.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- Research:
 - o [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#)
 - o [Benchmark-studie: "Publication output in Development Studies Institutes 2018-2023", November 2023](#)
- Education:
 - o [Script for Education Committees](#)
 - o [Self-evaluation report IOB education 2023](#)
 - o [IOB education peer review team report 2023](#)
- Internal quality assurance:
 - o [ZAP job profile and evaluation schedule](#)

Contact persons: •

- Chairman of IOB (D. Cassimon) •
- Chairman of the Research Committee (T. De Herdt)
- Chairman of the Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Quality assurance employee / CIKO (E. Godderis)

2.2.2 ACCREDITATION

The post-initial courses are completed with the master's degree. These courses must comply with the relevant decree provisions and be included in the Higher Education Register.

The scope of these courses is at least 60 credits. (BO 2.2.2.)

- *Are all master's programs accredited?*
- *Were there any negative evaluations during the term of the management agreement? Was an improvement program set up in those cases?*

All IOB master's programs are **accredited** (visitation 2007, 2015). This has also followed since the 2016-2017 academic year the IOB the new 6-year cycle for quality assurance led by the central Education Department of the University of Antwerp. The IOB completed the Internal Process Monitoring and Control in 2018-2019 (after 3 years) and this was completed very positively. In 2022-2023, the IOB was in year 6 where self-reflection with **peer review** took place. Once again the IOB received a very positive evaluation (see 2.2.1.).

There were no negative evaluations during the term of the management agreement.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- [Internal Process Monitoring and Control IOB Report 2019](#)
- [Self-evaluation report IOB education 2023](#)
- [IOB education peer review team report 2023](#)

Contact person: •

- Chairman of the Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Quality assurance employee / CIKO (E. Godderis)

2.2.3 EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE

The University of Antwerp, together with the IOB, ensures the quality assurance of education, according to a system that is adapted to the IOB's mission and that allows domestic and international comparison. (BO, 2.2.2)

- *How is the quality of education monitored?*
- *Is there (international) benchmarking with other, similar courses?*

- *What are the concrete results of quality assurance?*

The IOB has a thoroughly developed **system of quality assurance** for education that meets the UAntwerp conditions. The University of Antwerp follows a six-year quality assurance cycle, within which the existing quality assurance processes have been adopted. The six-year cycle consists of three parts that build on each other:

- **Systematic care for educational development (continuous internal quality assurance throughout the cycle)**

- Internal process monitoring and control in year 3 of the cycle (see 2.2.2.)
- Self-reflection with peer review in year 6 of the cycle (see 2.2.1.)

Various components return annually within the **systematic care for educational development** and are prepared and carried out by the CIKO staff member, so that their quality is guaranteed.

On the advice of the education department (after internal process monitoring in year 3), a number of processes were "rationalized" based on the workload. Below is an overview of what was retained:

- Follow-up and feedback on results of quality measurements of courses and course components (standard questionnaires, quickVIPs, focus group discussions, points reports and inflow, throughflow and outflow analyses, abbreviated feedback sheets);
- Via **alumni surveys and based on the [Alumni barometer survey \(2018-21\)](#)**, the IOB also takes into account the evaluation and suggestions from alumni and from the professional field. It also provides the opportunity to monitor where alumni end up professionally and what they experience as strengths and weaknesses in the IOB courses.
- The IOB conducted an international benchmark exercise on the quality and assessment of master's theses in 2014. The IOB planned a next **benchmark exercise** in September 2020, but this was postponed twice due to the COVID pandemic, until **September 2022**. The last exercise the recommendations from the IPS have been taken into account, including (the most important): involving various international partners from the IOB Going Global program so that more than

1 external reviewer is involved. This also provided the opportunity to exchange with our partners about us and their thesis assessment system. In addition to 4 IOB Going Global partners, academic colleagues from peer institutions in the North and experts from the field were also invited.

The results and recommendations were described in detail by CIKO in a benchmark report (see link at the bottom of this paragraph). This report was discussed in detail in the education committee of March 2023 and a 'dissertations task force' was established in June 2023 to work on the conclusions.

Following the six-year cycle, the IOB has developed a **digital education portfolio on Pintra** from 2016 with the support of the Department of Education. This portfolio is systematically supplemented and can be shown to the evaluation committee. The education portfolio is an important tool for the IOB to **make the underlying processes of internal quality assurance and good practices visible**. The portfolio is a calling card of the IOB for colleagues at UAntwerp and bundles the output of the systematic care for educational development in the form of reports from education committees, policy plans, quality measurements, curriculum revisions, etc.

With regard to **doctoral training**, the IOB follows the general principles of quality assurance of the **Antwerp Doctoral School (ADS)**, of which the doctoral training is a part. In addition to these generic rules, the **IOB** also has a number of specific principles of quality assurance:

- a PhD at the IOB is only possible for themes that are in line with the IOB research agenda and - expertise;
- themes and promoters belong to research lines;
- Candidates will only be accepted if there are sufficient financial and logistical guarantees (usually scholarship and/or institutional support).

As an additional quality control, the IOB requires all candidates to follow a **study program** (12 credits of advanced courses) during the first year. Recently, the IOB also became more actively involved in CERES to provide specific **PhD training in development studies** to help shape it. As a **mandatory part of the doctoral training**, the IOB also requires that all students obtain a minimum of 30 credits spread over 4 different competencies, produce an international peer-reviewed **publication** and **present** a doctoral seminar at the IOB. The strategy also repositions the institute with regard to a number of

debates on the field of development studies. This strategy also responds to the recommendation from the previous audit to think about “how do you position the IOB in a rapidly evolving landscape for development and international cooperation?” The new strategy also pays attention to the development of different *impact pathways*, ethical considerations in partnerships, and it perpetuates previously made choices regarding the organization of our research group and the criteria for evaluations.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- [Rapport internationale benchmarkoefening thesissen IOB](#)
- Quality assurance for doctoral training: [IOB Doctoral Regulations](#), [General Doctoral Regulations UAntwerp](#) and [PhD Roadmap IOB](#).
-

Contact persons:

- Quality assurance education (masters and short-term):
 - o Chairman of the Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
 - o Quality assurance employee / CIKO (E. Godderis)
 - o If desired, you can also contact I. Verachtert of the Department Education from UAntwerp.
- Alumni survey and impact research:
 - o Staff member (S. Dewachter)
- Quality assurance doctoral training:
 - o Chairman of the Doctoral Committee (S. Vandeginste)

2.2.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE RESEARCH

The University of Antwerp, together with the IOB, ensures the quality assurance of the research, according to a system that is adapted to the IOB's own mission, but which allows domestic and international comparison. (BO 2.3)

- *How is the quality of the research monitored?*
- *How is it ensured that the output and impact of the research is comparable to that of the Flemish universities and similar foreign institutions?*

The IOB monitors the quality of research in line with the research policy of the University of Antwerp.

As mentioned earlier, the IOB has precise **minimum output parameters for individual staff members** recorded for all sections of the AP. These parameters serve as the basis for the intake and goal interviews and are used for every assessment, namely for extension of AAP mandates, the awarding of postdoc bridging mandates, the assessment of ZAP after a trial period, for promotion applications and for decree evaluation. These parameters have been slightly adjusted since 2019 in line with the objective of 'sustainable excellence' and in order to pay more attention to the social outreach component. The percentage spent on education, research and services is fixed for each staff member. For ZAP, the standard percentage for research is 40%, but individual variations are possible based on the intake interview and/or the target interviews with ZAP members. The report of these target interviews also forms the basis for evaluation afterwards (every five years, for permanent appointment or for promotion). For Research professors (where the weight of research is 90%), the evaluation takes place at central level - albeit with substantial input from the IOB board.

At institutional level, research quality control is included in the cycle of research audits that is monitored by the UAntwerp Research Council. Earlier this year, this resulted in a thoroughly renewed research and outreach strategy. The IOB can of course place its own emphasis on this -

and considers this necessary: for example, in the renewed research and outreach strategy, extra attention was paid to research ethics (with special attention to power imbalances in the North-South interface), the role (and ethics) of partnering in the South, and the research-outreach nexus that is of great importance to us.

In the updated [research and outreach plan](#) we also document the success of a policy that focuses on

(co-)publications with (co-)authors from the South (figure 1.1.) and southernization of our staff (figure 1.2.), under more through stricter requirements for vacancies for postdoc and ZAP staff members.

The IOB also organizes [benchmark studies on a regular basis, in which](#) the institute is compared with a number of excellent European *peer* institutes. While the IOB represents the largest concentration of expertise in development studies in Flanders (and in Belgium), it is one of the smallest institutes in Europe, but systematically one of the most productive in terms of standard criteria of qualitative research output and impact.

Also at institutional level, the IOB has established a **Scientific Advisory Council (WRA)** , consisting of experts in the field of development studies, at similar institutions from abroad or from the world of development cooperation. This council meets during the preparation of new policy documents, and its members can be addressed by promotion committees. In February 2024, the WRA also provided advice on the new research policy plan.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)
- [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#)
- [Benchmark-studie](#): "Publication output in Development Studies Institutes 2018-2023", November 2023
- [Feedback WRA](#) on research policy plan

Contact persons: •

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon)
- Chairman of the Investigation Committee (T. De Herdt)
- Library staff member (H. De Backer)
- Research coordinator (F. Huybrechts)

3. PERSONNEL POLICY

The IOB pursues a transparent personnel policy that strives for the highest possible quality at all levels.

3.0 REVIEW

For the 'Personnel policy' section, provide a review of the period of the current management agreement. Also indicate here what happened to the recommendations of the previous evaluation as far as they relate to this section.

During the past policy period, the renewal/supplementation of the structural contingent of 12 ZAP was further realized, partly and temporarily financed from central resources. The postdoc (BAP) policy, largely financed from the appropriated funds, was also continued. The AAP policy, tightened during the previous policy plan period, was largely retained; the ATP was expanded with a research/communications staff member.

A continuing point of attention concerned the **workload** at the IOB. In that context, further measures were taken, not only to reduce the institutional pressure on ZAP, but also to clarify the scope and content of tasks and the guidance of the AAP, as well as that of the BAP, and also to address the increasing workload at Better organizational management of ATP.

Within the framework of the DNA process, a process was started with Mensura to map well-being at work and improve it where necessary.

3.1 POLICY PLAN

Although the management agreement does not, strictly speaking, include any obligation to draw up a personnel policy plan, the terms of reference of the evaluation committee stipulate that 'personnel management' is also discussed.

3.1.1 PERSONNEL POLICY - PERSONNEL POLICY VISION

- Does the IOB have a global vision of its personnel policy?
In which documents and plans is this vision translated?

Within the limits of the planned structural financing of the IOB, the personnel policy plan currently provides for a basic staffing level (expressed in FTE) of 12 ZAP, 10 AAP and 8.15 ATP (see Dutch annual report 2023, table 4, for the evolution over time) .

During the past policy period, the renewal of the **ZAP contingent** was further implemented with the appointment of a total of **three new ZAP**, two of which were to replace (full-time) ZAP members who left the institution and a third was a 10% ZAP appointment within a FED-tWIN mandate (financing a 10-year postdoctoral position on the bridge between the RMCA Tervuren and UAntwerp). These new ZAP members were each appointed as research professor (TTZAPBOF) during the five-year trial period,

one of which was based on central UAntwerp (BOF) resources (because the person concerned obtained a (Starting) ERC Grant. In line with the new research lines, these appointments have helped shape the IOB's 'identity transition'. In addition, during the current policy period, the IOB was also able to always count on a half-time **additional research professor** (shared on a 50%-50% basis with the Faculty of Law) financed from the central research budget. The current ZAP staff is currently 11.7 FTE.

For **AAP**, the policy that was changed in the previous policy period was continued. In this policy, individual ZAP members are given more powers/responsibilities in writing the vacancy and following up (only!) the research and the doctorate; There is a fixed procedure of rotating filling of the AAP positions by the ZAP members. New vacancies are now more strictly checked by the OZC for their consistency with the IOB research policy. The management of the AAP's education and services remains collective (including through detailed a priori working agreements in consultation with the chairman of the OWC and the OZC). In line with the general AAP statute, the quantification of the relative time commitment for doctorate, IOB research, education and services was also specified. Depending on the total institutional needs in terms of educational support, and in the current policy period also as a result of COVID restrictions, the total AAP quota was handled as flexibly as possible within the budget margin; the current effective quota of AAP is 11 FTE.

For **ATP policy**, there were no major changes (or personnel changes) in terms of quota during the past policy period, with the exception of the recruitment of an additional ATP member for research coordination and -communication; the increasing workload and the permanent changes in the demand for support requirements some adjustment in the job profiles and, above all, constant attention to further rationalization and optimization of the work organization and the deployment of the ATP staff members, who now operate in a self-organizing manner to a greater extent than before; In the near future, a more global revision of the job profile descriptions of the IOB ATP must be carried out.

In addition to the structural staff framework, the IOB has an increasing number of salaried **BAP members** (from 16.15 FTE in 2018 to 28.4 FTE at the end of 2023), largely due to steadily growing external financing.

- A part-time ZAP, 1.5 FTE BAP with a guest professor degree and some additional postdoc BAP members are financed directly and non-recurringly by the institute from the appropriate funds in function of innovative research impulses and internationalization of the staff (bridging to external postdoc financing for excellent IOB doctoral students and external international postdocs with perspectives on self-financing at the IOB).
- A part-time postdoc position is also financed here by the Global Minds program in return for the significantly increased services provided by the IOB to the University of Antwerp in this context; A similar position is also financed on a one-off basis from central research resources (UAntwerp Postdoc Challenge).

A new dimension of the personnel policy is the explicit attention to the **workload and experience**, in the broader context of the UAntwerp policy.

- In addition to the generic anti-stress measures of the university, we have developed a number of new measures at the IOB in the context of a policy for 'sustainable excellence', primarily for the ZAP. This includes attention to the workability of the tasks at the IOB (discourse, paying attention to excessive ambitions and competition); a redefinition of evaluation criteria for research to align them more with the criteria of sister faculties (correction to the often substantially stricter IOB criteria); an explicit and certain degree of quantification of the outreach tasks.
- In addition, the possibility was created for ZAP to request a temporary work reduction through 'mini-sabbaticals' and postdoc support for the IOB chairman (the equivalent of a half-time postdoc BAP) was continued.
- Finally, in 2023 it was decided, in consultation and with explicit support (and financing) from the HR department of the University of Antwerp, to start a process for the survey and explicit measurement of the experience of well-being at work, carried out by Mensura, via their internal standard tool SONAR: all staff members were now invited to complete this SONAR survey, the results were fed back and supplemented with individual and focus group discussions; Mensura is currently formulating conclusions and suggestions for a follow-up process.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)
- Not a single AAP candidate will be called "2018.12.14 IOB AAP Policy na Raad"
- [Postdoc policy](#)

Contact persons:

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon) •
- Institute coordinator (V. Verlinden)

3.1.2 PERSONNEL POLICY PLAN – RECRUITMENT AND STAFF FORMATION

- *What is the IOB's vision regarding recruitment, promotion, evaluation, training, exchange and reward of staff?*
- *How does the IOB translate this into an annual staff formation?*

With regard to remuneration systems, monitoring and evaluation instruments (including promotions), the IOB's personnel policy follows the **UAntwerp personnel policy**. All operational personnel are monitored in a cycle of goal and evaluation interviews. BAP employees on external funding are monitored by their respective supervisor.

ZAP members use evaluation **schedules** that monitor a balanced distribution of teaching, research and service tasks per staff member and across different staff members. The determination of educational input also refers to educational input from partners in the South.

For AAP members, the balanced commitment to education, research and services is monitored by a time administration system in consultation with the OWC chairman.

When **recruiting ZAP**, the aim is **international excellence**; there is always broad international advertising and internationalization is always an explicit objective. Vacancies are determined based on educational needs and the research agenda (by the Council). This policy period was even more explicitly focused on attracting candidates from the Global South, including through more targeted promotion, diversification of the selection committees and, of course, specific vacancy profile descriptions of ZAP and postdoc appointments. All external postdoc appointments on IOB resources and two of the last three ZAP recruitments thus resulted in ZAP appointments from the Global South. See also figure 1.2. in that renewed [research and outreach strategy](#). To the extent possible, we also continue to focus [on collaboration with Southern partners](#) and academics from the South to southernize our teaching staff.

Selection committees are composed according to UAntwerp rules, with at least one at the IOB external ZAP member of UAntwerp and at least two external experts. Candidate lists are always screened in advance by the IOB librarian for their publication output (based on the established publication standards).

The method for **selecting AAP** and IOB-funded **postdocs** is similar. **BAP** funded on external projects are selected by individual promoters, often after an external vacancy (e.g. at DOCPRO, FWO).

The annual staff formation is determined on the basis of the annual budget within the structurally available financial resources; a rolling five-year medium-term forecast is routinely inserted into the budget document. As previously reported, the current institutional and structural staff formation includes the financing of 12 ZAP, 11 AAP and 8.15 ATP in FTE, with an annually determined additional expenditure of BAP financed on the use of the historically accrued designated funds; This will of course be supplemented outside the structural IOB budget with appointments based on the available external financing.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- Not a single AAP candidate will be called ["2018.12.14 IOB AAP Policy na Raad"](#)
- [ATP status](#)
- [ZAP status](#)
- [BAP status](#)
- [AAP statute • IOB](#)
- [Organic Regulations](#)

Contact persons:

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon) •
Institute coordinator (V. Verlinden)

4. MANAGEMENT AND POLICY

The IOB pursues a coherent policy that is communicated systematically and transparently to internal and external stakeholders.

4.0 REVIEW

For the 'Management and policy' section, provide a review of the period of the current management agreement.
Also indicate here what happened to the recommendations of the previous evaluation as far as they relate to this section.

In terms of **management of the institute**, the operational structure, which was positively assessed in the previous evaluation, was maintained and further optimized, both in terms of general institute management, as well as the management of education, and research and services; This also applies to the reporting mechanisms to internal (UAntwerp) and external stakeholders. Naturally, many aspects of management and decision-making are subsequently embedded in the management structures of the University of Antwerp and there too, **cooperation with and integration into the University of Antwerp** has only been further strengthened and deepened in the past period: The IOB is recognized and present in all kinds of central policy bodies (College of Deans, Education and Research Council, Services Council, etc.) and the interaction with the central services is excellent

(also thanks to the work of our institute coordinator). IOB (staff) also plays a central role in the preparation and implementation of the 'Global Engagement' strategy of the University of Antwerp.

The (positively assessed) **financial management**, fully embedded in the University of Antwerp, was also maintained and remains healthy, partly due to the predictable institutional financing and helped by an increasing volume of external financing.

In order to address the conversations about the larger ('DNA') questions and challenges (also in a more inclusive way) and to provide stronger organizational guidance, a broad internal overarching and consultative process of consultation was started and implemented, the **DNA process**, which is still ongoing. This process is supervised by a DNA Task Force. It gave rise to a series of internal and residential (Alden Biesen) policy days, meetings and seminars, whether or not externally facilitated, sometimes in more limited (ZAP) or the broader IOB staff, and addressed both the 'how' questions (how do we talk about this with each other), which resulted in a *code of conduct* (the Team Charter), as well as the more fundamental 'what' questions (e.g. about the survey of term 'development', how we enroll in the decolonization movement, etc). These discussions then fueled concrete outputs such as the new research strategy, and in the near future also a revised IOB mission and vision. Naturally, decision-making on this still takes place via the existing policy and management structures; The initiated Mensura process on measuring well-being at work is also linked to this DNA process.

4.1.1 MISSION AND VISION

The IOB has a clear mission and vision that is aligned with the vision of the relevant stakeholders.

- *Is the mission and vision written down clearly and powerfully?*
- *Does this reflect the reason for the IOB's existence?*
- *Is this aligned?*
- *Has this been communicated?*

The IOB has a clearly written [vision text](#) which is located on the homepage of the website. The vision text is also displayed in the IOB building. Our **policy plans** also always start with a reference to the vision and [mission](#), and the objectives. [The text](#) refers to high-quality research and education, but also a permanent concern for South activities and strategic engagement in political decision-making processes from the local to the global level (service provision, outreach).

An important cornerstone of our way of working is **academic pluralism**: the active recognition and cultivation of pluralism is important both in terms of our scientific approach (the importance of different scientific disciplines, methodologies and scale of analysis), and in terms of the diversity of personal backgrounds (hence the great importance of southernization of our staff) and the multitude of forms of social involvement of our research.

In the context of the DNA process, a start was made on **revising the mission and vision at the Alden Biesen seminar (2022)**, but rather than clarifying these more abstractly, it was decided to tackle them on the basis of the more concrete policy questions and plans, such as the new research strategy, and thus complete the new mission and vision earlier as the final part of the DNA process.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- [Current mission- and vision text](#)
- [Alden Biesen Report 2022](#)
- Research policy plan [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#)

Contact persons:

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon) •
Institute coordinator (V. Verlinden)

4.1.2 VISION - OBJECTIVES

The IOB has translated its vision into objectives.

- *Have the organization's objectives been written out?*
- *Were these implemented and realised? (to what extent)*
- *Have these been translated at the different levels of the organization?*

The objectives of the IOB are written down in the general Policy Plan 2021-2025 and further specified and elaborated in policy plans, especially most recently for research. The Dutch-language administrative annual report most systematically describes the evolution of the concrete implementation of the current policy plan.

The objectives for the IOB's core missions have been clearly translated and operationalized at all relevant levels and, in our opinion, have been largely achieved.

Inspired in part by the DNA process, innovative policy is in various phases of definition and implementation, and the same applies to the extent to which the objectives have been achieved.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- [Policy plan 2021-2025](#)
- Research policy plan [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#)
- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports](#)

Contact persons:

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon)

- Chairman of the Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Chairman of the Investigation Committee (T. De Herdt)

4.1.3 RISKS

The IOB identified its risks and formulated a strategy to deal with them.

- *Has a SWOT analysis been carried out based on the objectives and processes?*
- *Have the risks within the various organizational units and processes been identified?*
- *Have measures been formulated to deal with the risks?*

The SWOT (2019) and associated risk analysis from the previous self-evaluation report were taken as a starting point for an update, whereby the updated SWOT was inspired, among other things, by sub-SWOTs (on decolonization education; PhD, and research) made in the context of the Alden Biesen reflection days in 2022 (see Alden Biesen Report 2022, p. 9-11-14). Both the original and the updated SWOT are added in the appendix at the end of this report. The interpretation of the updated SWOT 2024 requires some explanation (see also legend SWOT 2024): it resumes the old SWOT and indicates to what extent substantial progress has been made for a particular item (green), while the item, on the contrary, is more stringent or risky. has become (red), and/or progress has been made but is still a concern/risk (orange). New items in the SWOT were added (in blue).

When comparing both SWOTs, it is striking that many items are still valid, although their intensity has sometimes changed somewhat (positive or negative) and few truly new items have been added.

The associated risk analysis also differs little in terms of items from those from the previous self-evaluation report, although some risks have changed in intensity; some in a positive sense, but others have also increased in risk intensity and/or risk urgency:

- Apart from the DNA process and the pursuit of multi-perspectiveness, the uncertainty surrounding the future of the VLIR-UOS scholarships remains a worrying point of attention. The success and high quality of the current IOB education offering not only gave us very positive evaluations but also a package of 30 **scholarships** (for our three masters) through the competitive VLIR ICP financing. This package guarantees us a sufficient number of students from low-income countries for another 2 years. Although the IOB master's programs - financed by a separate grant (excl. study grants) - have a *sui generis* character compared to the competing master's programs (which usually have no grant for operating costs nor a specific development assignment), there is no specific treatment of our masters. This would mean that the number of **less well-off students from low-income countries** could fall sharply within a few years.

Aware of these risks, the IOB is already focusing more than before on **self-financing students**, also from Europe (for the time being with slightly less intensity and success). Alternative sources of financing such as focusing on micro-credentials, considering an Erasmus Mundus, and short training initiatives are also possible. But of course the loss of scholarship students implies that an essential piece of DNA of our master's programs would disappear.

- A second risk has to do with our strategy of internationalization (and decolonization) of our education and research activities. During IOB Going Global and the successor ICP Connect programme, it became clear that the **unpredictability of the political context** in countries such as DR Congo and Nicaragua has a major impact. For example, our Nicaraguan partner disbanded by the government, which meant that the entire design had to be rethought. The ties with the people involved have continued to exist in other creative ways, but flexibility and creativity have proven to be necessary there.
- A third risk concerns global developments and growing polarization around the role of the university in broader social (including global) events (e.g. Israel-Palestine conflict, decolonization). The IOB recognizes (in its renewed [research and outreach strategy](#)) It

importance of different forms of social engagement, but internally this also implies mutual tolerance of these different styles of change.

- A fourth risk is the **IOB staff** who perform very well (as shown by individual and collective evaluations), but who, despite all initiatives, clearly continue to encounter the limits of the sustainable workability of the current levels of deployment. The strongly pursued 'results-oriented management' with its extensive and detailed evaluation criteria and the competitive pressure perceived as such (perhaps wrongly) from the university and the broader academic world seems to lead to a culture of over-performance and high ambitions (beyond the explicit stipulated requirements). Another dimension of this culture is that sometimes too much focus is placed on individual rather than institutional agendas and tasks (which can be deduced, among other things, from a reduced willingness to take on public tasks). With the policy of '**sustainable excellence**'

the IOB wants to give an institutional signal that some throttle may need to be slowed down, not least to improve the quality and sustainability of the work of IOB staff members in the future.

safeguard. Efforts are also being made to strengthen a collaborative rather than competitive culture.

- A final lasting but also greatly reduced risk is created by the recent attention to the **risks of traveling to risk areas** and the possible liability of the universities in the event of any problems. At VLIR level, an inter-university policy was agreed that, among other things, created a '**Risk Destinations Committee**', and which was also implemented at the University of Antwerp (with IOB staff members sitting on it). This committee determines whether staff members and students can still travel to risk areas and under what conditions. Naturally, working in fragile contexts is a core activity for the IOB. IOB staff members are also involved as experts in the committee - which is now working very smoothly; The IOB also institutionally facilitates the following of adapted (so-called HEAT) training that must teach staff to better deal with possible risky situations in the field on site.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- SWOT analysis 2019 and 2024: see Appendix to this document

Contact persons: •

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon) • Chairman Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Chairman of the Investigation Committee (T. De Herdt)
- Institute coordinator (V. Verlinden)

4.2 FOLLOW-UP AND REPORTING

4.2.1 MONITORING

The IOB has a system that allows the execution of assignments to be monitored (monitoring).

Is there a monitoring system within the different parts of the organization?

- *Does this system allow timely adjustments?*

There is a detailed system and systematic practice of transparent monitoring and evaluation for almost all parts of the organization.

For **education**: (see also detailed reporting under points 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.2.3)

- student evaluations and focus groups of courses in the master's program, alumni surveys, monitoring selection procedure, student participation in the IOB education committees where there is room for direct feedback, etc.;
- annual evaluations of short training programs, specific courses ("Debating Development", courses with South partners, Capacity Building Evaluation, etc.);
- small education committee (education team) prepares and follows up on the above;
- Education Committee prepares decisions and proposes policy to the IOB Council based on: above information.

For **research**: (see also extensive reporting under points 1.3.1. and 1.3.2.)

- monthly reporting on publications to the Council;
- annual reporting of IOB research output in annual report;
- research team prepares and monitors OZC and broader policy
- periodic publication output measurement via benchmark study;
- For follow-up doctoral research annual progress reports.

Monitoring and evaluation are ongoing for **scientific services and social impact**

through individual goal discussions and reporting during evaluations. The work with Southern partners is subject to internal or external monitoring and evaluation, including in the context of IOB Going Global. The same is the case for the collaboration with the University of Antwerp in the context of Global Engagement/Global Minds (in this case managed by the University's Global Engagement Working Group).

For the monitoring and evaluation of **academic and administrative staff**, the IOB closely follows the working methods and guidelines of the University of Antwerp, i.e. annual target interviews and periodic (decretal) evaluations or evaluations in promotion files. Education, research and services are also individually monitored and discussed here every year.

In addition, the regular **(self)evaluations** in the context of internal or external general, educational or research audits are important moments of monitoring and evaluation.

The preparation and discussion of the **annual report** is also a time for monitoring and evaluating the entire operation; also always provided feedback for external reflection with the WRA.

For more details, see the quality control sections on education, research, social services, personnel and the section on financial policy (4.3.2).

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

See points 2.2., 1.3., 1.4. and 3.1.2.

4.2.2 REPORTING

The IOB reports on the execution of the assignments.

- *How are the measurement results of the follow-up system reported to the various stakeholders (Board of Directors, government, partners, etc.)?*
- *Does this reporting provide a true picture of performance based on relevant information?*

Almost all in 4.2.1. The M&E instruments mentioned are reported externally: - The results of the **evaluation of academic staff** are handled by specific committees, with the presence of external evaluators in the case of ZAP members, and discussed by the IOB Council. The results of monitoring of all personnel are also reported to the

relevant bodies of the University of Antwerp. Teachers' files also contain evaluations of students.

- o Reporting tools are standardized (UAntwerp templates for AAP evaluation and ATP, e-curriculum for ZAP) and comprehensive, objective IOB-specific evaluation criteria have been determined in detail (cf. evaluation and excellence criteria for AAP & PhD students, evaluation criteria for ZAP). Evaluations are based on verified data (official student evaluations, academic bibliography library, ADS doctoral figures, project financing data from the financial services, etc.) that are additionally checked

by the institute coordinator and the library employee.

- The monitoring of **educational activities** and **research and service activities** is reported and discussed in the Education and Research Committees, which report to the IOB Council. Other activities (e.g. debate evenings, partner work, etc.) and elements of general policy are the subject of discussion in the IOB Council, whether or not prepared in the OWC or OZC. The reports of the IOB Council are in turn reported to the Executive Council and the Board of Directors

from University of Antwerp.

- **Self-evaluation reports** for education and research were provided to the external evaluation committees, but also to the UAntwerp Education Council and Research Council, respectively, which ensure further follow-up via follow-up reports (OwR) and progress reports (OzR). The IOB also has a practice of making other evaluation documents (partnership, benchmarking study, etc.) available to the public via the website as much as possible.

- All of the activities and business operations of the IOB are reviewed annually, via an English-language document **annual report** and reported via a Dutch administrative annual report

- o to the Scientific Advisory Board, consisting of various external members from the broad field of development studies and development actors; o the Board of Directors and government commissioner of UAntwerp; o the Flemish Government; o the public via the website.

The 2023 English-language annual report experimented with a more digital format to great acclaim.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)
- [Reports of IOB Investigation Committee](#)
- Reports of IOB Education Committee: available on request and via the Pintra Education Portfolio
- [Reports of the Scientific Advisory Council \(WRA\)](#)

Contact persons: •

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon) • Chairman Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Chairman of the Investigation Committee (T. De Herdt)
- Institute coordinator (V. Verlinden)

4.3 MANAGEMENT OF THE IOB

4.3.1 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The IOB has an organizational structure that is tailored to achieving its objectives.

- What is the basis of the organizational structure?
- Have the necessary coordination mechanisms been built in and aligned?
- How does this structure provide the necessary flexibility to deal with changes?

The basic structure of the IOB consists of the **Council** (decision-making body), the **Education Committee** (OWC) and the **Research Committee** (OZC). Within the OZC, the **Doctoral Committee** (DC) also functions as a faculty policy entity of the IOB within the entire Antwerp Doctoral School (ADS). In the OWC and OZC, all institutional policies regarding resp. education and research/social impact prepared, monitored and evaluated. This committee also prepares all decisions of the Council in the area of their competence. Within the facilitating institutional framework, the individual ZAP members (and to a certain extent also the postdocs and the AAP) are and will remain the primary driving forces in terms of concrete education, research and outreach initiatives.

The chairman of the institute and the chairmen of the OWC and OZC together with an elected representative of the AAP, the BAP and the institute coordinator (ATP), the **Office** that is responsible for the daily management of the IOB and the preparation and follow-up of the Council's decisions. A (rotating) program director is elected every two years under the ZAP to manage the operational management of the master's programs (and the concrete management of the educational administration).

The Council, OWC, OZC and DC are composed representatively. ZAP members are automatically members of the Council and of the OZC, and members of OWC in function of their tasks in educational management. Representatives of AAP, ATP and students are appointed by periodic elections.

Informally, a 'small OWC' has also existed for several years, in which those directly involved in education policy (chairman, CIKO, student administration, alumni manager and students) come together to prepare policy issues for the OWC; A similar process also exists for research and outreach and the preparation and follow-up of OZC meetings.

It is also the IOB's habit to prepare important policy points on institutionalized policy days (at least 3 per year) and/or during informal ad hoc meetings, so that important new policies have already been clarified and supported within the IOB as much as possible before they are adopted. decisions are made in the Council. A **DNA Task** was also created in the context of the DNA process

Force was established to prepare and coordinate this process in terms of content, organization and logistics. In this context of important policy developments, our external **Scientific Advisory Board** also plays an important role. After all, they are not only asked to provide feedback on the annual report every year, but are also systematically consulted on new policy points in preparation.

There is also a regular informal consultation meeting with the **ATP** in which the administrative operations are discussed and monitored (reports via Notes in MS Teams). Under the leadership of the Education Committee chairman, there is also an annual AAP meeting where educational tasks are divided. Furthermore, a number of committees with specific tasks also function, such as the Library Committee, the Social Committee and the ICT Committee.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)
- [IOB Organic Regulations](#)

Contact persons: •

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon) • Chairman
- Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Chairman of the Investigation Committee (T. De Herdt)
- Institute coordinator (V. Verlinden)
- Chairman DNA Task Force (K. Titeca)

4.3.2 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The IOB has sound financial management.

- *How are the IOB's finances organised?*
- *What is the link with UAntwerp?*
- *How is the financial reporting done?*
- *How sustainable is the IOB's financial situation?*

The IOB's financial management is fully **embedded in the UAntwerp system** and its guidelines, procedures and reporting systems, both internally and towards external stakeholders. The IOB budget and annual accounts are integrated into the UAntwerp budget and annual accounts, and the IOB budget and accounts are drawn up by the IOB in close consultation with the central Finance Department of the UAntwerp and monitored by them, both informally and through an annual summer meeting with the CFO (about drawing up the following year's budget). The cooperation with the Department of Finance is excellent.

The IOB (and the University of Antwerp) meticulously monitors compliance with all provisions regarding financial reporting, stipulated in section 4.2. of the **management agreement**. The cooperation with the responsible government commissioner is also excellent. The budget and accounts are mainly reported in detail and transparently in the IOB annual reports, and especially in the 'administrative' Dutch-language annual report.

The IOB chairman has final internal responsibility for the financial policy and actively monitors it. The IOB has an ATP staff member who is responsible for the **daily financial administration** and settlements of both institutional transactions and those involving external project financing, within the UAntwerp management and transaction system.

The institutional financing from the government naturally provides a **stable, predictable source** and basic financing for the IOB budget, further supplemented with a number of (mainly internal UAntwerp) income. On this basis, the staff framework (and related staff expenditure) as well as other expenditure are recorded in the annual budget, supplemented with projections for the next four financial years.

In addition, the IOB has been applying a policy for more than 10 years, laid down in policy plans and annual reports, and validated by the University of Antwerp and the government commissioner, to annually use part of the historically accrued **designated funds** of the IOB for temporary, non-recurring expenses. for BAP in function of innovative research and education impulses (temporary postdocs, part-time temporary ZAP, chair support, mini-sabbaticals, see also 3.1). This amount is determined annually. In terms of sustainable budget policy, the IOB strives for a situation where a consciously planned (and realized) budget deficit reflects this temporary use of the intended funds.

When we look at the budget and annual accounts of recent years, we conclude that this policy was successfully implemented and the situation of the IOB remained **healthy**, partly due to the still outstanding earmarked funds.

In addition, the IOB attracts an **increasing volume of external financing**, which is initially managed by the promoters involved, of course fully integrated into the above-mentioned UAntwerp system; This also contributes to an expansion of IOB expenditure and financial sustainability.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- IOB annual reports: [Dutch administrative annual reports / English annual reports](#)
- Research policy plan [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#)

Contact persons: •

Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon)

- Chairman of the Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Chairman of the Investigation Committee (T. De Herdt)
- Institute coordinator (V. Verlinden)
- ATP finance employee (An Vermeesch)
- Head of Finance Department UAntwerp (Ann Notelé)
- Cell coordinator Financial Project Management UAntwerp (Caroline Bollaert)

4.4 CHANGE MANAGEMENT

The IOB implements change in a planned manner.

- *Is an analysis made of the departure situation?*
- *Is the change supported by the top of the organization?*
- *Is the desired situation clearly defined?*
- *Have the risks in case of failure been identified and an approach developed?*
- *How does the IOB implement the changes?*

As a learning organization, the IOB is aware of the need for **permanent change and adaptation** of its various activities. The fact that it takes this to heart and concretely **anchors it** in effective and functioning policy and management instruments relating to education, research and services has been made sufficiently clear in this report, in our opinion, in the previous sections.

In terms of education, for example, the modular structure of the master's programs offers ample opportunity to adapt the content and methodological approach of the specific courses within the fixed general modules, which is done at the initiative of the module coordinator and the teachers involved, and under the guidance of the OWC, also happens all the time. For example, the DNA process has led to important changes within course components due to an increasing attention to multiperspectivity and decolonization.

However, this is possible within the current structure and so there is little need to make more fundamental changes to the generic design and modular organization of the master's programs. (In that case, a formal curriculum renewal would have to be prepared via a curriculum committee.) There are few risks associated with this method.

In terms of research and scientific and social services, themes, priorities and organizational structures are continuously adjusted in the five-yearly policy plans and specific policy documents (such as now for the outreach policy), and in the operational activities of the research committee. Here too, the risks of the method are limited.

In addition, there is continuous work on **specific innovation initiatives**, which are usually prepared by specific task forces and then socialized in the institute. Recent examples of such innovations are the in-depth alumni work, the IOB ICP Connect program, (and within the broader UAntwerp dynamic) also the Global Engagement/Global Minds program. Some of these innovations are more ambitious and risky (particularly the IOB Going Global programme), and some also touch on the IOB's core missions. However, if they are largely made possible by specific additional financing, the risks are also manageable.

Other innovation processes really touch the core of the IOB. This obviously applies to tackling the 'big questions and challenges' surrounding (the revision of) the DNA of the institute and the long-term vision and mission, including the formulation of answers to the questions asked in the previous evaluation of the management agreement. . Partly in view of the historically strong **horizontal participatory organizational culture** of the IOB, with great respect for the autonomy of individual staff members and a jointly developed identity, these conversations also required a process-based, inclusive approach.

The DNA process, which was started after the lifting of COVID restrictions in 2022 and has not yet been completed, therefore led to a series of both on-site and residential (Alden Biesen) internal meetings and seminars, the organization of (internal) workshops, whether or not externally facilitated, sometimes in a more limited ZAP group, sometimes with the entire IOB staff. The process initially mainly dealt with the 'how' questions (how do we talk about this with each other), with the help of an external facilitator, which resulted in a **code of conduct** (the IOB Team Charter). The focus then shifted to the more fundamental 'what' questions. These discussions then feed concrete outputs such as changes in course components in master's education (see above), and also the new research strategy, and as an intended provisional final piece, a revised IOB mission and vision.

This process was also organizationally supervised by an **IOB DNA Task Force**, with a broader composition in addition to the members of the Bureau. Naturally, decision-making on this still takes place via the existing policy and management structures; The initiated Mensura process on measuring well-being at work is also linked to this DNA process.

The IOB has learned that changes can only be successfully implemented if they are sufficiently widely supported by a critical mass within the institute. Sufficient investment in a solid, strong participatory and inclusive preparation and discussion of innovative policy is therefore necessary. The result is that the process requires a lot of time and commitment from those involved, and therefore tension arises between this objective/method and the very strong workload of the current assignments of all (but especially ZAP) staff.

Relevant documents and/or people we can speak to about this during our visit:

Documents:

- [IOB Team Charter](#)
- [Self-evaluation report IOB education 2023](#)
- [IOB education peer review team report 2023](#)
- Research policy plan [Research and Outreach strategy 2024-29](#)
- UAntwerp [Global Engagement Framework](#)

Contact persons: •

- Chairman IOB (D. Cassimon) •
- Chairman Education Committee (N. Molenaers)
- Chairman of the Investigation Committee (T. De Herdt)
- Institute coordinator (V. Verlinden)

ANNEX: SWOT analysis IOB 2019

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality and fully optimised master programmes in Antwerp • Significant growth in quantity and (international) quality of output (PhDs, external finance, publications) • Clear integration of Great Lakes focus within broader IOB agenda. • Steps towards the internationalisation of master education with Southern partners • Advances in outreach to and support for alumni • Good integration and cooperation (with autonomy and a good reputation) in the University of Antwerp • Fully elaborated staff policies and procedures (incl. clear and coherent publication and outreach criteria, cycle of goal setting talks) • Stimulating & enabling work environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced, but still moderate institutional capacity for strategic management and guidance, leading to missed opportunities for strategic acting e.g. towards international funding opportunities, institutional outreach policy • Poor monitoring of educational environment (e.g. new competition) • Risk of underinvestment in activities with high societal impact • An almost all white IOB staff at ZAP and post doc level (despite efforts, internationalised AAP and extensive international cooperation with Southern academics)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing academic recognition of multi-disciplinary /mixed methods Development studies • Increasing need to mainstream development issues • Increasing attention to societal impact in research assessments • Great Lakes Region remains important part of the world development puzzle • Demand and opportunities for cooperation with faculties of University of Antwerp (Korf Verbredende vakken, research profs, new masters, ...) • Increasing (academic) strength of an increasing number of academics in Southern partner institutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Medium term) High dependence on competitive time-bound VLIR ICP scholarships; (Partially unexpected) Institutional weaknesses of Southern academic partners & strained political context in Central Africa and Central America • Risk of unsustainable workload in view of self-imposed performance targets and ambitions as well as new demands on IOB (outreach, UAntwerp, ...) • Emphasis on quantity and individualised assessments might jeopardise efforts for the IOB commons and option for quality • University (anti-risk) policies for students and staff travel to 'hazardous countries' making collaboration with the South in general and Southern partners in particular very difficult or impossible

ANNEX: SWOT analysis 2019 – update 2024

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive staff policies and procedures, including clear publication and outreach criteria and a structured goal-setting cycle;• Stimulating and supportive work environment;<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High-quality, fully optimised master programmes in Antwerp;• Significant growth in the quantity and international quality of outputs (PhDs, external finance, publications), with consistently high European benchmarking performance;• Important steps towards the internationalisation of master education with Southern partners;• Exemplary alumni activities and policy (considered best practice at UAntwerp);<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excellent integration and within the University of Antwerp, with strong autonomy and reputation (Global Engagement/Global Minds, etc.);• Increasingly international staff - further progress mostly needed among ZAP;• Appointment of a research and outreach coordinator;• Clear integration of the Great Lakes focus within the broader IOB agenda;• Commitment to investing in internal processes to enhance mutual understanding (DNA process);• Commitment to introducing multiple perspectives in the curriculum (DNA process).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient monitoring of the educational environment (e.g., new competition);• Risk of underinvestment in activities with high societal impact;• (Improved but still moderate institutional capacity for strategic management and guidance, leading to missed opportunities (e.g., international funding, outreach policy) → Research and outreach coordinator hired, so now a strength);• Need for further internationalisation of lecturing staff, despite efforts with AAP and Southern academic cooperation);• Increased polarisation and internal tensions.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The African Great Lakes Region remains a crucial part of global development;• Growing academic strength among scholars in Southern partner institutes;<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing academic recognition of multi-disciplinary and mixed methods in Development studies;• Rising need to mainstream development issues;• Greater focus on societal impact in research assessments;• Opportunities for collaboration with University of Antwerp faculties (e.g., Korf 'Verbredende vakken', centrally-funded research professors, Global Engagement, joint research initiatives);• Expanding lifelong learning and funding opportunities (e.g., micro-credentials);• The mainstreaming of 'co-creation' in research, education, and outreach, with increased awareness of power imbalances and the need to avoid extractivist/colonial practices;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risk of unsustainable workloads due to self-imposed performance targets, new demands (e.g., outreach, UAntwerp), despite the adapted evaluation matrix aimed at sustainable excellence;• Emphasis on quantity and individualised assessments may undermine collective efforts and quality, despite initiatives like conference organisation for sustainable excellence;• University policies restricting travel to hazardous countries hinder collaboration with Southern partners;• (Short term) High dependence on competitive time-bound VLIR ICP scholarships for students;• (Partially unexpected) Institutional weaknesses of Southern academic partners and strained political context in Central Africa and Central America;• Rising global polarisation threatening international solidarity.

Legend: black: unchanged | green: important progress made | orange: still a challenge, but efforts undertaken | red: pressing challenge | blue: new