



External Institutional Evaluation International Expert Report

University Ovidius Constanta Romania

Razvan Ghinea, PhD
Associate Professor Dpt. Optics
University of Granada, Spain

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This report summarizes my impressions as ARACIS International Expert Evaluator of the Institutional Evaluation of University Ovidius Constanta (UOC) Romania. The evaluation of the University Ovidius Constanta 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 of University Ovidius Constanta (UOC):

Director:

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

Coordinator:

Prof. PhD. Dumitru Miron, ASE Bucharest

Representative of the advisory committee:

Prof. PhD. Ioan Lascar; UMF Carol Davila Bucharest

International expert:

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

Expert of the institutional committee:

Prof. PhD. Calin Ioan Rosca; University "Transilvania" Brasov

Student Evaluator:

Andreea-Oana Paun; Technical University Cluj-Napoca

Student Evaluator:

Adriana-Mariana Asoltanei; "Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University Iasi

The evaluation period extended from 29/03/2022 to 1/04/2022, and it was developed in blended format, although the majority of the activities were developed on-line, while on-site was organized the visit of the available educational and research infrastructure. 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. PhD. Dumitru Miron, ASE Bucharest) as well as the Technical Assistant (Mihaela Bajenaru - 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.

"Ovidius" University of Constanta (UOC) is an autonomous, open, public higher education institution with legal personality, part of the Romanian state education system. UOC has assumed the mission to create, maintain and disseminate knowledge to society through education and scientific research at the highest European quality standards. The main pillar of its mission is education, with academic training in the three cycles of undergraduate training complemented by continuing education through postgraduate training and professional conversion programs.

UOC is a multidisciplinary and multicultural university, institutionally accredited by ARACIS, which offers accredited or authorized bachelor, master and doctoral degree programs, in compliance with the legislation in force concerning their establishment and functioning.

"Ovidius" University of Constanta has a coherent, integrated and transparent organizational system, adapted to its strategy, mission and objectives, operating in accordance with the legislation in force. The central governing structures of the UOC are: the Senate and the Administrative Council. The Senate represents the academic community, guarantees academic freedom and autonomy, and is the highest decision-making and deliberating body of the UOC. The Administrative Council provides the operational management of the university and implements the strategic decisions of the University Senate, operating on the basis of national regulations and internal rules. The Administrative Council is chaired by the Rector of "Ovidius" University of Constanta,



Within UOC are included 16 faculties and 5 doctoral schools with 8 doctoral domains, where are running 80 undergraduate degree programs (69 full-time education programs; 7 part-time education programs (IFR) and 4 distance education programs (ID)). There is also a Psycho-pedagogical Training Program for Certification of Teaching Competences (DPPD) as well as the Romanian Language preparatory program for foreign citizens. UOC also offers 61 master's degree programs in the form of full-time education (IF), classified in the three types of master's degree: research master's degree, professional master's degree, and teaching master's degree. UOC runs five undergraduate programs taught in international languages (English – American Studies; Informatics; Medicine; Dentistry and Business Management) as well as three Master's Degrees (Anglo-American Studies; Modern Languages in multilanguage dynamics and Cyber Security and Machine Learning). The teaching staff is constituted of 667 full professors, associate professors, lecturers and university assistants, as well as associated professors.

The mission of "Ovidius" University of Constanta is to create, maintain and disseminate knowledge to society through education and scientific research at the highest European quality standards. In addition, the UOC also plays a key role in relation to society, being involved in solving the problems of the local community in Dobrogea and, in a broader sense, in the whole Black Sea region. The vision that drives UOC is the aspiration to be recognized as a regional leader in education, research and community involvement. The values that guide the way of action in the fulfilment of its mission emphasize collegiality and solidarity, call for ethics and fairness, and promote professionalism and performance.

Evaluation Methodology

UOCc has undergone its last ARACIS institutional evaluation in 2016. 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.

Following observations and recommendations formulated by the Evaluating Committee in 2016, UOC management elaborated an Action Plan which contained specific measures to meet the recommendations made by the committee. I was very satisfied to confirm that UOC has implemented the vast majority of measures required to fulfil previous ARACIS Committee recommendations. It can be safely concluded that UOC has done considerably more than what was suggested in the last external evaluation. It is worth noting the progress made at all levels by the "Ovidius" University of Constanta in the period under review (2016-2020).

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 79 pages .pdf document in the UOC 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 cloud or sent directly by e-mail to the evaluation panel.

On-line Meetings

Tuesday March 29th 2022

10:00 – 10:45 -Meeting with UOC management and stakeholders.

At the meeting with UOC 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 and the Coordinator of the Evaluation Committee presented the purpose, objectives, and the detailed schedule of the evaluation visit. UOC Rector (Prof. Dan Iliescu) and UOC representatives, welcomed the Evaluation Committee and offered their full support for the evaluation visit purposes.

11:00 – 12:00 Meeting with Teaching Staff at UOC.

At the meeting/discussions with representatives of the UOC Teaching Staff participated the several members of the Evaluation Committee (including the Director, the Coordinator, the International Expert) and more than 150 UOC teaching staff.

UOC has a robust, fair and transparent mechanism for recruiting its staff. At UOC, teaching and research positions are filled in accordance with the provisions of the National Education Law no. 1/2011, as amended and supplemented, and its regulations. The staff carrying out teaching activities at the UOC fulfils the legal requirements for competitive recruitment and corresponds in terms of professional qualifications to the conditions required for their positions. The number of staff employed is adequate for the development of all current and planned future activities of the institution. UOC grants equal opportunities, without gender or other discrimination, to candidates for teaching positions.

The teaching staff was inquired regarding -the general working climate at UOC, on how to they perceive that their criticisms, suggestions and/or recommendations are considered by UOC management, on how UOC structures encourage participation in scientific events and publication of articles and if there are e-learning platforms, resources for the transfer of activity in the online environment, training or training material for online teaching.

Generally, UOC teaching staff valued the very good relationship with the University management. They consider that UOC is moving in the right direction, and UOC leadership is decisive in achieving institutional goals. International projects and publication of high quality research papers are also encouraged through different mechanism by UOC.

Teaching staff consider that UOC considers their feedback when changing regulations and procedures, especially considering that there are members from many faculties within UOC



management (Senate, Administrative Council, etc.). UOC regulations are constantly being updated.

UOC teaching staff stated that UOC responded quickly to moving to the online environment (within few days the teaching activity was moved online). UOC made substantial efforts to support online activity, such as acquiring subscriptions to WebEx and Microsoft Teams platforms. Later, UOC supported teaching staff training and elaborated different types of guides, etc. Teaching staff valued UOC effort as substantial and considerable. Teaching staff at UOC also consider that the 20-22 period had many benefits, such as development of digital skills, and they agree that these skills and abilities should be preserved.

It was possible to observe the special care that the evaluated institution has towards the didactic training of the teaching staff. Many teaching staff have benefited annually from professional training periods, ERASMUS + mobility, professional development courses, or events aimed at strengthening teaching and research skills. However, there are some Faculties where teaching staff mobilities are still low. On the professional, pedagogical and scientific development side of the teaching staff, although a large number of training sessions have been organized to improve teaching and evaluation skills, there are many such sessions with very few participants, in many cases only one.

16:00-16:50 Meeting with UOC Graduates

At the meeting/discussions with representatives of the UOC Graduates participated several members of the Evaluation Committee (including the Direct, the Coordinator, the International Expert) and more than 130 UOC Graduates.

Among the participants, I was pleasantly surprised to see that 70% of them continued studying a Master degree at UOC, while 13% studied a Master Degree and Phd at UOC. It was also extracted that 85% of them continued studying in the same field as their undergraduate degree and the exact same amount is working within the field of their studies. Another positive fact is that 95% of the participants considered that the degree of knowledge acquired during studies at UOC is appropriate to the requirements of the position currently held. UOC Graduates were also generally satisfied with the study program and the learning/development/research environment offered by UOC. Regarding the available infrastructure at UOC, although there was a majority of Graduates that were clearly satisfied with it, almost 10% of participants consider it as sufficient or unsatisfactory. Also, only 20% of the participants were contacted by UOC structures regarding possible study programs modifications and improvements and only 13% of UOC graduates at the meeting participated in international mobilities (such as Erasmus+, etc.). However, I was pleasantly surprised that UOC Graduates did benefit during their studies of different services, scholarships and other forms of student support, such as University housing, access to eating areas, access to University Library, different types of scholarship and/or tax reduction and/or exemption. Lastly, UOC Graduate were largely unaware of the existence of an UOC Alumni association and only 11% of the participants were members of Alumni UOC.



Overall, UOC graduates valued as positive the collaboration between UOC and different other organization from the surrounding area (private companies, Museum and Art Institutions, etc.); the dedicated and professional teaching staff; the educational infrastructure; the employment opportunities after graduating; the collaboration with both undergraduate and master students in the organization of international conferences; the well-structured relationship between the study programs curriculum (including its distribution by years of study) and practical work (in the workplace) and the opportunity to learn in a dynamic and supportive environment. UOC graduates also considered that the content of the subjects studied was relevant and helped them to find a job relatively quick and easy after graduation. They also valued positively the relevance in terms of curriculum provision, the interesting optional courses offered, the interactive teaching methods, the inter- or trans- disciplinary approach as well as the possibility to participate in different mobility programs, and the numerous activities that encourage extracurricular participation, such as competitions, meetings with external companies, conferences or workshops.

On the other hand, UOC Graduates also identified some aspects that UOC might improve. It seems that graduates were not fully satisfied with the amount of practical activities (either laboratory, field or external practice), with the predominantly traditional teaching methods chosen by some teachers, the amount of partnerships with other Universities within Romania, the diversity of courses within study programs or the level of available equipment for research and teaching laboratories. Also, some of the graduates were unhappy with the amount (quantity) of the existing taxes or the lack of guidance or career planning at some study programs

17:00 – 17:50 Meeting with employers of UOC graduates.

At the meeting/discussions with representatives of the employers of UOC graduates participated several members of the Evaluation Committee (including the Direct, the Coordinator, the International Expert) and more than 50 representatives of the employers.

Most of the employers considered that holding a degree (bachelor's, master's, doctorate) obtained at UOC is a guarantee of the quality of their training and they considered UOC graduates as well prepared. They all agreed that both employers and UOC 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 UOC at all levels: they were consulted regarding curricula modifications, they were invited for lecturing; they receive students for practice or internship at their companies or they collaborate in research areas with UOC students and staff.

Some of the employers' representatives suggested that UOC should better balance the theoretical and practical teaching hours within some study programs, and they should consider including courses within study programs that can help students to increase their communication and presentation skills, promote more team and collaborative work, a better training on analytical and critical 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.



Wednesday March 30th 2022

12:00 – 13:00 -Meeting with UOC students.

At the meeting/discussions with UOC students participated several members of the Evaluation Committee (including the Direct, the Coordinator, the International Expert) and around 200 UOC students. Overall, it can be stated that students are satisfied with the quality of the educational services at UOC, as well with the available infrastructure. Also, students feel supported by UOC and that they have been informed of the student's rights and obligations within their Faculty/University. They were also satisfied that they are granted access to faculty/university buildings related to students' studies outside lecture hours. UOC students appreciated how the lecture/seminar/lab rooms are equipped, of the organization and information available on UOC and Faculty websites as well as of UOC/Faculty Secretariat's schedule, information and services.

When asked why they chose to study at UOC, students mentioned UOC's focus on student needs, the excellent communication with academic staff, their empathy, support, and constructive competition, the subjects, the courses or the educational infrastructure. Of course, there were other reasons, such as prospects and employment opportunities after graduation and the proximity to their home.

However, not all students were satisfied with the way of teaching of UOC academic staff or the level of transparency of their Faculty in terms of regulations, decisions etc. Some students complained that there were situations in which there was not enough available laboratory material for practical activities (for example, chemical reactants), although they stated that teaching staff is proactive in searching for solutions.

Although UOC students seemed satisfied with the conditions and services offered by the majority of University dorm rooms, it seems that not in all dorm rooms conditions are similar. Some students (mostly form C2 dorm rooms) reported having issues with hot water availability and/or pressure, pest-control frequency and efficiency, apparently non-functional kitchens or not available reading/study rooms (turned into storage areas). These problems were reported by several students from different faculties at UOC.

The students seem to know who are their representatives and communicate with them well. UOC students did not report any major ethical problems, and when some minor issues appeared they seem to have been dealt with adequately. Students were also aware of the existence and activity of the Career Counselling and Guidance Centre (CCOP) at UOC. In general, students are satisfied with the communication with the UOC management (at all levels) and with the academic staff. They confirmed that they were provided with different materials, course support, and other additional items for proper development of their learning process at UOC. Some students mentioned problems with internet connection quality and speed in some UOC buildings.

Students were aware of the existence of different types of scholarships at UOC as well as mobility opportunities. Students were also largely 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. Students reported that, when required, measures were taken in accordance with the results of the teaching staff evaluation.



Thursday March 31st 2022

10:00 – 18:00 On-Site visit to UOC facilities and meetings with representatives of the Economic and Financial Department (DEF), CEAC & the Department for Quality Management (DMC) and UOC Ethics Commission.

The International Evaluator did not participate to any of the on-site visits and meetings at UOC. However, I have subsequently been briefed on the most important aspects of both the visit and the meetings. Also, the Director and Coordinator of the Evaluation Committee sent a set of images with the visited infrastructure.

According to the information provided on the SER, as well as the one included in the annexes and available on the institutional website, the educational infrastructure at UOC has undergone a permanent process of consolidation and renovation, to meet the needs of a competitive and efficient higher education. UOC offers to its students from all forms of education (full-time, part-time and distance), an adequate infrastructure, with modern spaces, equipped with study facilities and equipment necessary for the teaching process, grouped in eight educational complexes/facilities. The study spaces are in accordance with the technical, safety and sanitary standards established for quality education. The lecture halls and seminar rooms are equipped with technical teaching equipment that facilitates an active communication between teachers and students, and the teaching laboratories are technically equipped to train and develop students' professional skills and competences.

Research facilities available at UOC 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. The existence of the Research and Development Centre for Morphological and Genetic Studies in Malignant Pathology – CEDMOG and the Institute of Nanotechnologies and Alternative Energy Sources is a proof of the continuous concern of UOC for availability of high-quality research infrastructure.

UOC is also making efforts towards modernization of the existing facilities, as for example the B building within the Campus - University Alley no. 1 or the main building of the educational complex on Bd. Mamaia no. 124. To improve the quality of the teaching process, especially that of practical activities, there is also an ongoing extension of the building on Capitan Aviator Al. Șerbănescu no. 6, where a new building where students from the faculties of Physical Education and Sport, Medicine, Economics will carry out practical activities and/or specialized practice is currently under construction.

The "Ioan Popișteanu" Main University Library (BUIP) is an organizational and operational structure of UOC, which participates in the process of education and training, as well as in the scientific and cultural research activity of the university. The library provides info-documentary support for all the courses taught in higher education and scientific research areas, regularly acquiring the most important and necessary documents and access to scientific databases. In



addition to BUJP, UOC also has a library at the American Corner (Campus, building A) as well as smaller libraries at faculty level.

UOC is also concerned on providing optimal conditions for its students, in terms of University Housing, eating areas and spaces for recreation and socialization. In this sense, recently it was inaugurated the park of the B body of the Campus and these actions will continue with the development of the park on the A Campus. For the accommodation of students, UOC has 4 university dorm rooms and a university housing facility, with a total accommodation capacity of 1377 places. UOC started construction of a new dormitory at the premises in Aleea Studenților nr. 1, with a capacity of 167 places.

UOC has sufficient financial resources to achieve short-term objectives, but also medium-term objectives, such as those listed in their strategic development plan. According to the implementation of the budget based on revenue and expenses, during 2016-2021 period, there was a constant cash operational surplus (reaching its maximum in 2021). For the efficient management of the activities carried out by the UOC, the execution of the income and expenditure budget is periodically analyzed, and measures are taken to improve the collection of income and the distribution of expenditures. UOC has financial reserves and diversified sources of funding which ensure the optimal functioning of UOC's activity and ensure financial stability and allow to continue the investment policy in the future.

UOC ensures, through the implementation of appropriate management strategies, the necessary financial resources to properly develop its activity. Factors such as the diversity of study programs and student population, forms of education, student training and student-centred education objectives, learning resources, student scholarships and provision of student-specific services, etc. are considered when developing the financial plan. Students are informed about the existence and allocation of resources and how the budget is designed through their representatives in the Administrative Council and UOC Senate. Student tuition fees are calculated based on the average tuition costs per academic year and are presented to students by appropriate means of communication.

Friday April 1st 2022

13:00 – 14:00 -Meeting with UOC management and stakeholders.

At the meeting with UOC 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 and the Coordinator of the Evaluation Committee presented general info on how the evaluation process was developed. They also wanted to convey that a substantial improvement has been observed since last Institutional Evaluation. UOC Rector (Prof. Dan Iliescu) and UOC representatives thanked the Evaluation Committee and offered their full support for further collaboration within the evaluation visit purposes.



International Expert Assessment

I will summarize below my conclusions and recommendations regarding “Ovidius” University Constanta Romania’s activity, following the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

UOC has all the necessary means to organize and conduct of teaching, training as well as scientific and practical-applied research activities. UOC also benefits of specialized teaching staff, meeting the requirements imposed by the regulations in force on quality management in higher education. UOC presents itself as a fully mature institution, able to innovate and respond to the challenges of modern society.

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 UOC 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 UOC; 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. Also, the Evaluated Institution is vigilant against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff and lastly, it supports the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

Recommendations:

- *To maintain high quality standards related to the educational act.*
- *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.*
- *Access for disabled persons (teaching and/or research staff, students or any other stakeholder) in all UOC 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, on a regular basis, external stakeholders on different aspects of the educational process as well as to adapt curricula in agreement to new labor market requirements.*
- *Continuation of efforts to link scientific research to the needs and requirements of the economic, research and social environment.*
- *To consider authorization/accreditation of new study programs taught in international languages;*
- *To study the opportunity to expand doctoral domain offer to cover a wider variety of fields.*
- *To study the opportunity to expand master degree offer to cover a wider variety of fields.*
- *Benchmark study programs with other reference universities within Romania as well as other similar foreign institution;*

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 students are informed of 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 students.*
- *Continue to seek partnerships with similar institutions within the 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.*
- *To Increase the number of extracurricular activities organized by the university (e.g. volunteering, socio-cultural events, etc.)*

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.*
- *To increase effort to advertise University educational offer on different platforms/websites and to maintain content always updated and easy to locate and consult.*



- *To continue efforts towards attracting more students and to promote the University among potential students.*

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, to ensure that teaching activity is not disregarded in benefit of research activities.*
- *To develop a mechanism to stimulate and support academic staff with outstanding results in innovation and development.*
- *Continue to identify and use innovative techniques for effective teaching/learning, including the use of new technologies, as well organization of professional development training sessions for academic staff.*
- *To increase efforts to promote available opportunities for academic staff professional development 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.*
- *Continue to develop the available infrastructure and, where appropriate, consider upgrading existing premises, based on realistic investment plans in relation to projected revenues.*
- *Continue efforts to improve and expand available sport and cultural facilities.*
- *Continue efforts to upgrade, when needed, the available equipment in all rooms related to teaching activities (lectures, seminars, projects, workshops, etc.).*
- *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.*
- *Continue efforts to direct the results of scientific research towards publications and other results with national and international relevance.*
- *Continue the current financial policy, with the maintenance of an operating surplus and a low share of salary expenses in total income, 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.*
- *Keep good practice of 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 more and diversified professional development programs and opportunities for the support and administrative staff.*
- *To expand high-speed Wi-Fi coverage to as many as possible buildings and facilities.*
- *To continue efforts to finalize as soon as possible all infrastructure projects that are now under construction, in order to provide a better service to the academic community.*
- *To continue efforts to finalize as soon as possible under construction University housing (accommodation facilities) for students.*
- *To ensure that all University accommodation facilities (dorm rooms) offer optimal cleanliness, utilities and services (among them, can be mentioned: quality accommodation, high-speed internet connection, available space for food preparation, medical offices, laundry rooms, etc);*



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 continue efforts towards digitalization of different activities and data management processes.*
- *To further promote their quality assurance procedures among both their teaching staff and students.*
- *To constantly analyze collected information and feedback and to update, if necessary, existing regulations, also considering predictability and stability of regulations, in order to plan for the mid- and long- term.*
- *To promote the availability and importance of answering a questionnaire on other aspects of the University's activity and facilities (such as quality of the infrastructure, quality of the institutional services, etc) among its 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.*

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.*

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 lead 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 the 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 years.

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RAZVAN IONUT GHINEA, PhD