

Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ARACIS

External Evaluator's Report

Dimitrie Cantemir University of Târgu Mureș

11–13 May 2025

Introduction

I was invited by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) to serve as a Foreign Expert on the evaluation panel for the institutional assessment of "Dimitrie Cantemir" University of Târgu Mureș (DCUTGM). This report **summarizes** my observations and impressions from the site visit, which took place between May 12 and 14, 2025.

Prior to the visit, I reviewed DCUTGM's Institutional Internal Evaluation Report (IER). The on-site visit provided an opportunity to gain deeper insights into the university's operations and institutional dynamics.

The visit commenced with a preparatory meeting of the expert team, during which the stages and methodology of the evaluation process were discussed and harmonized. This was followed by an initial meeting with DCUTGM's senior leadership. Throughout the visit, I participated in all plenary and group discussions with representatives of the university's **academic staff, students, alumni, and employers of graduates**. In addition, I attended individual and group meetings with various stakeholders both within and beyond the university.

During the site visit, I gathered further information on key areas of DCUTGM's activity, which allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the institution's functions. This included aspects such as leadership and governance, academic management, research, internationalization, external partnerships, quality assurance, and institutional development. I also had the opportunity to visit the university's main academic building and associated support facilities.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ms. Ioana Popescu, ARACIS official, for her invaluable assistance throughout the process. I also appreciated the collegial and constructive spirit of the evaluation team, led by Prof. Univ. Dr. Ing. Neculai Eugen Seghediu (Head of Mission) and Prof. Univ. Dr. Vasilica Stan (Coordinator of the Expert Evaluators Team).

The evaluation methodology combined documentary review and direct observation to assess DCUTGM's institutional capacity, academic performance, research engagement, and internal quality culture, in light of national accreditation standards and relevant European best practices.

This report presents my external perspective on the institutional performance of DCUTGM, based on the information available to me during the evaluation. I wish to stress that my reflections represent a limited viewpoint and do not claim to fully capture the complexity of all issues discussed. The observations and suggestions offered here are intended as a constructive contribution to the university's ongoing efforts toward institutional improvement.

General Statements

The university, named after the renowned Romanian scholar Dimitrie Cantemir, was founded in 1991 as a private institution of higher education. Legally recognized as a non-profit academic entity, it is accredited to offer undergraduate and master's degree programs in accordance with national legislation and the standards of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS).

Located in Târgu Mureș, the university has developed a distinctive academic profile with programs in law, psychology, geography, economics, and medicine. Its mission emphasizes expanding access to higher education and promoting regional development in Mureș County and Central Romania.

"Dimitrie Cantemir" University of Târgu Mureș (DCUTGM) operates under the provisions of Romanian Law no. 1/2011 and holds full institutional accreditation. It is authorized to deliver licensed and accredited study programs at both undergraduate and master's levels.

DCUTGM's mission reflects its dedication to an educational model grounded in ethical values, professionalism, scientific rigor, and responsiveness to the socio-economic needs of its region. The university's vision aligns with the goals of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), prioritizing academic excellence, interdisciplinary research, international collaboration, and active societal engagement.

Strategic priorities are clearly articulated in the institutional Development Plan and include quality enhancement in teaching, the advancement of scientific research, internationalization, community involvement, and ongoing improvement in quality assurance. These objectives correspond with ARACIS quality criteria and the principles of ESG 2015.

The university's leadership demonstrates awareness of the challenges facing the higher education sector, such as demographic change, evolving labor market demands, and the impact of digital transformation. In response, DCUTGM is pursuing modernization of its academic offerings, strengthening its research capacity, and fostering partnerships at national and international levels.

Despite its relatively modest size, DCUTGM plays a meaningful role in broadening access to higher education in Central Romania. It maintains a positive reputation among students and alumni and benefits from constructive partnerships with regional employers, which support curricular relevance and favorable graduate outcomes.

Comments/Recommendations:

- *Overall, the information obtained from various sources was comprehensive and consistent.*
- *The significance of DCUTGM for the city of Târgu Mureș and the wider region is evident. The university plays a vital role in regional development, and it is not*

surprising that employers, students, and graduates express a high level of satisfaction. In this regard, the university functions as a key driver of regional vitality.

- *It is recommended that the university regularly monitors and updates its website to ensure the inclusion of current and relevant information.*
- *The institution is encouraged to further strengthen its research orientation and expand its regional partnerships.*
- *Additional integration of sustainability and digitalization into the institutional strategy may also be considered.*

Managerial Structure

DCUTGM has developed a comprehensive set of regulatory documents that govern the organization and management of the institution.

The university's governance is based on the principle of institutional autonomy, as stipulated by Romanian education legislation. It operates under a legally adopted Institutional Charter and is structured in accordance with national legal provisions. The leadership structure includes the Rector, Vice-Rectors, the University Senate, Faculty Councils, and the Administrative Council, each with clearly defined responsibilities.

The Rector serves as the chief executive and academic authority of the institution and is elected in accordance with internal procedures and national law. The Rector is supported by Vice-Rectors with specific portfolios, as well as by Deans and Heads of Departments, all appointed through transparent processes. The leadership team is stable, and the decision-making procedures are well established.

The University Senate, chaired by the Rector, is the highest academic deliberative body. It comprises elected academic staff and student representatives from each faculty. The Senate is responsible for overseeing academic strategy, approving curricula, and guiding institutional development. Student participation in governance is ensured by internal regulations and was confirmed during the external evaluation.

DCUTGM has adopted internal regulations and policies covering key areas such as education, research, quality assurance, finance, human resources, and international cooperation. These documents are publicly accessible and are regularly updated to reflect institutional development and changes in legislation.

The university's management structures are supported by administrative departments with clearly defined mandates. Despite the relatively small size of the institution, its administrative capacity is functional and proportionate to its needs.

Strategic management is articulated through core institutional planning documents, including the Strategic Plan and Operational Plans. These documents define objectives, performance indicators, timelines, and responsible units. There is clear evidence of alignment between strategic objectives and their operational implementation.

The Internal Audit Department and the Ethics and Professional Deontology Commission (UEPDC) are active and contribute to transparency and integrity in institutional operations. The university also complies with national regulations on data protection and public procurement.

Comments/Recommendations:

- *The managerial structure is coherent and proportionate to the size and complexity of the institution. However, the existence of faculties without departments is not optimal. Consider exploring the possibility of merging certain faculties.*
- *The Rector's leadership team may consider delegating part of its operational workload to administrative or technical staff, in order to avoid having to carry out tasks of a predominantly technical nature.*
- *Further efforts could be made to digitalize internal management processes and to ensure broader stakeholder involvement in strategic planning.*
- *Consider strengthening middle management structures (e.g., department heads) through targeted leadership and administrative training.*
- *Continue to have students as full members of the university community and partners in the management of DCUTGM, ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making processes, quality assurance activities, and institutional development initiatives.*

Teaching Staff

“Dimitrie Cantemir” University of Târgu Mureş employs academic staff in accordance with national legislation. The teaching body consists of both full-time and part-time faculty members, covering the fields in which the university offers accredited study programs—namely law, psychology, geography and tourism, economics and **dental medicine**.

Academic ranks represented include professors, associate professors, lecturers, and **teaching assistants**. While the number of full-time staff remains relatively limited, the university supplements its teaching needs through **part-time contracts**. These often involve **professionals from the labor market or academics affiliated with other institutions**. Although this practice complies with legal norms, it presents challenges related to program continuity, **institutional coherence, and identity**. In this context maintaining a critical mass of full-time academic staff for each study program is recommended.

The staff-to-student ratio complies with national requirements. However, **workload distribution varies across faculties and educational cycles**. Monitoring and optimizing the allocation of human resources—particularly between bachelor’s and master’s levels—remains a key area for further development.

Teaching staff are subject to internal evaluations and periodic performance reviews. In this regard, DCUTGM supports the continuous professional development (CPD) of its academic personnel through several institutional mechanisms.

Student evaluations of teaching are conducted regularly and taken into account in staff appraisals. However, the systems for analyzing student feedback and implementing follow-up measures are underdeveloped. There is a clear need for a transparent and closed feedback loop that communicates to students how their input is used to inform improvements. During the site visit, both students and alumni expressed a high level of satisfaction with the **accessibility of their professors and the overall quality of teaching**.

The small-group learning environment was particularly appreciated for its capacity to foster direct communication and mentorship.

Comments/Recommendations:

- *Ensure transparency in the allocation of teaching workloads and monitor the balance between full-time and part-time staff in each study program.*

- *Establish mechanisms for systematic follow-up on student evaluations, including the opportunity for academic staff to respond constructively.*
- *Continue to provide opportunities for the professional development of the teaching staff.*

Facilities

The infrastructure of “Dimitrie Cantemir” University of Târgu Mureş is adequate for the scale and scope of its educational activities. The university provides both teaching and administrative spaces that meet national standards in terms of surface area and functional design.

The institution operates in a dedicated building that includes well-equipped lecture halls, seminar rooms, and laboratories. Classrooms are furnished with multimedia equipment and are accessible to students and staff. Facilities for specialized study programs—such as psychology, tourism geography, or dental medicine—are outfitted with program-specific equipment, though certain upgrades would be beneficial in light of increasing digitalization and the growing emphasis on experiential learning.

The university library is functional and accessible, offering a modest collection of printed resources along with selective access to electronic databases. However, the limited availability of major international academic databases was noted during the site visit and represents an area for further investment and development.

Support infrastructure includes administrative offices, designated spaces for student services—such as psychological counseling and career guidance—and meeting rooms. As the university lacks its own student canteen, dormitory, or sports facilities, it relies on external partnerships and student-led arrangements to meet these needs.

The digital infrastructure is functional, and teaching staff make regular use of digital platforms to manage course content and communication. Nevertheless, the existing learning management system could be further enhanced to support hybrid, online, and asynchronous learning formats. Students in various disciplines also benefit from access to specialized software platforms and apps for academic and research-related activities.

Comments/Recommendations:

- *Continue investing in digital infrastructure, including the modernization of laboratories and the expansion of access to international academic databases.*
- *Explore opportunities for strategic partnerships or facility rentals to compensate for the lack of a student canteen, campus housing, and sports infrastructure.*
- *Consider enhancing the virtual learning environment to provide greater flexibility for students with employment or mobility constraints. The installation of an elevator should also be considered to improve accessibility.*

Students

“Dimitrie Cantemir” University of Târgu Mureş serves a diverse student body enrolled in bachelor’s and master’s programs across its accredited fields of study: law, psychology, geography and tourism, economics, and dental medicine. According to official data, the

university maintains a relatively stable student population, with only minor fluctuations in annual admissions.

The institution has implemented clear and transparent procedures for admission, enrollment, and academic progression, all publicly available on its official website (www.cantemir.ro). These procedures comply with national legislation, including provisions related to the recognition of prior learning and mobility periods, in alignment with the Lisbon Convention.

DCUTGM offers a range of student support services, proportionate to the scale of the institution. These include:

- Academic advising and individual tutoring;
- Psychological counseling and career guidance;
- Merit-based and need-based scholarships;
- Opportunities to engage in research projects, academic conferences, and student-led initiatives.

Feedback collected during interviews and outlined in the Internal Evaluation Report indicates that students feel their needs are addressed on an individual basis, and communication with staff and administration is generally smooth. This is largely facilitated by the institution's modest size, which allows for personalized support and direct access to decision-makers.

Graduate employability is a stated institutional priority. According to internal data, approximately 85.7% of graduates are employed, and 60% of bachelor's degree holders continue their studies at the master's level, most of them enrolling in programs offered by DCUTGM itself. While these figures are encouraging, the university has yet to implement a formal graduate tracer system, and its alumni relations remain underdeveloped. Strengthening these mechanisms would provide valuable feedback for enhancing curriculum relevance and improving alignment with labor market needs.

Students are formally represented in the University Senate, faculty councils, and quality assurance bodies. Their participation in institutional decision-making is enshrined in internal regulations; however, their involvement in strategic planning processes could be further enhanced.

International student mobility is formally supported through Erasmus+ partnerships, yet remains limited. Outgoing mobility is sporadic, and incoming student exchanges are currently almost non-existent.

Comments/Recommendations:

- *Maintain and further develop individualized support services that enhance student satisfaction and engagement.*
- *Strengthen career guidance and alumni relations by introducing graduate tracer studies to monitor employment outcomes and inform program development.*
- *Encourage and facilitate increased student participation in international mobility programs and institutional strategic planning processes.*
- *Consider developing targeted strategies for attracting a greater number of international students.*
- *Ensure that all students have access to a sufficient number of hours dedicated to professional practice, in alignment with program objectives and labor market expectations.*

Research

Scientific research at “Dimitrie Cantemir” University of Târgu Mureş is identified as one of the institution’s core missions, alongside teaching and community engagement. The institutional strategy promotes both applied and disciplinary research, aligned with national research priorities and the specific development needs of the region. Research activities are coordinated at the faculty level and are overseen institutionally by the Vice-Rector for Research and the Scientific Council.

According to the Internal Evaluation Report and supporting institutional documents, faculty members publish in both national and international journals, with a concentration in fields such as law, psychology, economics, geography, and medical sciences. Some academic staff have also participated in international conferences and collaborative research projects.

- The university has initiated several measures to promote research, including:
- Institutional support for participation in academic conferences;
- Opportunities to publish in university-affiliated journals;

Encouragement of individual research initiatives by staff members.

While some publications appear in Romanian and regional outlets, the university’s visibility in high-impact, peer-reviewed international journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science remains limited. Research activity is uneven across faculties and is largely driven by individual initiative rather than coordinated institutional programs.

DCUTGM has adopted a Code of University Ethics and Professional Deontology to ensure integrity and ethical standards in research and to prevent intellectual dishonesty and academic misconduct.

Comments/Recommendations:

- *Encourage staff to apply for competitive research funding at national and European levels.*
- *Strengthen access to international scientific databases and invest in research infrastructure.*
- *Continue to promote student involvement in research through thesis-based projects, assistants’ roles, and participation in scientific events.*
- *Continue to publish especially in scientific journals.*
- *Encourage collaborations with other research institutes.*
- *Stimulate academic entrepreneurship of staff, graduates, and students.*

Internationalization

“Dimitrie Cantemir” University of Târgu Mureş demonstrates a formal and sustained commitment to internationalization. The university has established bilateral agreements with higher education institutions in countries such as France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, as well as with institutions outside Europe, aimed at facilitating student and staff mobility.

International activities are coordinated by the Department of International Relations (DRI), which supports student, academic, and administrative staff mobility and fosters international cooperation, contributing to the achievement of the university's internationalization objectives.

According to statements provided during the site visit, several teaching staff members **have participated in Erasmus+ mobility programs, while student participation remains limited.**

The university promotes the internationalization of academic life through:

- Erasmus+ mobility opportunities for students and staff;
- participation in international conferences;
- occasional guest lectures delivered by foreign academics;
- **access to selected international literature through the university library.**

Foreign language proficiency, particularly among staff and administrative personnel, **appears to be a limiting factor in expanding international engagement.**

Currently, the university does not offer degree programs taught in English or other foreign languages, and there are no international students enrolled in full-degree programs.

Comments/Recommendations:

- **Develop and adopt a formal internationalization strategy for the 2025–2030 period, setting realistic targets and clear action plans.**
- Improve the university's digital visibility in English by providing up-to-date program descriptions, detailed information on mobility opportunities, and clear application procedures.
- **Pursue partnerships within the framework of European University Alliances, Horizon Europe, and regional cooperation initiatives.**
- Strengthen Erasmus+ implementation by increasing the participation of outgoing students and staff, and by creating the necessary conditions to support incoming mobility.
- Develop partial or full course offerings in foreign languages to attract international students and foster academic exchange.

Quality Management

The quality assurance (QA) system of "Dimitrie Cantemir" University of Târgu Mureș is formally established and complies with Romanian national requirements. It is coordinated by an internal quality assurance structure under the authority of the university's leadership. The QA system is outlined in the Internal Evaluation Report and institutional procedures and is **broadly aligned with the ESG 2015 standards.**

The university has implemented the following elements:

- A Quality Assessment and Assurance Commission (QAAC) at the institutional level;
- Periodic internal evaluations of academic staff and study programs;
- Student feedback mechanisms;
- An Ethics and Professional Deontology Commission that actively safeguards academic integrity;

An internal audit system to monitor compliance, efficiency, and performance indicators. However, several areas of the QA system require further strengthening:

- The use of student feedback lacks transparency; it is unclear how feedback is analyzed and applied to support improvements.
- There is limited evidence of systematic involvement of external stakeholders (e.g., employers, alumni) in quality assurance processes.
- Public reporting on quality is minimal — quality reports and improvement plans are not visibly published or communicated to students.
- The cycle linking evaluation, analysis, decision-making, and follow-up is not fully closed or consistently documented.

Some quality indicators (e.g., student satisfaction, staff evaluation scores, progression rates) are monitored internally, but benchmarking against national or international standards has not yet been implemented.

A Quality Manual is available to support the QA processes.

Comments/Recommendations:

- Strengthen the feedback loop by ensuring that students and staff are informed about survey results and the corrective measures implemented in response.
- Integrate input from external stakeholders into the design, review, and quality assurance of study programs.
- Ensure that students are regularly updated on the status and impact of their feedback regarding teaching activities.
- Provide teaching staff whose activities are evaluated by students with the opportunity to review and respond constructively to student feedback.

Conclusions:

The external institutional evaluation of “Dimitrie Cantemir” University of Târgu Mureş (DCUTGM) was carried out in accordance with the methodologies and principles of ARACIS. The analysis of documentary evidence, observations from the site visit, and consultations with stakeholders highlighted the university’s efforts to maintain academic stability, ensure educational access, and promote regional relevance.

The institution demonstrates strengths through its student-centered environment, stable leadership, and responsiveness to student needs. The existence of quality assurance mechanisms, continuous professional development initiatives, and support structures such as the Ethics and Audit Committees reflect a level of institutional maturity.

Consolidation of the academic profile and further development through a proactive, integrated approach to quality, innovation, and internationalization would support the university’s advancement. With targeted investment and the institutional commitment already in place, “Dimitrie Cantemir” University of Târgu Mureş holds clear potential to evolve into a

more competitive and impactful academic institution within both the Romanian and European higher education landscapes.

It is my considered view that the university will continue to contribute positively to Romanian society through education, research, and broad social engagement. The overall impression gained from the visit inspires confidence in the capacity of the university's management and structures to sustain consistent development in line with national and international standards of academic quality and rigor.

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