
Self-evaluation report: the key facts in brief

Institutional accreditation in accordance with HEEdA

A university of applied sciences institute with two frames of reference

The Swiss Federal Institute of Sport Magglingen (SFISM) is part of the Swiss Federal Office of Sport (FOSPO). As part of the central federal administration, it is not a public-law entity with its own legal personality. This status dates back to a fundamental policy decision by the Swiss parliament in 2011. Disciplinarily and thematically, the SFISM focuses on sport and is therefore classified as a university of applied sciences institute within the higher education system.

The SFISM fulfils its mandate within two frames of reference: first, as part of the federal administration, with the sports policy objectives of the Federal Council and parliament; second, as part of the international higher education system, to fulfil the educational and scientific mission of universities. This distinction is relevant in practice, as it involves different management rationales, funding models and scope for action. In the hierarchical context of the federal administration, the decision-making authority regarding official tasks lies with the Director of FOSPO. These official tasks are fully funded, and the SFISM is contracted to perform them. In contrast, the SFISM decides on its university tasks with the assistance of the SFISM Advisory Board, following the organisational model of universities, whereby the Director of FOSPO remains the superior decision-making authority. Regarding its university tasks, the SFISM has a broader say.

High proportion of services in the activity profile

SFISM's activities primarily serve Switzerland's sports system: that is, the structures for promoting organised and non-organised sport as well as exercise, in both recreational and elite sport. The services include education and training, applied research and development, and the transfer of knowledge from teaching and research into services.

In comparison with other universities and with the SFISM's own internal teaching and research, services account for a very large proportion of its total expenditure. This is owing to its sports policy mandate, which requires it to provide official services to the national sports federations and the armed forces.

In order to remain competitive in the field of education and to offer students attractive follow-up options, the SFISM cooperates with other universities: Berne University of Applied Sciences (BFH) for undergraduate and professional development courses, and the University of Fribourg (UNIFR) for Master's degree courses. In addition, the SFISM offers training modules in the field of sports practice and school sports for students from other universities as well as training and continuing education in

higher professional education (tertiary B) for coaches in national youth and elite sport.

Individual and well-networked

In 2020, the SFISM comprised 100 full-time equivalent posts (124 employees), 127 undergraduates, 187 Master's students (62 doing the MSc in Elite Sports, 125 doing the MSc in Sports Sciences with UNIFR), 79 students in training modules at the SFISM and 79 participants in the professional coaching course. The SFISM Sports Facilities CAS course had 30 participants, and a CAS course in Strategy, Leadership and Governance in Sports Organisations is being offered from 2021 onwards. Employees of the SFISM produced 36 publications, most of which were peer-reviewed, and provided a range of services, most notably for national sports federations (including Swiss Ski, Swiss Cycling, and the Swiss Football Association [SFV]).

All change at the SFISM

The SFISM is currently undergoing a process of change affecting staffing, partnerships, and structures. As regards staffing, new appointments have been made to key posts, bringing in new management styles, ideas, and skills. In terms of partnerships, the long-standing cooperation with the BFH has been re-defined to meet future needs better. At the structural level, new framework conditions have been created, although these still need further development and consolidation. This transformation process is placing demands on the SFISM. Institutional accreditation provides it with an opportunity to evaluate its current situation and press ahead with further development.

Self-evaluation report – a joint effort

The self-evaluation report was developed as part of a participatory and multilevel process. A total of 48 authors evaluated the SFISM in the various areas examined. In addition to SFISM staff, four students as well as employees from other FOSPO departments were involved, including staff representatives. The Rector and the Central Administration led the process.

Quality – in everything we do

The SFISM strives for quality in teaching, research, and development, and in the services it provides. This is achieved with the help of a quality assurance system, which contributes to the development of the SFISM and its services. This system is cyclical in nature, geared towards the quality requirements for universities, and takes into account the distinct and specific features of the SFISM as part of FOSPO. The SFISM has drawn up a visual representation of its essential features in a quality assurance map. This quality assurance strategy provides a foundation for developing the SFISM's quality culture over the long term.

Moving ahead with both strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- As part of the “Magglingen umbrella solution”, the SFISM has a comprehensive network that encompasses all the key players in the Swiss sporting community and likewise places the institution on a firm political footing;
- Its involvement in the national promotion of sport and exercise, and thus acting as a unit of the federal administration as the sponsoring body, guarantees stability. Human and financial resources, as well as appropriate infrastructure to fulfil the SFISM’s legal mandate, are stable and guaranteed;
- The fact that the SFISM is part of the central federal administration means that guidelines on many management topics (e.g. equal opportunities, personnel management, risk management, etc.) are developed by other federal units which make their considerable specialist expertise available to the SFISM;
- Sustainable development, equal opportunities and social equality are anchored in the federal administration and thus also in FOSPO and the SFISM. These objectives are superordinate, and are also included in the SFISM’s quality assurance;
- “Magglingen” is an established and recognised brand, both nationally and internationally. This strengthens the SFISM’s positioning as a university that is unique of its kind – as perceived not only by society but also by the world of higher education;
- The SFISM has an established university network that creates synergies for nurturing young scientists, mobility and university-specific services;
- The process of accreditation and the introduction of a systematic quality assurance system have triggered a surge of innovation. Structural, organisational and procedural changes have been implemented, now laying the foundations for the future development of the SFISM;
- In line with the framework conditions, the SFISM has developed a transparent and systematic quality assurance system based on the EFQM model, which has been adapted to the needs of the SFISM and clearly defines competencies and responsibilities;
- The manageable size of the SFISM facilitates direct communication, without the need to go through cumbersome official channels. Participation has also been enhanced at the operational level;
- The employees are closely involved with setting up, implementing and refining the quality assurance system. One example of this is the participatory way in which the self-evaluation report was drafted;
- The courses and services offered by the SFISM comply with its mandate and are in high demand. Interdisciplinary services for a very wide range of customers guarantee practical relevance and pave the way for applied research and development, as well as the transfer of knowledge from teaching and research to services.
- The SFISM’s well qualified and intrinsically motivated staff form a solid foundation for high quality teaching, research and development, and services. “Magglingen” is a magnet for sports-oriented personnel. All of FOSPO is characterised by a strong commitment to sport.

Weaknesses

- FOSPO’s staffing level is dependent on the resources made available to the federal administration as a whole. The expansion of official tasks in tandem with the budgetary constraints imposed on the federal administration is leading to a shortage of resources at departmental level and is putting an excessive burden on the SFISM. This makes planning staff development for the medium to long term, based on the divisional strategy, more difficult;
- The fulfilment of both official and university tasks leads to a concurrence of revenue-raising and usage models. Its official services – apart from the fee payments made by customers – are financed by the federal government. In terms of resourcing, these services compete with FOSPO’s other tasks in the national promotion of sport and exercise, and are therefore limited in terms of growth. By contrast, the SFISM’s commercial services, which are fully financed by customers, offer growth potential as the revenues allow additional resources to be financed. Services provided by both models are in high demand. The dual nature of the systems, and the differing conditions for customers, in many cases the same stakeholders or organisations, are difficult to communicate, both internally and externally;
- Extensive statutory regulation combined with dependence on political and administrative processes is not conducive to the agile development of the university or of university services (e.g. Open Science);
- Rather than being developed as a single entity, the SFISM’s quality assurance system is an amalgamation of several different ones, some of which are controlled superordinately by other administrative units, some others by FOSPO. The SFISM has management control over its teaching, research and development, as well as services, whereas the quality assurance in teaching, research and development as well as services has different levels of development. This makes it correspondingly challenging to communicate the quality assurance system and to develop a quality culture;
- The SFISM is currently undergoing a process of radical change (see chapter 1.3). The monitoring and evaluation of these change processes are not yet embedded in the SFISM as an institution;
- The strategic participation of university staff has not yet been established;
- To date, too little attention has been paid to equality of opportunity and equality for students;
- The information systems in teaching, research and development, as well as services have not yet been fully developed; additional data is needed for quality assurance and development purposes. This data will enable courses and services to be systematically reviewed and refined regarding their efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy, and resources can be deployed in a targeted manner.

For the further development of the EHSM, the identified weaknesses are addressed step by step with an action plan.