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Development and consolidation of quality culture at the level of Romanian Higher Education system – QUALITAS

SUMMARY REPORT ON TRENDS IN THE EVOLUTION OF QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOLLOWING THE ASSESSMENTS MADE



The Romanian Agency of Quality Assurance in Higher Education



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Invest in people!

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SUMMARY REPORT

on trends in the evolution of quality in higher education following the assessments made

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The Summary report
on trends in the evolution of quality in higher education following the assessments made is also presented on the website www.aracis.ro, in the section designed for the presentation of project results <http://www.aracis.ro/proiecte/qualitas/>.



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I. Analysis of evolution trends of Romanian higher education quality based on data from institutional evaluation reports for the periods 2008-2009 and 2014-2015

The synthetic report regarding the evolution trends of higher education quality succinctly presents information and data from the institutional evaluation reports for the periods 2008-2009 and 2014-2015, and from the self-evaluation reports made by the evaluated universities in the project “Development and consolidation of quality culture at the level of Romanian Higher Education system - QUALITAS”, Agreement POSDRU/155/1.2/S/141894: the National University of Arts Bucharest, the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration of Bucharest (SNSPA), “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, “Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, “Eftimie Murgu” University of Reșița, “Petru Maior” University of Târgu-Mureș, “Politehnica” University of Bucharest, “Politehnica” University of Timișoara, “Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian University of Bucharest, University of Arts “George Enescu” Iași, University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davila” Bucharest, University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine “Regele Mihai I al României” of Banat from Timișoara, University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine of Bucharest, West University of Timișoara, University of Bucharest, University of Craiova, University of Petroșani, Romanian-American University of Bucharest, Technical University “Gheorghe Asachi” Iași and Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest.

The institutional evaluation reports elaborated for the periods 2008-2009 and 2014-2015, and the self-evaluation reports made by the evaluated universities represent a valuable source of information and data, which allows the realization of a projection on evolution trends of Romanian higher education quality. The limits of this step are given by the size of universities lot – 20 in this case – and some structure differences of mentioned reports. Because the report is trying to capture the dynamics of higher education quality assurance and evaluation system we have mentioned only sometimes the names of universities so much more as the issues reported have quasi-general nature.

I.1. Organization of quality assurance system

Going through the progress of institutionally evaluated universities in 2014 and 2015, we can see that the organization of quality assurance system represents a major preoccupation in the period elapsed from university year 2008-2009 until now.

From the reports mentioned we can see that in time there is a continuity regarding the organization of quality assurance system, but also the amplification and diversification of activities and responsibilities of teaching staff involved in quality management. Compared to the years 2008-2009-2010, in 2015 we assist to



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refining of philosophy concerning quality and an adequate dedication to the benefit of students and partners of universities.

By comparing the situation of 2014-2015 with the situation of 2008-2009, we can see that in all the universities the organization of quality assurance system is vaster, more comprehensive and fully applied at executive level: faculties and teaching departments. They have also made remarkable progress by creation of structures and internal functional procedures regarding legislative requirements, the regulations of line ministry, ARACIS standards etc. regarding quality assurance in higher education. The modernization of quality assurance system is the proof that this dimension of education is important and carefully monitored in all universities.

We present below a few relevant aspects regarding quality organization, which illustrates that good practices can be found in all universities.

“1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia has structures, strategies, policies and concrete procedures for management and quality assurance of teaching, learning and research activities, but also for development of own culture at two levels: the Commission for quality evaluation and assurance at institutional level subordinated to Senate, respectively the commissions for internal evaluation and quality assurance of education at faculties level. Since the university year 2008-2009 Quality Management Department operates, has constant preoccupations in establishment of qualitative and quantitative references - benchmarking. The department carries out its activity based on an institutional procedure which aims at collection and processing of information on the activities of universities from the country and abroad.

At the Technical University „Gheorghe Asachi” Iași operated the Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation (CEAC) which consistently applies a manual of procedures. According to own regulations for organization and functioning, CEAC has as mission the regulation and monitoring of study programs, in line with the strategy of university development and the requirements of external accreditations – national and international.

At University of Petroșani actions were taken to improve quality culture: organization of specialized courses in the field of quality management; creation of a body of internal evaluators; initiation of consultation activities and exchange of opinions with similar institutions from the country and abroad in view of promoting good practices in teaching and scientific research activities. Now a part of members of CEAC Commission are registered in the National Register of Evaluators from ARACIS in different fields, which offers the guarantee of knowing the procedures, criteria, performance standards and indicators listed in the Methodology for external evaluation of study programs and higher education institutions drawn up by ARACIS.

Since 2005, with the foundation of the Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation (CEAC) in the University „Eftimie Murgu” of Reșița, the university has implemented and continuously perfected a modern quality management system, which was restructured at the beginning of the year 2010 according to the principles



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SR EN ISO 9001:2008 and was subjected to certification TÜV Austria, certification body accredited for education institutions.

“Petru Maior” University of Târgu-Mureș has applied since 2008 many system procedures and operational procedures, having as support a Quality Manual and a manual dedicated to the management of educational processes at departments and faculty’s level. In the university year 2014-2015 the Quality Management System is regulated by the “Regulations for organization and functioning of Quality Management System”. In the University there is a body of 58 internal auditors trained in the field of quality management according to the requirements of standards ISO 19011:2009 and ISO 9001:2008, who carry out audit activities in all departments of the university.

At National University of Political Studies and Public Administration Bucharest, at the University of Arts „George Enescu“ Iași, the Romanian-American University of Bucharest, “Dimitrie Cantemir“ Christian University Bucharest, „Petru Maior” University of Târgu-Mureș etc., benchmarking is a strategy on several levels and is accomplished by analysis of quality-related data offered by universities from the country and abroad. The collection and analysis of this data are carried out by tools specialized in benchmarking.

At the University of Bucharest, since the university year 2014-2015, at university level attached to CEAC operate the commissions for quality assurance and evaluation at faculty’s level. CEAC has regulations and specific procedures for quality management system to develop its own quality culture. The progress elements are related to the existence of strategic plans and annual plans of quality for all the activities which are carried out in the university. Among the achievements of quality management stands out the increase in the capacity of human resources to provide qualifications adapted to changing requirements of labour market.

In order to assure the quality of all forms of university activities, in the University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davila” of Bucharest consultancy, monitoring and internal evaluation structures are founded and operate according to the laws in force: the Commissions for Quality Assurance and Evaluation – CEAC, since 2006, The Commission of Ethics and University Deontology – CEDU, since 2012 (which carries out its activity based on the Code of Ethics and Professional Deontology) and the Commission on Ethics of Scientific Research – CECS.

“Politehnica” University of Bucharest has support organizational structures for implementation of Quality Management System: Quality Council at university level, CEAC, quality commissions at faculties level and work groups at department level. The limits of competence and the relationships established between these structures and the existing structures in the university are presented in the Regulations on Quality Management System and in the Regulations for functioning of Quality Council. Together with the Quality Management Department, CEAC has organized training courses for internal auditors addressed to the members of teaching staff from the university so that the provisions of Quality Manual and ARACIS standards for evaluation of study programs are known in all the faculties.



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The organizational structure of quality management system from “Politehnica” University of Timișoara, CEAC members, the members of quality commissions at faculty and department levels, and the body of internal auditors have a coherent orientation to develop a thorough and profitable quality culture. The whole step in quality field is taken with the wide participation of the students. The structures DGAC and CEAC from “Politehnica” University of Timișoara assured the evaluation EUA since 2012, and recently the participation in the international evaluation action U-Multirank.

In the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine of Bucharest operate a Quality Council, a Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation at university level and subcommissions for quality assurance and evaluation at faculty/department level and study programme level, which work in an integrated way. Quality assurance is carried out according to the Regulations on quality assurance. In order to promote a quality culture, 58 teaching staff members have the capacity of auditors, evaluators of study programs and institutional evaluators in ARACIS, participants in ARACIS trainings for evaluators.

At West University of Timișoara for many years has existed the Department for Quality Management which promotes a quality culture by engaging the whole academic community from the university with the purpose of assuring the fulfilment of quality objectives and the means for their realization. The Department for Quality Management coordinates the elaboration of procedures regarding quality standards, publishes and revises the Quality Manual; it also disseminates information on quality assurance, manages the relationship with bodies who publish university hierarchization systems (QS, U-Multirank), getting involved in quality-related projects in higher education.

I.2. Policies and strategies for quality assurance

The objectives of universities concerning quality assurance and improvement are related to the assurance of learning resources and adequate support resources for students for a better professional training of the students, quality assurance of teaching and auxiliary staff, assurance of a fair and transparent evaluation of competences acquired by the students, coherence of educational offer, functional communication in the university and outside of it and institutional transparency. The observation is valid for large universities: “Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, West University of Timișoara, University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine of Bucharest etc., and for universities of small sizes: Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest, University of Arts “George Enescu” from Iași, University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davila” from Bucharest etc.

In the last years, by internal strategy, the West University of Timișoara undertook the development of a quality culture, including the financial support (contributions by projects), highlighted by the structures created and participation in a series of projects concerning quality, by realization of systemic analyses and formulation of recommendations regarding the internal quality policy and national quality policy.



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Since the university year 2008-2009, the quality objectives of Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest were generous: identification and application of the best practices for continuous improvement of educational process; implementation of quality evaluation procedures on all the segments of educational process; introduction of a feed-back from students, graduates and employers regarding the structure and quality of educational services and their improvement as a result; identification of requirements and real expectations of socio-economic environment regarding the competences of graduates in each specialization, their correlation with international (European) practice. We can see that after five years all these objectives were achieved, and this progress contributed to enhancing the visibility of the university.

The University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine Bucharest has established, documented, implemented, maintains and improves the quality management system which contains a quality manual at institutional level, many system procedures and operational procedures. The performance of processes is monitored according to the measurement methods stated in the Process Matrix.

With reference to the evolution of quality assurance system in the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine "Regele Mihai I al României" of Banat from Timișoara, apart from the regular internal evaluations, the quality management system is regularly evaluated according to the standard ISO 9001: 2008 by annual supervision audit by the certification body SRAC. In the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine of Bucharest, the quality assurance and evaluation process is continuous.

In "Politehnica" University of Timișoara, Romanian-American University of Bucharest and other universities, all the teaching staff and many students were involved in implementation of policies. The evaluation grids of scientific activity were changed so that international visibility is stimulated. In the last years the policies and strategies for quality assurance are expressed by the strategic plans of university and faculties. They correspond to national legislation in force and recommendations ENQA and EUA.

The quality assurance policy presented in Management Plan 2012-2016 and in quality policy Declaration of Rector of „Politehnica“ University of Bucharest demonstrates the very important place of quality in the strategy and total involvement of top management in the achievement of quality objectives and mentions also the means of realization. Strategies of realization with provisions and concrete deadlines correspond to each policy.

The University of Bucharest has reached a high level of quality culture, which makes that every member of academic community is interested in active participation in the activities proposed at academic level. The quality assurance and evaluation policies are designed at the level of each department. At university level we extend the implementation of Internal Management Control Standards, which cover the fields: control environment, performance and risk management, information and communication, control, audit and evaluation activities.



„Petru Maior” University of Târgu-Mureș has created its own system of specific performance indicators by which it organized the quality management system according to the requirements of standard ISO 9001:2008 for education and research activity.

The National University for Political Studies and Public Administration of Bucharest, Technical University „Gheorghe Asachi” of Iași and other universities developed in the last five years software platforms and systems which support the evaluation processes and statistic data processing which reflect the evolution of quality assurance and evaluation.

Every year, “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia draws up an Internal Evaluation Report on quality of education, based on which they elaborate a set of recommendations which can be found in the Operational Plan of the University for the following year. The policies, strategies and procedures regarding quality assurance are dissemination at the level of all the academic and administrative structures.

The quality assurance mechanisms have diversified over time. They concern both the university management university activities, administrative activities, respectively teaching-learning activities and academic or scientific research services.

Quality Management is based on a process-based approach in which inputs represent the requirements of customers and the outputs – the satisfaction obtained is regularly evaluated, aiming at continuous improvement of all activities carried out.

I.3. Initiation, monitoring and regular revision of study programs

In all the universities from sample there is one Regulation on initiation, approval, monitoring and regular evaluation of each study programme, which is thoroughly and consistently applied. The realization of curricula is monitored and substantiated by internal structures at faculty and university level.

We can see a real progress in monitoring and regular revision of study programs. Their analysis is usually done by working teams formed by students and representatives of employers, which assures a continuous alignment with dynamics of university and professional qualifications market.

The main actions carried out in monitoring activities refer to the analysis of curriculum structure; analysis of content of subject sheets; establishment of didactic positions; distribution of subjects according to competences, didactic position and proven scientific achievements of the teaching staff; analysis of learning results expressed by the performances obtained by students.

As novelty element, the Faculty of Veterinarian Medicine from the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine of Banat “Regele Mihai I al României” Timișoara has aligned its university curricula with the curricula of other faculties of profile from European Union, in view of European accreditation.

The monitoring of study programs is carried out by various methods: analysis of learning results, questionnaires completed by students regarding the performance



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of teaching staff, the internal audit of quality activity. The regular evaluation of study programs within or outside the institutional evaluation is performed based on self-evaluation reports.

In the University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davila” of Bucharest, the substantiation of decisions is based on harmonization with demand and labour market, observance of national regulations, convergence with good practices and requirements concerning quality assurance in European Area of higher medical education.

In the University of Bucharest, by international collaborations in various projects, the study programs are regularly adapted to requirements of European and international market. A proof in this respect is the increasing number of foreign students by various study programs. There is an implementation plan of compatibility of study programs/curricula with the structure of qualifications on workforce market.

I.4. Ratio between the number of students and teaching staff number

The data from Table 1 was calculated by taking into account the number of students from all forms of education and the number of tenure teaching staff and associated staff.

Table 1

University	2008 – 2009	2014 – 2015
„Petru Maior“ University of Târgu Mureș	23.28	18.23
„1 Decembrie 1918“ University of Alba Iulia	29.02	19.13
Technical University „Gheorghe Asachi“ of Iași	19.38	16.57
Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest	14.66	10.01
University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davila” Bucharest	5.44	6.08
University of Bucharest	20.42	14.74
Politehnica University of Bucharest	15.70	16.95
„Politehnica“ University of Timișoara	18.00	15.23
University of Petroșani	37.37	15.44
“Eftimie Murgu“ University of Reșița	18.40	19.95



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University	2008 – 2009	2014 – 2015
University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine "Regele Mihai I al României" of Banat from Timișoara	18.30	15.10
University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine of Bucharest	28.79	22.63
National University of Arts of Bucharest	5.74	7.46
University of Craiova	32.58	16.15
West University of Timișoara	21.12	15.58
„Babeș-Bolyai“ University of Cluj-Napoca	31.30	23.42
National University of Political Studies and Public Administration of Bucharest	42.70	20.19
University of Arts „George Enescu“ of Iași	8.16	6.30
Romanian-American University of Bucharest	29.25	13.53
„Dimitrie Cantemir“ Christian University of Bucharest	30.23	30.84

We can see the significant reduction of ratio between the number of students and teaching staff in almost all universities. This striking change is the consequence of decrease in the total number of students and slight increase in the number of teaching staff from Romanian higher education system. Of course, the statement above must be accepted with reserve because it refers only to the data of evaluated universities in Qualitas project..

1.5. Regular evaluation of teaching staff quality

One of the progress elements in quality management in the last years is the foundation of internal audit commissions at university/faculty level, structures which aim at observance of quality standards regarding didactic activity. In the audit sheet the commission's observations are written down regarding the observance of timetable of planned activity, the deployment place, the conditions for carrying out the activity, the observance of analytical curriculum and plan of work, use of new didactic technologies, attendance rate in scheduled activity, the impact of activity on the students etc.

The universities have accomplished transparent multi-criteria evaluation mechanisms which include classification elements of performances in teaching, research and in services provided to the institution and the community. The evaluation by university



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management is the corollary component of monitoring of didactic, scientific and administrative activity of each teaching staff member. The evaluation of teaching staff is carried out according to the regulations dedicated to this process and implies: self-evaluation; peer evaluation; evaluation of teaching staff by students; evaluation by head of department. The results of different activities are quantified by a score allocated according to the volume of work and the importance of activity for the university. Based on the score accrued for the whole activity the classification of teaching staff is made for the awarding of merit prizes.

Peer evaluation represents one of the components of regular evaluation of teaching body's quality for all Romanian universities. In the last years peer evaluation was considered and accepted as compulsory and regular. In each teaching department there is a commission for annual evaluation of teaching and research performances of each teaching staff member/researcher and an annual report of their quality is drawn up.

Peer evaluation is carried out according to procedures established at university level, by using a specific questionnaire drawn up based on many performance criteria, and the results represent reference elements in establishing the policy of each department regarding didactic promotion, awarding of merit prizes and salaries.

In order to assure an objective nature of evaluation, in many universities a self-evaluation sheet for scientific and didactic activity is used especially for scientific research activity, instrument which allows the quantification of research activity, artistic achievements and scientific prestige.

The evaluation of teaching staff by students represents one of the most important links in the quality management chain. In all the universities the students have the possibility to evaluate at the end of each semester the didactic activity of teaching staff in courses, seminars, laboratories and other applicative activities based on questionnaires, respecting the anonymity of persons who filled in the questionnaires and the confidentiality of results. All the students have the possibility to fill in the questionnaires for evaluation of teaching staff activity in printed format or in online system. The results of students' evaluations are discussed in university structures.

The multicriteria evaluation of academic performances of teaching staff made by the evaluated universities in the university year 2014-2015, represents an essential factor which contributed to improvement of teaching and research activity. This practice will create an optimal framework for promotion of teaching staff and will allow the stimulation of performances by differentiated remuneration.

I.6. Stimulation and recovery programs

The stimulation of active citizenship, engaging students in the community life, corroborated with the development of practical skills as objectification of cross-sectional competences acquired by attending complementary subjects were materialized by many universities by awarding of ECTS credits and recognition of volunteering activities. The support of community activism in the student life



is recognized by the West University of Timișoara by awarding of supplementary points in the processes of granting excellence scholarships, to get seats in student camps and in university hostels.

The faculties of University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine of Bucharest, Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca and other universities offer every year stimulative prizes for the professional activity of students. The best-performing students can participate in the realization of scientific research or educational projects and can benefit from mobility scholarships.

The University of Craiova has practised for many years a stimulation system for students with special performances. The participation of students in national and international professional competitions is funded from the centralized fund of the university.

On the other hand, the students with learning difficulties benefit from dedicated support and recovery programs (consultations, counselling for avoidance of university dropout, alternative learning resources etc.).

There has been a constant concern for recovery of students with learning difficulties, assistance of students and guidance of students in professional activity. The recovery programs of students with learning difficulties are carried out by individual assistance in each department and assistance by Career Guidance and Counselling Centres.

The stimulation of students' creativity, their permanent encouragement, creation of a favourable context for independent thinking, free association of ideas, development of argumentation capacity, motivation for choices made and permanent attention paid to students who encounter study difficulties are a few important directions of action of the teaching body from universities, faculties and departments.

I.7. Databases and information

The Universities have integrated software systems which allow the collection, processing and analysis of relevant data and information for evaluation and institutional assurance of quality. The universities apply operational procedures of collection and processing of curricular information from universities from the country and abroad for determination of qualitative and quantitative reference points. The integrated software systems treat different aspects that exist in university processes: curricula, grading systems; admission sessions; academic records and situations; students and their schooling routes; organization by modules, groups and subgroups of series of students; sessions of examinations and grades obtained at examinations; scholarships; tuition fees and financial obligations of students; school situations and analyses dedicated to university management; bachelor's degree diplomas and diploma supplements etc. In the universities operate communication centres with specific regulated activity and international communication centres which entered the national structure ROEDUNET.

The software systems of universities allow the collection of the following categories of information: mission, organization, structure, management, administration,



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international relations, public relations, counselling and career guidance centre, equipment, facilities, timetable, faculties, forms of education, teaching staff etc.

The Universities use databases which are filled in on-line for data analysis and processing regarding didactic and scientific research activity of teaching staff and researchers.

The financial accounting records are made by dedicated software systems.

All the systems of information and online resources developed by universities have as declared purpose the enhancement of quality of educational process: online platforms dedicated to distance learning, online access to school situations, easy access to Internet during didactic and student mobilities Erasmus, communication platforms with Alumni, support services etc.

II. Trends and certainties formulated based on analysis of information from the database of Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

In order to capture the evolution trends of Romanian higher education's quality in the project "Development and consolidation of quality culture at the level of Romanian Higher Education system – QUALITAS" we analysed the information that exist in the database of Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education recorded by the universities which were institutionally evaluated during December 2014 – June 2015. There were especially benchmarked the data from the section Quality Management for the university year 2008-2009, respectively 2014-2015. This step completes the issues presented in the previous chapter.

The data presented below represents only sequences regarding the activity, progress and problems of the universities from the sample evaluated by Qualitas Project. This data allows the outlining of institutional development trends.

1. In the last five years in most universities the number of persons who hold competences in collection/processing and analysis of data regarding quality assurance and evaluation significantly increased and the total number of employees with basic workload who have assignments in collection and analysis of data regarding quality assurance and evaluation increased. In some universities we have recorded a remarkable increase (both relative and in absolute value) in the size of body of persons involved in quality management processes.
2. The number of employees of universities who have specific competences for social/educational assistance activities and who carry out specific counselling/assistance activities for students is on the increase. For example, in the university year 2014-2015, in West University of Timișoara there were 73 specialists



who provided assistance services to 4732 students. In the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration of Bucharest, the number of employees who hold specific competences for social or educational assistance activities has increased and the number of students who resorted last year to assistance services amounts to 1194. We encounter similar situations in "Gh. Asachi" University of Iași, University of Bucharest, University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine of Bucharest etc.

3. The number of students with high performances who benefited from scholarships and rewards has significantly increased. The examples are many. Thus, in University of Craiova the number of those who benefited from these facilities increased over 5 times over the last years. In "Petru Maior" University of Târgu Mureș the number of students increased over 10 times, the total amount spent was 13 times higher than in 2008. The same progress rate was recorded in the University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Carol Davila" of Bucharest. In "Gh. Asachi" University of Iași the total amount spent by the higher education institution for rewards offered to students with high performances increased six times and in "Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca the total amount spent by the higher education institution for rewards offered to students with high performances increased from 111,680 lei to 618,540 lei in the last 5 years. The examples can continue.
4. The Universities made learning programs adapted to the needs of students with high performances, which did not happen five years ago. We encounter such practices in "Petru Maior" University of Târgu Mureș, Romanian-American University of Bucharest, „1 Decembrie 1918“ University of Alba Iulia etc. In West University of Timișoara the preoccupation for stimulation of students for high performances led to increase of amount of merit scholarship and other rewards, 32 students benefited from the amount of 140,760 lei in the university year 2014-2015. On the other hand, the concern of institutional management for stimulation of students to obtain high performances has increased by increasing the number of learning programs adapted to these students.
5. In the last five years facilities were created for disabled persons in many higher education institutions. Such achievements were recorded in the Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest, "Politehnica" University of Timișoara, "Politehnica" University of Bucharest, University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinarian Medicine of Bucharest, the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration etc.
6. Apart from material facilities for disabled students, "Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, has developed software which facilitates access to information for persons with sight deficiencies. On the other hand, West University of Timișoara has increased the number of tutors who assure specific services for



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disabled persons and the number of learning programs adapted to their needs. We also find there software which facilitates access to information for persons with sight deficiencies and a printer in BRAILLE.

7. The number of volumes that exist in the libraries of evaluated universities in the university year 2014-2015 has increased in absolute value and the number of seats in reading rooms has significantly increased. Such evolutions are obvious in all universities from the sample of 20 universities evaluated in Qualitas project.
8. In most universities increased expenses were recorded for the purchase of books and the number of subscriptions to magazines and periodicals has increased. The novelty element is the increase of interest for access to online databases, which naturally led to the decrease of number of volumes borrowed/consulted by students. The exception is at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davila” of Bucharest where the number of volumes consulted by students in the last university year increased by 50%.

III. Opinion of universities on self-evaluation processes and external evaluation of quality in higher education and proposals for improvement of policies and methodologies of quality assurance and evaluation

III.1. Quantitative analysis

In order to identify the opinion of representatives of evaluated universities in Qualitas project on self-evaluation and external evaluation of quality processes at institutional and study programme level and for the identification of proposals for improvement of policies and methodologies of quality assurance and evaluation in higher education in Romania we conducted a sociological survey based on questionnaire (sociological survey form¹). The research instrument was elaborated based on the items from *External evaluation methodology, standards, reference standards and list of performance indicators – ARACIS* and from *Evaluation Guide of quality of university study programs and higher education institutions*.

The sociological survey form is presented in Annex.

We mention that quantitative analysis of answers to the questions from sociological survey form was conducted with the support of expert PL IV –associate professor Emilia Gogu, Ph.D. this scientific step led to results which can contribute to improvement of quality assurance and evaluation policies and methodologies.

¹ The research instrument was drawn up by the experts of Work Package PL II with the scientific support of Associate Professor Emilia Gogu, Ph.D.

Thus, at the request to evaluate with marks from 1 to 10 the satisfaction level regarding procedures, policies, internal methodologies and mechanisms for improvement of quality of academic processes we have obtained the values presented synthetically in Figure 1.

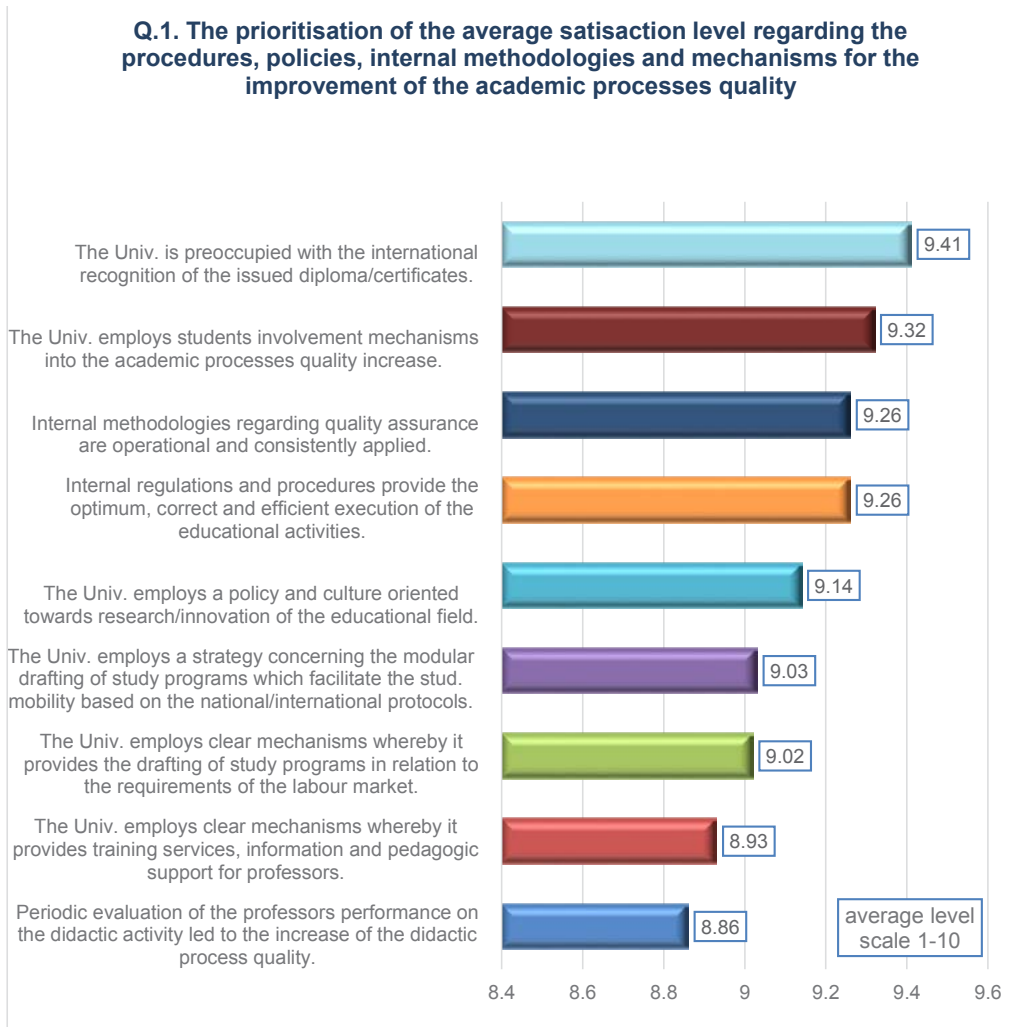


Figure 1

The data obtained highlight a positive perception on the satisfaction level regarding the procedures, policies, internal methodologies and mechanisms for improvement of quality of academic processes in universities.

With reference to mechanisms regarding external evaluation of quality, the results lead to the conclusion that external evaluations satisfy the needs and expectations of universities as you can see in Figure 2.

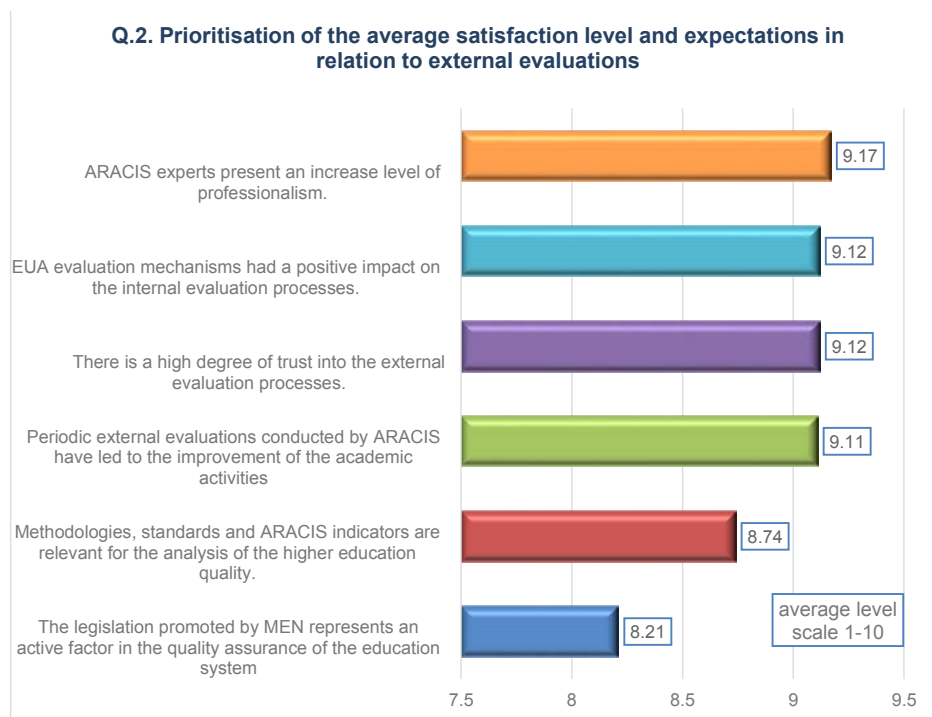


Figure 2

In the same research, we requested proposals for improvement of education and quality evaluation processes. The quantitative results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Items	Central trend and variation indicators			
	Average	Module	Standard deviation	Variation coefficient%
Indicators mentioned in external evaluation sheets require a numerical quantification with pre-established weights which establish a global score by aggregation.	8,32	10	2,148	25,83
The use of e-learning platforms is important in didactic process (teaching-learning-evaluation).	8,42	10	1,794	21,32
The evaluation process of quality of education system must be carried out in stages: I) Institutional level, II) Level of study programs/fields, III) Level of subjects from curriculum.	8,99	10	1,530	17,02



III.2. Qualitative analysis of answers to the questions from sociological survey form

III.2.1. The main dimensions of quality of higher education system

1. Organizational culture based on quality concept
2. Assurance of resources for realization of policies and objectives in the field of quality management
3. Social dimension: easy access to university studies, increase of attendance rate of studies in higher education and graduation in time
4. Generation of trust in capacity and performances of universities in satisfaction of implicit and explicit expectations of society
5. Responsibility of society for higher education system (manifested towards professions, manifested at governmental level) and its recognition as generator of values
6. International dimension (alignment to standards and practices of European higher education), national dimension (requirements of Romanian society), institutional dimension. The most important dimension of quality assurance system is the institutional one imposed by internal management requirements, accountability of university staff and orientation to performance.
7. Academic dimension (instructive-educational and research activities)
8. Scientific research adequately financed which leads to prestigious achievements valuable for the economy of the country and which support the educational process.
9. Ethical climate and integrity, quality services from teaching staff and responsible behaviour in educational process
10. High training of teaching staff, permanent interaction with students, offering competences which facilitate the insertion of graduates on the labour market
11. Adjustment of curricula to the new challenges from economy by promoting the entrepreneurship principles
12. Development of collaboration with employers and adjustment of curricula to the needs of economy and society
13. Competent teaching staff, students with authentic interests of knowledge and personal/professional development, best-performing self-financing system
14. Performance, creativity, preservation of national authenticity, undertaking responsibility

The quality of higher education system is a multidimensional concept, which can be approached from the perspective of organization provider of education. Quality reflects the extent that the institution is capable to offer the study programs the features which lead to the achievement of quality standards accepted and used at national and/or international level; from the perspective of students, the quality



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of education reflects by the extent that the university assures the optimal learning environment for assimilation of professional and cross-sectional competences desired and for future development of career; from the perspective of society, the quality of education is synonymous with the effort of the university to supply graduates prepared for the labour market. The mission of higher education is first of all to answer the needs of education and professional training of the individual and social and economic development needs of the community (local, regional, national). The higher education institution fulfils this purpose only to the extent that it satisfies these needs at a quality standard which allows both the individual and the society to become best-performing in a globalized environment characterized by competition and dynamism.

III.2.2. Changes which must be made to the Methodology for external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programs

1. Updating of procedures according to the legislation in force. Correlation of provisions of Methodology for external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programs with the Law no. 1/2011
2. Simplification and granting an enhanced autonomy to universities
3. Clarification on the importance of each indicator regarding the final result of evaluation and what happens when an indicator is not fulfilled.
4. Lower emphasis on quantitative indicators of the type “minimum 70% tenure teaching staff of which at least 25% are professors and associate professors”. This indicator limits the capacity of universities to organize study programs in collaboration with foreign universities.
5. Criteria, standards and weighted indicators according to importance and evaluated by scores or marks
6. Simplification of drawing up of self-evaluation report by conception of a matrix in which we introduce quantitative and qualitative data which guarantees a minimum quality level. The report could be made in synthetic form in online format.
7. Elimination of redundancies existing between the compulsory normative requirements and the standards and performance indicators set out in ARACIS methodology (we are talking about the indicators regarding the mission of the higher education institution, the material base, the research activity which repeats itself in the two sections of the visit record etc.).
8. Rephrasing more clearly the indicators which refer simultaneously to a multitude of requirements. Examples: Valorisation of university qualification obtained – Student-centered learning methods – Referential 1 of institutional Evaluation visit record; Budget and accounting – Institutional Evaluation Visit Record
9. Reduction of package of documents required (for example, regarding the evolution of the institution), reduction of emphasis laid on indicators that target spaces, equipment, facilities and increase of importance attached to the quality



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- of educational processes themselves (student-centered didactic activity, scientific quality of course materials etc., dissemination and valorisation of research activity results of teaching staff in educational process)
10. Introduction of mechanisms for identification of requirements and expectations of economic environment regarding the competences of graduates
 11. Simplification of procedure in case of programs which were already accredited
 12. Differentiation between the reevaluation procedure and the initial evaluation
 13. Use of global quality indicators as sum of individual indicators
 14. Flexibilization of evaluation procedures and quantification of evaluations
 15. Large differences between standards and reference standards (the last ones should be decided at university level)
 16. The emphasis is placed on numerical, statistical indicators and less on overall evaluation of results
 17. Determination of a maximal threshold regarding the changes of curriculum between two regular evaluations
 18. The criteria, standards and indicators require a higher degree of flexibility with determination of extreme acceptable values
 19. ARACIS should assure the consultancy for drawing up self-evaluation reports
 20. New indicator: Number of students incoming/outgoing from/to internal and external destinations; durations of internships
 21. Procedures for evaluation of absorption degree of graduates
 22. Criteria, Standards and Indicators: increase in weight of outcome indicators and standardization of their evaluation
 23. Granting of a more significant weight for output indicators specific to a study programme (now the input and process indicators are the most important ones from numerical point of view)
 24. Between the compulsory normative requirements and performance indicators set out in ARACIS methodology we can make an uniformization and can follow the model of ID commission regarding the concentration in visit record both of compulsory normative requirements and standards and performance indicators.
 25. Clear specification of performance indicators whose non-fulfilment entails the non-authorization/non-accreditation of a study programme.
 26. Determination of quantifiable performance indicators with explicit delimitation of their minimum level of fulfilment for authorization/accreditation/evaluation
 27. Focus of procedures, criteria, standards and indicators on evaluation of development degree of professional, personal and civic skills following the educational process
 28. Introduction of evaluation of procedures for deconspiration of corruption, nepotism and blackmail exerted on students



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29. More complex criteria in case of visual arts
30. Adequate criteria of vocational fields
31. Evaluation criteria must be adapted to each field
32. Realization of an online evaluation portal

ARACIS Methodology and all ARACIS Guidelines must be revised from several points of view: elimination of redundancies, elimination of vague phrasing, reduction of number of aspects which should be treated and their hierarchization depending on the “length of service” of the institution in ARACIS evaluations.

An indicator is well-defined only when it is measurable or quantifiable and measurable. The current indicators are mostly threshold type, “promoted or unpromoted”, so they do not make distinction between mark 5 and mark 10, and therefore they do not stimulate quality. The importance paid by criteria, standards and indicators to the educational process is purely formal.

The procedures which must be processed for authorization/accreditation of a study programme or a higher education institution could be simplified by using a combined approach in which the visit of an evaluation commission (which could appreciate on the spot the accuracy of indicators regarding material base and study conditions of the students) could be followed by the completion on an online platform of indicators regarding educational effectiveness and quality management.

We suggest more coherence and elimination of parallelisms in steps taken by institutions which target different sides of quality in higher education – ARACIS, National Authority for Qualifications (ANC), CNFIS, UEFISCDI, CNATDCU etc.

III.2.3. Indicators from ARACIS methodology in force which are less relevant for institutional evaluation or evaluation of study programs

1. Indicators related to material base
2. Indicators related to financial aspects
3. Numerical and/or percentage quantification for evaluation of the quality of teaching
4. Accommodation spaces for at least 10% of students
5. Specific indicators of the type: number of seats in student hostels (it is important the degree of coverage of requests for accommodation in hostels), number of seats in reading rooms of libraries etc.
6. Examples of irrelevant documents from self-evaluation report: Regulations of Senate, Internal Regulations for functioning of university, Regulations of professional activity of teaching staff, Regulations for organization and carrying out of academic elections
7. Requirement that at most 50% of teaching staff should be associate professors or professors



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8. For programs which are regularly evaluated they should request only changes compared to the previous evaluation
9. Having in view the interdisciplinary character of programs and that after the doctoral studies the teaching staff also attend other specializations (by research projects, research internships) the strict correlation between the doctoral field and the subject taught is not the only factor relevant in the evaluation of competence of teaching staff to teach a certain subject.
10. Number of computers per student
11. Valorisation of qualification by continuation of university studies
12. Teaching as source of learning
13. Elimination from evaluation reports of study programs of references to institution and replacement with a form in which the completions are made to a large extent by "yes/no"
14. At the indicator Valorisation of qualification by continuation of university studies from master's degree programs, the requirement that at least 20% of graduates of the last two classes should attend doctoral studies or work in research is restrictive because most of students who go through the 2nd level of studies do it to have complete studies according to Bologna process
15. Effective administration
16. Income and expenses budget

III.2.4. Means by which the university can follow the professional route of its graduates

1. Keeping the connection with graduates and their involvement in the life of academic community
2. Creation of a database of graduates which is regularly updated and creation of ALUMNI at faculties level
3. Link dedicated to the activities of ALUMNI on the main webpage of university
4. Regular reunions for debates regarding the practical aspects of specialization field in which teaching staff, students and graduates participate
5. Invitation of graduates to scientific communication session of teaching staff
6. National regulation by which the employers are forced to announce the university on recent employments of its graduates
7. Generalization of using the graduate sheet completed at the issue of study documents
8. Existence of a special section for graduates in the webpages of faculties



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III.2.5. The main dimensions of performance of a higher education institution

1. A greater visibility and presence in the public area, need for transparency, responsibility and comparability, promotion of diversity in the European university sector, elaboration and implementation of adequate measures for management of human capital, consolidation of connections with non-academic sector, improvement of financing conditions and promotion of competitive and sustainable models.
2. The performance of a higher education institution is given by the quality of products offered to society, respectively competences and knowledge under various forms: fundamental and applied scientific research, consultancy, expertise, involvement of members of academic community in the society life etc.
3. Thorough strategic plan and operational institutional capacity
4. Capacity of attracting out-of-budget resources by research contracts
5. Results of research, their visibility, their scientific impact on economic environment
6. Position of university in various national and international classifications
7. Attractiveness degree for the admission candidates
8. High quality educational services
9. Capacity to render flexible the programs depending on the evolution of labour market and implicitly having an enhanced interest in the specialized internship
10. Realism of study programs and consistency of their implementation
11. Number of study programs in foreign languages promoted by the university
12. Number of foreign students who study in the university
13. Reputation among the academic community, visibility by illustrious graduates
14. Training level and competences of teaching staff; active presence of teaching staff in specialized fields at national and international level; network of external relations of educational institution; organization of highly prestigious academic events
15. Number of international research projects in which the university is coordinator
16. Number of inventions applied in socio-economic environment
17. Number of scientific articles with special international impact
18. Transfer capacity of scientific achievements in economic sector, specialized consultancy capacity, involvement in socio-economic life, partnerships with economic agents of profile etc.
19. Transfer of competences through the graduates of university
20. Number of teaching staff who teach at universities from abroad



21. Quality of internship
22. Ratio between the number of graduates and the number of enrolled students
23. Professional route of graduates, international recognition
24. Attractiveness of study programs and their correlation with the evolution of labour market
25. Interest of employers in the graduates of the university
26. Ethical dimension
27. Quality of services offered to students
28. Involvement of members of academic community in socio-cultural plan
29. National and international visibility (method of reflection in mass media)
30. Recognition on European market of qualifications offered by the institutions from the country
31. Capacity of university to offer conditions for the formation and strengthening of characters
32. Capacity of the university to stimulate the creativity of students and to encourage critical thinking
33. Capacity to generate knowledge
34. Quality of human resources, quality of graduates, culture and university ethos

III.2.6. The main dimensions of performance of teaching staff

1. The performance of teaching staff depends on the level of: a) general and philosophical culture, specialized and psychopedagogical training; b) positive attitude towards people, correctness, honesty, dignity, patience, self-control, responsibility; c) cognitive skills (qualities of thinking such as capacity of analysis and synthesis, flexibility, originality, memory quality, imagination, intelligence), verbal ability, communication skills, pedagogic aptitude.
2. A best-performing teaching staff member masters very well the subject he/she teaches, is up-to-date with the latest breakthroughs in the field and has the capacity to transmit his/her students his/her knowledge, but also has the competence to form competences in the field he/she manages and to encourage the student to problematize, discover and innovate.
3. In order to be best-performing the university professor must be at the same time researcher and teaching staff.
4. Constant undertaking of pedagogue status; permanent interest in rendering efficient the didactic act by activation of active-participative modern techniques and methods, with focus on student in the teaching-learning process
5. Teaching staff in Romanian higher education is to an equal extent trainer and modeller of professional destinies, and researcher in his/her field of specialization.



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6. Notoriety. Performance in research/creation
7. Professionalism: advanced pedagogy, innovation and opening to novelty, ethical attitude
8. Professionalism: knowledge of problematics in specialized field; experience in the field of specialization; teaching experience; connection to new technologies in IT&C field
9. Human dignity, self-giving for profession and positive appreciation of teams of students and teaching staff
10. Preoccupation for lifelong training
11. The professor should have many graduates who recognize that that had him/her as role model over the years
12. Capacity to interact with students, empathy, capacity to transmit knowledge
13. Capacity to create practical skills in the student
14. Capacity to arouse interest for the subject taught, capacity to transmit the need of lifelong learning
15. Prestige in front of the students and colleagues, based on didactic and scientific performance, participation in life of the team and creation or consolidation of a "school"
16. Attachment for profession

III.2.7. The main dimensions of performance of student/graduate

1. The performance of the student depends on: a) positive attitude towards people, correctness, honesty, dignity, patience, self-control, responsibility; c) cognitive skills (qualities of thinking such as capacity of analysis and synthesis, flexibility, originality, memory quality, imagination, intelligence), verbal ability, communication skills, progress in learning process, attendance to courses, receptivity, individual study, motivation for the study field
2. Intellectual capacity, seriousness, desire of personal development based on work
3. Awareness of profession
4. Prizes obtained in scientific student events organized at national/international level
5. Results obtained in learning
6. Availability for effort
7. Desire to assimilate knowledge and form the skills needed for the profession chosen
8. Graduation of university with clear professional objectives for the future
9. Receptivity, argued communication, motivation, involvement, seriousness, responsibility, respect for the others, availability to learn, to understand
10. Capacity of abstraction, generalization, theorization of knowledge



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11. Applicative capacity, logical thinking
12. Extracurricular involvement
13. Competences acquired for the studies period allow the graduate a fast and stable access to a job, in the reference field or in a close field; interest in lifelong training; competitive spirit and performance oriented; entrepreneurial capacity
14. Competences and professional skills, correctness, honesty, responsibility, capacity of integration and team work skills
15. Graduation of the faculty with professional knowledge which includes issues related to professional integration in society
16. Capacity to solve practical concrete problems in the field of the study programme graduated
17. Practical skills, communication skills, spirit of initiative, creativity, preoccupations for valorisation of formed competences
18. Creativity, visibility, professional and financial success (vocational fields)

III.2.8. Trends of Romanian higher education in the field of quality assurance and management in the opinion of representatives of evaluated universities by Qualitas Project

1. Over time we move from reporting culture to quality culture.
2. The national and international competition requires the approaching of quality in higher education and the performance can be achieved only where the quality policy becomes essential in the university life. The indicators must be measurable, quantifiable and comparable.
3. There is a positive experience in this field, but it has an important role in quality assurance along with the quality of teaching act and the team realized and the assurance of economic financial conditions according to the forecast expectations.
4. The higher education and research institutions must become key social institutions in the knowledge-based European economy.
5. Recognition and accessibility of graduates on the European/international labour market
6. Focus on performance and professionalism
7. Sometimes excessive bureaucratization
8. Focus on an education oriented to formation of cross-disciplinary competences which facilitate the fast absorption of graduates on the labour market
9. Transition to a quantitative analysis system with measurable, quantifiable and comparable indicators with emphasis on overall evaluation of results
10. Giving an increased trust for the internal evaluation made by the institution.
11. A trend of changing perceptions at the level of teaching staff and students in the direction of paying on enhanced importance to quality assurance



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12. Values on which Romanian higher education is based: responsibility, transparency, orientation to beneficiaries
13. By ARACIS the Romanian higher education has managed to implement a functional quality assurance system.
14. The trends are refinement of evaluation, perfection of evaluators and precise conformity with criteria and standards.
15. The mission of each university tends to enclose a striking social component which gives the university the role of driver of economic, social and cultural changes in close connection with the dynamics of environment, but also with the preoccupation for social individual and collective responsibility of the academic community members.
16. Shifting emphasis within the quality assurance system from regulations to consolidated practices of quality management, which proved in time the effective capacity to adjust the processes for which they were designed.
17. Emphasizing the connection between universities and stakeholders, with implications in the recognition of qualifications of graduates on the workforce market.
18. Significant restructuring of relationship between students and teaching staff, as far as the access to information technologies becomes wider, so that it leaves its market on both the early educational processes and especially on the university training.
19. Ascension of information and communication technologies with direct impact on the revolution of traditional teaching methods.
20. The use of blended learning will lead to the fading of differences between the full-time education and distance education.
21. The development of information technology has implications on the integration trend of academic processes carried out at university level – software systems manage the whole learning path of students – from enrolment to the relationship with stakeholders and lifelong training
22. Increase of quality assurance importance in the perception of teaching staff and students
23. Surpassing the conformity trend at minimal levels of criteria and quality assurance standards. The need for classification of higher education institutions and hierarchization of study programs based on indicators which can stimulate them to achieve performances has emerged.
24. Shifting emphasis towards qualitative indicators which change the orientation of universities to the concern for own financial survival, to a student-oriented university
25. The trends of Romanian higher education in the field of quality assurance and management are adjustment to requirements set by ENQA, adjustment to changes which took place in educational processes, training and perfection of



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staff with quality assignments; consolidation of quality management systems in universities, development of social function of the university

26. The concern for quality assurance of study programs has increased by focusing on the satisfaction of explicit and implicit needs of society and easy insertion of graduates on the workforce market.
27. It requires more responsibility and dedication from all the members of academic community, more honesty and quality and less formalism.

IV. Appreciations, observations and trends formulated by the representatives of the universities institutionally evaluated by Qualitas Project regarding the evaluation of quality and the quality of higher education system

Quality Management must target the whole activity of the university. An organization provider of education must tend towards a total quality management, in which the whole management system should be governed by the achievement of the highest performances possible and tend to their continuous improvement. Higher education can be the system which builds the education of the individual as main actor of society's development and only the premises of an education based on total quality management of university processes can assure this goal.

The internationalization of Romanian universities which will affirm more remarkably as credible actors on the global market of education providers is able to create the necessary pressure for the higher education institutions in Romanian to assimilate the best practices disseminated at European level regarding the quality assurance of academic and administrative processes carried out in the universities.

The quality assurance of higher education at the standards of European Higher Education Area has an essential role in the formation of human resources and personal development as citizens of a knowledge-based democratic society.

On the other hand, we can see the trend of changing perceptions of teaching staff and students on the line of paying an enhanced importance to quality assurance institution, instruments and specific work methods.

Now the actors from the system – students, teaching staff and employers have started to realize that there is no other activity which promises more influence in improvement of society but the development of a generation which understands the concept of quality and acts to improve it. It has developed the natural trend of involving more employers in the educational process. There is the proposal of inserting in the university curricula of each study programme applicative subjects supported by specialists among the employers at the proposal of their councils.

The following issues should be given a major interest: quality of teaching and research staff from higher education institutions; importance given to professional practical works of students – activity sometimes marginalized and deployment of



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strategic partnerships for this purpose; the capacity of institutions to adapt their programs to requirements of labour market; development of entrepreneurial spirit of students; capacity of teaching staff to disseminate the results of their research activity in the teaching processes; development of cross-curricular programs which allow the assimilation of knowledge from related fields and implicitly, the increase of adaptability degree to requirements of labour market.

There is the opinion according to which at curricular level we tend towards theorization which will have negative implications on medium and long term on the performance of students. The development of cognitive competences to the detriment of professional competences will create situations in which the practical skills of graduates will be insignificant. From the perspective of developing efficient systems of training for future graduates, this approach must be reconsidered.

The exigency level of teaching staff relates to the receptivity level of students, which is sometimes very low. To counteract this situation, we must find ways to engage and motivate students in extracurricular activities with practical usefulness, to launch competitions between students in the profile of specializations, the obligation of teaching staff to participate in training courses in academic management field etc.

It has now emerged a trend of changing perceptions of teaching staff to give a special importance to quality assurance activities and work instruments such as peer evaluation, evaluation by students etc.

A possible risk for the future can be the remuneration level of debutant teaching staff. It can act as a brake in the selection of a teaching career by the best graduates and is not a motivating element to increase the interest in performance and quality in university education.

The higher education institutions are constantly preoccupied with the redefinition of study programs and their regular evaluation, which clearly shows that there is a concern for the correct answer to the needs of society, to the integration of graduates on the labour market by continuous adjustment of curricular contents. The trend towards modernization results clearly from the need of permanent updating of teaching methods.

The evolution trends of higher education quality not only depend on the data of educational system and the people who work in this system, they also depend on the attitude of the general public towards school and the direction in which society goes. The public image of higher education system must be reconstructed, professionalism and credibility of universities must increase in order to contribute to the development of society. It is necessary to generate the trust in the capacity of universities to satisfy the implicit and explicit expectations of society.

It is obvious that the orientation of high school graduates towards study programs of technical profile is low and the number of persons with higher studies to one thousand inhabitants aged between 30 and 35 years old is not satisfactory. On the other hand, universities should develop the social function of universities by attracting high school graduates from social underprivileged areas. The formal and



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firm undertaking of the status of universities from and for the region should be a means of institutional development and especially economic and social development at regional level. Because they face major difficulties which result from the limited character of financial resources available, some universities are more concerned for the number of students than the quality offered for their training. In these situations, the limitation of educational offer and the orientation to the regional needs of qualified human resources can be an option for the universities in difficulty.

There are signals related to the lack or inconsistent positive perception of students towards academic training, which is proven by the increase of ratio between the number of students enrolled in the first year and the number of graduates, which shows a certain inefficiency of teaching processes.

In order to increase the chances of academic training, especially for very busy persons, it is maintained the need of extension and perfection of distance education and part-time education by adjusting the legislation and equipment.

With reference to methodology, procedures and institutional evaluation standards and evaluation of study programs, the observations are generally positive, but there are also proposals for perfection.

We can see a consolidation of ARACIS, and increase in the degree of professionalism of evaluators of study programs.

We can see a trend of ARACIS to give an increased trust in higher education institutions, which shows that the expectations towards higher education institutions have been reached.

We have shifted from the stage of adopting the practices and processes from the reference environment (higher education institutions from EU) to their organic undertaking: it is a difficult, but necessary process which will effectively enhance the quality of Romania education on medium term.

The quality in higher education is analysed in the light of indicators most of the times statistical indicators by specific standards and thorough procedures. In other words, the standardization and formalization level of higher education is high, which led to the stabilization of higher education system.

The Romanian higher education system must continue to develop on the pillars of organizational quality culture at institutional and individual level, flexibility of study programs depending on the immediate demands of workforce market, as priority support of student-orientation of all institutional processes. In this respect, the development of current quality management systems of universities towards total quality management systems, which allows easy and immediate adjustment to the changes of economic environment represents a priority of Romanian education.



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Abbreviations

ANC – National Authority for Qualifications

ARACIS – Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

CEAC – Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation

CNATDCU – National Council for Attestation of Titles, Diplomas and University Certificates

CNFIS – National Council for Financing of Higher Education

ENQA – The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

SRAC – Romanian Society for Quality Assurance

UEFISCDI – Executive Unit for Financing of Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation



References

1. The Methodology for External Evaluation of study programs and higher education institutions (http://www.aracis.ro/fileadmin/ARACIS/Proceduri/Metodologie_de_evaluare_externa.pdf)
2. Guidelines for evaluation of quality of university study programs and higher education institutions (http://www.aracis.ro/fileadmin/ARACIS/Proceduri/parte_a_I_acredidare_programe_licenta_si_master_Aprilie_2010.pdf)
3. SMQ – Quality Management System (the definitions of SMQ are compliant with SR EN ISO 9000:2006 and SR IWA 2:2009)



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Annex – Sociological Survey Form



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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 /1.55/L.2/S/141894

SOCIOLOGICAL SURVEY

Dear Professor¹,

In QUALITAS Project whose beneficiary is ARACIS, a study is conducted in 20 higher education institutions selected for institutional evaluation.

The purpose of the study is to identify the opinion of higher education institutions, selected in the project for institutional evaluation, on the processes of self-evaluation and external evaluation of quality in higher education and identification of proposals for improvement of quality assurance and evaluation policies and methodologies. We are also concerned with the realization of a benchmarking analysis of evolutive trends regarding the quality of higher education based on the data provided by the universities selected for institutional evaluation in the project.

The answers are confidential and your collaboration is very useful for determination of a concrete image on evaluation process and evolutive trends of quality in Romanian higher education system.

The analysis of results from the questionnaire will be valorised in a Synthetic Report, which will be published in Romanian and in English. The synthetic report will be made public also by posting on ARACIS website.

Thank you in advance for your availability, involvement and your time.

MENTIONS: ARACIS METHODOLOGY for external evaluation of higher education institutions and university study programmes refers to fields for quality assurance of education, criteria, standards², reference standards³ and performance indicators⁴. Standards, reference standards and performance indicators describe the quality requirements for the activities of a university which requests authorization for temporary functioning, to be accredited or to be regularly evaluated, respectively requests authorization for temporary functioning/accreditation/regular evaluation of a study programme.

Fields for quality assurance of education		
A. Institutional capacity	B. Educational effectiveness	C. Quality Management
Criteria		
Standards – define the compulsory minimum level for realization of an activity	Reference standards – define an optimal level for realization of an activity	

¹ Note: The questionnaire is addressed to the Vice-Rector responsible for quality assurance, the President/Manager CEAC/DAC, coordinators/managers of study programmes, specialists in evaluation and quality assurance of higher education appointed by the university management.

² Standards define the minimum compulsory level for realization of an activity in education. Any standard is formulated under the form of an enunciation and materializes by a set of performance indicators. The Standards are differentiated by fields and quality assurance criteria.

³ Reference standards define an optimal level for realization of an activity based on the good practices that exist at national, European or world level. The reference standards are specific to each study programme or each institution, are optional and range above the minimum level.

⁴ Performance indicator represents an instrument for measuring the degree of realization of an activity by comparison with a standard. Performance indicators identify the results which vary from a minimum acceptable level to a maximum identifiable level. The minimum level of performance indicators corresponds to the requirements of a standard. The maximum levels correspond to reference standards, are optional and differentiate quality in institutions in a progressive hierarchical manner.

Performance indicators

PART I - QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION I. Mechanisms and processes in internal evaluation of quality

Q1. Please evaluate with marks from 1 to 10 the satisfaction level regarding procedures, policies, internal methodologies and mechanisms for improvement of quality of academic processes.

where: 1 – very low level, 10 – the highest level, NS – I do not know, NR – I do not answer

No. crt.	Items	Mark										N S	N R	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
1.	Regulations and internal procedures assure the optimal, correct and efficient deployment of educational activities.													
2.	The internal Methodologies of quality assurance are operational and consistently applied.													
3.	The University has clear mechanisms by which it assures perfection services, information and pedagogic support for the teaching staff.													
4.	The regular evaluation of performance of teaching staff regarding the teaching activity led to the increase in the quality of the didactic process.													
5.	The University has clear mechanisms by which it assures the design of study programmes in correlation with the requirements of labour market.													
6.	The University has a strategy regarding the modular design of study programmes which facilitates the mobility of students based on national/international protocols/agreements.													
7.	The University is preoccupied with the international recognition of diplomas/certificates issued.													
8.	The University has mechanisms of students' engagement in the enhancement of quality of academic processes.													
9.	The University has a policy and culture oriented to research/innovation in educational field.													

SECTION II. Mechanisms regarding external evaluation of quality

Q2. Please evaluate with marks from 1 to 10 to what extent the external evaluations satisfy the needs and expectations of the institution.

where: 1 – to very little extent, and 10 – to a very large extent, NS – I do not know, NR – I do not answer

No. crt.	Items	Mark										N S	N R	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
10.	The methodologies, standards and indicators ARACIS are relevant in the analysis of quality in higher education.													
11.	The regular external evaluations made by ARACIS led to the improvement of academic activities.													
12.	ARACIS Experts have an enhanced degree of professionalism.													
13.	There is a high degree of trust in external evaluation processes.													
14.	The evaluation mechanisms EUA had a positive impact on internal evaluation processes.													
15.	The legislation promoted by MEN represents an active													

SECTION III. Proposals regarding the improvement of educational and quality evaluation processes
Q3. Please evaluate with marks from 1 to 10 the importance of the following items
where: 1 – totally unimportant, and 10 – very important, NS – I do not know, NR – I do not answer

No. crt	Items	Mark										N S	N R
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
16.	The indicators mentioned in external evaluation sheets require a numerical quantification, with pre-established weights, which establish a global score by aggregation.												
17.	It is important to use e-learning platforms in the didactic process (teaching-learning-evaluation).												
18.	The quality evaluation process of educational system must be carried out by stages: I) <i>Institutional level</i> , II) <i>Level of study programmes/fields</i> , III) <i>Level of subjects from curriculum</i> .												

Q4. In the quality evaluation of the academic system what weight would you give to the following indicators?

Indicators	Weight %
19. <i>Input indicators</i> ⁵	
20. <i>Process indicators</i> ⁶	
21. <i>Output indicators</i> ⁷	
22. <i>Outcome indicators</i> ⁸	
Total	100%

SECTION IV. Organizational aspects
Q5. As an estimate, what is the period of drawing up an internal evaluation file (self-evaluation) in view of authorization/accreditation/regular evaluation of a bachelor's degree programme?

- below 2 weeks
- 3-5 weeks
- 6-8 weeks
- over 9 weeks.

Q6. How many persons participate in the drawing up of self-evaluation report (evaluation of a study programme)?

- Members of CEAC department and the manager of evaluated programme
- 2- 5 persons from academic department, with the participation of a CEAC member
- 6-10 persons from the academic department, with the participation of CEAC members
- The entire teaching staff of the study programme.

⁵ The input indicator represents the factor taken into consideration before the start of educational process (for example, the ratio between the number of students and the teaching staff number, the data on valorisation of scientific research of teaching staff, equipment of laboratories, methods of recruitment and selection of applicants – admission procedure etc.).

⁶ The process indicator refers to the factors that exist in the teaching-learning-evaluation process (for example, the pedagogic competences of teaching staff, didactic technologies, degree of correlation of subjects' contents with their objectives, relevance of evaluation of competences acquired by students etc.).

⁷ The output indicator aims at direct results after the conclusion of educational process (for example, the ratio between the number of graduates and the number of students enrolled after admission, the degree in which the graduates acquired the competences stated at the start of study programme etc.).

⁸ The outcome indicator aims at indirect results after the conclusion of the educational process (for example, the number of graduates who were hired in the first 6 months from the end of studies in the their qualification field).



PART II STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

SECTION V. Open-ended questions

I	Q7. In your opinion what are the main dimensions of quality in higher education system? <i>Answer:</i>
II	Q8. In your opinion which are the changes that need to be made to the Methodology for external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes (structural answer in the 2 main directions: Procedures and respectively Criteria, Standards and Indicators)? <i>Answer:</i> Procedures: Criteria, Standards and Indicators:
III	Q9. In your opinion what are the indicators from ARACIS methodology in force which you consider less relevant for institutional evaluation or evaluation of study programmes? <i>Answer:</i>
IV	Q10. In your opinion which are the means by which the university can follow the professional route of its graduates? <i>Answer:</i>
V	Q11. In your opinion what are the main dimensions of the performance of a higher education institution? <i>Answer:</i>
VI	Q12. In your opinion what are the main dimensions of the teaching staff performance? <i>Answer:</i>
VII	Q13. In your opinion which are the main dimensions of the student's/graduate's performance? <i>Answer:</i>
VIII	Q14. In your opinion what are the trends of Romanian higher education system in the field of quality assurance and quality management? <i>Answer:</i>



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Învățământul Superior

SECTION VI. Opinions on the trends of quality of Romanian higher education system

(Please state your opinions extensively)

Thank you for your involvement and your time.

We assure you that your opinions count!

For further information and questions, please contact us at

e-mail: qualitas@aracis.ro.

To be completed by the interview operator:

Name of interview operator:

Registration date:

This document is drawn up in the project POSDRU – QUALITAS. The use or complete or partial reproduction of this document will be only with the written consent of ARACIS.

Note: The collection of information based on this questionnaire is done with the observance of the provisions of art. 12 of Law no. 677/2001 for the protection of persons regarding the processing of personal data and free circulation of this data, further amended and supplemented.



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