

**EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT
FOR ARACIS OF
"ION IONESCU DE LA BRAD" UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL
SCIENCES AND VETERINARY MEDICINE OF IASI**

2018



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 evaluation process of "Ion Ionescu de la Brad" University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iasi (USAMV). The audit took place between Wednesday 16 May and Friday 18 May 2018.

A large evaluation team (16 members) took part in the accreditation process as USAMV has quite a number study programmes conducted by its four faculties.

The evaluation process began on Wednesday the 16th of May at 9 a.m. in the Senate Hall with the welcoming speech of the rector and talked shortly about the history of the university and its present situation. Prof. univ. dr. Vasile VINTU also presented the management of USAMV, the representatives of the students and those colleagues who were responsible for the different programmes at the faculties. It was very conspicuous that there were only two ladies on the part of USAMV in the room, the dean of the Faculty of Horticulture and the representative of the students.

(It means that the female presence in the leadership is very low.) Then Prof. univ. dr. Ioan IANOS told the introductory statements of the mission and asked members of the evaluation team to introduce herself/himself. This was followed by a tour at the university to see the infrastructure of the institution.

Between 12 noon and 4 p.m. the group of experts was working on different aspects of the evaluation. At 4 p.m. we had an appointment with a group of 80 undergraduate students and at 5 p.m. there was a one hour meeting with a group of 30 former students. At 6 p.m. we had a meeting with a group of about 20 graduates' employers.

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.

The team continued the evaluation process on Thursday, 17th of May. In the morning I visited the International Relations Office and the University's library. In the afternoon the evaluation team visited a huge farm of a former student of USAMV close to the border of Moldova.

The evaluation process was finished on Friday the 18th of May when the team of experts prepared the final report. The evaluation process was conducted in open and collegial manner.

General Statements

USAMV operates according to the Constitution of Romania and the laws that govern the higher education system in Romania. USAMV is a state higher education institution constituted as a legal entity.

USAMV functions according to the Bologna process, organising 4 faculties in Iasi. The educational offer of USAMV is based on three cycles of study: Bachelor (16), Master (23) and PhD (four different domains). The "Doctor of Veterinary Medicine" programme is also available in English. Also, the university is recognized as an institution with the right to organize doctoral studies.

The university had 4.477 enrolled students in the academic year of 2016/17, out of which: 3584 undergraduate students (3.093 full-time and 491 distance learning); 737 master's degree students; 156 PhD students. 3672 students' studies were financed by the state; the others were paying fees for their studies. The number of foreign students is increasing at USAMV but I could not find out how many of them were listening courses conducted in English.

Managerial Structure

The leadership of the university is organised in accordance with its legal obligations, which is established in the university's charter and the structure can be followed very clearly in the organogram of USAMV. The management structures of USAMV are the Senate, the Management Board and the Council for Doctoral Studies (at the university level); the Faculty Board (at the faculty level); the Department Board (at the department level); the Doctoral School Board (at the level of the PhD School).

The Senate is the main decision making body of the university which consists of the faculties representatives. 29 persons are in the Senate at USAMV (21 academic staff and 8 students). Its activity is structured into four committees (Committee for Education; Committee for Research and International Relations; Committee for Administration and Patrimony; Committee for Social and Student Relations) being led by the professors from each faculty.

The Management Board of USAMV is represented at all levels (institutional, faculties, departments, academic bodies). All the members from the management structures of USAMV have been elected through pyramid type processes. The organizational structures of USAMV may be modified upon demand by the Management Board, with the approval of the Senate. The operative management is ensured by the Management Board (rector, four vice-rectors, the chief administrative director, the director of the Council for Doctoral Studies, the deans of the four faculties, the chief accounting officer and the students' representatives).

USAMV is divided into 4 faculties, which are further subdivided into departments.

The faculty management is assured by the dean, the two vice-deans, and the faculty council. At the department level, the management is assured by a department director, supported by the department council.

Within the organization of USAMV counselling, monitoring, internal assessment structures and technical, administrative services also operate.

Comment: USAMV has a coherent, integrated, transparent management system, based on an efficient and effective administration. I would recommend involving more females in the leadership of USAMV.

Although I appreciate it very much that the students' rate are higher in the Senate it should be balanced according to the Romanian regulation.

Teaching Staff

In the current academic year there are 305 teaching positions at USAMV from which 184 are occupied. Nearly everybody is PhD holder (99,5% of the tenured teaching staff).

The structure of the teaching staff seems to be balanced according to the teaching staff of USAMV by age group. Number of lectures between 41-50 and 51-60 years (36+8) a bit high; the situation is similar in the position of the associate professors at the age group of 51-60 years (9). The university might persuade the experienced lectures to become associate professors. and the experienced associate professors to become professors in order to maintain the academic quality. Every year the University evaluates the employees' performances.

Comment: Should establish a procedure for monitoring the gender balance of academic staff at the faculties. The quality of human resources at USAMV seems to be at a very good level.

Erasmus mobility programme would offer more opportunities for exchanging academic staff. Every year the number of outgoing teaching staff was nearly the same (between 25-35; average ~ 28,5) in the last few years (2011-2017). The most popular destinations were Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Turkey and the professors of the Faculty of Agriculture were the most active.

The numbers of incoming were even less (between 15-25; average ~ 18) in the same period. The most professors were from Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, and Turkey. Most of the incoming professors were hosted by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.

Facilities

USAMV ensures the spaces for education and research that are appropriate for their specific requirements. The land and the spaces used for the educational training, scientific research and related activities are in the patrimony of USAMV. In the recent years investments have been made for the rehabilitation and modernization of the spaces for educational training, as well as for the construction of new spaces has going on.

USAMV has 5 dormitories with a total of 1795 places, which ensures the accommodation of over 45% of the total number of students who are studying full time, although they are on different levels.

USAMV has a modern Library which includes 90.567 books, 9050 periodicals and access to different scientific databases. The inter-library loans programme is carried in association with 29 foreign and 18 domestic partners. USAMV has good sport facilities. All these facilities provide a wide range of recreation and personal development activities for th students. A cafeteria-restaurant located near USAMV campus. It was renovated and modernized in 2008. USAMV has a publishing house in order to facilitate the printing of the academic materials. It is accredited by the National Council for Scientific Research in Higher Education and has many printing equipment located in the departments and the library. The main goals of the Publishing House are supporting the education process and promoting the scientific research.

Comment: There is enough place for didactic and research activities. Facilities are well used and most of the educational spaces, that I have seen, fulfil every requirement of the European standards. It can be seen that USAMV invested in its physical infrastructure a lot in the past few years. It is important to continue this procedure.

Students

Each type of study program (BA/BSc, MA/MSc and PhD) is available for the candidates at USAMV. The numbers of student are roughly constant if we compare the data with the past academic years but the composition changed a bit. A small increase can be observed in the numbers of foreign students and more than half of them pay tuition meanwhile the rate of the budgeted students rose. It is a great success nowadays as the regressive tendency is very common in most of the higher education institutes because of the demographic problems and economic crises.

It was mentioned at the appointment with the undergraduate students that the practice should be improved in the programme of veterinary medicine. They told us that it was also very difficult to find practice places.

During the discussion with the former students they seemed generally pleased with the members of the academic staff and the university. They also were not pleased with the practice especially in the programme of veterinary medicine. USAMV should take into account much more the needs of the labour market.

At the meeting with employers, they seemed very satisfied with those students who graduated from USAMV although they brought up the lack of students practical knowledge. Most of the employers were representatives of different fields from the private sector (e.g. KOSAROM, AGROCOMPLEX, AGRO INDUSTRIAL CERES S.R.L. etc.) but there were representatives of the public sector too. Some of them also mentioned that they have good cooperation with USAMV for the student's practice.

106 Erasmus Mobility agreements with various study fields can be found at USAMV. The study fields of the faculties do not appear in every agreement (Faculty of Agriculture – 58, Faculty of Horticulture – 46, Faculty of Animal Sciences – 24 and Faculty of Veterinary Medicine – 34).

The number of the students participating in Erasmus Program could be more for the size of the university and the number of agreements. There were 54 (10/44 ERASMUS Student Mobility for Studies/ERASMUS Student Mobility for Placements) outgoing and 39 (32/7 ERASMUS Student Mobility for Studies/ERASMUS Student

Mobility for Placements) incoming students in the last academic year (2016-2017). While the “Student Mobility for Placements Programme” is getting more popular among the outgoing students, the incoming students prefer the “Study Mobility Programme” in the recent years.

The most popular destinations were France, Italy, Spain and Turkey. The students of the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine were the most active. Most of the incoming students arrived from Italy, Portugal, Turkey and they studied at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.

Comment: It is recommended to increase the number of students taking part in mobility activities. It will help the students to gain some practical experience abroad and it is also suits to EU recommendations. USAMV has to encourage the members of the Faculty of Horticulture and Faculty of Animal Sciences to increase the activity in the ERASMUS+ Programme.

Research

Research activity within the university is coordinated by a vice-rector who is responsible for scientific research activity, innovation, technological development and international relations. The Department of Research, Innovation and Technological Transfer the main purpose is to coordinate the activities of research, innovation and technological transfer. It has also administrative and financial duties, is managed by a director. Scientific research at USAMV is structured into research centres. There are 8 research centres at USAMV. The research centres and laboratories are equipped with modern, efficient equipment.

The professors as well as the students are involved in research activities, within the grants financed by the Ministry of Education and Research, National Council of University Scientific Research, World Bank, state and private sponsors. Scientific research is continuously monitored and evaluated annually. The students are involved in scientific activity mainly through the framework of the master and doctoral programmes.

The research activity carried out by the academic staff of USAMV in 2017 was appreciated by 17 prizes and 8 patents obtained at a national and international level and were materialised also in textbooks for didactic purposes, books and monographs, scientific articles published in specialized reviews.

Comment: Extend the number of Master and PhD students involved in research. Increase the number of articles published in journals indexed ISI and also tries to raise the number of patents.

Quality Management

The coordination of the evaluation and quality assurance processes at an institutional level is done by the Committee for Evaluation and Quality Assurance. USAMV pays exceptional attention to quality assurance and implemented a quality management system in compliance with the model ISO 9001:2015.

The responsibilities regarding quality are The Committees for Evaluation and Quality Assurance is working with the committees created at the faculty level, for each faculty and at the level of each department. Besides the transparent quality assurance structure of USAMV, the university concentrate on the different fields of the quality assurance: quality assurance for management processes, quality assurance in teaching and scientific research.

Comment: In my opinion the structure and the procedures of quality assurance at USAMV are well organized. USAMV should be worked on the improvement of the effectiveness of the quality management system.

Conclusion

I had overall a quite good impression about USAMV. I was satisfied what I have experienced; seen, read and heard at the university. I propose a "High confidence rating".

I appreciate the efforts of the management, the academic staff and the students of USAMV to develop the quality. I hope that some of the comments which I made will help the university management in the process of continual improvement.

I would like to emphasize that all comments I made in this report are intended to contribute to further improvements of the institution.

I underline the following:

- The location and the traditions of Iasi is a great opportunity for USAMV with their special study programmes in the north-west region (Moldavia) in Romania.
- To strengthen the good relations with employers for getting more information and feedback from the job market.
- Having more internship for students in different institutions mainly on national and also on international level.
- To continue to invest in the physical infrastructure and facilities, as and when funds allow.
- I strongly suggest continuing internationalisation and develop more bachelor and master programmes conducted in English. USAMV should encourage students and academic staff taking part in more exchange and mobility programmes.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to the Rector, Vice Rectors, Deans and all the University staff for the pleasant atmosphere, support and cooperation during this accreditation procedure. Also much gratitude to my colleagues from the evaluation team for the professional, open and gentle way in which the audit was conducted.

Special thanks to ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this evaluation process in Romania.

Pécs, 31-05-2018



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