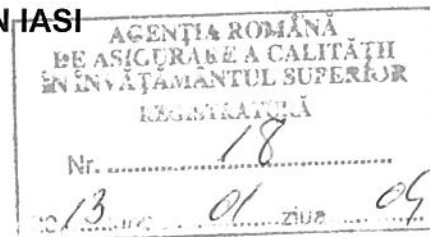


**EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT
FOR ARACIS OF "APOLLONIA" UNIVERSITY IN IASI**

Iasi, 2012



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 re-accreditation process of "APOLLONIA" UNIVERSITY in Iasi. The audit took place between Wednesday 5 December and Friday 7 December 2012.

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

Prof. univ. dr. Paul Serban Agachi („Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca) – Mission Director

Prof. univ. dr. ing. Marius Bulgaru (Technical University of Cluj-Napoca) – Coordinator of the Experts Evaluator Team

Prof. univ. dr. Dumitru Gaspar (West University of Timișoara) – Member of the Advisory Commission

Prof. univ. dr. Laurentiu Mogoanta (University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Craiova) – Member of the Institutional Evaluation for managerial and financial activities commission

Prof. univ. dr. Raducanu Anca Maria (“Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Bucharest) – Program Expert (Dentistry)

Prof. univ. dr. Cristina Maria Bortun (“Victor Babeș” University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Timisoara) – Program Expert (Technical dentistry)

Mihai Marcu – Technical Secretary

Delia Gologan (ANOSR) – Student Evaluator

Marius Catalin Baltarețu (UNSR) – Student Evaluator

The evaluation process began on Wednesday the 5th of December at 9 a.m. in one of the lecture hall of the university. The academic staff of AUI was greeted by professor Agachi on the behalf of ARACIS and the evaluation team was also introduced. Then Professor Bulgaru presented the introductory statements of the mission. Next the President of AUI welcomed the evaluation team and asked his colleagues to introduce themselves. From 10 a.m. the evaluation team discussed the most important aspects that should be considered during the audit. This was followed by a

tour at the university to see the infrastructure of the institution which lasted until 1 p.m. as we visited besides the central building, the clinic and the studios of AUI which are situated at different places in Iasi.

At 3 p.m. we had an appointment with a group of about 50 undergraduate students of AUI. At 4 p.m. we had another meeting with a group of about 20 graduate students. Between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. and from 5 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. the team 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. The first day ended with a meeting of the evaluators.

The team continued the evaluation process on Thursday the 6th of December starting at 9 a.m. and lasted until 6 p.m. At 3 p.m. there was one hour appointment with a group of 12 graduates' employers.

The evaluation process was finished on Friday, 7th of December when the team of experts prepared the final report. The evaluation process was conducted in open and collegial manner.

General Statements

AUI seems to operate according to the Constitution and the laws that govern the higher education system in Romania. AUI is a private university that would offer an alternative to the public education system.

AUI has only two faculties: the Faculty of Dental Medicine (with the specializations Dentistry – accredited and Dental Technique – authorized) and the Faculty of Communication Sciences (with two specializations: Communication and Public Relations; Journalism – authorized to function temporarily).

The University has 751 (699+52 FDM/FCS) enrolled students in the academic year of 2011/2012 (Annex 5.12 and 5.12.1) of which 15% are not Romanian citizen as I was informed.

I did have the possibility to visit all locations of AUI and I experienced that the material infrastructure is on a very different level at the buildings of the university. Some of them are under the optimal requirements.

The international cooperation, especially the Erasmus Mobility Programmes should be strengthened at AUI.

Managerial Structure

The management of the university is organised in accordance with its legal obligations, which are stated in the university's charter. The Senate is the highest management level of the academic activities.

Within AUI the managing activity functions on different decision levels. In my opinion the academic and the administrative management of AUI is not separated enough according to the organogram. The whole structure is fairly huge if I compare the available spaces and colleagues I have seen.

It stated in the self-evaluation report: "The rector, the university president, deans, vice-deans, heads of schools' departments are not part of the University Senate and they may only participate as guests at the University Senate's meetings, with no voting rights." It is rather strange that the rector and the deans, who are involved in academic activities (teaching and research etc.) very much, are not allowed taking part in the decision making processes which is the basic competence of the Senate. I also could not find the position of vice-deans in the organogram.

The management system is not based on the integrated information system that provides automated data records, functional departments of the University by communicating through the intranet system. Most of data are recorded manually.

Comment: Probably there is not enough human resource at AUI who could complete all the tasks which are attached to this structure. In my opinion managerial structure of AUI should be reduced.

Teaching Staff

The human resource of AUI is made of academic subjects and administrative staff.

The number of academic staff at the AUI is 99. There are 70 employees in the academic staff who is employed full-time by the university and 18 (25,71%) of them are professors and associate professors. (Annex 3.2 and 4.4). There are 41 PhD holders of all academic staff members at AUI.

Examining the CVs (Annex 3.5) of the academic staff at AUI I conclude that most of them graduated at universities which are well known in Romania.

Non-permanent staff from outside the university is graduated from the respective domains and have accumulated experience in practical activities and/or in research.

The human resource development plans, stated in the self-evaluation report, for the academic year of 2012-13 are very impressive but I did not find data in the annexes.

Comment: The academic staff quality seems to be on good level, although the quantity should be increased. The human resource development plans for the future should be realized.

Facilities

The academic spaces in which the academic community carries out its activity include: spaces of its own, bought by AUI and spaces obtained on the basis of cooperation agreements (Annex 9.3 and 9.5).

I stayed in the main building of AUI and I visited four different places owned or rented by AUI in Iasi which are situated very far from each other. Three locations were specialized clinics (including 2 in the property of AUI and 1 rented). These places are functioning as clinical training platforms although there are classrooms, seminar rooms and laboratories also in them. For practice the students have also available surgical dentistry clinics, with access through cooperation agreements.

In the fourth building, I visited, the Ioan Haulica Research Institute is situated. It is a structural unit for coordination and development of fundamental and applied research in AUI. This is also a place which makes available practical activities for the students

as the Radio Student Club, the Student Club Television, the Nova Apollonia Magazine, and the Apollonia Publishing House etc. operate here.

The above mentioned locations provide the structure of the so-called Practical Training Platform (PTP) in which students practice the mandatory scales for each subject. I assume that PTP is unique in Romania as in my former evaluation processes I have never faced a system like this which puts the stress on the students' practical training.

Not all the educational spaces fulfil every requirement of the European standards. There are huge differences of the material basis. There are high-tech tools (e.g. 4 Moog units, the most modern haptic simulating system, which is unique not only in Romania but in CEE too) and also other equipment which are out of date (e.g. most instruments of the didactic laboratories).

AUI has 60 modern computers of which 30 are located in informatics laboratory and 25 are in the library. The access to some of computers is limited. The computers in the library are available for the students during its opening hours and the computers in the informatics laboratory are used only within the framework of different courses. More software is needed for the computers. There are huge differences among the furniture used by the students. Ergonomically quite a number of them are unsuitable for study purposes.

The room is not enough for the laboratories in the main building of AUI and the offices of the academic staff are crowded. It happens that there are 3 or 4 different laboratories are located in one room or there is no writing desk for a university lecturer.

The library of AUI has a total of 13451 volumes books and periodicals (books: 4,379 titles in 8658 copies; periodicals: 371 titles in 4793 copies). There is little foreign literature in the library and most of books were published around millennium.

There is no students' hostel and sports facilities at the campus. Disabled people cannot move in the buildings of AUI.

Comment: Although AUI invested in its physical infrastructure in the last few years they should continue this process in order to reach the European standards.

Students

In the academic year of 2012/2013 there are about 751 students at AUI.

Besides the organized appointments with the students I also had the possibility to meet the representative of the Students' Union.

The undergraduate students at the appointment were not very active. (There were only two foreign students. One of them came from Iran and the other from Lebanon whose mother was also Romanian.) They were pleased with the education and the circumstances. They had only trivial objections e.g. lack of canteen and hostel; limited sport facilities etc. There was not too much reaction on tougher questions.

At the meeting of the students' representatives I was informed about all the activities organised by them (e.g. volunteering, blood donations, sport competitions, excursions etc.). They told me that there was a lack of interest about going abroad and spending some time on practice.

At the meeting of the graduate students I was surprised that most of them were employed by AUI or the clinics with whom the university cooperates. Those who had previous experience at state universities mentioned that at AUI had paid more attention to the students and the facilities had been much better than at state maintained higher education institutes.

Although AUI put great emphasize on organizing international cooperation in the last few months, it can be said that there were very few multilateral projects with different Universities.

Comment: It is recommended to enter into different European Higher Education Programmes (CEEPUS, ERASMUS, TEMPUS etc.) and increase the number of students taking part in mobility activities.

At the meeting with the representatives of the employers, they seemed very satisfied with those students who graduated from AUI. They told us that there was not too much difference between public and private universities, but probably some private institutes had better facilities.

Comment: As a part of the evaluation process I participated in several organised meetings with students and employers and I do not believe that this method can give real impression about the opinions of this group. It would be much better to choose this group somehow accidentally.

Research

Research activity is performed by the didactic staff and students. It is mainly organised through research centres.

I could not find out how much the students are involved in scientific activity.

The scientific research appears mainly presented in papers at conferences and in articles. AUI publishes two series of reviews (International Journal of Medical Dentistry and International Journal of Communication Research) in which scientific papers are presented. The scientific research appears in presented papers at conferences, in articles published in journals and books mainly at national level. It seems that the research strategy of AUI is not clear enough as research topics are much diversified.

Comment: I would also inspire AUI to strengthen its international collaborative links, as there is much to be learned from the experience of colleagues from abroad.

Quality Management

There is a central commission at AUI called The Evaluation and Quality Assurance Committee. This structure develops and coordinates the evaluation procedures and quality assurance, developing an annual internal evaluation of education, proposes solutions and strategies to improve the quality of education, evaluates trans-

institutional performance indicators in the dental medical and communication sciences fields. AUI has academic regulations for all activities and creates their specific procedures for quality management system for all: teaching, learning and research.

Involving students in assessment and quality assurance has become a common practice in AUI. They are present in all the evaluation and quality assurance processes.

Conclusion


AUI has made a 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-evaluation report. So they have to continue what they have started.

I am tempted not to offer any recommendations, but I hope that some of the comments which I made will help the AUI management in the process of continual improvement.

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

At least but not last special thanks to ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this evaluation process in Romania.

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