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Project co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007 - 2013

Priority Axis 1 “Education and training in support of growth and development of knowledge based society“

Major Intervention Field 1.2 “Quality in higher education”

Project title “Development and consolidation of quality culture at the level of Romanian Higher Education system – QUALITAS”

Agreement POSDRU /155/L.2/S/141894

**EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION
SYNTHETIC REPORT**

**NATIONAL SCHOOL OF POLITICAL STUDIES AND
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OF BUCHAREST**

04-06 DECEMBER 2014

Mission Director:

Prof. Luca Iamandi, Ph.D.

PARTENER



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CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN
NETWORK OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES
IN HIGHER EDUCATION



EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION SYNTHETIC REPORT

A. Evaluated institution: National School of Political Studies and Public Administration

B. Evaluation period: 04–06 December 2014

C. External evaluation commission:

No.	Name and surname of the evaluator University	The position of the evaluator within the Commission
1.	Luca Iamandi - Danubius of Galati	Mission Director
2.	Todea Nicolae – 1 Decembrie 1918 of Alba Iulia	Coordinator of the Evaluation Team
3.	Dinu Airinei – A.I. Cuza of Iasi	Advisory Commission
4.	Gabriel Marius Petrescu – Oil & Gas of Ploiesti	Institutional Commission
5.	Chis Alexandru – “Babes Bolyai” of Cluj Napoca	Program Evaluator
6.	Cercel Sevastian - University of Craiova	Program Evaluator
7.	Ivan Adrian - “Babes Bolyai” of Cluj Napoca	Program Evaluator
8.	Narita Ionel – West University of Timisoara	Program Evaluator
9.	Mihaela Bajenaru - ARACIS	Scientific Secretary
10.	Ciorei Mihaela	Student NUSR
11.	Chereche Vlad	Student NASOR
12.	Ivan Zadori	Foreign Expert

D. General framework of the evaluation process:

The External Institutional Evaluation of the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration (NSPSPA of Bucharest) was performed in order to assess and certify the extent to which the evaluated institution responds to public interest; to identify within the institution the existence of mechanisms necessary for permanent monitoring the process of enhancement of **quality** of the teaching, learning, research, and also for exercising the legal right to grant academic degrees and qualifications.

The external institutional evaluation was performed under the project entitled “*Development and the consolidation of the quality culture at the level of Romanian Higher Education system – QUALITAS*” (POSDRU /155/L.2/S/141894), co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Sectorial Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007 – 2013, Priority Axis 1 “*Education and training in support of growth and development of knowledge based society*”, Major Intervention field 1.2 “*Quality in higher education*” and under the protocol

agreement concluded on **10.14.2014** between the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), represented by prof. dr. **Luca IAMANDI** as the representative of ARACIS Council and the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration of Bucharest, represented by prof. **Alina BARGAOANU, Ph.D.**, as the rector, on the establishment of undergraduate study programs under evaluation of ARACIS.

The external institutional evaluation process was conducted according to the methodology of ARACIS, the law of higher education and specific procedures mentioned in the evaluation guide.

E. Objectives of the external institutional evaluation:

- a. verification of compliance of information and data presented by the visited institution in the Self-Evaluation Report, as well as of those listed in the annexes to the report;
- b. verification of compliance of the legal framework for the organization and functioning of the institution;
- c. assessment, in terms of quantity and quality, of teaching staff and all the aspects related to their activity;
- d. assessing the existence of specific regulations for all kinds of activities, of procedures and methods for implementing them;
- e. the assessment of institutional capacity as it was described in the Self-Evaluation Report and argued by the annexes to the report, as well as by findings on the spot in terms of material resources, the existence of all functional structures (academic and administrative management, etc.);
- f. examination of the enforcement of regulations in force related to students' professional activity, from admission to graduation, by using the system of transferable credits, internships, by providing the framework necessary to conduct specific research for the second and third cycle study programs, etc.;
- g. assessing educational effectiveness by verifying the performance standards related to the content of curricula, learning outcomes, conducting scientific work, capitalizing research, providing learning resources etc.;
- h. assessing the implementation of quality management in all aspects and all areas of activity covered by the mission in the visited institution;
- i. assessing the way in which the code of ethics and academic integrity is applied and a real scientific and academic environment is provided;

- j. assessing the level of transparency of public information regarding specific activities conducted within the **National School of Political Studies and Public Administration of Bucharest**.

F. Procedures used to achieve the objectives of external institutional evaluation:

- a. organizing meetings and discussions with the staff in the institution's academic and administrative management;
- b. conducting a detailed visit on the spot, which included most education and research areas of the institution, in order to ascertain the material resources, their quality and their level of performance, the way they are used, etc.;
- c. organizing meetings and discussions with teachers, students, graduates and with a number of employers;
- d. visiting secretariats and some administrative departments in order to ascertain the compliance of procedures regarding the records of students, records of students' professional activity, issuing study documents, records on teachers, financial administration, public procurement etc.;
- e. elaborating the visit documents (in the evaluated study programs and at institutional level) and the Report of External Institutional Evaluation Commission;
- f. analysis of the institutional Self-Evaluation Report and Annexes to the report.

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G. Procedure:

- a. activities conducted by the Commission for institutional visit in its integrity: the initial meeting with the University management (Rector, President, vice-rectors, scientific secretary, deans), with the representative of Quality Assurance Department (QAD), with the contact person for the institutional evaluation, with the representatives of study programs; the visit on the spot;
- b. differentiated activities conducted by the members of the Commission: study programs evaluation by program experts; the institutional evaluation by the Institutional Commission expert, the Advisory Commission expert, the mission director, the mission coordinator, the foreign expert and the scientific secretary;

- c. activities conducted by the experts of commissions, the mission director and the mission coordinator, the foreign expert., the scientific secretary and students in the Commission: meeting organized with the students of the evaluated institution, the meeting organized with the graduates; the meeting organized with the employers;
- d. activities conducted by the foreign expert: the meeting with the university's academic and administrative management and with the representative of QAD, the visit in the **National School of Political Studies and Public Administration of Bucharest** together with the students in the Institutional Evaluation Commission;
- e. the students in the Institutional Evaluation Commission conducted specific activities in terms of total autonomy, according to a schedule defined by themselves;
- f. analysing the evaluation results within the External Institutional Evaluation Commission in its integrity;
- g. presenting the evaluation summary in a meeting which brought together the External Institutional Evaluation Commission and the University management (Rector, President, vice-rectors, deans, department managers, coordinators of administrative structures) the representative of QAD, the contact person for the institutional evaluation and the study programs representatives.

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H. Findings of External Evaluation Commission – Summary:

a. Institutional capacity:

- The National School of Political Studies and Public Administration has a management system which complies with national laws, effective management principles and best practices of Romanian and EU higher education.
- NSPSPA has the necessary structures established and their operating rules approved; the body responsible for ethics in the university submits annually an activity report.
- The management of the university, faculties and departments is based on a system that communicates the strategic and operational decisions through the management structures created.

b. Educational effectiveness:

- The study programs conducted in the institution are associated to nationally approved areas and develop qualifications corresponding to the National Framework of Qualifications.
- In the study programs within NSPSPA, there are conducted semestrial/annual surveys to assess the level of student satisfaction regarding the quality of programs provided

and the learning/development environment offered. For the academic year 2013/2014, the results confirm that (on average) more than 75% of the university students are satisfied with the community they belong and the proposed learning path.

- The research strategy envisages international positioning of NSPSPA in the global rankings such as U-Map and U-Multirank and follows national and international topics. NSPSPA aims to develop curricula in line with the research concerns validated nationally and internationally by recognized publications and by participating in national and transnational research teams, as well as by attracting foreign and domestic funding sources (Annexes B.3.1.1).

c. Management of quality

- The Quality Assurance and Assessment Commission (QAAC) is organised and operates in NSPSPA as an autonomous structure subordinated to the University Senate. Each faculty has its own Quality Assurance and Assessment Commission. QAAC coordinates the quality commissions existing in faculties and establishes study program commissions working in an integrated manner.
- NSPSPA has a database that will store data on meeting the quality criteria for study programs and research programs. The procedures for the assessment of educational activity are not limited to assessing the performance of program studies, but also of the people directly involved: students and teachers.

There is a Regulation concerning the initiation, approval, monitoring and the periodic review of study programs and activities, which is approved in the Senate meeting (Annex C.2.1.1.a) and specifies the aspects related to the monitoring of study programs. The main actions undertaken in monitoring activities refer to: analysing the structure of the Curriculum; analysing the content of syllabuses of each discipline; establishing teaching positions; allocating the disciplines according to competences, the teaching position and the scientific achievements proven by the teaching staff; analysing the results expressed by the students' performances.

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I. Comments and suggestions of the evaluators, presented within the joint meeting of the Evaluation Commission and the University management:

- The analysis of curricula considering the accordance of some discipline names with the specified standards in the field (with special reference to Public Relations and Communication program), and also the share of different categories of disciplines (with regard to International Relations and European Studies program).
- Permanent and systematic monitoring of implementation and functioning of quality management procedures in all aspects and study programs so that the small inconsistencies reported, especially on support courses of distance learning programs, to be eliminated.

- Solving the internal audit issue, especially for administrative and financial accounting, diversifying its missions so that all aspects of activity conducted in the university to be monitored at least with one action annually.
- Permanent update of internal regulations (regulations, methodologies and procedures) in terms of compliance with the law, but also for consistency between the Charter and regulations, methodologies and procedures detailing some aspects of the Charter, which governs the activities within the NSPSPA.
- Perpetuating the collection and systematization of information required for internal or external assessment of quality for all the components of activities conducted (teaching, research, administrative) so as to eliminate the gaps in providing specific information and the measures to increase the quality to be solidly grounded and their effects objectively assessed.
- Conducting activities that lead to greater cohesion of the students and teaching staff of the four faculties, supporting the students in order to establish their own student organization.
- Reorganisation of spaces for the library, so the number of seats in the reading rooms to satisfy the requirement to provide places for at least 10% of students.
- Revitalizing commissions for initiation, approval, monitoring and evaluation of study programs, supplementing them with people who represent all the “stakeholders” (students, teachers, graduates, employers), and making them attractive, particularly to graduates who are already employed in the field and compare the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired to work requirements.
- Analysing the possibility to address the issue of auditing the financial statements of the university, the complexity of activities alleging the necessity of such an activity, either by specialized state institutions or by independent professionals.
- Improving the communication system between the NSPSPA management and students, so that they know the management decisions, the assessment and grading criteria that entitle them to benefit from a certain facility of the existing regulations and methodologies, to be included in all school activities, including the evaluation of teaching staff in a higher number.
- Establishing clear deadlines for communicating the final evaluation results of students’ knowledge; the communication and compliance with these deadlines.
- A more careful monitoring of students’ practical training and the activity of these coordinators, so that the time allotted to it to be used as efficiently as possible.

J. Strengths:

- *Sufficient and modern material resources:* teaching spaces and facilities consisting of buildings comprising classrooms and lecture theatres, seminar rooms and laboratories;
- *Sufficient, good quality documentation resources;* the book fund in the university libraries comprises over 30,000 volumes, covering the needs of all students for all disciplines in the curricula.
- *The laboratories are properly equipped to prepare the students.*
- *The ratio between teachers and students* is within the normal range, especially if it is taken into consideration the teaching activity conducted by the PhD students and the fact that a competition for filling 26 teaching positions is in progress.
- *A management oriented towards educational processes of scientific research.*
- *Well-articulated quality management:* a management system supporting the development of activities complying with quality standards, mostly at the reference standard levels).
- All the mandatory requirements are met both for the institution and for each program evaluated, according in the Visit Record, part a) “Verification of fulfilling the mandatory requirements”.

K. Weaknesses – suggestions:

- The lack of correlation between the name of the discipline and the specific standards of the field;
- Deficiencies in the implementation and operation of quality management procedures in all forms and study programs;
- Lack of audit of financial statements and insufficient use of internal audit;
- Regulations, methodologies and procedures not updated in all cases with the provisions of law, but also with inconsistencies between them;
- An uneven approach in time to collecting information issues on quality;
- Insufficient spaces for reading rooms according to ARACIS standards;
- Deficiencies in the practical training of students.

L. Conclusions

Following the analysis of Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and the annexes to this report, of the reports of study programs which were the subject of evaluation within the process of Institutional Evaluation and its annexes, and as a result of all activities undertaken by the External Evaluation Commission during its visit between 2 and 4 December 2014 in the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration of



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Bucharest and mentioned in paragraph G. of this report, the following conclusions are drawn:

- NSPSPA has the necessary conditions (material resources, personnel) for a high quality level of teaching and research process;
- The majority of teaching and research activities in NSPSPA are conducted at a level that ensures a high quality level of training for graduates;
- NSPSPA has a mechanism that can detect and correct any slippages that could occur in its activity;
- The NSPSPA management must further pursue the provision of resources necessary for teaching and research activity, and also the way in which available resources are used and the effect of the resource consumption on the final results.

M. Score:

Given the achievement of performance standards stipulated by the law on quality assurance in higher education by the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration of Bucharest, substantiated by all the documentation used in the process of institutional evaluation, the External Institutional Evaluation Commission of ARACIS proposes granting the score: **HIGH LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE**.

Mission Director:
Prof. Luca Iamandi, Ph.D.

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