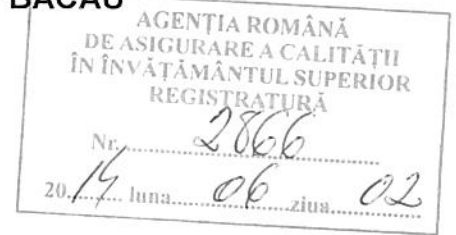


**EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT FOR ARACIS
OF "GEORGE BACOVIA" UNIVERSITY OF BACAU**

Bacau, 2014



Introduction

I was appointed as a Foreign External Evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) and was consequently invited to join the evaluation team for the institutional accreditation process of „George Bacovia” University in Bacau. The audit took place between Wednesday 7 May and Friday 9 May 2014.

The evaluation team consisted of the following members, in addition to myself:

- Prof. univ. dr. Iamandi Luca, “Danubius” University of Galati – Mission Director
- Prof. univ. dr. Răzvan Nistor, “Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca – Coordinator of the Experts Evaluator Team
- Prof. univ. dr. Cezar Birzea, National School of Political Science and Public Administration in Bucharest – Advisory Commission Expert
- Prof. univ. dr. Adriana Giurgiu, University of Oradea – Institutional Commission Expert
- Prof. univ. dr. Ilie Rotariu, “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu – Program Expert (Commerce, Tourism and Services Economy)
- Prof. univ. dr. Cosmin Dobrin, Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies – Program Expert (Management)
- Mihai Marcu – Technical Secretary
- Adrian Stan, „Victor Babeș” University of Medicine and Pharmacy of din Timișoara – Student Evaluator (ANOSR)
- Sebastian Stefaniga, West University of Timișoara – Student Evaluator (UNSR)

The evaluation process began on Wednesday 7th May at 9 a.m. in the Senate Room with the welcoming speech of Prof. univ. dr. Tatiana Puiu the Rector of “George Bacovia” University (UGB). Then she introduced the management of UGB who were present. After that Prof. univ. dr. Răzvan Nistor told the introductory statements of the mission and he also introduced the members of the evaluation team. Prof. univ. dr. Dumitru Bontas talked about the history of the university and its present situation. This was followed by a tour of the university to see the infrastructure of UGB.

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Between 10.00 a.m. and 5 p.m. the group of experts was working on different aspects of the evaluation. In my role as Foreign Expert Evaluator, I was responsible for establishing an overview of the whole university and was allowed to move freely, talking to members of staff and students of the university.

At 5 p.m. we had an appointment with a group of about 50 undergraduate students of UGB. At 6 p.m. we had another meeting with about 20 graduate students. At 7 p.m. there was one hour appointment with 13 graduates' employers. The first day ended with a meeting of the evaluators.

The team continued the evaluation process on Thursday, 8th of May starting at 9 a.m. and lasted until 8 p.m.

The evaluation process was finished on Friday, 9th of May when the team of experts prepared the final report. The evaluation process was conducted in open and collegial manner. The colleagues of UGB let me have all the materials I asked for during the evaluation process which I needed very much as the self-assessment report of UGB, which had been given to me in advance in English, was very poor in figures.

General Statements

UGB operates according to the Constitution and the laws that govern the higher education system in Romania and it is a private higher education institute which has been operating since 1992. It is functioning in accordance with Law 237/23.04.2002.

The didactic structure of UGB is very simple and transparent as it has only one faculty, namely the Faculty of Economics, Juridical and Administrative Sciences offering 8 programs of bachelor degree. The University provides also 6 master study programs. I was informed that UGB had switched their programs according to the European Bologna process (3-2-3) in 2005.

UGB had 868 enrolled students at the beginning of this academic year (2013/2014) and 242 (152 BA + 90 MA) students started their studies in the first year of the above mentioned number. I found from the figures that the number of students is decreasing continuously. The dropping out rate is around 10%.

The material infrastructure and the educational spaces, that I have seen, fulfil every requirement of the European standards at UGB.

There were wishes formulated in the self-assessment report but I few of them I did not experience to be fulfil.

The scientific potential and quality of human resources at UGB seems to be on a good level, although I have some doubts about the sufficient number of the academic staff comparing it with number of students.

Managerial Structure

The management of the university is organised in accordance with its legal obligations, which are stated in the university's charter. In terms of structure, the university is led by a Rector. The Rector's duties include the strategic leadership of the university and representing the university at judicial and public bodies.

Senate is the main decision making body of the university which consists of a mixture of appointed and elected representatives. There are 7 persons in the Senate at UGB: 5 teaching staff and 2 students (28,57%). The Organization Regulations for the Election of the Management is an integrant part of the University Charter.

Management system is based on the integrated information systems in a unified system that provides automated data records, functional departments of the University by communicating through the intranet system. University Management System (UMS) is an instrument dedicated to the administration of activities from the educational process that exists in the academic environments. It seemed to me that UMS operating quite well at UGB which supports mainly the educational administration.

Comment: As the staff is relatively small in the university, the management and institutional structures are top-heavy.

Teaching Staff

The human resource of UGB is made of academic and administrative staff.

The number of academic staff at UGB is between 33 and 36 in the academic year of 2013/14. (I found small differences in the data of the appendixes and the self-assessment report.) There are 8 pensioners and 3 part-time employees in the academic staff. Almost everyone is PhD holder, only 4 of them are PhD students.

This academic year the number of students per member of the teaching staff is around 25 (868/33 or 868/36) which rate is a bit high, nearly at the critical level, compared to the European average.

Although the human resource quality is on a quite good level and the age-groups seem to be balanced at UGB, I did not see the HRD plan. I also could not find any data about the technical and administrative staff.

Comment: The quantity of human resource should be developed at any rate at UGB but it especially should be increased in the future if the number of students increases.

Facilities

The University functions in a very nice and modern building in Bacau.

Generally I can put down that most of the equipment of the educational spaces is fulfil every requirement of the European standards (conference whiteboards, air conditioning, smoke sensors, modern quality furniture, projecting systems, internet access etc.).

UGB possess a library room with two study rooms and a corresponding book warehouse. The library almost has 6,200 book titles, respectively 21,000 volumes covering all the disciplines in the curriculum. Although UGB has access to quite a few

online journals, unfortunately the numbers of printed international publications are very few.

Some PCs which can be used by the students are out of date. Quite a number of the software has expired as Windows XP support has ended. (April 8, 2014, support and updates for Windows XP are no longer available.)

Disabled people also can move in the building of UGB.

It is stated in the self-evaluation report: "In future the 'George Bacovia' University is going to realize until the end of the year 2014, a feasibility study regarding the enlargement of the built spaces with another wing for social services, hosting and canteen for students." There is no sign of construction nearby.

Comment: I recommend upgrading the PCs and investing into new software at UGB. I also suggest enlarging the collection of the library with more international publications.

Students

In the academic year of 2013/2014 there are about 612 students in the BA programs and 256 students in the MA programs at UGB. (I was informed that there was a great decrease in the number students in the last few years.)

Unfortunately, I didn't talk any students during my stay except at the organized appointments. At the appointment with the students I found them fairly active. Generally they were pleased with the education and the circumstances. Only a few matters were mentioned (e. g. not enough breaks among the lectures; the lack of canteens and dormitories etc.). I experienced that the students did not know the regulations of the university and they are not involved in research at UGB although the relationship between students and teachers is very good. There was not too much reaction on tougher questions. UGB operates a Centre for Counselling and Career Guidance but most of the students do not know too much about it.

UGB was involved only in Erasmus Mobility Programme in the last few years although I had read very often about internationalisation in the self-assessment report. UGB activity in Erasmus Mobility Programme was quite good for the university's size comparing with other Romanian private universities as I had experienced before. They have already signed a few Erasmus+ agreements.

Comment: It is recommended to extend international activity of UGB and enter into other European Higher Education Programmes (e. g. CEEPUS etc.).

At the meeting of the graduate students it was emphasized that theoretical education was on good level but the practical training should be strengthened. It was also pointed out that they were pleased with the members of the academic staff and the university.

At the meeting with the employers, they seemed pleased with those students who graduated from UGB. I was delighted because there were representatives both of the private and public sector e.g. Banks (e. g. BRD; BCR) Companies (e. g. Aerostar S. A.; SIF Moldova), Chamber of Commerce, Courts and Municipalities etc. Without doubt they recommend to their employees to study at UGB.

Research

The academic staff develops scientific research activities, capitalized through didactic materials, publications in specific magazines or publishing houses. Exploitation of the results of scientific research, collective or individual, is high. Teachers frequently participate in conferences, symposia and scientific sessions. At UGB only the academic staff is performing scientific activities. The students are not involved in scientific research.

In the period 2009-2013, teachers of the University have published a total of 82 monographs, treatises and books. The number of articles published in ISI journals in the period 2009-2013 is of 49. Also a total of 16 articles were published in the proceedings of ISI Conferences (ISI Proceedings).

It seems that the research strategy of UGB is not clear enough as research topics are much diversified. The research activity seems to be not satisfactory at UGB.

Comment: I would encourage the university to develop its international collaborative links, as there is much to be learned from the experience of colleagues across Europe and elsewhere.

Quality Management

UGB seems to pay special attention to the quality insurance. The Central Committee for Quality Assurance identifies quantitative and qualitative standards in comparison with other universities in the country and abroad. It develops and coordinates the evaluation procedures and quality insurance, developing an annual internal evaluation of education, proposes solutions and strategies to improve the quality of education.

UGB has a computer system that accelerates the collection, processing and analysis of relevant data and information for assessment and institutional quality insurance. Although UGB has got the above mentioned informatics system, as it is stated in the self-assessment report, they do not use it to get online data e. g. feedback from student. UGB regularly reviews its courses and gathers student feedback on paper.

Comment: In my opinion the quality management at UGB is very formal. The description of the procedure is too complicated.

Conclusion

At the moment UGB is in a very difficult situation because external factors are very unpredictable e. g. demographic problems (number of students), changing economic and legal environment etc. Probably partly this is the reason that most of their innovation and development has to be postponed.

UGB has made great effort to improve its activity at all fields in the past years and they have a strong will to reach their aims, but I was not convinced that they could

finish all those developments which are stated in the self-assessment report. So they have to continue what they have started.

To summarize my remarks and observations I think that the activity of UGB does not meet all the requirements of the European standards of education and scientific research. In my opinion UGB is about at the level of limited confidence in the present situation.

My report is based on what I have experienced; seen, read and heard. I hope that some of the comments which I made will help the UGB management in the process of continual improvement.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to the President, the Rector and all the UGB staff for the pleasant atmosphere and the support during my stay in Bacau. I also owe much gratitude to my colleagues of the evaluation team for the professional, open and gentle way in which the audit was conducted.

Last but not least I would like to express my special thanks to ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this evaluation process in Romania.

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