



To Livia Dumitrascu

ARACIS (Agentia Romana de Asigurare a Calitatii in Invatamantul Superior

Bulevardul Schitu Maguareanu, nr.1.
Sector 5
BUCURESTI
Romania

Pécs, 28, February 2012.

Dear Livia,

Attached I am sending the evaluation report concerning the accreditation of Romaina- German University.

I would like to express my thanks to ARACIS for selecting me to be a member of the evaluation committee. I have appreciated the chance to meet you and the dedicated members of the academic staff and university leadership and management

Best wishes


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Evaluation Report - Romanian-German University of Sibiu

Written by the short-term foreign expert: Teréz Kleisz Phd (University of Pécs, Hungary)

First, I would like to express my special thanks to all members of the academic and managerial staff for their commitment and support for the whole evaluation process and for their readiness and openness to discuss any issues of concern I raised. I wish to record my sincere thanks for the provision of translation and the professional help given by the university colleagues. I really appreciate the friendly hospitality I was fortunate enough to enjoy.

The efficiency of the institutional procedures of programme quality assurance.

Mission, Values and Competitiveness:

The Romanian- German University is a relatively young institution. Since the launch of the Romanian- German University (1998) it has attained a distinctive profile:

Europe-orientation:

When it comes to promoting excellence in the European field of higher education the agenda is increasingly around enhancing national and international competitiveness. The university's main goal is to educate high quality professionals with competitive knowledge and skills in the European labour market who are capable of moving easily within contemporary socioeconomic settings. Romania's accession to the EU in 2007 has strengthened this aim and has brought new opportunities. Successful integration to the „European Higher Education Area ”has been also part of their strategy.

The university holds Europeanness and Europe-compatibility as fundamental values. The private university- project was established within the framework of a „University Foundation for European Integration”, and official accreditation was gained in 2005. The university values partnerships and seeks to promote transnational cooperation and mobility. The institution joined European networks like the European Association of Institutions of Vocational Education and the Network of Social Care Organizations in Europe.

German(y) -orientation

Choosing the name: Romanian- German University (= RO-GER in its used nickname version) signifies the importance of its relations with German and German-speaking higher education institutions and with business and civic communities. At the same time it expresses a commitment to build on the regional historical heritage of the Saxon people. The university has developed a wide network of partnerships with German companies and institutions for the sake of providing the students the possibility of acquiring European and intercultural experience and scholarships for study and placement. (Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, Fachhochschule für Öffentliche Verwaltung und Rechtspflege in Bayern, Fachhochschule der Sachsen Verwaltung, Meissen, Deutsch-Rumanische Akademie, Mainz, Europaischer Verband Beruflicher Bildungsträger, Diakonie Neuendettelsau, Karl Franzens University of Graz).

The four International Summer Universities held between 2004-2011 were supported by distinguished political individuals and organisations like the The Consul of Germany at Sibiu,

the Vice-President of the European Parliament, the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania, the Romanian – German Foundation, Sibiu.

The slogan expressing their identity is: *From Quality to Performance*

Until last year the slogan was: *Quality that makes the difference*. Last year there was an internal competition to renew it and out of the 50 proposals the present one was selected to emphasize the university's commitment to enact its mission and deliver excellence in education .

In Romania there are close to 50 private universities. Not all of them has been able to get successful accreditation so far and their recognition as a whole needs developing. Some years ago there was a nationwide scandal attached to one of them which cast a long shadow over this strand of higher education institutions. Competition is fierce. Romanian-German University has always aimed to be a serious, responsible university, not aiming merely to become a research university, nor merely a teaching university that can only offer BA study programs. The university positions itself in the category that offers and delivers both BA and MA level degree programs at the highest level.

Salient values:

The university's Ethical Code includes an explicit formulation of ideals, principles and moral rules which include academic freedom, the principle of public accountability, transparency, respect and tolerance, responsibility, the principle of rights of students and staff, student-centered education , the principle of consulting social partners in decision-making. According to the annual reports of the Ethic Commission there has been no violation of the Ethical Code in the last 3 years.

The university has internal auditing practices relating to the main fields of the university's activities. These ensure a large measure of public transparency. Since 2009 the university's financial statements have been subject to external audit.

Pro- community perspective

The university has developed a strong community approach .

Since 2003 it has adapted the model of the Extended Senate, whereby a broad range of regional and local stakeholders eg Romanian and German company ceo-s, representatives of public authorities and institutions, are co-opted a) to create a forum to identify and frame issues of common concern and b) to support institutional steering. The university has profited a great deal from these contacts: it has received up-to- date information about community needs, about donations, resource mobilization, field –practice places etc.

A „State of the University” speech is given each year by the Rector at the City Council. The EU-funded Regional Pact no. 1 for Employment and Social Inclusion in the Central Region of Romania (6 counties) and the Regional Pact no. 2 on Regional Labour Market's adjustment to vulnerable groups generated *fruitful partnership with regional stakeholders all over Transylvania*. The Centre Region's County Boards of Education, County Employment Agencies , Municipalities and business firms are regular partners both in research and development projects and in education.

Visibility

For a private university, increasing recognition and visibility is essential for recruiting students. Caravan Days especially target high school pupils. RO-GER has developed a partnership with impressive amount of high schools in Sibiu county and in the neighbouring region (nearly 70). The annual marketing plan covers the whole year, it involves regional media (radio, newspapers, journals for the young), social media, campaign periods, and many other promotional activities. The regular May 5th Open Day-events attract pupils and parents as well. The university's marketing budget is around 10.000 euros.

Promoting applied research and development projects has led to higher levels of partnerships and increased recognition. A transnational project in connection with the theme *corporate social responsibility* brought together not only international partners (Austria, Cyprus, Slovenia, Portugal) but local branches of big multinational companies.

In partnership with the University of Tübingen and the Institute of Applied Economic Research in Stuttgart RO-GER is involved in setting up a *Centre for Applied Economic Research and Econometrics* in Sibiu in consortium with 3 Romanian universities. The aim is to develop joint R & D-projects with the Transylvanian business community.

Cooperation agreements were signed with Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, The Institute of Multi-, Inter – and Transdisciplinary Studies of Sibiu, Paul Negulescu Institute of Administrative Sciences of Sibiu, University Dimitrie Cantemir of Targu –Mures, Eftimie Murgu University of Resita, Bucharest Forum of Science and Culture for joint research projects and programs.

Training excellent practitioners who can demonstrate their skills in the labour market also enhances visibility and reputation. The university encourages BA graduates to choose free of charge MA programs in state universities and have seen their former students prosper there. Ro-Ger MA-degree programs are chosen by Lucian Blaga students as well. The management was proud of the feedback they received from the students who compared the services, the relationships and the level of education in favour of their institution.

Quality assurance

Romanian legislative changes, ARACIS and the new Educational Act (2011) together prescribe and stipulate a large number of procedures and structures which have been undertaken in the last 3-4 years by the university. A huge set of regulatory standards and structures have been developed. A limited amount of experience has been accumulated so far, but all the new procedures have begun to operate.

For the 2008-2010 period the priorities of management were focused on developing and implementing a strategy for quality assurance in education and research which corresponded to national and European standards.

There are at present 7 specific operative management structures: Commissions for Evaluation and Quality Assurance, for Internal Audit, for Monitoring the Study Programs, for European Programmes and International Relations, for Human Resources, for Academic Ethics are functioning and the Scientific Council.

Each sets the main objectives for quality assurance on an annual basis. They are evaluated through the existing procedures and the *Evaluation Report on the achievement of objectives for QA being issued annually* is reviewed by the Senate.

Following the academic year 2010-2011 an annual Internal evaluation report of the study programs is going to be made.

The teacher/student ratio at the present year: 8,78 at the Faculty of Law and 6,52 at the Faculty of Management.

Being small and private the institution is well positioned to take advantage of shifts in the environment in a dynamic and vibrant way. It has the capacity to respond vigorously and flexibly to current and future challenges, as it constantly tries to review its practices and generate new programs and activities or close outdated ones.

At present 8 bachelor programs and 5 master degree study programs are offered at two faculties to the 884 members of full-time student population.

The university has not been growing at a constant rate despite the fact that a range of new and relevant study programmes and new approaches to teaching have been introduced. The problems identified are, in the management's view, largely due to the impact of global and national financial and economic crises on families, and to the lack of approval from the Ministry for some specialized courses. „Social Management”, which would have been popular with students, frequent legislative changes, the effects of recent demographic trends, and last year's unique case when 50 % of secondary school pupils in Romania failed their baccalaurate. This fact diminished the number of potential students going on to university, and RO-GER suffered as a result.

The university had earlier made efforts to build distant learning structures but it was quickly discovered that more intensive human and physical investments would be needed. The university's limited resources and fierce competition from other providers prompted them to opt out. Earlier the university aimed at teaching the study program completely in German but the students' language skills weren't sufficiently well developed for that. 70-80 % of the students are beginners in German. Still, German language learning is mandatory with another foreign language. Approximately 40-50 % of the student population achieves a fairly high professional German level.

The actual strategic plan's objective is to consolidate institutional development and position the university firmly in the local, regional, national and international academic landscape.

Since 2011 the unit of *Education and Training Centre* has been launched offering vocational and professional further training for adults. (72-100 hours). Teaching activity supporting the lifelong learning initiatives started in 2009 at RO-GER. The National Register for Adult Professional Training authorized specializations offered like *trainer, evaluator of training programmes, training of trainers, human resources inspector, project manager*; The modular teaching has proved to be very fruitful. Adding to them a wide range of short intensive courses are offered in the fields of Communication and PR, Customer Management, Time

Management, Conflict Management , Leadership, Teambuilding, Business and Marketing Planning. Social Management turned out to be a success and the university has been trying to develop it into a major study program.

The research activity and the internationally recognized publication level of the staff has to be promoted in spite of the fact that the use of bibliometric measures is very disputed. The University made efforts to obtain the official recognition of the BURG Publishing House that supports the channels of publication for the staff members. *Annals of the Romanian-German University of Sibiu – economic series* and *Annals of the Romanian- German Univeristy Sibiu – legal and administrative sciences* have been published in the recent years.

The dissemination of research results has been achieved by the university organizing an academic conference each year since 2002. International Summer Universities' themes also are selected to share good practices and project results.

The university ensures that staff have a free online access to a number of international scientific databases. The university management is very keen to make this provision so as to encourage research and development initiatives.

The efficiency of the institutional procedures for ensuring graduation standards.

The Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences now has 182 undergraduates, the Faculty of Economics offer BA programs to 440 students and MA-degree level programs to 260 graduates.

Responding to student demand there has been a re-arranging of the structures and programmes on offer. The Faculty of Engineering couldn't last and the Department of Languages has shrunk and been incorporated into another Faculty. Labour market demands are regularly analyzed to develop the portfolio of programmes and courses offered.

The university appreciates the chance to attend forums and meetings organized by Regional Employment Office to map and monitor labour market needs.

The employers highlighted how intensively the university leadership has tried to build contacts with them. (81 big companies in Sibiu, Police, Army Intelligence, Media, Bank, Auditing firms, Health insurance agency, Orange Mobii PhoneCompany , Post office were represented.)

The quality is as much dependent on students' ability and efforts as on the provision made available by the institution.

The university operates a *Community Programmes Office* for the task of coordinating and implementing the EU Erasmus student and staff mobility programs. I consider the university's real strengths in this field. According to a study published by the National Agency of Student Organization, RO-GER achieved 11th place among all universities (out of roughly 200) in Romania, and 2nd place among the private universities.

During the 2007-2011 period 18 students were awarded an Erasmus study grant and 46 won a practical placement grant. The total amount contracted for the period is over 118.000 euro.

Other international seminars are available for the students like the 2011 ISEM: Globals Scenario Seminar organized in Mannheim in partnership with Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg.

There is a *Centre for Counselling and Career Guidance* (accredited by the Ministry and by the county Employment Agency). This reports directly to the Rector, and offers a range of specific services like developing a CV and letter of intention , offering career orientation and job seeking practices. I have seen the enormous number of printed training and instruction materials developed in this field that are used both for high school students and university graduates.

Being a small –sized university (at present under 1000 students, but even at the peak the number is under 1500) , the teacher/ students ratio: 7,65) has produced outstanding interpersonal relations between the lecturers and the students.

The meeting with former and present students highlighted this element of the teaching climate. The employers appraised the students' constructive behaviour, their critical capacities, and their German language skills. The students expressed their pride in being graduates of RO-GER.

The efficiency of the institutional procedures of supporting the educational process

The timing of this review coincided with holiday time, so there was no chance of my observing the actual teaching processes and meeting the students informally.

An internal IT service, locally labelled as " Virtual University" is offered for the staff, management and for the students. This intranet system can handle detailed information on grades , records and all sort of relevant educational information. Access guaranteed on password and username. (<http://uv.roger-univ.ro>). Teacher-group communication is mediated through web –based technology. (groups.google.com or groups.yahoo.com).

Teachers are assigned a minimum of 2 hours per week for tutorials and academic counselling. Academic staff's teaching hours are kept between limits. A full professor has to teach at least 7 hours a week but never more than 16 hours.

Due to international partnerships internationally recognized academics and practitioners are regularly invited to give lectures and run courses for the students.

Practice-orientated teaching and learning processes are considered crucial at RO-GER. The university recently designed and implemented collaboratively a practice –oriented modular course with an another Romanian university and a Portuguese partner on developing entrepreneurial culture. The students were taught to make realistic and fundable business plans. The course modules were taught in English for half a year which was followed by the

16 working groups' joint planning activities. The results were presented to a real business community, bankers, financiers, etc. Such initiatives are always encouraged by the management.

Students have a say in decision-making processes: they enjoy 25 % representation in the Senate. However, according to the records they are not particularly vocal and demanding there, only one proposal was made in the last 3 years (extending the examination period for September – it was given.) The explanation for the relative inactivity was that the interpersonal relations are so good between the teachers and the students that formal representation is not needed : the students' wishes and complaints are quickly known and acted upon within the informal system. This seems to be the case : several former and present students went out of their way to mention the strength of the informal system. . There is a „suggestion box” on the ground floor where each of the students can express criticism or make a proposal.

The bulk of the classes are in the afternoon, to take account of the needs of those who are working. Classes end at 8.p.m.

The best students can apply for scholarships for excellence. The money is quite substantial , corresponds to the level of the annual tuition fee.

The university has a publishing house (BURG) that has managed to publish appr. 100 titles so far, among them course books and academic books. Since it achieved official authorization in 2009 new opportunities have presented themselves.

Composition of the teaching staff

At present there are 35 full time academics and 17 associated professors coming from various practice fields relating to the taught domains. Experienced judges, criminal experts, lawyers, the head of the police, director of the regional employment services were mentioned as colleagues among other academics from the famous and the town's biggest public university (Lucian Blaga).

Only 4 staff members are not enrolled in doctoral courses, all the others either do have a Phd or are involved in working towards one.

A number of former students who excelled in learning were selected to join the staff. This is considered to be part of the recruitment policy of the institution.

Since 2007-2011 10 staff members have been able to do teaching internships in Europe with the support of the Erasmus grants.

The staff do not enjoy lucrative salaries as the university maintains a low level of tuition fee policy compared to its main competitors. But additional sources of income are available if and when R&D projects are undertaken.

Lately the university's own financial resources have been too scarce to send staff members to national and international conferences. However the self-financing share has always been given to EU project-bidding.

If a staff member requests 3-6 months long individual research time, the Senate decides whether to grant that.

To date there have been no formalized procedures for incentives, but the incoming Rector intends to start up some motivational schemes.

In order to build community cohesion there are regular social events organized, like Christmas parties, Balls, community gatherings and study tours at International Summer Schools.

The internal evaluation results of the study programmes' quality.

All the formal evaluation procedures in the institution began in 2008.

Students' evaluations in the last 3 years were very favourable: 75 % of satisfaction rates were given to each dimension asked to assess. (exploitation of time, clarity and style of presentation, teacher's behaviour in relation to the students, their availability, assessment methods, the course's impact on the student, etc.).

A multi-criteria annual evaluation form does exist on each member of academic staff, and this forms a basis for monetary rewards and promotion. According to the final evaluation report the assessment affected salaries (approx. 10 persons suffered a 5 % decrease.) The levels of research and the internationally recognized reviewed publication dimension were relatively poor. It turned out at the meeting with the teaching staff that the associate professors coming from the workplace often do not meet the research requirements.

The teacher evaluation framework is composed of the following elements:

1. teacher self-evaluation at the end of each year;
2. peer-evaluation: this is coordinated by the heads of departments (each has to evaluate other colleagues whose work is known to the evaluator - corresponding the appropriate level of the teaching position.
3. Student evaluation of the teachers. The results are processed statistically. Teachers receive the evaluation results with recommendations about improving their teaching activity.
4. Supervisor's evaluation happens each year taking into account all the forms of evaluations and some other dimensions: research and publication activities, participation and effectiveness in the institutional work.

Starting last year the university now relates the overall assessment to financial incentives and sanctions as well.

Former graduates really valued the personalized teaching methods and academic skills of the professors; they expressed their thanks that lecturers always made time for their

personal and professional development. In particular, Dr. Hortensia Gorski was very much valued by her former students for her time and for the care given to them.

Mentoring, tutoring and the collaborative spirit were all positively appraised by the graduates.

Having met the graduates nobody mentioned any problems in getting employment, so the labour market or occupational relevance of the degree programs seems to be achieved well.

Since the beginning management has put emphasis on providing varied and institutionally diverse fields for the students' practical work experiences. Many graduates praised the extensive pool of professional practice they could acquire during their formative years.

Employers spoke positively about the learning outcomes as well.

Learning environment

The students' use of the academic infrastructure

There are three buildings on the campus: one old building for teaching and learning purposes. library and PC laboratory included. The building had been used by the Military Academy since the last century. It offers traditional style classrooms. Everything is clean and suitable but the interior decoration, the dark blue grey colours don't really make it as an attractive learning environment. Another building opposite the street hosts the management offices and the teachers' rooms. The auditorium (appr. 100 seats), the accommodation capacity and the fitness center is situated in this building. Directly attached to it there is another building currently run by Raiffesisen Bank. The university owns a 2 floor-size space in this building. None of the buildings can provide free access to the disabled. Out of the total 3690 sqm 1320 sqm is for the purpose of learning.

Free access is provided to the university library, computer laboratory and other laboratories, copy centre and Fitness centre and a dentist's check-up service is offered free of charge to the students. WIFI is available as well.

The fitness center in the basement is intensively visited which can't be said about the library. According to the sole qualified young librarian the relatively small facility is not the favourite space for students, who would rather use the internet at home for seeking information. The library is relatively very small, (84 sqm) it offers limited space for learning (60 seats were indicated in the reading rooms, but someone counted only 32) and somehow didn't strike me as a student-friendly space. It does have only one PC for search. 11,239 book titles, 101 titles of periodicals, electronic documentation resources are available on the shelves. Opening hours are from Monday to Friday:8-16 during semester time, in the examination period Saturday opening is offered. 900 reading permits have been issued.

To my surprise it turned out that the students don't prefer dormitory accommodation: they would rather rent premises in the city. In the last two years only 4-7 students asked for contracted dormitory accommodation. Having met them, I can confirm that they were satisfied with the living arrangements.

For this reason the accommodation capacity of 14 beds at the upper floor of the university building seems more than enough. The facilities are mainly used for hosting Erasmus-students and guest-teachers from abroad.

The university's intention is to start to build a new facility, a new campus in future years.

The credibility of information disseminated by the institution with regard to the study programmes.

The New Education Law stipulates that the strategic plan, operational plan, management plan has to be public. I was unable to find them on the website. The main website (www.roger-univ.ro) gives detailed information on the admission requirements, on study programs, degrees offered, management personnel, secretaries of the faculties, their opening hours.etc. in Romanian and German. Several items though are „under construction.” The SWOT-analysis listed the website as a weakness attributing it to the limited capacity of the system.

Students can get information in Romanian, German and English language leaflets and brochures. Each year approx. 10.000 copies of brochures, 30.000 flyers are disseminated to attract applicants for the Bologna-cycle offerings and for the intensive short courses. The institution practices a proactive marketing and recruitment efforts (Educational Fairs, Caravan to at least 70-80 high schools, Press conferences, media campaigns) as it wishes to maintain its reputation, expand the numbers and enhance the quality of incoming students.

Good practice aspects

Innovative leadership: Expanding the Senate with Honoured members, employing the „ extended Senate”-model; Having a Consultative Rector from the University of Tübingen. This social embeddedness is an asset both for the university management and for the students.

Partnerships: RO-GER seems to be very much embedded in the social life of the city and the Central Region, a lot of partnerships have been formed since the launch resulting both R & D opportunities and internship offers for the students' practical education.

It helps promoting visibility that the „State of the University –report” is presented by the Rector each year in front of the City Council.

Promotion activities, outreach: Career Caravan campaign reaching at least 70 high schools and the corresponding developmental work embodied in guides and instruction materials (accessible in pendrives) is very useful service for young people in school and serves as an efficient image building among potential students.

The organizational culture, the community spirit.

The personalized teaching methods and academic skills of the professors, strong informal teacher-student relationships.

Statement related to the confidence granted to the institution

I propose a “high degree of confidence” grade.

Recommendations for the institution’s activity

1. The newly elected Student Union should be given more responsibility and active involvement in institutional processes. This would make them feel more responsible for their own decisions and activities. I’ve observed in the practice of other Romanian universities that the Career Guidance and Counselling Centres are partially run by students, by the Student Union. It is worth considering involving the Student Union of RO-GER into this activity. Encourage the Student Union to join national and international youth networks.
2. Students and staff needs should be incorporated into the design and planning of the intended new facility. (The needs of the disabled shouldn’t be overlooked.)
3. Active support and help should be provided for students in developing information literacy, instructions or guides to the students to improve their search skills necessary for academic research. Introduction to Library professional services is worth organizing in a more professional fashion.
4. The Alumni network should be strengthened and better used for the benefit of the institution.
5. Structured ways of integrating the employers’ feedback into the teaching process should be developed.
6. All the MA study programs should be re-accredited according to the new legislation and there are newly emerging ones in the portfolio. The Faculty of Law has to develop some programmes at MA level as well.
7. In order to stimulate and support publication level „Excellent Publication of the Year” and other sort of incentives are worth developing .
8. BURG Publishing should produce more publications in bilingual forms, or in foreign languages. Annals – economic series and Annals- legal and administrative sciences series has to be issued in other languages as well. (German, definitely.)
9. Fostering university-industry-public stakeholder collaborative research and development projects would involve members of the broader teaching staff in exploring new and original avenues for research.
10. Creating research teams and research groups would support those individuals who are reluctant to do individual research. Hopefully , more research funds could be raised this way.

11 Modules should be designed and offered in partnerships with employers for professional further training.

12. The website at present is under construction and clearly needs improving. The intention to create a webpage featuring issues of Quality is a very good idea. Here the university's self-evaluation report and other assessments could be made public.

13. Last year was the first experiment in FP7 funded EU DocCareers Programme It is a collaborate doctoral education that is jointly supervised by the university and external partners like companies, ngo-s, public sector organizers. For RO-GER this model could offer insights into developing a doctoral program as well.

Recommendation to ARACIS

In the course of my visit, all the 21 employers who accepted the invitation to meet us had the chance to share their views. It was very helpful to hear the different aspects of educational outcomes they raised. The usual time scheduled (1 hour) wasn't enough but we stayed on. Usually the information on the accreditation takes up nearly half of the allotted time. I propose a longer time slot for this type of meeting in future.

Nov 2012 02.28.

Dr. Tereza Klavik