



## **External Institutional Evaluation International Expert Report**

### **West University Timisoara Romania**

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This report summarizes my impressions as ARACIS International Expert Evaluator of the Institutional Evaluation of West University Timisoara (UVT) Romania. The evaluation of the West University Timisoara was carried out by ARACIS in view of maintaining accreditation, procedure of quality assurance aimed to certify fulfillment of operating standards of the evaluated institutions.

The evaluation process was performed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), who recruited the following Experts Committee, in charge of Institutional Evaluation at the West University Timisoara (UVT) Romania:

**Director:**

Prof. PhD Nicolae-Adrian Opre; Babes Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

**Coordinator:**

Prof. PhD. Adriana Giurgiu; University of Oradea

**Representative of the advisory committee:**

Prof. PhD. Ovidiu Folcut; Romano-Americana University Bucharest

**International expert:**

Prof.PhD. Razvan Ionut Ghinea; University of Granada, Spain

**Expert of the institutional committee:**

Prof. PhD. Adela Socol; University "1 Decembrie" Alba Iulia

**Student Evaluator:**

Malan Denisa Maria; Babes Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

**Student Evaluator:**

Buhus Stefanut Iulian; Vasile Alecsandri University Bacau

The evaluation period extended from 06/04/2022 to 8/04/2022, and it was developed on-site. After my appointment as an International Expert Evaluator, I was informed by the Director (Prof Dr. Adrian Opre, Babes Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca), the Coordinator (Prof. Dr. Adriana Giurgiu, University of Oradea) as well as the Technical Assistant (Carmen Mirian - ARACIS) of the evaluation team on important aspects of the evaluation process, such as:

- Working methodology and the structure of the evaluation panels, for Institutional Evaluation and Study Programs, including contact data;
- All important working documents, such as The Guidelines for Periodical External Evaluation of academic quality in accredited higher education institutions as well as the updated guidelines with the amendments approved at the Council meeting of 27 August 2020 according to the Council Decision no. 55/27.08.2020.
- General presentation of the HE and QA systems in Romania.
- Detailed meetings and visit schedule;
- Credentials and how to access the Internal evaluation reports and their annexes uploaded by the evaluated institution.



## **Background**

As stated in the Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, engagement with quality assurance processes, particularly the external ones, allows European higher education systems to demonstrate quality and increase transparency, thus helping to build mutual trust and better recognition of their qualifications, programmes and other provision.

Higher education aims to fulfil multiple purposes, including preparing students for active citizenship, for their future careers (e.g. contributing to their employability), supporting their personal development, creating a broad advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation. Therefore, stakeholders, who may prioritize different purposes, can view quality in higher education differently and quality assurance needs to take into account these different perspectives. Quality, whilst not easy to define, is mainly a result of the interaction between teaching staff, students and the institutional learning environment. Quality assurance should ensure a learning environment in which the content of the study programs, learning opportunities and facilities are fit for purpose.

A successfully implemented quality assurance system will provide information to assure the higher education institution and the public of the quality of the higher education institution's activities (accountability) as well as provide advice and recommendations on how it might improve what it is doing (enhancement). Quality assurance and quality enhancement are thus inter-related. They can support the development of a quality culture that is embraced by all: from the students and academic staff to the institutional leadership and management.

The West University of Timișoara (UVT) is one of the major Universities in Romania, with a total of 11 Faculties (Faculty of Arts and Design, Faculty of Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Faculty of Physics, Faculty of Letters, History and Theology, Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science, Faculty of Music and Theatre, Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, Faculty of Political Science, Philosophy and Communication Sciences) where are running more than 75 undergraduate degree programs and more than 80 master degree programs.

At UVT are also running four undergraduate distance learning programs (Management, Accounting and Management Informatics, Finance and Banking, Social Work), and two undergraduate part-time programs (Physical and Sports Education and Law).

UVT also runs four undergraduate degree programs taught in international languages (two in English - Computer Science and Finance and Banking, one in German - Accounting and Management Informatics and one in French - Management), as well as 11 master's degree programs (one in French and ten in English, in the Faculties of Economics and Business Administration, Mathematics and Computer Science, Physics, Law, Sociology and Psychology and Political Science, Philosophy and Communication Sciences).

The teaching staff is constituted of 670 full professors, associate professors, lecturers and university assistants, as well as associated professors, who are responsible for the training of approximately 15 500 students enrolled at UVT.



The entire activity of the West University of Timisoara is carried out in accordance with national legislation and the principles of the European Higher Education Area. The general mission of UVT is advanced scientific research and education, generating and transferring knowledge to society through:

(a) scientific research, development, innovation and technology transfer, through individual and collective creation, in science, engineering, humanities, arts, by ensuring physical and sports performance and development, and by exploiting and disseminating their results;

b) initial and continuing training, at university level, for the purpose of personal development, professional integration of the individual and meeting the skills needs of the socio-economic environment.

UVT assumes its own mission as a catalyst for the development of Romanian society by creating an innovative and participative environment for scientific research, learning, cultural-artistic creation and sports performance, transferring skills and knowledge to the community through the education, research and consultancy services it offers to partners in the economic and socio-cultural environment.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

UVT has undergone its last ARACIS institutional evaluation in 2015, and the Institution carefully prepared a separate 28 pages document where it was explained how the recommendations formulated by the ARACIS Institutional Evaluation Committee in 2015 were implemented during the last period. Quality assurance is a continuous process that does not end with the external feedback or report or its follow-up process within the institution. The Evaluated Institution ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

I was pleasantly surprised to see that UVT took a large series of actions to satisfy previous ARACIS Evaluation Committee recommendations. I will list below some of the most important achievements:

- UVT acquired full or subscription access to several software packages that cover a large number of teaching and research needs;
- UVT implemented a methodology to financially stimulate teaching staff with remarkable research activity;
- UVT founded a support center for participation in international research projects – SupportTM;
- UVT increased by 80 the number of national/regional and international partnerships;
- UVT constituted a counseling Group of Strategic Partners of UVT – GPS UVT – comprised of 17 representative organizations from Western Romania to help strengthen the connection between UVT and social/economic environment;
- UVT launched a website ([www.admitere.uvt.ro](http://www.admitere.uvt.ro)) where the admission process to both graduate and postgraduate studies is thoroughly described, available in both Romanian and English;
- UVT launched a digital platform for admission to UVT ([www.admitereonline.uvt.ro](http://www.admitereonline.uvt.ro)), enabling a fully online admission process to UVT;



- UVT organized the West Summer University (WSU), a summer-school addressed to undergraduate students, where they can experience student life at UVT during a two week period.
- UVT integrated a Professional Counseling and Career Planning course for first year students;
- UVT increased the capability of student housing by building or start building new accommodation facilities;
- UVT increased efforts to attract international experts for both teaching and research, by implementing different programs, such as Visiting@UVT or Diaspora@West University of Timisoara Lecture Series;
- A synthetic report of the results of teaching staff evaluation performed by the students was made available online on the University website;
- UVT started the build of a University cafeteria - eating area for students and teaching staff;

### **Institution Internal Self-Evaluation Report (SER)**

The Evaluated Institution has taken the evaluation process very seriously and carefully prepared a Self-Assessment Report (SER). This document was available as 150 pages .pdf document in the ARACIS cloud, and I was able to access it easily, on-time and as often as necessary. To support information included in the SER, the annexes were addressed as links to documents publicly available online in digital format. These documents were later completed with other additional documents, upon request from the evaluation panel. All these documents were uploaded to the ARACIS cloud or sent directly by e-mail to the evaluation panel.

### **On-site Meetings**

#### **Wednesday April 6th 2022**

##### **12:00 – 12:30 -Meeting with UVT management and stakeholders.**

At the meeting with UVT management and stakeholders participated the Director, the Coordinator, the Representative of the advisory committee, the International expert, the Expert of the institutional committee, the Student Evaluators as well as all Program Evaluators. The Director of the Evaluation Committee presented the purpose, objectives, and the detailed schedule of the evaluation visit. UVT Rector and representatives, welcomed the Evaluation Committee and offered their full support for the evaluation visit purposes.

##### **12:30 – 13:00 Technical meeting of the evaluation panel.**

At the technical meeting of the evaluation panel participated the Director, the Coordinator, the Representative of the advisory committee, the International expert, the Expert of the institutional committee, the Student Evaluators as well as all Program Evaluators. The Director of the Evaluation



Committee, as well as the Coordinator, summarized the most important elements of the evaluation, as well as the time frames available for the evaluation committee. Also, any questions raised by the panel members were answered and clarified.

**12:30 – 13:00 Meeting of the evaluation committee with the contact person and the team that drafted the internal evaluation report.**

At the meeting participated several members of ARACIS Evaluation Committee as well as UVT representatives that drafted the internal self-evaluation report. During the meeting, participants were informed on the results of the review of the Self-Assessment Report and several complementary documents were requested. All requested documents were either uploaded or sent by the evaluated institution within few days from request.

**15:00 – 18:00 - Visit to UVT facilities.**

Wednesday afternoon it was organized a visit to several UVT facilities. At the visit participated the Representative of the advisory committee, the International expert and the Student Evaluators. The visit started with UVT main building, located at Bd. Vasile Pârvan nr. 4, Timișoara. The evaluation committee had the opportunity to visit some lecture halls, which have been considerably improved and are now provided with state-of-the-art technology to meet the current teaching needs and challenges of hybrid education. We had the opportunity to visit the recently renovated Aula Magna, which has now the capacity and the necessary technological equipment to be able to host large meetings, including blended format. Also, we had the opportunity to see some of the offices of the teaching staff, and it has been noted that, although conditions are very good, most of the teaching staff share offices with other colleagues. The evaluation Committee also visited the ongoing construction of the new Cafeteria/Eating Area of UVT, and it was possible to verify that the development of this project is on the right track and it is expected to be finished soon and hence be able to provide the services that this facility will offer to the UVT university community. Lastly, we had the opportunity to visit some of the research facilities at UVT. Research facilities are in good standing and they fulfill all recent requirements in terms of space distribution, allocated spaces, available complementary services, etc. In terms of research infrastructure, facilities are well equipped with state-of-the-art equipment that can clearly help and motivate students to properly engage in their research activities. All the research staff that joined the visit were clearly satisfied with the available resources.

Apart from UVT main building, per request of the Evaluation Committee, the construction site of the new Student Bedrooms and Accommodation facilities were visited. The evaluation committee was able to verify that, as stated in the SER, the construction of one of the buildings is at an advanced stage and it is close to being ready for use. According to UVT representatives, it could be ready for use as early as the beginning of the next academic year.

We also had the opportunity to visit the main indoor sports hall as well as the recently renovated building where the Faculty of Letters, History and Theology (FLIT) - as well as several UVT central services - are now located. I was really impressed by the quality of the modernized facilities and how the services that UVT provides to its community have been greatly improved. During the visit, we also had the opportunity to visit the construction site of the Institute for





Advanced Environmental Research - I.C.A.M. ICAM aims to carry out scientific research, technological development and innovation activities mainly in the fields of environmental knowledge and protection, conservation and efficient use of natural resources, classical and renewable energies, as well as in other areas of excellence of UVT. The university representatives affirmed that the construction should end by the end of 2022, although it seems like a very optimistic approach.

Lastly, the International Evaluator requested a visit to the Erasmus office as well as a meeting with Erasmus coordinators. The visit took place on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2022 from 9:00 to 10:00. I've had the opportunity to see how the Office is organized, meet the personnel and the person in charge of the Office. Taking into account the number of incoming and outgoing students, I consider that the allocated space as well as personnel is adequate, although, if UVT desire is to increase the volume of Erasmus exchanges (both students and teaching staff), they should consider allocating more space and resources to this office in the future.

#### **18:00 – 19:00 – Meeting with employers of UVT graduates.**

The meeting/Discussions with employers of the graduates of UVT took place on April 6<sup>th</sup> 2022. At the meeting participated approximately 40 representatives of employers of graduate students from UVT. Overall, they employers were satisfied with the level of training of the graduates as well as their considerably high level of knowledge. They all agreed that both employers and UVT can benefit from constant cooperation that should start as soon as possible. I was pleasantly surprised to check that most of the employers representatives constantly collaborated with UVT at all levels: they were consulted regarding curricula modifications, they were invited for lecturing; they receive students in practice at their companies or they collaborate in research areas with UVT students and staff.

Some of the employers' representatives suggested that UVT should promote more team and collaborative work, timeline-based assessments, a better training on analytical thinking, professional communication or digital competences. Of course, the suggestions largely depended on the professional profile of the employers and the graduate that they seek to enroll.

#### **Thursday April 7th 2022**

##### **10:00-10:30 Meeting with representatives of the Economic and Financial Department (DEF)**

The meeting/Discussions with representatives of the Economic and Financial Department (DEF) of UVT took place on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2022. The University has substantial financial reserves to carry out its activities thanks to efficient financial policies. According to the implementation of the budget on the basis of revenue and expenses, during 2016-2021, there was a constant cash operational surplus. UVT Representatives briefly explained the main sources of funding included in the budget which ensure the optimal functioning of UVT's activity, as well as the main categories of expenditures. The share of salary expenditure in total revenue is on a decreasing trend (now stable around 52-53%), which will ensure financial stability and allow to continue the investment policy in the future. During the meeting, the Evaluation committee inquired Economic and Financial Department representatives regarding the decrease of the share of allocated funds to development



of infrastructure from the total institutional budget, which was clarified by the fact that in recent years it has been possible to obtain more external financing for investments in the infrastructure.

### **11:00-11:30 Meeting with representatives of the CEAC & the Department for Quality Management (DMC) of UVT**

The meeting/Discussions with representatives of the CEAC & the Department for Quality Management (DMC) of UVT took place on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2022. At the meeting participated several members of CEAC and DMC of UVT, including DMC Director Vlad Chereches and Vice-President (Pro-rector) Madalin Bunoiu. The architecture of quality management at UVT was briefly explained. The Department for Quality Management (DMC), a structure currently composed of 7 specialist referents and 1 director, oversees developing and implementing quality assurance policies in the university, under the coordination of the Pro-Rector responsible for academic strategy and student relations. In addition, a Quality Assessment and Assurance Commission (CEAC) operates at UVT level, according to the legislation in force, and a Quality Management Commission (CMC) operates at the level of each UVT faculty, whose composition is approved by each Faculty Council. Two students, delegated by the representative student organization at UVT level (OSUT), are part of the CEAC structure and at least one student is part of each faculty committee. DMC supports CEAC in its activity and takes all necessary steps to implement all quality policies and practices at UVT level and monitors their application at UVT faculty level. The quality management department (DMC) uses templates, model questionnaires, and several others technical tools for collecting feedback from students and all other actors involved in the educational process at UVT.

During the meeting, it was discussed what type of recommendations/measures DMC usually takes and how their implementation is monitored. UVT representatives explained that they are in the process of reorganizing their quality assessment, as a new quality manual is in the drafting stage. Also, the improvement of the methodology of teaching staff evaluation is being pursued. There is a new methodology that is now in pilot study (for 2 years). It could be noticed that the DMC is very proactive and that there is a clear interest from UVT to acquire a level of excellence in quality management culture.

### **11:30-12:00 Meeting with representatives of the UVT Ethics Commission**

The meeting/Discussions with representatives of the UVT Ethics Commission took place on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2022. The Chair of the Ethics Committee explained the mission and purpose of the ethics committee and its composition. The Ethics Committee has regular meetings, and it has the ability to make recommendations in the area of prevention but has no competence to monitor implementation (which depends on other structures). It was also resumed what kind of complaints the Ethics Committee received and how they were addressed and eventually solved. The Commission has the capacity to act on its own initiative (self-initiated) or following a complaint. According to the current commission regulation, anonymous complaints are not accepted. However, incoming requests are anonymized and data confidentiality is ensured. Members of the committee sign a confidentiality document. The Evaluation Committee inquired regarding what type of sanctions are applied to those members of the Ethics Committee that do not comply with the





provisions of the confidentiality document, and it was answered that, according to the regulations of the ethics committee, they are excluded from the committee

### **12:00-13:00 Meeting with UVT Teaching Staff**

The meeting/Discussions with representatives of the UVT Teaching Staff took place on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2022. UVT explicitly supports and promotes the professional, pedagogical and scientific development of its teaching staff. With regard to the development of pedagogical competences of university teaching staff, training actions are grounded in the context of the paradigm of student-centred learning and competence development. In this respect, an innovative model of university education has been developed, called RCL - reflective-collaborative learning model. The model is theoretically and empirically grounded through the investigation of current international literature and empirical research carried out at UVT.

It was possible to observe the special care that the evaluated institution has towards the didactic training of the teaching staff. During the period evaluated, UVT offered various training activities. The topics of these training activities aim at developing the capacity of university teaching staff to develop student-centered instructional strategies and competency development, addressing a wide range, from the pedagogical foundations of student-centered teaching approaches, to the integration of new technologies in university education or to the preparation of teaching staff to approach university education in a face-to-face, blended learning and/or online manner. During the meeting with UVT teaching staff it has been confirmed that teaching staff are aware of the existence of these training activities and that they have participated in some of them.

Also, I was pleasantly surprised to see that all doctoral students enrolled at the West University of Timisoara who carry out teaching activities at UVT and all new teachers at UVT are required to attend a psycho-pedagogical training module (provided by the Academic Development Centre of UVT), free of charge.

### **14:30-16:00 Meeting with UVT Students**

The meeting/Discussions with representatives of the UVT Students took place on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2022. In general, students are satisfied with the quality of the educational services at UVT, as well with the available infrastructure. Also, students feel supported by UVT. The Student Evaluators, inquired UVT students regarding the activity of the Student Info Centre at UVT, the administrative structure responsible for communicating with students throughout the university for all administrative processes, taking over these tasks from the faculty secretariats. The Student Info Center is generally in charge of handling requests from students; issuing student ID cards; issuing student certificates on request or providing information on the educational process and related activities, and can be contacted online through e-mail or by filling in an online enquiry form and has 5 working points in 5 different UVT locations. Students were very satisfied with The Student Info Center's activity and organization.

Students were aware of the existence of different types of scholarships at UVT. It seems that scholarships are also available for fee-paying students. Also, students were inquired regarding



the procedure to obtain a place at the University housing (accommodation), as well as the easiness to access the University housing and its services. Students were familiar with the procedures required to access University housing and considered the price as affordable. Also, they were generally satisfied with the level of cleanliness and services provided.

One of the concerns of the Evaluation committee was related to how the accommodation shortage has been solved at UVT, but students replied that UVT has been proactive in looking for accommodation for its students, as redistributions have been made to other facilities (belonging to other Universities) in the city. As stated before, UVT is aware of the accommodation shortage problem and there is willingness to increase the number of dormitory places, proven by the fact that there are two new University housing under construction.

Students were also aware of the procedures that are carried out for evaluating the teaching staff. They also stated that they have alternative mechanisms by which they can report any issue related to teaching and teaching staff activities, such as Faculty or department council meetings. Although clear improvements have been made in past years, students were unhappy that they were not able to clearly see the implementation of the results of the teaching staff evaluation.

Students have benefited from the activity of the Career Counselling and Guidance Centre (COCC) and find it very useful. The Evaluation Committee also inquired regarding the easiness to retrieve information regarding admission to UVT on the institutional website. Students answered that information was easy to find and was available on time (at least 6 months before admission process).

Students were also inquired on the awareness of another type of questionnaire, other than teaching quality and academic staff evaluation (such as quality of the infrastructure, quality of the institutional services, etc.), but it seems that although it exist, students were largely unaware of its existence.

### **16:00-17:00 Meeting with UVT Graduates**

The meeting/Discussions with representatives of the UVT Graduates took place on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2022. Overall, the UVT Graduates valued as positive the quality of the teaching staff, the curriculum, the library (specially the book collection), the University structure, the community, the professionalism, the diversity or the opportunities for exchange of experience (Erasmus). They also highly valued the communication with students, UVT's ability to adapt to new situations, its flexibility, the dynamic environment and that its activity is student-centered. UVT graduates were also satisfied with the available infrastructure, the involvement of different external partners as well as the opportunity for networking. After discussing with UVT graduates, it can be concluded that overall, graduates were mostly satisfied by the learning process at UVT, the UVT well-trained teaching and research staff with encouraging attitude towards students, the available infrastructure, the many activities that encourage extracurricular participation and the partnerships with universities within the country and abroad.

On the other hand, UVT graduates also identified some aspects that UVT should improve. It seems that graduates were not fully satisfied with the services and facilities at some University dorm-rooms (housing), as well as the lack of accommodation for all students. They also suggested



that communication between students and administration as well as between university management and faculty management can be further improved. UVT graduates also expressed their wish for UVT to take into account students' will and needs, as for example to involve students in planning in-session exams.

Infrastructure related issues were also identified, such as the absence of a larger sports facility commensurate with a large university (which is now under construction by the UVT, and the construction site was visited during the evaluation), the lack of a larger performance and theater hall, lack of sufficient parking spaces and even insufficient teaching spaces (such as the case of the Faculty of Political Science, Philosophy and Communication Sciences). Some of the UVT graduates also highlighted the need to adapt curricula to new labor market needs, to improve the balance between theoretical and practical learning and to organize more socio-cultural events dedicated to students.

### **International Expert Assessment**

I will summarize below my conclusions and recommendations regarding West University of Timisoara Romania's activity, following the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

### **Policy for quality assurance**

The evaluated institution proved to have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders. The policy has a formal status and is publicly available. The quality assurance policies at UVT reflect the relationship between research and learning & teaching and take account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach.

After analyzing the documents provided by the evaluated institution as well as documents available online or requested during the visit, it was clarified the organization of the quality assurance system within UVT; it was demonstrated that departments, schools, faculties and other organizational units as well as those of institutional leadership, individual staff members and students are encouraged to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance; academic integrity and freedom is supported and that the Evaluated Institution is vigilant against academic fraud; the Evaluated Institution is vigilant against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff and lastly, the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

### **Recommendations:**

- *To complete as soon as possible the new UVT quality manual and to further improve methodology of teaching staff evaluation.*
- *To establish a mechanism to monitor the degree of implementation of DMC recommendations made following the analysis of the results of the quality assessment items. If possible, it also recommended to provide with executive/mandatory power all DMC recommendations.*



- *To carry out benchmarking studies in the field of quality assurance and align with national/regional/international benchmark universities.*
- *Continuation of the statistical processing of the results of the students' evaluation of teaching staff by departments, faculties and University, in order to formulate policies to improve quality.*
- *To increase the awareness of the institution's internal regulations referring to the ways in which the institution ensures appropriate conditions of access to learning resources for students with special needs, in order to be acknowledged also by the potential candidates.*
- *To include within the Ethics Committee regulation, apart from revocation of their membership, additional sanctions for those members of the Committee that do not keep confidential the content of Committee's referrals, hearings, deliberations, and reports, such as whether or not there is a prohibition to be elected as a member of the Ethics Committee again and for what period; if possible, include other disciplinary sanctions.*
- *Continue to publish the CEAC annual reports on the university website.*
- *Review the content of the CEAC reports of the institutional/faculty CEACs and reconfigure them, not only by reference to the legal provisions in the field of quality assurance in force (criteria, standards and indicators), but also by formulating proposals for improving the quality of education, accompanied by plans of implementation measures, deadlines, persons responsible, as well as regular analysis reports on the implementation of quality assurance measures.*
- *To collect feedback from the students regarding their career perspectives as they get closer to finishing their studies.*
- *Access for disabled persons (teaching and/or research staff, students or any other stakeholder) in all UVT facilities and buildings should be solved progressively, taking into consideration architectural and structural limitations of older buildings. In any case, any new building should be designed to grant access for disabled persons.*

### **Design and approval of study programs**

The evaluated institution proved to have processes for the design and approval of their study programs. The programs are designed so that they meet their objectives, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a program are clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

The study programs provide students with both academic knowledge and skills including those that are transferable, are designed with overall program objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes; are designed by involving students and other stakeholders; benefit from external expertise and reference points; reflect the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (cf. Scope and Concepts); are designed so that they enable smooth student progression; define the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS; include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate and are subject to a formal institutional approval process.



### **Recommendations:**

- *To continue to consult external stakeholders in order to adapt its curricula in agreement to new labor market requirements.*
- *Continuation of efforts to link scientific research to the needs and requirements of the economic and social environment.*
- *To consider authorization/accreditation of new study programs taught in international languages;*

### **Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment**

The evaluated institution proved that the study programs are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach. The evaluated institution proved that their teaching and learning method is student-centered, respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs; considers and uses different modes of delivery; flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods; regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods; encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher; promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship and has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

This evaluator was able to confirm that assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field; the criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are transmitted to students and published in advance and the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are also given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process. Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures and also a formal procedure for student appeals is in place.

It was also possible to verify that students benefit of different types of placements, which include traineeships, internships and other periods of the program that are not spent in the institution but that allow the student to gain experience in an area related to their studies.

### **Recommendations:**

- *Adapt and provide, as far as possible, appropriate access to teaching and learning resources for students with special needs and/or disabilities.*
- *Further promote internship and exchange opportunities to its students.*
- *Continue to seek partnerships with similar institutions within the same country or abroad to provide a framework for student and staff mobility.*
- *Further increase efforts to inform students about the possibility of refuting the results of their evaluations and the mechanisms available to do it, as well as on their right to evaluate teaching staff.*



## **Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification**

The Evaluated Institution consistently applies pre-defined, publicly available and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", such as student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

It can be concluded that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner. Induction to the institution and the study program is provided. The Evaluated Institution has put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression.

The Evaluated Institution implements a fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, when applicable. When graduating, students receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.

### **Recommendations:**

- *To publish on the institution's website the admission procedures ensuring access to higher education for candidates with disabilities.*
- *Continue to work towards internal institutional regulation of the packages of documents governing the student admission processes and maintain the practice of public announcement of admissions with at least 6 months in advance.*

## **Teaching staff**

The Evaluated Institution has made consistent efforts to assure the competence of their teachers. Fair and transparent processes are applied for the recruitment and development of their teaching and research staff.

The Evaluated Institution assumes responsibility for the quality of their staff and provides a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively. It was confirmed that the Evaluated Institution sets up and follows clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognize the importance of both teaching and research; offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff; encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research and encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.

### **Recommendations:**

- *To continue good policies and practices in terms of quality of teaching and research staff.*
- *To promote the continuous professional training of teaching staff to acquire new skills, methods and techniques that can further improve their teaching activity.*
- *Keep good practice and implement strategies (as differentiated payment, for example) to further stimulate teaching staff with remarkable research activity but, at the same time, carefully monitor the teaching activity, in order to ensure that teaching activity is not disregarded in benefit of research activities.*





- *Continue to identify and use innovative techniques for effective teaching/learning, including the use of new technologies and the organization of training sessions for academic staff and try to maximize participation to these type of training sessions.*

### **Learning resources and student support**

The evaluated Institution proved to have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities that ensures adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

According to the documentation provided, the visit itself and the different meetings that took place, it was established that the Evaluated Institution benefits of large range of physical resources (such as libraries, study facilities, access to online databases and resources, etc.) as well as adequate IT infrastructure and human support in order to properly carry out its activity. Also, there are several support services for both students and teaching staff, some of them of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.

The Evaluated Institution operates on the basis of a student-centered learning and teaching model, and therefore flexible modes of learning and teaching are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.

The internal quality assurance system in place at the Evaluated Institution ensures that all resources are fit for purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

### **Recommendations:**

- *To maintain subscription to software packages as well as continuously identify possible needs of both teaching/research staff and students in order to expand subscription and/or acquire more software packages;*
- *Supplement the library stock if books/volumes/scientific papers that are included in a course bibliographical references are missing;*
- *Continuous analysis of the opportunity to develop the book collection / other library resources, by acquiring titles published in recent years, related to all disciplines of study.*
- *Popularize among students access to the ANELIS database and the culture of searching for information in scientific articles.*
- *Continue to develop the available infrastructure and, where appropriate, consider upgrading existing premises, based on realistic investment plans in relation to projected revenues.*
- *Maintain the provision of at least 10% of the total number of students in the reading rooms and access to electronic databases for all students.*
- *Continue to equip all rooms related to teaching activities (lectures, seminars, projects, workshops, etc.) with most recent technical equipment.*
- *Continue to equip all research and teaching laboratories with equipment and resources so they can meet the requirements, at least at a minimum level, of dealing with current scientific topics in the fields assumed by the institution.*



- *Continue efforts to link scientific research to the needs and requirements of the economic and social environment.*
- *Continue efforts to develop the research infrastructure for all fields of study and to involve doctoral students in scientific research.*
- *To perform regular analysis of the results of research activity and setting up mechanisms to increase scientific production.*
- *Continue efforts to direct the results of scientific research towards publications and other results with national and international relevance.*
- *To expand high-speed Wi-Fi coverage to as many as possible buildings and facilities.*
- *To implement Eduroam coverage in as many as possible buildings and facilities.*
- *Increase efforts to finalize as soon as possible the build of the University cafeteria - eating area for students and teaching staff.*
- *To continue efforts to finalize as soon as possible under construction University housing (accommodation facilities) for students.*
- *Consider allocating more space and resources to the Erasmus office in the future.*
- *As the number of incoming students, teaching and research staff increases, consider establishing an International Welcome Center, which can offer support on all levels to incoming students, teaching and research staff.*
- *Continue the current financial policy, with the maintenance of an operating surplus and a low share of salary expenses in total income, in order to ensure the financial stability of the institution in the medium term and to allow for investments.*
- *Continuous analysis of the teaching staff structure in relation to the objectives set in the field of quality assurance and compliance with legal provisions.*
- *Monitor the ratio of academic/teaching staff to students and benchmark with other reference universities within the country or abroad.*
- *To increase efforts towards offering professional development programs and opportunities for the support and administrative staff.*

### **Information management**

The Evaluated Institution proved to collect, analyze and use relevant information for the effective management of their study programs and other activities. As information collecting methods, questionnaires, interviews and meetings are mainly used. It was also verified that both students and staff are involved in providing and analyzing information and planning follow-up activities.

The information gathered relates to profile of the student population; student progression, success and drop-out rates; students' satisfaction with the study programs; available learning resources and student support and career paths of graduates.

The Evaluated Institution has in place effective processes to collect and analyze information about study programs and other activities, which are fed into the internal quality assurance system and further used for decision-making.



### **Recommendations:**

- *To further promote their quality assurance procedures among both their teaching staff and students.*
- *To promote among different stakeholders (specially students) strategical decision-making and implementation carried out as a consequence of the results of the learning/development environment quality assessment. Also, the evaluated institution is encouraged to make all the learning/development environment quality assessment results and reports publicly available on the institutional website.*
- *To promote the availability and importance of answering a questionnaire on other aspects of UVT activity and facilities (such as quality of the infrastructure, quality of the institutional services, etc) among its students.*

### **Public information**

The Evaluated Institution publish clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible information about its regulations, activities and study programs. The available information is useful for prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public.

The information provided includes the study programs they offer, the selection criteria for them, the intended learning outcomes of these programs, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information.

### **Recommendations:**

- *Continuous analysis of the information posted on the institution's website and its updating, as well as identification of the most intuitive sections for posting information for various categories of stakeholders.*
- *To intensify monitoring of the professional insertion of graduates and make the results publicly available, in compliance with legal provisions.*

### **On-going monitoring and periodic review of programs**

The Evaluated Institution monitors and periodically reviews its study programs to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. This monitoring and review often leads to the improvement of the study program. Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programs aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and creates a supportive and effective learning environment for students. The students' workload, progression and completion; the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students; the student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the study program; the learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the study program are often taken into account. The information collected is analyzed and the study program is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date.



### **Recommendations:**

- *To periodically monitor the contents of their study programs and to adapt it, if needed, to the latest research and discoveries in the given discipline and the changing needs of society;*
- *To communicate effectively and to publish on the institutional website any action planned or taken as a result of the monitoring and update of the study programs.*
- *To increase efforts of involving students and other stakeholders in the monitoring and review of the study programs.*

### **Cyclical external quality assurance**

The external quality assurance in its various forms verifies the effectiveness of institutions' internal quality assurance, act as a catalyst for improvement and offer the institution new perspectives.

The Evaluated Institution participates in cyclical external quality assurance that takes account the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate. This external quality assurance may take different forms and focus on different organizational levels (such as study program, faculty or institution). In this sense, the Evaluated Institution undergoes cyclical external quality assurance evaluation every 5 year by ARACIS.

**Granada 7<sup>th</sup> of May, 2022**

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