**1. The Law Faculty’s current location**

1. *There would appear to be a tension between the Law Faculty‘s current location and its business and practical real life focus.*

We disagree with this conclusion for a number of reasons: a) Transport between Reykjavík and Bifröst is easy, frequent and quick. Bifröst is located on the ringroad which means that it is quite centrally located. It takes less than one and a half hour to drive to Reykjavík, and less than three hours to Akureyri. The roads are open all year round. b) Being outside of Reykjavík has an advantageous effect on student engagement. Students at the Law faculties in the Reykjavík universities (University of Iceland and Reykjavik University) tend to have a second job (not necessarily connected to their studies) Bifröst students are in most cases able to concentrate wholly on their studies. c) The emphasis Bifröst puts on practical assignments clearly profits from the campus arrangement which would be more difficult to keep in Reykjavík. d) Work placement is, according to a revised study program in business law, done in the last semester during which students also write a BS thesis. This enables them to live off campus during the last semester of their studies.

**2. Role and Objectives**

1. *The statement of role, aims and objectives needs to be underpinned by a formal mission statement, and developed to embrace a more explicit research and knowledge creation focus as well as more emphasis on external academic collaboration with other Law Schools at home and abroad. There also needs to be clear and detailed policy statements addressing aims, objectives, methods, priorities etc on all aspects of the Faculty’s activities, including its contribution to the student experience, the community and external collaboration.*

We agree with this. Bifröst has gone through serious administrative and academic restructuring during the past one and a half years. These changes are meant to sharpen academic focus. In the next weeks and months we intend to develop formal mission statements for the University as a whole as well as for its areas of study and reasearch. This work is closely connected to the evolving Quality system which the Ministry of Education and Culture is now implementing in collabroation with Bifröst and other Higher Education Institutions in Iceland.

**3. Administration and Organisation**

1. *There is a need for a distinct central University research division (equivalent to the teaching division).*

These changes have already been made as a part of Bifröst’s administrative and academic restructuring. The faculties of business, law and social sciences have been united to form a single body which serves as a central research division, under the leadership of the provost and the most active researchers in the faculty. Bifröst’s Research center has been reorganized and now provides administrative support to the central research division.

1. *The Law Faculty needs to develop a middle management, with particular allocations of responsibility for research, teaching methods, students affairs, programme development, external networks etc.*

As a part of the restructuring a middle management layer has been created (fagráð) where administrative tasks that require academic leadership are assigned to individual faculty members, as a part of their formal duties.

1. *There is a need for a distinct allocation of responsibility for engagement with the Business Faculty in the administration, delivery and development of the BSc and other matters.*

The unification of the faculties means that decisons on coursework and course-offerings are made jointly in a new body called the Academic council which consists of the heads of departments (business, law and social sciences). This means that the content of inter-departmental courses is determined by representatives of all departments.

**4. Structure of Teaching and Research**

1. *The core offerings on the BSc should be reviewed with a view to strengthening mainstream law courses (e.g. criminal law, human rights and substantive European law) and to replacing practical mathematics with business organisation/administration.*

The undergraduate program is conceived as a program in business law rather than as solely a preparation for the ML degree and further attorney qualification through the bar exam. It is therefore vital that the BS degree retains this character. We agree with the specific recommendation made here, about replacing practical mathematics with business organization. In the restructured program this has indeed been done. All first year students now have to take a course in Leadership and management. Since all undergraduate students are also required to take a course in Ethics and law students take a course in European law as well we assume that the committee’s recommendations have at least partly been met. It is furthermore clear that the program cannot be rigid and it is constantly a matter of discussion where the balance should lie between main stream law courses and more specific courses in business and business law. We feel however, that we have to be very careful not to go too far in developing the program towards the mainstream, since that could defeat the purpose of offering a strong business law degree.

1. *Consideration should be given to the introduction of a sustained period of work experience as an integral part of the BSc.*

In the restructured program all students have the opportunity to do 4-8 weeks work placement / internship for credit. The semester projects are also an opportunity to reach out to the business (and business law) community, through real-life projects.

1. *Consideration should be given to delivering some courses on the BSc in English in order to attract a larger number of international exchange students onto this programme.*

The number of exchange students increases from year to year and it is our intention to be able to offer a good selection of courses in business and law to these students. The number of law courses in English is now one or two each semester. We plan to increase the number of such courses also to increase the opportunity of law students at Bifröst to do coursework in English.

1. *Consideration should be given to introducing more mainstream law subjects to the core and electives of the ML.*

A revision of the ML program is planned early next year. It must be said, however, that the content of the ML program is closely connected to the content of the BS program. More mainstream courses in the BS program demand more business related courses in the ML and vice versa. It has been our policy to design the ML program so as to include mainstream coursework absent from the undergraduate program because of its business law character. It is in other words hard to see how the committee’s recommendation to increase mainstream coursework in both the BS and ML program without thereby endangering the special character of Bifröst’s law program.

1. *The offerings on the LLM European Business and Corporate Law should be expanded to include mainstream and emerging subjects in European law. The inclusion of introductory courses on the masters’ programmes should be reviewed for compatibility with international standards.*

We fully agree with this comment. The LLM program is dormant at the moment but we intend to revive a restructured program in 2013, in line with this recommendation.

1. *Multi-media technologies should be used more fully to bring resources and facilities from elsewhere in Iceland and abroad into the classroom.*

Bifröst University has for the last decade been among the front runners in the use of internet and multi-media technologies in Iceland. We are now in active communication with the University of Iceland about more cooperation in the field of multi-media with the aim of making more full use of human and other resources in Iceland.

1. *Strategy on the use of part-time tutors needs to be reviewed with the aim of integrating them more fully into the life of the Faculty.*

We have been concluding permanent part-time contracts with some of our former part-time tutors hiring them as faculty members with part-time responisbilities. This strengthens their affiliation and engages them in our effort to develop the law programs and increasing the quality of student experience at Bifröst. It is our aim to allocate only around one fourth of coursework in law to part time tutors.

1. *External examiners must be appointed (at least one to each year of each program) to oversee and audit standards on syllabus, teaching, assessment and student performance.*

This recommendation is in line with the general quality enhancement effort in which Bifröst actively participates and is one of the things planned for this academic year.

1. *Research quality and output must be established prominently as a top priority permeating everything that the Faculty does.*

We do plan to increase the number of qualified researchers to our faculty, bringing in members with doctorates an strong research profiles. We will do this however without compromising our commitment to practical training and strong ties to business. This means that we also consider it a top priority to hire part-time faculty members with strong professional profiles rather than research profiles.

1. *Faculty management must play a leadership role in placing research and publications in national and international ranking outlets at the forefront of what the Faculty does and stands for.*

This is in line with our objectives and will be expressed clearly in Bifröst’s research policy and general mission statement. It must however be clear, that an increased emphasis on research, which includes putting resources into the development of research projects and applications to research funds, does not mean that less emphasis will be put on practical life training and strong ties to business and adminstration.

**5. Competence Requirements of Personnel**

1. *Staff must be resourced, facilitated and encouraged to publish regularly in the highest national and international outlets and to secure external research funding. Their success in these matters must be monitored, rewarded and fed directly into the promotions process.*

Bifröst does have a monitoring system for research which requires academic staff to submit a detailed report of their research annually. A point system is used to measure research output. This system is adapted from a system used by the University of Iceland and follows the same criteria. Academic staff is also encouraged to apply for external research funding. We intend to further strengthen the demand that permanent full time staff regularly publish their findings in internationally recognized journals.

1. *Existing staff must be strongly encouraged and supported in upgrading their qualifications to masters’ and doctorate levels (where appropriate).*

We enourage academic staff to acquire doctorates in their field and work with those interested in doing so on finding the right balance between teaching at Bifröst while conducting a doctoral study in Iceland or abroad. We have communicated clearly to all academic staff that they should see it as an absolute necessity for those who plan on an academic career to have doctorates.

1. *A formal introductory course on teaching and assessment methods should be compulsory for all new staff appointments.*

The University of Iceland has developed a training program for university teachers. Such training is not required but strongly encouraged. Bifröst staff and faculty has acces to the UI training program. We will develop those opportunities further either through a formal agreement with the University of Iceland or by deceloping our own qualification courses. It is, however, unrealistic at the moment that such qualification be made compulsory for teaching academic staff.

1. *Regular short courses on teaching and assessment methods and quality should be provided and there should be a requirement for all staff to attend a minimum number over specified regular periods.*

We do organize such short courses every year for permanent and part-time teaching staff. Participation is not obligatory but strongly encouraged. We intend to strengthen such preparatory courses.

1. *Consideration should be given to Icelandic universities collaborating to develop and deliver a formal third level teaching qualification which at least all new tenured appointees would be expected to take on a part-time basis.*

We agree and are moving in that direction.

1. *Special attention needs to be given to the oversight of quality of, and supports for, part-time teaching staff.*

We agree. Such structures are being developed, some have existed for a long time. This academic year we have set up a peer monitoring system with classroom visits, interviews with teachers and systematic review of course content, syllabi, objectives and requirements. Student evaluations are under continuous scrutiny and are used actively to monitor teaching and for interdepartmental comparisons. In this year we have also promoted the administration on quality control in the university with a new position of Director of quality systems (gæðastjóri).

**6. Rules Regarding Admission Requirements and Rights and Duties of Students**

1. *Specific criteria for the admission of students need to be transparent and published and kept under review in light of progression and graduation rates.*

General admission criteria are well advertised and in line with general admission criteria to Higher Education Institutions in Iceland. It is also explicitly stated on the school’s website that applicants who have finished Bifröst’s preparatory faculty with the grade of 7,0 or above enjoy a priority status. One of the tasks of the newly created Academic council is to clarify and make explicit the specific admission criteria that Bifröst will use to select students from applicants who satisfy the general requirements.

1. *Procedure of formal mechanism through which complaints can be lodged about the teaching of individual courses and through which individual students can challenge actions and decisions directly affecting them needs to be displayed prominently in materials provided to the students and on the University’s internal website.*

As a part of the university’s restructuring such mechanisms have now been clarified and students made aware of them. They are now accessible on our website as a part of the Quality system. (<http://bifrost.is/Files/Skra_0050285.pdf>).

**7. Facilities and Services Provided to Teachers and Students**

1. *The Law Library requires substantial investment to bring it up to university standard.*

We believe that this comment rests partly on a misunderstanding of the Icelandic national library system Gegnir. All university and public libraries in Iceland use a common database, Gegnir, which enables students in any Icelandic university to order books using a domestic interlilbrary loan system. In addition to that, Bifröst offers students and faculty free interlibrary loans from abroad. Bifröst also subscribes to a number of electronic journals and databases. Everything is done to make student access to libary materials quick and easy. In addition to that some effort has been made to build a specialized collection in tax law and European law. Strategic additions to the library’s Philosophy of law collection have also been made. We believe, therefore, that Bifröst students have excellent access to library resources needed for coursework and research. We will continue to strengthen our specialized collections since other law departments in Iceland profit from our collection as well, but we do not intend to use our resources on strengthening our more general law collection since we have good access to such materials in other libraries and can deilver those materials to students on site.

**8. Internal Quality Management System**

1. *The teaching evaluation questionnaire needs to be simplified and, if necessary, administered in hard copy at a fixed time during one of the classes in each course.*

The process for course evaluation has been simplified, but is now conducted more frequently with questionnaires delivered to students electronically. Peer review groups have also been established, as mentioned above. We are seriously considering going back to using hard copies for teaching evaluations.

1. *Internal peer review of teaching should be introduced.*

This has now been done.

1. *The role of external examiners should include comment on strengths and weaknesses of teaching as reflected by course examinations, assessment and student performance.*

We agree with this recommendation and will act accordingly.

1. *The University should introduce an annual teaching award for best practice.*

This proposal is under serious consideration.

1. *The division of roles between the Director of Teaching Division and the Quality Board needs to be rationalised and clarified.*

These roles have been clarified. The Quality board is lead by a chairperson, but managed by a Director of quality systems who works directly under the University Rector. The Director of Quality systems conducts teaching evaluations and oversees other measures taken as a part the overall quality assurance strategy.

1. *A formal mechanism for the annual reporting and recording of research output must be introduced.*

Such mechanism has been in place since 2007 and is under constant scrutiny.

1. *Consideration should be given to the introduction of periodic external assessment of the quality of research activity and output.*

The Central research division is introducing a system of research planning and budgeting to be implemented for the first time in 2012. This mechanism will include regular research assessment exercises for the School, in addition to the research monitoring system already in place for acedemic staff.

1. *The University should introduce an annual research award to recognise exceptional achievement.*
2. This proposal is under serious consideration.

**9. Description of Learning Outcomes**

1. *Detailed learning outcomes should be formulated, published and keept under review for each of the programmes.*

Bifröst University has gone through a complete overhaul of the teaching programs during the past one and a half years. Handbooks have been developed for all programs with clear and concise descriptions of course content, learning outcomes and study objectives. We believe we can say therefore that this recommendationa has already been met.