

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education



External Evaluation Report (REE) for the procedure for obtaining a maintaining accreditation (MAC) of Doctoral Study Domain

Higher Education Institution/Education Provider Organization:	"Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava
Doctoral School:	DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF APPLIED AND ENGINEERING SCIENCES
Doctoral Domain:	GEOGRAPHY
The objective of the external evaluation:	Maintaining accreditation (MAC)



Members of the ARACIS Evaluation Panel

No.	Last Name and First Name	Team role	Signature
1.	<i>Boengiu Sandu</i>	Expert evaluator	
2.	<i>Kholiavchuk Dariia</i>	International Expert	
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I. Introduction

Context in which the external evaluation report was drafted.

The evaluation of the doctoral field Geography within the Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, „Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, was part of the periodic evaluation of this field for maintaining the accreditation.

The evaluation took place at „Ștefan cel Mare” University during 6-7 July 2026.

The evaluation team was composed of: the coordinator, Prof. Sandu Boengiu, PhD, from the University of Craiova; member, the international expert Assoc. Prof. Daria Kholiavchuk, PhD, from Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University; and student member Petre Angelo Andi, PhD candidate, from the University of Bucharest.

Description of the higher education institution.

Establishment. The history of higher education in Suceava began in 1963, with the creation of the 3-year *Pedagogical Institute*, with two faculties, of philology and of mathematics-physics. Four stages can be distinguished in the history of university education in Suceava: i) 1963-1975: the Pedagogical Institute stage; ii) 1976-1984: the stage of the mixed, pedagogical and technical, Higher Education Institute; iii) 1984-1989: the stage of the Sub-engineering Institute; iv) from 1990 to the present: the stage of the „Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava (USV). University status was confirmed by Government Decision No. 225 of 7 March 1990, by which the „Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava was established as a public institution, integrated into the national higher education system.

Evolution. USV is currently a comprehensive university with a mixed structure, offering study programmes in all fundamental fields: mathematics and natural sciences, engineering sciences, biological and biomedical sciences, social sciences, human and art sciences, sports and physical education science, organised into 11 faculties.

USV has adhered to the principles set out in the Magna Charta of European Universities, adopted in Bologna in 1998. USV is affiliated with prestigious international bodies such as: the International Association of Universities; the European University Association; the Alliance of Universities for Democracy; the City Business Centre; the International Council for Open and Distance Education. USV is a member of the NEOLAIA Alliance (<https://neolaia.usv.ro/>), a European academic network funded by the European Commission under the ERASMUS+ programme.

Mission. USV is a public higher education institution whose mission is to promote and support the creation and dissemination of knowledge through education and continuing training, research and innovation, human development and entrepreneurship, in line with national and international standards. USV's leadership assumes the mission of education and scientific research, in which the entire academic community participates (<https://usv.ro/despre-noi/povestea-noastra/misiune-si-obiective/>).

Governance. The management and governing bodies at the level of the departments, faculties and the university are those corresponding to the structures defined by Higher Education Law No. 199/2023, laid down in the USV Charter (<https://usv.ro/resurse/carta-usv/>) and through decisions of the university's leadership issued by the Administrative Board and the University Senate (<https://usv.ro/resurse/organigramele-usv/>).

The University Senate, the highest decision-making and deliberative body at university level, represents the university community and carries out its activity on the basis of its own organisation and operation regulation (<https://usv.ro/despre-noi/conducere/senatul-usv/hotararile-senatului-usv/>), in compliance with the University Charter and the legislation in force.

The operational management of the university and the implementation of the Senate's decisions are ensured by the Administrative Board of USV, which operates according to its own regulation (<https://usv.ro/despre-noi/conducere/hotararile-consiliului-de-administratie-usv/>).

The Rector was elected by universal, direct and secret vote of all tenured teaching and research staff and of the student representatives in the Senate and the faculty councils. The Rector was validated by the Ministry of Education through the Ministry Order no. 3949/04.03.2024.

Strategic management. The entire activity of USV, including its managerial activity, at all levels, is subordinated to the mission and strategic objectives assumed by the Senate. Implementation of the university's strategy follows the planning of activities described in the *University's Strategic Plan*, drawn up for a period of 5 years, in line with its material and human potential, based on the strategic plans of the faculties, departments and services (<https://usv.ro/despre-noi/organizare/strategii/>), and, respectively, of the annual operational plan (<https://usv.ro/despre-noi/organizare/plan-operational/>).

Quality management at USV. Access to the national higher education competitive space requires the promotion of quality assurance activities for all processes and activities organised at university level. The organisational structure of the quality management system has its own website (<https://ceac.usv.ro/>) on which the quality principles, objectives, policy and strategies can be found (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/proceduri/>) together with the Quality Code (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/codul-calitatii/>). The internal evaluation of study programmes proposed for provisional authorisation, accreditation or periodic certification, at five-year intervals, was carried out in accordance with the External Evaluation Methodology, the reference standards and the list of ARACIS performance indicators (<https://ceac.usv.ro/dezbatare-publica/planuri-de-invatamant-anuale/>).

Effective administration. The operational management of the university is carried out by the Administrative Board. The management process within the university's administrative structures is led by the general administrative director, who coordinates the activity of the heads of offices, services and administrative directorates with competences in specific areas of administration, while at faculty level, cooperation takes place with the vice-deans and/or chief administrators who assist the deans in administering the faculties (<https://usv.ro/resurse/organigramele-usv/>).

Structure. USV comprises eleven faculties, composed by departments, and an administrative structure that supports the teaching and research processes. The university's structure is reflected in the organisational charts: academic, management system and administrative system (<https://usv.ro/>, <https://usv.ro/resurse/organigramele-usv/>).

At USV, within the 11 faculties (<https://usv.ro/>) *study programmes* are run under their own regulations at bachelor's level (full-time, distance learning and DUAL), master's and doctoral level (https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/regulamente-usv/#_programestudii).

USV has systematically pursued, in accordance with legal requirements, the external quality evaluation procedures for education, in order to ensure compliance with the standards and specific indicators set by ARACIS. USV was evaluated by ARACIS at institutional level in 2008, 2013, 2019 and 2025, receiving the rating High Degree of Confidence (<https://usv.ro/despre-noi/povestea-noastra/acreditari-clasamente-si-premii/>).

The periodic evaluation of study programmes based on ARACIS-specific standards has been a priority for the university's management. Doctoral schools and doctoral domains were evaluated by ARACIS in the 2021 academic year. The Doctoral School of Applied and Engineering Sciences, which includes the Geography doctoral field of university studies, full-time/reduced-frequency study, obtained, at the last periodic evaluation in 2021, *Maintenance of Accreditation*, approved by the ARACIS Council at its meeting of 16.12.2021 (<https://www.aracis.ro/dsud/geografie-iosud103/>).

[General description of the doctoral study domain.](#)

The Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (ȘDȘAI) is an organisational and administrative structure established within the Organising Institution of Doctoral University Studies (IOSUD), operating within the „Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava.

IOSUD-USV was established in 2005 within the higher education institution „Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava by Senate Decision, and operates within it without entering into partnerships that could lead to the creation of a new legal entity.

Starting in 2012, based on USV Senate Decision No. 68 of 15.05.2012, two Doctoral Schools were established: i) the Human and Social Sciences Doctoral School (HSSDS) and ii) the Engineering and Applied Sciences Doctoral School (EASDS).

Following the elections organised in 2022, the directors of the two Doctoral Schools within IOSUD-USV were appointed: Prof. Silvia MIRONEASA, PhD Eng. – Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied

Sciences, and Assoc. Prof. Bogdan POPOVENIUC, PhD – Doctoral School of Human and Social Sciences, together with the council of each doctoral school (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/structura/>).

The Council of the Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (ȘDȘAI) includes the director of the doctoral school, Prof. Silvia MIRONEASA, PhD Eng.; a doctoral supervisor faculty member, Prof. Radu-Daniel VATAVU, PhD Eng., elected by the vote of the doctoral supervisors; and a doctoral student, Eugen IAVORSCHI, elected by the vote of the doctoral students within the doctoral school.

The mission of ȘDȘAI is to train intellectually autonomous researchers and to prepare highly qualified specialists in the fields of engineering and applied sciences through the development of high-performance doctoral research programmes.

ȘDȘAI provides the necessary support for carrying out doctoral university studies in seven accredited doctoral fields: *Computers and Information Technology; Geography; Food Product Engineering; Electrical Engineering; Electronic Engineering, Telecommunications and Information Technologies; Mechanical Engineering and Forestry* (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/programe-de-pregatire-universitara-avansata/scoala-doctorala-de-stiinte-aplicate-si-ingineresti/>). Each of these doctoral fields of university studies includes at least 3 doctoral supervisors, in accordance with the legislation in force (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/domenii-de-doctorat-in-usv-si-conducatori/>), and the 7 domains include a total of 34 doctoral supervisor faculty members.

The **Geography** doctoral study domain has been active within IOSUD for 15 years, the first thesis having been defended in May 2011 under the supervision of Prof. Costică BRÂNDUȘ, PhD. By the end of 2025, a total of 24 doctoral theses had been defended in the field of Geography. In the last five academic years, 13 doctoral students supervised by four doctoral supervisors have defended their doctorates: one doctoral student supervised by Prof. Maria Rădoane, PhD, 5 doctoral students supervised by Prof. Vasile Efros, PhD, 4 doctoral students supervised by Assoc. Prof. Habil. Dumitru Mihăilă, PhD, and two doctoral students supervised by Assoc. Prof. Habil. Marcel Mîndrescu, PhD. All doctoral students received CNATDCU confirmation and hold doctoral degrees in Geography.

During the period 2.09 – 8.09.2021, the periodic external evaluation visit of the IOSUD and of the doctoral study domain took place, in hybrid format, at the „Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava. The result of the evaluation of the Geography field (ARACIS panel coordinated by Prof. Adrian Grozavu, PhD, of „Al. I. Cuza” University of Iași) was “maintaining of accreditation”. The intermediate evaluation of the progress made by the Geography DSUD of IOSUD USV, carried out during 12-25 May 2025 by the ARACIS panel composed of Prof. Nicoleta Ionac, PhD (University of Bucharest), Sorin Furdui, PhD candidate (University of Oradea) and Roxana Florea – Expert from the Quality Assurance Directorate, responsible for supporting the activity of the CPS – Exact Sciences and Natural Sciences – showed that the Geography DSUD of IOSUD-USV had made significant and systematic progress since the last REE, standing out through a clear alignment with the previously formulated recommendations, reflecting a coherent and concerted strategy of institutional, academic and research development; these positive developments have contributed to increasing the visibility and attractiveness of the doctoral study programmes and activities offered. All 11 previous recommendations were fulfilled (<https://www.aracis.ro/dsud/geografie-iosud103/>).

II. Methods used

Prior to the on-site visit, the coordinated evaluation panel proceeded to evaluate the internal evaluation report and the accompanying annexes uploaded to the ARACIS SharePoint platform.

During the on-site visit, the following were visited: the CSUD secretariat, the laboratories of the **The Research Center of Applied Geography GeA** (Climatology and Hydrology, Paleoenvironment, GIS), the collection of minerals and rocks, the University Library, the university restaurant, the sports base.

Meetings were organised with the leadership of CSUD and ȘDȘAI, with the leadership of the Faculty of History, Geography and Social Sciences and of the Department of Geography, with the person in charge of the field and with the doctoral supervisors, with the leadership of CEAC and of the University Ethics Committee, with representatives of the research laboratories and of the **Research Center of Applied Geography (GeA)**, and with employers, graduates and doctoral students.

III. Judgement on the extent to which the standards and performance indicators are fulfilled

DOMAIN A. Institutional capacity

Criterion A.1. Managerial and administrative structures and processes involving students and other stakeholders

Standard S.A.1.1. Organisational components and institutional processes

The HEI has organisational components in its structure, which function based on adequate competences, responsibilities, processes, and implementation procedures, and ensure an effective management system.

Indicator I.P.A.1.1.1	For delivering the study programme/domain, the HEI has adequate organisational components and an adequate management system, which operate based on methodologies, regulations and procedures that are periodically reviewed as required by law.
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IOSUD-USV has organisational components in its structure that operate on the basis of appropriate competences, responsibilities, processes and application procedures, ensuring an effective management system.

✓ Presentation of the state of facts

For the conduct of the study domain, IOSUD-USV has appropriate organisational components and a management system, whose operation is based on methodologies, regulations and procedures periodically revised, in accordance with the law.

USV's activity, specific to a higher education institution, is carried out with organisational components and a management system, confirmed by the existence of the following organisational charts (<https://usv.ro/resurse/organigramele-usv/>): i) academic system, ii) management system, iii) administrative system, iv) senate.

The functioning of the institution is based on periodically revised methodologies, regulations and procedures governing the conduct of teaching, research and administrative activities: i) Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the university, ii) Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the senate, iii) Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the administrative board (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/regulamente-usv/#structuriuniversitare>), iv) Framework regulation on the initiation, approval, monitoring and periodic evaluation of study programmes (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/regulamente-usv/#programestudii>), v) Regulation on the organisation and conduct of master's university studies, vi) Regulation on the organisation and conduct of doctoral university study programmes (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/regulamente-usv/#doctorat>), vii) Procedure for the drafting, revision and approval of curricula, viii) Procedure for the internal evaluation of self-evaluation reports of study programmes (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/proceduri/>), ix) Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the Council for Doctoral University Studies, Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/regulamente-usv/#doctorat>). These documents are periodically revised and applied throughout the activities they regulate.

Going forward, the implementation of the requirements set out in the methodologies, regulations and procedures must be monitored to ensure that teaching, research and administrative activities are carried out under optimal conditions.

✓ Analysis of the state of facts

These documents are periodically revised to correspond to the current legislative framework and realities in the educational field. They are applied throughout the activities they regulate to ensure a conducive environment for the implementation of educational, scientific and managerial policies.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples**

The university's procedures and regulations are periodically reviewed and updated in line with legislative changes and their requirements. Efforts are made to implement the requirements set out in the methodologies, regulations and procedures to ensure that teaching, research and administrative activities are carried out under optimal conditions.

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Standard S.A.1.2. Stakeholder engagement

The HEI proves that it engages the relevant stakeholders in developing methodologies and regulations, as well as implementation procedures.

Indicator
I.P.A.1.2.1

The opinions of the faculty and department members, of the subsidiary or extension* and of other stakeholders are considered in the process of adopting and revising methodologies, regulations and implementation procedures.

✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The national legislative dynamics, the pace of development of knowledge in the field of Geography and the requirements of the labour market require a constant updating of the institutional norms governing the professional activity of geographers as well.

Knowledge of labour market requirements, in terms of the needs and expectations regarding the competences expected upon the employment of doctoral graduates from the Geography doctoral study domain, is necessary for establishing the training project appropriate to the field of study. Both the opinions and expectations of potential employers and those of doctoral students and graduates, as well as of the members of the doctoral school and the Doctoral School Council, are taken into account here. The Geography curriculum is adapted to the needs of doctoral students in geography and to labour market requirements. Various events and periodic consultations are organised with master's students and economic agents, following which opinion surveys are drawn up and minutes are concluded that include the partners' proposals and opinions. To ensure the efficiency and transparency of the consultation process, the proposals received during the debates are centralised. Feasible proposals made during debates and consultations are included when the methodologies, regulations and procedures are adopted/revised. All these consultative activities with third parties are conducted periodically, being part of current institutional practice.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The Geography DSUD shows a systematic interest in and commitment to the active involvement of all stakeholders in the educational process. Feedback (regarding teaching staff and auxiliary staff) collected periodically from students is analysed with a view to improving teaching and administrative services. Each faculty member allocates weekly consultation hours to students, which facilitates communication between the two parties and the elimination of dysfunctions. Students are consulted in the drafting and/or revision of procedures. After the observations are analysed, together with the additions resulting from the public debate, the documents are submitted to the USV Senate for approval, and are then posted on the CEAC website. In the latest consultation carried out by CSUD and centralised in June 2026, 102 out of more than 300 respondents answered the questionnaires on issues concerning doctoral students' lives. Doctoral students' requirements will serve as a benchmark for future normative and curriculum reconfigurations.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples**

USV already has consolidated mechanisms for periodic consultation with students, graduates and employers, and largely integrates their perspectives into decision-making processes.

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

* The faculty, department, subsidiary, extension - hereinafter "organisational components"

Criterion A.2. The material resources and optimisation of the use of the material resources

Standard S.A.2.1. Material resources

The HEI owns adequate movable and immovable assets to enable it to carry out the study programme/domain.

Indicator I.P.A.2.1.1	The HEI legally owns venues for the related education, research and administrative processes, as well as for services for students, doctoral students and trainees, thus providing an enabling environment for living and studying, including for disabled persons. Optimal venues are also provided for activities of the staff. Such venues are adequately equipped.
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✓ Presentation of the state of facts

The university has an patrimony that effectively contributes to fulfilling its mission and stated objectives. The Geography doctoral study domain has its own, adequate spaces for the teaching process (amphitheatres, classrooms, seminar rooms, laboratories, spaces intended for doctoral supervisor faculty members) and spaces for administrative activities. The equipping of the teaching and research spaces (https://fig.usv.ro/cga/#about_us) used by the Geography doctoral study domain corresponds to the current stage of development of technical, practical and scientific knowledge and is comparable to that of developed European universities and to international best practices, most of the equipment having been acquired in the last 5 years. The teaching spaces used by the Geography doctoral study domain are equipped with the computing hardware and software necessary for carrying out the teaching process (an aspect confirmed by the on-site visit to the Climatology and Hydrology, GIS, Paleoenvironment, Geomorphology and Geology laboratories).

The university library plays an important role in supporting the teaching process and research activity within the Geography doctoral study domain, doctoral students having access to the university library (<https://biblioteca.usv.ro/>). The reading rooms give students the opportunity to prepare for academic and scientific activities and to carry out projects and plans (<https://biblioteca.usv.ro/biblioteca-in-imagini/>). The Library currently has five reading rooms, an internet room and a home-loan room. The book collection is significantly supplemented by the access of all students and university staff to internationally recognised electronic scientific information resources, such as the Elsevier ScienceDirect Freedom, SpringerLink, Wiley, Nature, OVID and IEEE journal collections, the CAB ebooks and de Gruyter e-book collections, and the SCOPUS, Web of Knowledge and CABI FSD international abstract databases, available through the implementation of the ANELIS Plus association project and co-financing provided by USV.

In order to ensure students' free access to any resource, in line with the objectives and requirements of the study programmes, the academic management has a constant concern for encouraging the intensive use of electronic-format resources (books, journals, tutorials and teaching simulators) available online, given that these can be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (<https://biblioteca.usv.ro/acces-in-biblioteca/>). The number of computers connected to the institution's Intranet network, with broadband Internet access, accessible to students in teaching laboratories or at department level, exceeds 400 stations. In addition, student dormitories have been connected to broadband Internet, respectively to the university's Intranet network, via a fibre-optic backbone.

The geography book collection is a substantial one (an aspect also discussed with the library staff during the on-site visit). The Geography doctoral study domain uses the Training and Continuing Education Centre in Vatra Dornei (<https://usv.ro/servicii/ro/pagina-01-1.php>) where it organises numerous field applications and events with master's and doctoral students (<https://fig.usv.ro/conferinta-stiintifica-internationala-atmosfera-si-hidrosfera-2024/>, <https://fig.usv.ro/gis-aplicat-in-climatologie/>), geography doctoral students being active within the GeA Research Centre of Applied Geography (https://fig.usv.ro/cga/#human_resources). The facilities available in the laboratories and the Research Centre create the conditions for carrying out doctoral students' training research and advanced research activities in the evaluated field (https://fig.usv.ro/cga/#material_resources). Through the major investments made in recent years in equipping the university's laboratories, both from European and national projects won through competition and from the university's own revenues, the equipment of these laboratories is

being continuously modernised. A major advantage of the geography researchers at USV and other university centres is that their research laboratory is the geosystem itself, with its various levels of organisation – from the local to the regional, national and so on (https://fig.usv.ro/cga/#statia_meteorologica_moara). Partnerships with various environment-related organisations strengthen the research base and opportunities available to geography doctoral students (<https://fig.usv.ro/acorduri-de-parteneriat-si-protocoale-de-colaborare/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

USV has its own spaces for teaching/applied activities/laboratories, adequately equipped for all disciplines in the curriculum of the evaluated doctoral study domain. Within the Geography DSUD, the material base is managed efficiently and responsibly, with a focus on the sustainable use of spaces and equipment. The spaces have been sized to correspond both to the specific nature of the activities carried out and to the technical, safety and health standards in force. The book collection and subscriptions to periodicals or databases are ensured by the USV Library.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples**

USV makes efforts and keeps pace with the accelerated rate of technological progress by periodically refreshing equipment and offering training sessions for young researchers.

✓ **Recommendations.** During the on-site visit, the geography doctoral students requested that USV provide a furnished space with an internet connection where doctoral students could work permanently and without restriction on their teaching and research projects.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Standard S.A.2.2. Management of material resources

The organisational components manage the movable and immovable assets used for the evaluated study programme/domain in an optimal, sustainable manner.

Indicator I.P.A.2.2.1	The movable and immovable assets are properly maintained to ensure optimal conditions for studying, living and research, as well as for work.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The teaching, research and administrative spaces, together with their related equipment, are used optimally, with staff employed for their maintenance. In the Geography doctoral study domain there is a systems engineer, Aniței Adrian, with competences in the field of IT, and also Mrs Rodica Girigan, engineer, who is responsible for the management, monitoring and maintenance of estate assets.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

Both immovable and movable assets are used responsibly and are constantly maintained, ensuring the best conditions for carrying out teaching and research activities. Each of the 7 geography laboratories has a person responsible for its assets, which are continuously supplemented and efficiently managed, an aspect confirmed by the on-site visit and by discussions with representatives of the research centre and research laboratories.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples**

USV's leadership continuously modernises and expands the laboratories to meet current technological requirements. A predictive infrastructure maintenance plan is being implemented to ensure the continuity of the educational and research process.

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion A.3. Adequate human resources and transparent staff recruiting procedures developed according to the law

Standard S.A.3.1. Human resources

The HEI has the required human resources to organise and deliver the evaluated study programme/domain.

Indicator I.P.A.3.1.1	The human resources of the organisational component are suitable to perform the activities pertaining to the evaluated study programme/domain. The teaching staff has the required qualifications and professional competences to teach the subject matters assigned to them in the job list.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (ȘDȘAI), which organises the Geography doctoral study domain, has the activities set out for the disciplines in the Curriculum (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/programe-de-pregatire-universitara-avansata/scoala-doctorala-de-stiinte-aplicate-si-ingineresti/>) covered by competent faculty members. The teaching staff who teach in the Geography study domain are tenured members of the university, having studies in the evaluated field and a doctoral/habilitation title in the evaluated doctoral field or related fields. Information on the CVs of faculty members and their lists of publications is available on the Doctoral Studies website (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/domenii-de-doctorat-in-usv-si-conducatori/>). At the time of the evaluation, 3 faculty members were active as doctoral supervisors in the Geography doctoral study domain (Prof. Vasile EFROS, PhD; Assoc. Prof. Habil. Marcel MÎNDRESCU, PhD; and Assoc. Prof. Habil. Dumitru MIHĂILĂ, PhD). All the doctoral supervisors in the evaluated field have intense scientific activity and prioritise the Geography Doctoral study domain within ȘDȘAI in everything they undertake.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The current composition of the teaching staff reflects expertise and professional maturity. The Geography DSUD is very concerned with renewing and expanding the teaching staff with faculty members of recognised academic and professional value. There are prospects that, in the coming years, three faculty members – Assoc. Prof. Briciu Andrei, PhD; Lecturer Despina Saghin, PhD; and Lecturer Francisca Chiriloaiei, PhD – will obtain their habilitation in order to expand/strengthen the group of Geography doctoral supervisors. Likewise, among the doctoral graduates of the Suceava school, young researchers such as Florescu Gabriela, PhD (Researcher within the USV MANSID Research Centre), meet the conditions for habilitation. The possibility of attracting internationally recognised scientific figures among the geography doctoral supervisors, such as Monica Ioniță Scholtz, Senior Research Scientist at the Alfred Wegener Institute, is not excluded. There are numerous efforts to attract faculty members from Romanian or foreign university and research structures to join the team of geography doctoral supervisors at Suceava. Doctoral supervisors and candidates for this position make great efforts to write ISI Q1/Q2 articles as first authors and to submit projects in as diverse a range of research project competitions as possible under the aegis of UEFISCDI.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** The evaluation panel recommends that those responsible for the Geography doctoral study domain, the leadership of ȘDȘAI and of CSUD take steps to encourage/support 1-2 geographers from Suceava in obtaining their habilitation within the next 2-4 years. This is a difficult process, but the Suceava geography school has the capacity to complete it. Likewise, affiliating doctoral supervisors from other university and research structures may be a way of strengthening the supervisory team.

The indicator is: fulfilled

Indicator I.P.A.3.1.2	The HEI ensures professional and personal development for its staff.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

USV constantly supports the professional and personal development of doctoral supervisor faculty members by involving them in continuing training, research and teaching innovation activities. Faculty members within the Geography study domain have actively participated in the ERASMUS+ programme and in projects financed from the Institutional Development Fund, aimed at modernising the educational process, digitalising teaching resources and stimulating applied research in the field of geography. Conferences (<https://fig.usv.ro/conferinta-stiintifica-internationala-atmosfera-si-hidrosfera-2024/>), workshops (<https://fig.usv.ro/gis-aplicat-in-climatologie/>, https://fig.usv.ro/cga/#_evenimente_si_activitati) and study trips for teachers and students abroad

(https://fig.usv.ro/cga/#field_research_applications_working_visits) have been organised from IDF funds. The university has also organised training and professional development sessions within the COACH project (<https://coach.usv.ro/>), a project that offered concrete training opportunities in modern university teaching methods, the use of digital technologies in education, and the development of transversal competences.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The collaboration of Suceava geography specialists with various research institutions and partner universities (<https://relint.usv.ro/>) offers opportunities for the academic career development of faculty members. The participation of faculty members in IDF projects and in the activities of the COACH project reflects the institution's commitment to the continuing training of staff and to maintaining a high level of quality in the teaching process.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.** Within the Geography DSUD, faculty members have access to relevant information resources available through the e-nformation platform (<https://www.e-nformation.ro/>). USV's support, from its own resources, for participation in scientific events and for the open-access publication of articles (<https://usv.ro/despre-noi/conducere/senatul-usv/hotararile-senatului-usv/>) constitutes a serious incentive for the teaching and scientific career development of geography faculty members and researchers.

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Standard S.A.3.2. Recruitment procedures

Teaching staff recruitment procedures compliant with the provisions of the law.

Indicator I.P.A.3.2.1	Recruitment procedures comply with the provisions of the law, and are established and carried out transparently.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The faculty members teaching in the Geography DSUD were recruited in accordance with legal provisions and USV regulations: i) Regulation on Filling Vacant Teaching Positions (R14), ii) Regulation on Filling Vacant or Temporarily Vacant Teaching and Research Positions for a Fixed Term (R51), and iii) Regulation on the Organisation and Conduct of the Habilitation Certification Process (R37) (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/regulamente-usv/#cadredidactice>) and meets the required legal requirements.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

Within the Geography DSUD, recruitment procedures comply with the legal framework, ensuring a transparent and standardised process for filling teaching and research positions, based on criteria established at national level (<https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/geztqmjwgg4ts/legea-invatomantului-superior-nr-199-2023>).

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** A priority for the Geography DSUD should be the habilitation, within the next 2-4 years, of faculty members from the Department of Geography, and the attraction of high-performing external human resources, within the context of a transparent and competitive recruitment process.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion A.4. Digitalisation of institutional processes

Standard S.A.4.1. Digital transformation

The digital transformation process in the organisational component seeks to achieve administrative simplification and improve the quality of the services provided to the members of its own community, as well as to third parties.

Indicator I.P.A.4.1.1	The organisational component uses IT tools in its own procedures, to improve access and provide good quality services for the members of its own community and the indirect beneficiaries of education.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

A major contribution to carrying out these activities is made by the Communications and Information Technology Service (SCTI), which operates under its own regulation (<https://scti.usv.ro/>) and is responsible for configuring, administering and maintaining the university's Internet/Intranet network, as well as ensuring optimal traffic conditions and the security of data transfers. The university's Intranet network, including its wireless coverage area, is freely accessible to all students at the university. This service periodically produces reports on the operational status of the IT system. Course and application teaching materials are available through collaborative educational IT platforms such as Google Classroom and Google Forms. ȘDȘAI has a website (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/domenii-de-doctorat-in-usv-si-conducatori/>, <https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/programe-de-pregatire-universitara-avansata/scoala-doctorala-de-stiinte-aplicate-si-ingineresti/>) which is constantly updated with useful information for doctoral students, faculty members and prospective admission candidates for the Geography Doctoral study domain. The schedule of each faculty member carrying out teaching and doctoral supervision activities is available online (<https://orar.usv.ro/>), allowing easy access to the calendar of scheduled activities. Within calls for project competitions launched through various funding programmes, a series of projects concerning the digitalisation of institutional activities have been submitted and won, such as USV DIGITAL – Digitalised University, Students Connected to Emerging Professions, Sustainable Future (with a total value of over 22 million lei), and the Pedagogy-Education-Digitalisation project (with a total value of over 14 million lei) (<https://digital.usv.ro/>, <https://ped.usv.ro/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

Through the digital solutions presented above, the Geography DSUD considerably enhances the quality of the education and research carried out. Within the USV Digital project, the Digital Technologies Laboratory for Cultural Heritage Analysis was modernised and equipped (<https://digital.usv.ro/13-laborator-de-tehnologii-digitale-de-analiza-a-patrimoniului-cultural-laborator-modernizat/>), through which research into environmental geographic issues is carried out using automated means that store and transmit environmental information online, digitalising the process of knowledge and research.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.** Within the USV Geography doctoral study domain, young doctoral researchers work with electronic environmental monitoring equipment (sensors – over 50 sensors placed in the NE Region and in the Republic of Moldova, networks of automatic stations – https://fig.usv.ro/cga/#statia_meteorologica_moara) that store and transmit environmental information remotely and make it accessible to a broad group of researchers.

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

DOMAIN B. Educational efficacy

Criterion B.1. Content and relevance of study programmes

Standard S.B.1.1. Content of study programme/s*

The study programme is based on a curriculum designed so that students can acquire the expected learning outcomes.

Indicator I.P.B.1.1.1	The study programme is developed and structured according to the expected learning outcomes, and organised based on transferable study credits. It includes all learning, teaching, practical training, research and evaluation experiences, which, together, lead to a higher education qualification.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

* The term “programmes” concerns the external quality evaluation for the study programmes contained in a master/doctoral domain. The term “programme” shall be used hereinafter.

The curriculum for the Geography doctoral study domain (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/programe-de-pregatire-universitara-avansata/scoala-doctorala-de-stiinte-aplicate-si-ingineresti/>) corresponds to the regulations in force and complies with the normative requirements and with the criteria, standards and performance indicators developed by ARACIS, with the aim of training specialists able to meet the rigours of the labour market. The curriculum was drawn up taking into account the situation of human resources and the material base, as well as the mission of the stated objectives, the need for compatibility with similar doctoral study domain in the country and the EU, and the adaptation of these to the dynamics of activities compatible with the field of geography. For the first semester of the first year of study, the curriculum for the Geography DSUD provides a total of 30 transferable study credits for compulsory and optional disciplines, in accordance with the requirements of the European system (ECTS). The disciplines in the curriculum are arranged in a logical sequence. The course syllabi (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/programe-de-pregatire-universitara-avansata/scoala-doctorala-de-stiinte-aplicate-si-ingineresti/>) are drawn up by the discipline coordinator, then analysed and approved by the Domain Coordinator, the Director of the doctoral school and the Director of CSUD. The syllabi comply with the assumed mission and include a series of methodological guidelines, such as: information about the study programme and the discipline, the number of hours allocated to teaching activities, the distribution of the time allocation, professional and transversal competences that doctoral students may acquire, learning outcomes, the discipline's objectives, the content of the courses and applications (seminar/laboratory/project), recommended bibliographic sources, the correlation of the discipline's content with the expectations of representatives of the epistemic community, professional associations and representative employers in the field related to the programme, as well as the form of assessment. These syllabi are available and can be consulted by students, and the questionnaire dedicated to doctoral students and graduates also includes questions concerning knowledge of, usefulness of, and content of the syllabi. Information on the organisation of the Geography DSUD is disseminated to students through the Student Guide (<https://usv.ro/studenti/ghidul-studentului-usv/>) and the ŞDŞAI website (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/programe-de-pregatire-universitara-avansata/scoala-doctorala-de-stiinte-aplicate-si-ingineresti/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The Geography DSUD is developed and structured on the basis of the expected learning outcomes and offers graduates versatile competences. The curriculum of the doctoral study domain also includes the discipline of *Academic Ethics and Integrity*, as a compulsory discipline at doctoral school level. Academic writing and statistics are core components of the training of geography doctoral students. During the on-site visit, both graduates and doctoral students were familiar with the curriculum and the syllabi of the disciplines they had taken. In addition, employers were consulted regarding curricula and their expectations of a level-8 geography graduate.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.** Dissemination among all students, and especially employers, of relevant information relating to the curriculum and the content of the syllabi. The feedback provided by doctoral students, faculty members, graduates and employers is continuously monitored.

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion B.2. Alignment of the curriculum with the qualification

Standard S.B.2.1. Alignment with the qualification level and the intended competences

In the curriculum design and development process, the organisational component seeks to ensure the qualification level, as well as correlation with the envisaged occupations.

Indicator
I.P.B.2.1.2

The expected learning outcomes are correlated with the competences required by those occupations, according to the occupational standards and/or the European Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO).

✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The learning outcomes are correlated with the specific competences related to each discipline in the curriculum of the advanced university studies training programme of the Geography DSUD (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/programe-de-pregatire-universitara-avansata/scoala-doctorala-de-stiinte-aplicate-si-ingineresti/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The content and learning outcomes for the Geography DSUD are designed by correlating the curriculum with the targeted occupations, contributing to the training of specialists in accordance with level 8 of the National Qualifications Framework and, at the same time, with labour market requirements.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion B.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and evaluation

Standard S.B.3.1 Principles

The organisational component implements the principles of student-centred learning.

Indicator I.P.B.3.1.1	The organisational component ensures implementation of the student-centred learning in the curriculum and through the teaching strategies used in the learning and teaching activities and experiences.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The coordinator of the doctoral study domain monitors the implementation of the strategies and principles that ensure effective, student-centred learning. In this endeavour, he/she is supported by the doctoral supervisors within the field, who advise doctoral students on the educational situations that arise during the teaching and/or research process. CSUD develops its own methodologies for evaluating the teaching process, which result in recommendations for updating the methods and the teaching/research process applied by each faculty member. Each doctoral supervisor faculty member uses web resources or has teaching materials available in electronic format on the university's institutional educational platform implemented through Google services (Google Classroom), as well as a public professional email address (<https://fig.usv.ro/departament-geografie/>) which can be used by doctoral students for fast and efficient communication. Also, each doctoral supervisor has a scheduled time slot for consultations with doctoral students. (<https://orar.usv.ro/>). The university also provides access to the Microsoft 365 platform, which includes the Microsoft Teams collaboration hub. The curriculum of the advanced university studies training programme for the Geography DSUD also includes optional disciplines (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/programe-de-pregatire-universitara-avansata/scoala-doctorala-de-stiinte-aplicate-si-ingineresti/>) which allow doctoral students to choose a professional development path in order to acquire the professional and transversal competences required in the relevant occupations. Each discipline in the Geography DSUD curriculum has assessment methods that are detailed in the discipline's syllabus. No later than two years, and no sooner than one year, after the communication of the ARACIS Council Decision on the evaluation of the DSUD, the coordinator of the Geography study domain prepares an interim report sent to ARACIS, analysing how the recommendations made in the External Evaluation Report have been implemented in order to eliminate any deficiencies and ensure optimal functioning.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The Geography DSUD integrates modern teaching and assessment methods, adapted to various learning styles, together with research activities aimed at interdisciplinary training. Faculty members constantly update the content of the disciplines, in line with developments in students' specialisation field. The presentation of annual progress reports is a good opportunity to review annual professional activity and correct shortcomings in the learning and research plans of geography doctoral students. Supervising professors hold monthly meetings with geography students, take part with them in field research, and focus all activities on the improvement of those they supervise. Online working and training sessions are also organised when necessary.

- ✓ Aspects that constitute best practice examples.
- ✓ Recommendations. None.
- ✓ The indicator is: fulfilled.

Indicator I.P. B.3.1.2	The organisational component ensures opportunities for students to participate in academic mobility programmes organised in person and/or virtually.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

ȘDȘAI actively collaborates with various European universities through ERASMUS+ partnerships and the NEOLAIA consortium, thereby strengthening an international educational network. These partnerships take shape through extensive academic mobility programmes that include student and faculty exchanges, forming a solid basis for improving the academic experience and professional training (<https://relint.usv.ro/>, <https://neolaia.usv.ro/>). For doctoral students, these collaborations offer valuable opportunities to study and conduct research in diverse academic environments, to access new teaching methods, and to gain a better understanding of intercultural perspectives. Through the promotion of these international exchanges, ȘDȘAI aims not only to optimise the learning and teaching process, but also to strengthen intercultural dialogue, develop sustainable partnerships with prestigious universities, and create an educational environment that prepares doctoral students and teachers for the challenges of a globalised professional context. The ERASMUS and PN IV mobility programmes of Geography DSUD students are also presented on the page https://fig.usv.ro/cga/#field_research_applications_working_visits.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

Through the promotion of these international exchanges, the Geography DSUD aims to strengthen intercultural dialogue, develop sustainable partnerships with prestigious universities, and create an educational environment that prepares doctoral students and teachers for the challenges of a globalised professional context. From the on-site visit, we found that constatăm că, prin stagiile și vizitele de lucru externe, studenții doctoranzi geografi suferă sunt conectați la realitățile învățământului geografic european.

- ✓ Aspects that constitute best practice examples.
- ✓ Recommendations. None.
- ✓ The indicator is: fulfilled.

Standard S.B.3.2. Fairness

The organisational component provides fair opportunities for students.

Indicator I.P.B.3.2.1	The organisational component provides fair opportunities for students, in line with their potential and aspirations, taking into account the diversity of learning styles and abilities
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

USV, and implicitly IOSUD-USV and ȘDȘAI, ensure equitable opportunities for doctoral students through an integrated approach to the diversity of learning styles and individual abilities. Within the Geography DSUD of ȘDȘAI, varied teaching methods are adopted, such as experiential and active learning, case studies and interactive activities, while at the same time providing equal access to modern educational resources, including online platforms. Concrete policies and measures supporting inclusion are also implemented, such as support for doctoral students with special needs (<https://social.usv.ro/homepage/facilitati-pentru-persoane-cu-nevoi-speciale/>), scholarships for social cases – R53 Framework Regulation on the Granting of Scholarships and Other Forms of Material Support (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/regulamente-usv/#studenti>), and counselling services (<https://ccoc.usv.ro/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The Geography DSUD offers an unbiased educational environment, based on educational inclusion, a curriculum that is continuously adapted to students' needs, and the personalised development of competences.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.** The on-site visit found that geography doctoral students work within a favourable, friendly, almost family-like institutional environment. They know one another, collaborate very well, and frequently share their professional experience and expertise with one another. Supervising professors and guidance committees are always close to doctoral students, providing them with methodological and scientific support. Team-building events are frequently organised in Vatra Dornei, attended by doctoral students and their supervisors.

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion B.4. Accessibility and efficiency of the resources and support services, adequate for learning

Standard S.B.4.1. Access to resources and services

The organisational component provides access to adequate resources and support services, according to the needs of the students.

Indicator I.P.B.4.1.1	The organisational component provides students, including those with special educational needs/disabilities, with access to resources and services designed to support the learning process, adequate for the individual learning needs, the study domain, the study cycle, and the form of organisation of the study programme.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The university library plays an important role in supporting the teaching process and research activity within the Geography DSUD. The Library currently has five reading rooms, an internet room and a home loan room (<https://biblioteca.usv.ro/biblioteca-in-imagini/>), allowing students access at a schedule convenient for them (<https://biblioteca.usv.ro/acces-in-biblioteca/>). For Geography DSUD doctoral students, there is a specialised book collection corresponding to the disciplines in the curricula, as well as subscriptions to periodicals in line with the mission assumed by the Geography DSUD. There is also a sufficient number of subscriptions to Romanian and foreign publications and periodicals, both physical and online (through the Anelis+ programme), corresponding to the assumed mission. Students have access to the Elsevier ScienceDirect Freedom, SpringerLink, Wiley, Nature, OVID and IEEE journal collections, the CAB ebooks and de Gruyter e-book collections, and the SCOPUS, Web of Knowledge and CABI FSD international abstract databases, available through the implementation of the ANELIS Plus association project and co-financing provided by USV. Faculty members have prepared and published, in physical and/or electronic format on Google Classroom, textbooks for the disciplines in the curriculum, to which doctoral students have access. These resources are continuously updated by the discipline coordinators, in line with current specialist literature. The university has optimised access to teaching spaces (ramps, lifts) to allow easy access for people with disabilities (<https://social.usv.ro/homepage/facilitati-pentru-persoane-cu-nevoi-speciale/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

In-depth documentation and high-quality scientific research are encouraged and facilitated within the Geography DSUD through support services (the USV Library, subscriptions to publications and periodicals in the field, access to international scientific databases), in addition to the activity of the doctoral student guidance committees. Faculty members have, or are in the process of setting up, personal web pages on which they post educational resources accessible to doctoral students. Faculty members on guidance committees play an increasing role in training geography specialists. All doctoral students are equitably supported with financial resources for research activities and for presenting research results at various scientific events.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion B.5. Learning outcomes

Standard S.B.5.1. Definition and evaluation

Learning outcomes are adequately defined and evaluated.

Indicator I.P.B.5.1.1	Learning outcomes are adequately described, and they support understanding of the students' and teachers' expectations regarding the content of the subject matters in the curriculum.
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✓ Presentation of the state of facts

Learning outcomes are a component of the curriculum and reflect the faculty member's expectations for each discipline in the Geography DSUD curriculum regarding the activity and preparation of doctoral students (https://usv.ro/academic/csud/_doctorat-2/programe-de-pregatire-universitara-avansata/scoala-doctorala-de-stiinte-aplicate-si-ingineresti/). The purpose of the learning outcomes is to contribute to the development of the competences necessary for practising the professions within the Geography doctoral study domain, in line with current labour market requirements. These are integrated into the syllabi and are correlated both with the specific objectives of each discipline and with the assessment criteria applied. For each discipline in the curriculum, the learning outcomes are clearly and measurably formulated and closely linked to the general objectives of the study programme. These outcomes are communicated to doctoral students from the beginning of the semester, in order to give them a clear understanding of the competences they are to acquire and of how these will be evaluated. The syllabi follow a unified format, and teaching staff benefit from support through continuing education programs for drafting and updating learning outcomes. There is also a direct correlation between these outcomes and the teaching and assessment methods used, and their quality is periodically monitored by the doctoral school council.

✓ Analysis of the state of facts

Learning outcomes are correlated with the professional and transversal competences of the Geography DSUD, in full agreement with the structure of the curriculum and the syllabi. The training provided within the Geography DSUD offers varied opportunities for professional integration in research and education, or in various other organisations whose activity relates to the socio-geosystem or parts thereof. Within the Geography DSUD, the outcomes are aligned with the specific nature of the field of study and adapted to current professional requirements. The level of correlation between the competences targeted by the doctoral training programme and the learning outcomes is constantly monitored. Students are continuously supported in successfully completing the proposed doctoral university study programme.

✓ Aspects that constitute best practice examples.

✓ Recommendations. None.

✓ The indicator is: fulfilled.

Indicator I.P.B.5.1.2	Achievement of the learning outcomes is checked in ongoing examinations and study completion exams.
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✓ Presentation of the state of facts

The examination and grading of doctoral students is carried out in accordance with the university's regulation, R12 Framework Regulation on Student Assessment (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/regulamente-usv/#studenti>). Examinations are scheduled by doctoral students in collaboration with the faculty member. The schedule is centralised at ȘDȘAI and CSUD level. The CSUD secretariat holds the examination schedule and informs all interested parties of it. The level of learning outcomes is determined through assessments that take place during the semester and in the examination session. Both the learning

outcomes and the documents governing the educational and examination process are periodically updated to correspond to internal requirements and national standards.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The assessment of learning outcomes within the Geography DSUD is carried out on an ongoing basis, during examination sessions, during the presentation of progress reports and of scientific research reports, and through compliance with the requirements for the presentation of the doctoral thesis set out in IOSUD's internal regulations and in the legislation in force.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** Creation, on the CSUD/\$DŞAI website, of a special section dedicated to the assessment process: examination scheduling, scheduling of progress and scientific reports, and public defences of doctoral theses.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion B.7. Procedures and practices regarding the admission competition, the journey, recognition and equivalence of studies, and result certification

Standard S.B.7.1. Admission

The admission procedures and principles ensure access to higher education.

Indicator
I.P.B.7.1.1

The organisational component applies the admission procedures.

✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The admission of candidates to the Geography DSUD is carried out in accordance with R10 – Regulation on the Organisation and Conduct of Admission Examinations, approved by the Council for Doctoral University Studies and by the USV Senate, based on the framework methodology drawn up annually by the relevant ministry. Each year, the Geography DSUD is allocated, for admission, one scholarship place, two budgeted places without a scholarship, 3 fee-paying places, and one place for Romanians everywhere) (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/admitere-doctorat/>). When establishing the maximum number of doctoral students that can be enrolled, account was taken of the number of admission places allocated per category, as well as of the enrolment figures over the last 5 years in the Geography field of study.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The admission policy of IOSUD-USV and specifically of the Geography DSUD is aligned with the national framework methodology and with USV regulations, and is clear, predictable, transparent and communicated publicly in a timely manner on the faculty/university website and through the media. To increase the attractiveness of the field, those involved have strengthened partnerships with the pre-university environment and have intensively promoted the doctoral study programme among graduates of master's study programmes.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** Allocation of two scholarship places for the Geography doctoral field, given that the specific nature of the Geography doctoral field at USV is strongly anchored in the theme of current climate and environmental change. This theme is both topical and forward-looking, and allocating two scholarship places would create the conditions for strengthening this field and increasing its attractiveness. There is potential for supervision in this research direction and potential for achieving remarkable results in specialised research.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Indicator
I.P.B.7.1.2

Admission in higher education study programmes complies with the principles of fairness and equal opportunities, and with the establishing of support measures to ensure access of vulnerable groups at social and educational risk, including candidates with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The admission regulation and its own methodology contain provisions concerning compliance with the principles of equity and equal opportunities. There are separate admission places allocated to

candidates coming from backgrounds with social and educational risk (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/admitere-doctorat/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

By implementing clear support measures for candidates in special situations, IOSUD-USV and, respectively, the Geography DSUD aim to support equity and equal access to higher education. Candidates with financial or social vulnerabilities are supported logistically and materially by CSUD/ŞDŞAI/the Geography study domain.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Standard S.B.7.2. Academic journey of students	
The organisational component carries out actions supporting the students' academic journey.	
Indicator I.P.B.7.2.1	The organisational component applies the regulations concerning the students' professional activity.

✓ **Presentation the state of facts**

To facilitate and regulate the professional activity of doctoral students, R5 – Framework Regulation on Students' Professional Activity was drawn up; Annex 2 approved by Senate Decision 193/19.12.2024 (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/regulamente-usv/#studenti>). Within the Geography DSUD, a coherent framework for carrying out the educational process is ensured by complying with the provisions of the Regulation on Students' Professional Activity, and the regulations concerning students' professional activity are applied. Study contracts are not modified during the academic year.

✓ **Analysis the state of facts**

Each doctoral student enrolled in the doctoral university study programme signs a university study contract with USV, in accordance with the provisions of the regulations on the organisation and conduct of study programmes and in compliance with the legislation in force. This is a document that guides both the student and the doctoral supervisor. Increased attention is paid to monitoring the academic and professional path of doctoral students through the continuous development of feedback mechanisms, through which they report academic and administrative difficulties they encounter at an early stage.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion B.8. Internationalisation process

Standard S.B.8.1. Internationalisation	
Improving the quality of education and research through internationalisation actions.	
Indicator I.P.B.8.1.1	The organisational component carries out international cooperation actions supporting mobility of the members of its own community and collaboration in academic and research activities.

✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

ŞDŞAI has concluded partnerships with various European universities through the ERASMUS+ programme, the NEOLAI consortium, and other relevant international institutions, thereby strengthening an international educational network. Thus, exchanges of doctoral students and faculty members facilitate both the diversification of educational experiences and the strengthening of research and professional training activities. For doctoral students, these collaborations offer valuable opportunities to study in diverse academic environments, to access new teaching methods, and to gain a better understanding of intercultural perspectives. At the same time, faculty members benefit from opportunities for continuous professional development, participating in international teaching activities, workshops and research projects, thereby contributing to improving the quality of the educational process and enriching individual

expertise. The organisation of study mobility for outgoing students within the *Lifelong Learning* programme, ERASMUS section, is carried out in accordance with the operational procedures *Selection of students undertaking mobility under the Erasmus+ programme*, PO-SRIAE-01 ([Procedure – Selection of students undertaking mobility under the ERASMUS+ programme](#)) and *Organisation and conduct of Erasmus+ mobility undertaken by outgoing Erasmus+ students*, PO-SRIAE-02 ([Procedure – Organisation and conduct of ERASMUS+ mobility undertaken by outgoing students](#)). Through the promotion of these international exchanges, ȘDȘAI aims to optimise the learning and teaching process and to strengthen intercultural dialogue, develop sustainable partnerships with prestigious universities, and create an educational environment that prepares students and faculty members for the challenges of a globalised professional context. The number of contracts concluded by USV under ERASMUS+ for the field of Earth Sciences is 29, with 14 partner countries.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

USV's clear institutional internationalisation strategy facilitates academic mobility among students and faculty members. USV is present in international networks and supports mobility for all categories of members of the academic community. Intensifying the promotion of international mobility among doctoral students is an institutional priority. Increasing the number of international agreements for the mobility of doctoral students and faculty members is another priority.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** Increasing the number of doctoral students participating in international training programmes and mini-internships.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion B.9. Scientific research results

Standard S.B.9.1 Scientific research in the education process

Scientific research activities support students in achieving the learning outcomes.

Indicator I.P.B.9.1.1	Learning based on scientific investigation and research results support and are capitalised upon in achieving the learning outcomes envisaged through the study programme.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

Doctoral theses addressing research topics specific to the evaluated study programme are archived in electronic format at the Doctoral Studies secretariat, and a printed copy of the thesis is held in the university library. Doctoral completion theses address topics with a high degree of originality, in line with the research directions of the GeA Research Centre within the Department of Geography (https://fig.usv.ro/cga/#experience_expertise_connections). Within the Geography DSUD, the educational process is strengthened through the integration of learning based on scientific research, the results of which directly contribute to the development of specific competences. Doctoral students are actively involved in research activities through the preparation of doctoral theses, which address current topics in the field of Geography, with applicability to real-world situations (https://fig.usv.ro/cga/#field_research_applications_working_visits). These scientific works offer valuable opportunities to deepen knowledge and develop scientific investigation skills.

Doctoral students benefit from multiple opportunities to participate in conferences organised by USV or in partnership with it, which facilitates their access to recent research results and interdisciplinary perspectives. The CVs of Geography doctoral students and graduates can be viewed at https://fig.usv.ro/cga/#human_resources. At the same time, USV's and CSUD's leadership actively encourage and support their participation in scientific events organised by other higher education institutions in the country and abroad, contributing to broadening academic horizons and developing scientific communication skills. The conferences, symposia and professional competitions attended by geography doctoral students, as well as the list of scientific works produced by doctoral students, can be found on the GeA page.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The research activity of the Geography DSUD, reported annually, is supported by a clear and well-organised institutional framework, in accordance with USV's research strategy. Increasing the visibility of doctoral students' research activities by promoting them through various institutional and social media channels and through several dedicated conferences are directions of action already being implemented (<https://fig.usv.ro/conferinta-stiintifica-internationala-atmosfera-si-hidrosfera-2024/>, <https://fig.usv.ro/simpozionul-international-calitatea-mediului-si-utilizarea-terenurilor/>, <https://fig.usv.ro/simpozionul-international-al-studentilor-geografii/>, <https://fig.usv.ro/gis-aplicat-in-climatologie/>).

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** Implementation, on the page of the Geography doctoral study domain within ȘDȘAI/CSUD, of the scientific/professional profile of each member of the Geography doctoral field – supervisors, graduates, doctoral students.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Standard S.B.9.2. Scientific research pertaining to the objectives of the study programme

The organisational component carries out scientific research activities aligned with the objectives of the evaluated study programme.

Indicator I.P.B.9.2.1	The results of scientific research are visible at national and international level in that scientific domain, and capitalised upon in an adequate manner.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

Scientific research is one of the fundamental missions set out in the University Charter. The main directions of fundamental and applied scientific research carried out within the Geography DSUD are integrated into the strategic plans of IOSUD and of the University. The research activity carried out by each doctoral supervisor faculty member is reflected both in scientific publications appearing in high-impact-factor journals and in the number of research contracts carried out (<https://fig.usv.ro/departament-geografie/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The research and creative activity of faculty members and doctoral students within the Geography DSUD is supported and leveraged through a wide range of editorial and scientific initiatives. This is aligned with USV's research strategy. Including students in future collaborative or research projects and increasing the visibility of their scientific activity (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/programe-de-pregatire-universitara-avansata/scoala-doctorala-de-stiinte-aplicate-si-ingineresti/>).

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** Increasing the number of scientific articles published by doctoral supervisors and doctoral students in prestigious journals ranked in quartiles Q4-Q1.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

DOMAIN C. Quality management

Criterion C.1. Quality assurance strategies and procedures, including in the field of academic ethics and conduct, which involve students, employers and other stakeholders and are applied in a consistent, transparent manner

Standard S.C.1.1. Application

Adequately implemented strategic directions, actions, and procedures

Indicator I.P.C.1.1.1	The organisational component consistently carries out actions and applies procedures, proving their impact on improving the quality of education at the level of the study programme
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The functionality of the education quality assurance structures is a constant concern both for the University's leadership and for IOSUD. The institutional quality assurance structure is organised in accordance with legal provisions and operates continuously, in line with the Quality Code (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/codul-calitatii/>), the Quality Policy and Authority Statement, the regulations (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/regulamente-usv/>) and the quality procedures (<https://ceac.usv.ro/documente-usv/proceduri/>). At CSUD level, an annual Internal Quality Evaluation Report is drawn up, which is included in the Rector's Report (<https://usv.ro/informatii-publice/rapoarte-anuale/rapoarte-de-activitate/>), which contributes to substantiating strategic and operational decisions. IOSUD has its own quality policy, supported by a series of strategies applied at IOSUD level, in conjunction with the CEAC-USV operational plan (<https://ceac.usv.ro/ceac/plan-operational-ceac-usv/>) and pursue the promotion of a quality culture and the active involvement of all members of the academic community, faculty members, doctoral supervisors, researchers and students. Within this framework: i) the quality strategy at IOSUD level was defined, ii) quality objectives, correlated with the institutional mission, were established, iii) the teaching and research activity plan was drawn up, and iv) the curriculum corresponding to the field was analysed and adapted in line with current labour market requirements and national quality standards.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

USV and IOSUD-USV have implemented and maintain a coherent quality assurance system, in accordance with European standards. The on-site visit found that USV has documented organisational structures, policies, strategies and procedures for ensuring the quality of teaching, learning, research and student services processes. The system promotes a quality culture based on values, norms and practices that support the initiation, approval, evaluation and continuous monitoring of academic and research processes, oriented towards continuous improvement.

- ✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**
- ✓ **Recommendations.** None.
- ✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Standard S.C.1.2. Stakeholder engagement

The HEI proves that it engages the stakeholders who have relevant activity in applying the procedures.

Indicator I.P.C.1.2.1	The opinions of the members of its own community and of other stakeholders are taken into account in the procedure implementation process.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

Members of the academic community and stakeholders are informed by email or online announcement about the implementation of procedures, as well as about the fact that documents of public interest are under debate and for which proposals for amendment/updating may be submitted.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

Quality assurance procedures are applied uniformly across all USV structures, involving both the academic community and external stakeholders. Discussions held on site revealed that employers and graduates are consistently involved in the consultation processes concerning the quality of the Geography doctoral field of study. This process is continuously evolving.

- ✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**
- ✓ **Recommendations.** None.
- ✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion C.2. Functionality of education quality assurance structures, including in the field of academic ethics and conduct, according to the law

Standard S.C.2.2. Operation

Quality assurance and academic ethics and conduct organisational structures adequately perform their specific role and functions.

Indicator I.P.C.2.2.2.	The academic ethics commission operates based on the regulation approved by the University Senate, and performs actions that are compliant with the law, independently from any other structure or person in the higher education institution.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The activity of the University Ethics Committee is regulated by the University Charter (No. 32170/18.11.2004), through the regulation on the organisation and functioning of this committee (R04 – adopted at the USV Senate meeting of 20.11.2025), and it acts independently of any other structure or person within USV, in accordance with the academic organisational chart. The annual reports of the University Ethics Committee (CEU) are published on the university's website (<https://usv.ro/academic/integritate-academica/comisia-etica/rapoarte-anuale/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The quality assurance structures act in accordance with institutional regulations. Within the Geography DSUD, the domain coordinator plays a central role in monitoring the quality of the activities carried out and is supported by the institutional infrastructure. Collaboration between CEU and the field coordinator is genuine and constant.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion C.3. Procedures for the initiation, monitoring and periodic review of the study programmes and domains and of the performed activities, involving students, employers and other stakeholders

Standard S.C.3.1. Procedures and implementation of procedures The HEI has procedures for initiating, monitoring, and periodically reviewing the study programmes and domains and the performed activities, and applies them systematically.	
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Indicator I.P.C.3.1.1	The organisational component consistently applies the procedures, and proves their impact on quality assurance.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The initiation, monitoring and periodic review of study programmes and fields is regulated through Procedure PO-01 for the Drafting, Revision and Approval of Curricula (approved at the Administrative Board meeting of 09.09.2025) and R-40 – the Framework Regulation on the Initiation, Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Evaluation of Study Programmes (approved at the Senate meeting of 17.09.2025).

The provisions of these documents are applied consistently when a new study programme is initiated, as well as at authorisation and periodic evaluation. At the periodic evaluation of the Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, specifically the Geography DSUD, which took place in 2021, the ARACIS Council Decision of 25.11.2021 issued the rating *Maintaining of Accreditation*.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The Geography doctoral study domain is organised and monitored in accordance with USV, IOSUD and ŞDŞAI institutional regulations and internal procedures. The Geography doctoral study domain within ŞDŞAI has a designated domain coordinator. This person continuously oversees the application of, and compliance with, the procedures and regulations approved by USV's governing structures by all those involved.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Indicator I.P.C.3.1.2	Members of its own community and other stakeholders are involved in the procedure implementation process.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

USV and CSUD ensure a participatory and transparent process in the implementation of quality assurance procedures (<https://ceac.usv.ro/ceac/rapoarte-anuale-asupra-calitatii/>), actively involving doctoral students, teaching staff, administrative staff, employers and other stakeholders. This approach is

part of the university strategy for continuous improvement of the quality of education and development of professional skills of doctoral students.

Members of the academic community participate in the implementation of quality procedures through: i) periodic evaluation of study programs, ii) advising doctoral students through tutoring, providing academic and professional support throughout their studies. *Doctoral students* are an essential part of the decision-making process and of improving the quality of education through: i) representatives in the university management structures, CSUD and the doctoral school council (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/structura/>), ii) evaluation of teaching staff and courses, iii) participation in the review of study programs, offering suggestions for adapting them to the needs of the labor market. CSUD maintains close relations with *employers* and other organisations, in order to adapt the educational offer to labour market requirements, through: i) periodic consultations with partners to update the curriculum – an aspect that emerged from discussions with employers during the on-site visit, ii) facilitating research placements for doctoral students, iii) organising career fairs and workshops to connect doctoral students with the labour market (<https://usv.ro/targul-locurilor-de-practica-internship-si-voluntariat-pentru-studenti-2/>, <https://ccisv.ro/content/targ-de-joburi-editia-de-toamna-la-universitatea-stefan-cel-mare-din-suceava/>, <https://fim.usv.ro/targul-de-carriere-13-mai-2022/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The team that prepared the internal evaluation report of the Geography doctoral study domain, as well as the members of ȘDȘAI, are directly involved in applying the procedures.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion C.4. Procedures for the periodic evaluation of the quality of the activities of teaching staff, auxiliary teaching staff, and administrative staff

Standard S.C.4.1. Procedures

Applying the methodologies and procedures contributes to improving the quality of the staff's activities.

Indicator I.P.C.4.1.1	The organisational component analyses the results of the students' biannual evaluation of teachers.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

CSUD members manage the process of evaluating faculty members by doctoral students, applying the provisions of R42, the Regulation on the Evaluation of Teaching Staff Performance (approved at the Senate meeting of 26.04.2018), and of PO-DAC-95, the Procedure on the Evaluation of Faculty Members by Students (approved at the Senate meeting of 08.05.2025), and the results of this process are communicated to faculty members/doctoral supervisors at semester meetings. At institutional level, there is a regulation for evaluating the performance of auxiliary teaching and non-teaching staff (PO-SRU-04; PROCEDURE for the Annual Individual Professional Performance Evaluation of auxiliary teaching and administrative staff, approved at the Administrative Board meeting of 19.12.2023), and the results of the evaluations are communicated to those evaluated.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

Performance evaluation is carried out periodically, through various mechanisms (self-evaluation, peer evaluation, student evaluation, managerial evaluation), and the feedback leads to measures for improving the activity of those evaluated.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** Although the results of student evaluations of faculty members are available online in PDF format, we recommend posting the results of annual faculty evaluations (students, colleagues, ȘDȘAI director, CSUD...) on the ȘDȘAI website for all domains, including GEOGRAPHY. We recommend full transparency of the results of the evaluations carried out to date.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion C.5. Systematically updated databases on internal quality assurance

Standard S.C.5.1. Databases

The HEI uses databases to support internal quality assurance activities.

Indicator	The organisational component systematically collects and analyses data required for the internal quality assurance process.
I.P.C.5.1.1	

✓ Presentation of the state of facts

USV has an integrated IT system through which essential data for institutional management is periodically collected. This data is used both for reporting to the Ministry of Education and for evaluating the university's overall development, based on relevant indicators and analyses carried out at regular intervals.

The official CEAC-USV website (<https://ceac.usv.ro/>) is continuously updated and is an essential resource for: i) monitoring the quality of educational and administrative processes, ii) preparing self-evaluation reports for study programmes, and iii) documenting quality legislation and policies, through access to institutional platforms and databases.

Through electronic discussion lists, USV provides a virtual space dedicated to public debates on academic and quality issues. Newly proposed or revised curricula are put up for debate by communicating them, by email, to doctoral supervisor faculty members and doctoral students on the doctoral school council (<https://ceac.usv.ro/dezbatare-publica/planuri-de-invatamant-anuale/planuri-de-invatamant-2025/>). Important information is also communicated to doctoral students centrally through the email address allstud@usv.ro, ensuring efficient and transparent communication. Within CEAC-USV, CCOC (<https://ccoc.usv.ro/>) and the Rectorate, data on the state of institutional quality and student life is constantly collected, processed and analysed, with the aim of supporting strategic decision-making and improving campus conditions. At CSUD level, the quality evaluation reports produced by CEAC USV are presented annually on the website (<https://ceac.usv.ro/ceac/rapoarte-anuale-asupra-calitatii/>). Discussion forums and surveys on doctoral students' and faculty members' perceptions of the quality of the educational process, research activity and student social life are permanently active at CSUD level. These mechanisms contribute to strengthening an institutional culture centred on quality and participatory involvement.

✓ Analysis of the state of facts

The integrated digital system implemented by USV for managing educational, administrative and research processes considerably supports the monitoring and improvement of quality. The IT infrastructure is developing and will allow an in-depth analysis of academic performance and the impact of educational strategies.

✓ Aspects that constitute best practice examples.

✓ Recommendations. None.

✓ The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion C.6. Transparency of information of public interest, including those regarding the study programmes and domains offered, and transparency regarding the related certificates, diplomas and qualifications

Standard S.C.6.1. Transparency

The organisational component ensures transparency of information, as required by the law.

Indicator	The organisational component ensures publication and access to information of public interest regarding the evaluated study programme.
I.P.C.6.1.1	

✓ Presentation of the state of facts

Essential information about the evaluated doctoral study programmes, including the curriculum, syllabi, competences associated with the qualification, and the timetable of teaching activities, is available online, with public access, on the USV website, in the CSUD, Doctoral Studies section (<https://usv.ro/academic/csud/doctorat-2/>). Through the university's institutional website, correlated with the CSUD page, a varied range of up-to-date information of public interest is provided, useful both for current doctoral students and for external candidates or beneficiaries. This information includes: i) the organisation of IOSUD into two Doctoral Schools: the Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied Sciences

and the Doctoral School of Human and Social Sciences, ii) the accredited doctoral study domains, iii) the structure of the academic year and the timetable, iv) services and facilities for doctoral students, v) professional development and academic mobility opportunities, etc. CSUD constantly monitors the updating, accuracy and validation of information, in accordance with national regulations and international best practices. CSUD carries out promotional campaigns for doctoral study domains, in which doctoral students are also involved. These campaigns are public and visible to the entire community, addressing both students and the general public.

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

CSUD and ȘDȘAI ensure transparent access to relevant information regarding the field of study, facilities and academic activities through their official websites. Information on the CSUD and ȘDȘAI websites is periodically updated and standardised.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** Providing more detailed information on the CSUD/ȘDȘAI website for prospective candidates/interested parties, including in bilingual format.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Indicator I.P.C.6.1.2	The organisational component ensures transparent decision-making processes.
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✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The transparency of decision-making processes is ensured through the university's website, where all decisions of the Administrative Board and all decisions of the USV Senate are published (<https://usv.ro/despre-noi/conducere/hotararile-consiliului-de-administratie-usv/>, <https://usv.ro/despre-noi/conducere/senatul-usv/hotararile-senatului-usv/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

Decisions are communicated transparently both at CSUD level and at ȘDȘAI level, through website postings and email communication.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

Criterion C.8. Participation in external evaluation processes, according to the law

Standard S.C.8.1. Compliance with the external evaluation obligation The HEI undergoes external quality evaluation as required by the law.	
Indicator I.P.C.8.1.1	The organisational component carries out the procedures pertaining to the external quality evaluation process, aiming to organise the evaluated study programme as provided by the law.

✓ **Presentation of the state of facts**

The Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, which includes the Geography doctoral study domain, full-time/reduced-frequency study, obtained, at the last periodic evaluation in 2021, Maintaining Accreditation, approved by the ARACIS Council at its meeting of 16.12.2021. The ARACIS evaluation team that carried out the evaluation progress from 2024 found that all 11 recommendations of the ARACIS panel from the previous evaluation had been implemented (<https://www.aracis.ro/dsud/geografie-iosud103/>).

✓ **Analysis of the state of facts**

The external evaluation process of IOSUD and the Geography DSUD is organised periodically, in accordance with the legal framework, and is approved by USV's governing structures.

✓ **Aspects that constitute best practice examples.**

✓ **Recommendations.** None.

✓ **The indicator is: fulfilled.**

IV. SWOT Analysis

Strengths: ✓ The teaching process is student-centred, being constantly adapted to student needs. ✓ The teaching and research material base is modern, enabling research to be carried out in the evaluated field. ✓ Opportunities are provided for deepening knowledge through scientific activities: conferences, scholarships and mobility programmes, and integration into laboratories and the GeA Research Centre. ✓ The international relations developed by the Geography DSUD support collaboration in education and research. ✓ The Geography study domain has high-performance research infrastructure, with national and international visibility, also accessible to students. ✓ Research activity is stimulated through differentiated pay, correlation of teaching load with scientific performance, and financial support for publication and participation in scientific events. ✓ CSUD promotes an institutional culture of quality in the training, research and professional development process. ✓ There are active collaborations with institutions and partners in the environmental field, supporting doctoral students' research activities.	INTERNAL FACTORS ➡	Weaknesses: ✓ The level of salary motivation remains low, which may affect the retention and attraction of highly qualified specialists. ✓ Funding is insufficient for the continuous maintenance and modernisation of the material base required for the educational process and research activities. ✓ Collaboration with the local and national business environment is developing, but is not leveraged to its full potential, particularly with regard to integrating doctoral students into applied research. ✓ The high workload of academic staff, caused by the overlap of teaching, research and administrative activities, affects the efficiency and quality of the educational process.
		SWOT Analysis
Opportunities: ✓ A modernised university campus, equipped with all the facilities needed for the educational and research process, undergoing continuous expansion and modernisation. ✓ Constant and significant institutional support from the university's leadership for the development of the Geography field.	EXTERNAL FACTORS ➡	Threats: ✓ The regional demographic decline, with a direct impact on the potential number of candidates for the evaluated study domain. ✓ Decreasing interest among master's graduates in continuing on to doctoral studies. ✓ Insufficient public support for promoting academic values and motivating

✓ A well-trained teaching staff, with academic and practical experience, in Geography capable of meeting the current needs of education in the field ✓ Modernisation of the teaching and research infrastructure, enabling the implementation of innovative teaching methods and the expansion of practical training capacity. ✓ Access to external funding sources, through research projects, institutional development and continuing professional training. ✓ Leveraging any opportunity to attract funds for the Geography DSUD: projects, donations, sponsorships, etc.		young people in developing an intellectual career. ✓ The migration of young faculty members to sectors of activity in the country and abroad that offer more attractive salary packages and promotion conditions. ✓ Difficulties in the applied leveraging of scientific research results, particularly with regard to transferring research results to the socio-economic environment. ✓ Both internal and external human resources and candidate pools are in continuous decline, especially under the new conditions related to the reduction/elimination of the doctoral supplement.
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V. Extent to which the standards and performance indicators are fulfilled, and recommendations

No.	Performance indicator	Extent to which it was fulfilled (F/PF/UF)	Recommendations
1	I.P.A.1.1.1 For delivering the study programme/domain, the HEI has adequate organisational components and an adequate management system, which operate based on methodologies, regulations and procedures that are periodically reviewed as required by law.	F	
2	I.P.A.1.2.1 The opinions of the faculty and department members, of the subsidiary or extension and of other stakeholders are considered in the process of adopting and revising methodologies, regulations and implementation procedures.	F	
3	I.P.A.2.1.1 The HEI legally owns venues for the related education, research and administrative processes, as well as for services for students, doctoral students and trainees, thus providing an enabling environment for living and studying, including for disabled persons. Optimal venues are also provided for activities of the staff. Such venues are adequately equipped.	F	<i>During the on-site visit, the geography doctoral students requested that USV provide a furnished space with an internet connection where doctoral students could work permanently and without restriction on their teaching and research projects.</i>

4	I.P.A.2.2.1 The movable and immovable assets are properly maintained to ensure optimal conditions for studying, living and research, as well as for work.	F	
5	I.P.A.3.1.1 The human resources of the organisational component are suitable to perform the activities pertaining to the evaluated study programme/domain. The teaching staff has the required qualifications and professional competences to teach the subject matters assigned to them in the job list.	F	<i>The evaluation panel recommends that those responsible for the Geography doctoral study domain the leadership of ȘDȘAI and of CSUD take steps to encourage/support 1-2 geographers from Suceava in obtaining their habilitation within the next 2-4 years. This is a difficult process, but the Suceava geography school has the capacity to complete it. Likewise, affiliating doctoral supervisors from other university and research structures may be a way of strengthening the supervisory team.</i>
6	Indicator I.P.A.3.1.2 The HEI ensures professional and personal development for its staff.	F	
7	I.P.A.3.2.1 Recruitment procedures comply with the provisions of the law, and are established and carried out transparently.	F	<i>A priority for the Geography DSUD should be the habilitation, within the next 2-4 years, of faculty members from the Department of Geography, and the attraction of high-performing external human resources, within the context of a transparent and competitive recruitment process.</i>
8	I.P.A.4.1.1 The organisational component uses IT tools in its own procedures, to improve access and provide good quality services for the members of its own community and the indirect beneficiaries of education.	F	
9	I.P.B.1.1.1 The study programme is developed and structured according to the expected learning outcomes, and organised based on transferable study credits. It includes all learning, teaching, practical training, research and evaluation experiences, which, together, lead to a higher education qualification.	F	
10	I.P.B.2.1.2 The expected learning outcomes are correlated with the competences required by those occupations, according to the occupational standards and/or the European Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO).	F	

11	I.P.B.3.1.1 The organisational component ensures implementation of the student-centred learning in the curriculum and through the teaching strategies used in the learning and teaching activities and experiences.	F	
12	I.P.B.3.1.2 The organisational component ensures opportunities for students to participate in academic mobility programmes organised in person and/or virtually.	F	
13	I.P.B.3.2.1 The organisational component provides fair opportunities for students, in line with their potential and aspirations, taking into account the diversity of learning styles and abilities.	F	
14	I.P.B.4.1.1 The organisational component provides students, including those with special educational needs/disabilities, with access to resources and services designed to support the learning process, adequate for the individual learning needs, the study domain, the study cycle, and the form of organisation of the study programme.	F	
15	I.P.B.5.1.1 Learning outcomes are adequately described, and they support understanding of the students' and teachers' expectations regarding the content of the subject matters in the curriculum.	F	
16	I.P.B.5.1.2 Achievement of the learning outcomes is checked in ongoing examinations and study completion exams.	F	<i>Creation, on the CSUD/ŞDŞAI website, of a special section dedicated to the assessment process: examination scheduling, scheduling of progress and scientific reports, and public defences of doctoral theses.</i>
17	I.P.B.7.1.1 The organisational component applies the admission procedures.	F	<i>Allocation of two scholarship places for the Geography doctoral field, given that the specific nature of the Geography doctoral study domain at USV is strongly anchored in the theme of current climate and environmental change. This theme is both topical and forward-looking, and allocating two scholarship places would create the conditions for strengthening this study domain and increasing its attractiveness. There is potential for supervision in this research direction and potential for achieving remarkable results in specialised research.</i>
18	I.P.B.7.1.2 Admission in higher education study programmes complies with the principles of fairness and equal opportunities, and with the establishing of support measures to ensure access of	F	

	vulnerable groups at social and educational risk, including candidates with special educational needs and/or disabilities.		
19	I.P.B.7.2.1 The organisational component applies the regulations concerning the students' professional activity.	F	
20	I.P.B.8.1.1 The organisational component carries out international cooperation actions supporting mobility of the members of its own community and collaboration in academic and research activities.	F	<i>Increasing the number of doctoral students participating in international training programs and mini-internships.</i>
21	I.P.B.9.1.1 Learning based on scientific investigation and research results support and are capitalised upon in achieving the learning outcomes envisaged through the study programme.	F	<i>Implementation, on the page of the Geography doctoral study domain within ȘDȘAI/CSUD, of the scientific/professional profile of each member of the Geography doctoral study domain – supervisors, graduates, doctoral students.</i>
22	I.P.B.9.2.1 The results of scientific research are visible at national and international level in that scientific domain, and capitalised upon in an adequate manner.	F	<i>Increasing the number of scientific articles published by doctoral supervisors and doctoral students in prestigious journals ranked in quartiles Q4-Q1.</i>
23	I.P.C.1.1.1 The organisational component consistently carries out actions and applies procedures, proving their impact on improving the quality of education at the level of the study programme	F	
24	I.P.C.1.2.1 The opinions of the members of its own community and of other stakeholders are taken into account in the procedure implementation process.	F	
25	I.P.C.2.2.2. The academic ethics commission operates based on the regulation approved by the University Senate, and performs actions that are compliant with the law, independently from any other structure or person in the higher education institution.	F	
26	I.P.C.3.1.1 The organisational component consistently applies the procedures, and proves their impact on quality assurance.	F	
27	I.P.C.3.1.2 Members of its own community and other stakeholders are involved in the procedure implementation process.	F	
28	I.P.C.4.1.1 The organisational component analyses the results of the students' biannual evaluation of teachers.	F	<i>Although the results of student evaluations of faculty members are available online in PDF format, we recommend posting the results of annual faculty evaluations (students, colleagues, ȘDȘAI director, CSUD...) on the ȘDȘAI website for all fields, including the Geography field. We</i>

			<i>recommend full transparency of the evaluation results obtained to date.</i>
29	I.P.C.5.1.1 The organisational component systematically collects and analyses data required for the internal quality assurance process.	F	
30	I.P.C.6.1.1 The organisational component ensures publication and access to information of public interest regarding the evaluated study programme.	F	<i>Providing more detailed information on the CSUD/ŞDŞAI website for prospective candidates/interested parties, including in bilingual format.</i>
31	I.P.C.6.1.2 The organisational component ensures transparent decision-making processes.	F	
32	I.P.C.8.1.1 The organisational component carries out the procedures pertaining to the external quality evaluation process, aiming to organise the evaluated study programme as provided by the law.	F	

Summary Table of Performance Indicators – Degree of Fulfillment

Evaluation Domain	Number of Performance Indicators		
	Fulfilled	Partially fulfilled	Unfulfilled
Domain A. Institutional capacity	8		
Domain B. Educational efficacy	14		
Domain C. Quality management	10		
Total	32		

Other, general recommendations that were not given within the analysis of a specific performance indicator can be presented here.

Sum up the number of analysed performance indicators, and specify how many were assessed as fulfilled, partially fulfilled, and unfulfilled, if any.

VI. Conclusions

A number of important aspects noted during the evaluation are reiterated here, and general conclusions are made about the quality of education delivered within the evaluated doctoral study domain.

Propose and substantiate a decision.

Following the completion of the accreditation/maintaining accreditation procedure, the decision of the evaluation panel shall be one of the following:*

The Geography doctoral study domain at the „Ştefan cel Mare” University of Suceava is a mature one. It has a teaching staff with remarkable results in geographic research. The material facilities used by supervisors and students in geographic research are numerous and modern. The theses produced are of the highest academic standard. All theses defended since the last evaluation have been validated by

* When the external quality evaluation for accreditation is performed with undergoing the procedure for obtaining a provisional authorisation to operate.

CNATDCU (13 theses). On average, 2-3 doctoral theses are defended annually in the field of geography. The dropout rate of doctoral students in the Geography field is well below 30%. The level of internationalisation of activities carried out in teaching, research and the presentation of research results is high. USV, CSUD and ȘDȘAI support, by all means, the teaching and research activity of the Geography doctoral study domain.

The ARACIS panel, composed of Prof. Sandu BOENGIU, PhD, Assoc. Prof. Daria KHOLIIVCHUK, PhD, and Angelo Andi PETRE, PhD student, recommends maintaining accreditation of the Geography doctoral study domain within ȘDȘAI, CSUD, USV.

All 32 indicators analysed were fulfilled.

VII. Annexes

Enclose the schedule of the on-site visit, the list of the documents reviewed, as well as any other documents that are relevant for the evaluation procedure, which are referred to in the EER and cannot be accessed through links.

The timetable for the evaluation of the external quality evaluation visit for the doctoral university study domain GEOGRAPHY

Higher Education Institution: "Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava

Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied Sciences

Doctoral Domain: GEOGRAPHY

The objective of the external evaluation: *maintaining accreditation for the doctoral program*

The evaluation period: *July 6–7, 2026*

Evaluation experts panel:

HEI Representative: Gabriela Prelipcean

No.	III.1 Last Name and First Name	Team role
1.	<i>Boengiu Sandu</i>	Expert evaluator
2.	<i>Kholiavchuk Daria</i>	International Expert
3.	<i>Petre Angelo Andi</i>	PhD Student Evaluator

No.	III.2 Last Name and First Name	Team role
1.	<i>Mihăilă Dumitru</i>	<i>Contact person</i>

Hour	Evaluation activities	Participants	Location List of Participants
Monday, 06.07.2028			
9:00 10:00	<i>Technical discussions within the expert committee for external quality evaluation</i>	<i>Panel members</i>	Room/Location Dean's Office of the Faculty of History and Social Sciences (FIGSS)
10:00 11:00	<i>Meeting of the external quality evaluation experts' panel with the representatives of the</i>	<i>- Panel members</i>	Room/Location

Hour	Evaluation activities	Participants	Location List of Participants
	management of the organisational component	- representatives of the management of the organisational component - Contact person	Dean's Office of the Faculty of History and Social Sciences (FIGSS) List of participants attending the meeting: - Prof. Laura Bouriaud, Ph.D., Eng. – Director of CSUD at USV, - Prof. Silvia Mironeasa, Ph.D., Eng., Director of the Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied Sciences - Associate Professor Aurelian ROTARU, Ph.D.– Vice Rector for Research at USV, - Prof. Florin Pintescu, Ph.D. – Dean of FIGSS, - Lecturer Despina Saghin, Ph.D. – Director of the Geography Department, FIGSS, - Associate Professor Dumitru Mihăilă, Ph.D. – Head of the Geography Doctoral Study Program.
11:00 11:30	Meeting of the external quality evaluation experts' panel with representatives of the quality assurance organisational structures.	- Panel members - Representatives of quality assurance organisational structures.	Room/Location Dean's Office of the Faculty of History and Social Sciences (FIGSS) List of participants attending the meeting:: - Prof. Costel Mironeasa, Ph.D., Eng. (Habil.), President of CEAC USV - Oana Șancariuc, Secretary of CEAC USV - University Lecturer Vasile Budui, Ph.D. – President of CEAC FIGSS, - Associate Professor Dumitru Mihăilă, Ph.D. – Head of the Geography Doctoral Study Program.
11:30 12:00	Meeting of the Expert Committee on External Quality Assessment with members of the University Ethics Committee	- Panel members - Members of the University Ethics Committee and the Research Ethics Subcommittee	Room/Location Dean's Office of the Faculty of History and Social Sciences (FIGSS) List of participants attending the meeting:: - Associate Professor Aurel Ghiuță, Ph.D., Chair of the USV Ethics Committee,

Hour	Evaluation activities	Participants	Location List of Participants
			- Associate Professor Dumitru Mihăilă, Ph.D. – Head of the Geography Doctoral Study Program, - Lecturer Despina Saghin, Ph.D. - Director of the Geography Department, FIGSS
12:00 13:00	Meeting of the external quality evaluation experts' panel with the team that has drafted the internal evaluation report. Meeting of the Expert Committee on External Quality Assessment with the teaching staff involved in activities within the DSUD	- Panel members - Team that has drafted the IER; teaching staff in the field of study being evaluated	Room / Location Dean's Office of the Faculty of History and Social Sciences (FIGSS) List of participants attending the meeting:: - Professor Vasile Efros, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, - Associate Professor Dumitru Mihăilă, Ph.D. (Habil.) – responsible for the Geography Doctoral Study Program; - Associate Professor Marcel Mîndrescu, Ph.D. (Habil.)
13:00- 15:00	Break		
15:00- 16:00	Meeting of the external quality evaluation experts' panel with the staff in charge with the research centres/laboratories	- Panel members - Staff in charge with research centres/laboratories	Room / Location Dean's Office of the Faculty of History and Social Sciences (FIGSS) List of participants attending the meeting:: - Associate Professor Dumitru Mihăilă, Ph.D. – Director of the GeA Center for Applied Geography Research, responsible for the Climatology and Hydrology Laboratory - Associate Professor Ionuț Cristea, Ph.D. – Associate Dean for Research, responsible for the Laboratory of Digital Technologies and Cultural Heritage Analysis, - Associate Professor Liviu Popescu, Ph.D., Eng., Cartography, GIS, and Remote Sensing Laboratory - Lecturer Despina Saghin, Ph.D. - Head of the Geography Department, responsible for the

Hour	Evaluation activities	Participants	Location List of Participants
			Laboratory of Tourism and Regional Development - Associate Professor Dana Popescu, Ph.D., Eng. – Laboratory of Geology, Geomorphology, and Environmental Risks - Dr. Gabriela Florescu, Dr. Aritina Haliuc, Dr. Carmen Bădăluță – Paleolimnology Laboratory (paleoclimatic, paleoecological, and paleoenvironmental studies and research) - Associate Professor Andrei Briciu, Ph.D. – Editor of Georeview - Lecturer Francisca Chiriloaei, Ph.D., in charge of GeA research - Lecturer Petruț-Ionel Bistricean, Ph.D. – Scientific Secretary of the GeA Center and Associate Editor of the journal Georeview
16:00 17:00	Meeting of the external quality evaluation experts' panel with employers* of the DSUD alumni	- Panel members - Employers	Room/Location Room E 213, Building E, 2nd Floor List of participants attending the meeting:: - Prof. Dr. Teodora Ursulică – Geography Inspector, Botoșani County School Inspectorate - Prof. Ionuț-Liviu Ciocoiu, General Inspector, Neamț County School Inspectorate - Prof. Doinița Țolca, Geography Inspector, representative of the Suceava School Inspectorate - Prof. Dr. Mihaela Lesenciuc – Geography Inspector, Iași County School Inspectorate - Meteorologist Dr. Gina TIRON, Director of the Moldova Regional Meteorological Center in Iași - a representative of the Suceava County Council

* Avoid inviting employers who are also staff of the HEI or members of the Romanian Academy, as applicable.

Hour	Evaluation activities	Participants	Location List of Participants
			- a representative of the Botoșani County Council - a representative of the North-East Regional Development Agency, - Daniela STANCIUC, Eng. – Chief Engineer, - Doina-Cristina MIHĂILĂ, Eng. – Head of the Laboratory Department, Suceava Water Management Service, - a representative of the Siret River Basin Water Administration, Bacău, - a representative of the Suceava County Environmental Directorate, - Cristian Cimpoeșu, environmental expert - a representative of the Suceava City Hall, - a representative of the Regional Weather Forecasting Service in Bacău - Adrian Curalăț, Engineer, Director of OSPA Suceava, - Lecturer Despina Saghin, Ph.D. - Director of the Geography Department - Associate Professor Dumitru Mihăilă, Ph.D. – Head of the Geography Doctoral Study Program.
17:00 18:00	Meeting of the external quality evaluation experts' panel with alumni* of the DSUD	- Panel members - Graduates	Room / Location Room E 213, Building E, 2nd Floor List of participants attending the meeting:: - dr. PRISĂCARIU I. Alin [2023], - dr. APOPEI V. Lidia-Maria (PAPAGHIUC) [2023], - dr. ȚICULEANU M. Mihaela-Nicoleta (ȚICULEANU-CIURLICĂ) [2024], - dr. ROȘU N. Constantin [2024],

* Avoid inviting alumni who are also staff of the HEI or members of the Romanian Academy, as applicable.

Hour	Evaluation activities	Participants	Location List of Participants
			- dr. Horodnic Dănuț-Vasilică [2023] - dr. LAZURCA V. Liliana-Gina (ANDREI) [2024], - dr. ȘPAC N. Luminița-Mirela (LĂZĂRESCU) [2024], - dr. DIACON V. Liliana-Daniela (HÎRȘIU) [2024], - dr. MITROFAN G. Gheorghe (BĂDĂLUȚĂ) [2025], - dr. PETRAȘ A. Ancuța-Ramona [2024], - [Associate Professor Dumitru Mihăilă, Ph.D. – responsible for the Geography Doctoral Study Program].
18:00 19:00	Meeting of the external quality evaluation experts' panel with doctoral students of the DSUD	- Panel members - Doctoral students	Room / Location Room E 213, Building E, 2nd Floor List of participants attending the meeting:: - drd. MARCU N. Alina (NISTOR) [5], - drd. MURARU C. Anca-Elena (CITURAN) [2], - drd. BOICIUC D. A. Carmen-Alexandra [4], - drd. MEDEI S. Elena (POP) [3], - drd. ADAM I. Ciprian-Ionuț [2], - drd. MIHALACHE P. Andrei [2], - drd. TIMISH G. Oleksandr [2], - drd. SAVIN A. Codrin-Fabian [2], - drd. FILIP C. Anișoara [3], - drd. CHIRUȚĂ Maria [2], - drd. LUPAȘCU C. Maria (PANFILII) [2], - drd. BECICA N. Domenic-Raul [4].
Tuesday, 07.07.2026			
9:00 - 10:00	Technical meeting of the expert evaluation panel (Collaborative activity for clarifying the aspects presented in the Internal Evaluation Report - IER)	- Panel members	Room / Location Dean's Office of the Faculty of History and Social Sciences (FIGSS)
10:00 – 12:00	Visiting the material resources; SDSAI Secretariat	- Panel members -Representatives of the HEI	Room / Location USV Campuses 1 and 2

Hour	Evaluation activities	Participants	Location List of Participants
12:00 -14:00	Break		
14:00 – 15:00	Completion of evaluation activities	- Panel members	Room / Location Dean's Office of the Faculty of History and Social Sciences (FIGSS)
15:00 – 16:00	Meeting of the members of the expert evaluators' panel with representatives of the management of the HEI or the EP, as applicable, and management of the organisational component, to communicate the conclusions of the evaluation process	- Panel members - Representatives of the management - Contact person	Room / Location Dean's Office of the Faculty of History and Social Sciences (FIGSS) List of participants attending the meeting:: - Prof. Laura Bouriaud, Ph.D., Eng. – Director of CSUD at USV, - Prof. Silvia Mironeasa, Ph.D., Eng., Director of the Doctoral School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, - Associate Professor Aurelian ROTARU, Ph.D. – Vice Rector for Research at USV - Prof. Florin Pintescu, Ph.D.– Dean of FIGSS - Lecturer Despina Saghin, Ph.D. – Director of the Geography Department, FIGSS - Associate Professor Dumitru Mihăilă, Ph.D. – Head of the Geography Doctoral Study Program

If necessary and depending on the type of doctoral studies evaluated, other meetings can be conducted as well, for example with representatives of:

- the departments that provide IT support, for example, for organising the online activities
- international relations departments and student mobility departments
- Career Counselling and Guidance Centre etc.

Visit Coordinator:
Prof. univ. dr. Sandu BOENGIU

Contact Person:
Associate Professor dr. habil. Dumitru MIHĂILĂ