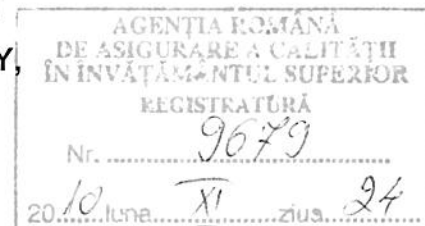


**EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT
FOR ARACIS OF AGORA UNIVERSITY,
ORADEA, 2010**



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 AGORA University in Oradea. The audit took place between Wednesday 10 November and Friday 12 November 2010.

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

Prof. univ. dr. Mircea Ivanescu – Mission Director

Prof. univ. dr. Ivan Cismaru – Coordinator of the Experts Evaluator Team

Prof. univ. dr. Dinu Airinei – Advisory Commission Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Antal Lukacs – Institutional Commission Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Costache Rusu – Program Expert (Management)

Prof. univ. dr. Horia Cristea – Program Expert (Accounting and Management Information Systems)

Prof. univ. dr. Dan Claudiu Danisor – Program Expert (Law)

Livia Dumitrascu – Technical Secretary

Ruxandra Pricope – Student Evaluator

Maria Padure – Student Evaluator

The evaluation process began on Wednesday the 10th of November at 9 a.m. in one of the seminar rooms. The Rector of AGORA University welcomed the evaluation team and talked about the history of the university and its present situation. Prof. univ. dr. Ivan Cismaru presented the introductory statements of the mission. This was followed by a tour at the university to see the infrastructure of the institution.

Between 10 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 alumni of AGORA University. At 6 p.m. we had another meeting with the present students. The first day ended with a meeting of the evaluators.

The team continued the evaluation process on Thursday the 11st of November starting at 9 a.m. and lasted until 5 p.m. At 12 a.m. we met the teaching staff of AGORA University and at 5 p.m. there was a one hour appointment with a group of about 25 graduates' employers.

The evaluation process was finished on Friday the 12th of November when the team of experts prepared the final report. The evaluation process was conducted in open and collegial manner. The colleagues of AGORA University let us have all the materials we needed for the evaluation.

General Statements

AGORA University operates according to the Constitution and the laws that govern the higher education system in Romania.

AGORA University is a private higher education and research institution, founded through the decision of 17 of March 2000 of the Managerial Board of AGORA Foundation, being organized according with the Law of Education no. 84/1995, with the Law regarding the accreditation of high education institutions and diploma recognition no. 88/1993 and with the provisions of Government Decision no. 88/2005 regarding the organization of the academic studies.

The didactic structure of AGORA University is very simple as it has only one faculty. The Faculty of Law and Economics performs its activity in two departments: the Department of Law and the Department of Economics.

AGORA University licensed to offer five complete BA programs: Law, Management, Accounting and Management, Economic Informatics, and the Community Police. All five programs are authorized by the Romanian Government, based on favourable indications of the National Council of Academic Evaluation and Accreditation

(CNEAA) or of the Romanian Agency of Quality Assurance in High Education (ARACIS) and of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth, Sport and Tourism. The University has about 550 enrolled students in the academic year of 2010/2011. The quality of human resources at AGORA University seems to be on a good level but scientific potential and research should be strengthened.

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.

The management is assured by the following managerial bodies: the Administration Council, the Senate, the Senate Bureau, the Faculty Council and the Bureau of the Faculty Council.

The Administration Council is the supreme forum of administrative, financial and economic management of the University, and the Senate is the superior management forum of the whole teaching and research activities.

The Senate is the main decision making body of the university which consists of a mixture of appointed and elected representatives. There are 9 persons in the Senate at AGORA University: 7 teaching staff and 2 students (22,22%).

The Faculty Council is the forum of the top management of all educational, scientific and administrative activities taking place in the faculty.

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: The formal regulations of AGORA University provide the student's participation in different decision-making bodies in sufficient proportion. I could not clear up how it is operating in the practice during the meeting with the students. It is unusual (also in the business) that close relatives are members of the leadership (rector and dean) though I suppose it cannot be against legal regulation.

Teaching Staff

The number of academic staff at the AGORA University in the academic year 2010/2011 is 27. There are 22 employees in the academic staff who is employed full-time by the university and 10 (37%) of them are professors and associate professors. Most of the academic staff members at AGORA University are PhD holders (77,77%) or they are working to achieve PhD degree (22,22%). There is only one member of the didactic staff who does not do any PhD activity. AGORA University has now a well qualified young didactic staff (half of them is under 40 years old).

There are 3 persons of the teaching staff who pensioners or who are over the limit of retirement age.

Comment: The University management pays a great attention to recruit competitive teachers, although there should be more leading practitioners among the part-time lectures in their field that may be very beneficial for the students.

The academic staff quality seems to be on good level, *the quantity is sufficient* compared to number of students. AGORA University put great emphasis on HRD in the last few years.

Facilities

AGORA University is housed in a building which used to be a factory in Oradea. Considering that the building was not designed for its current purpose, the university makes extraordinarily good use of its facilities.

The equipments of the educational spaces could be better. Not all the educational spaces fulfil every requirement of the European standards. Also the laboratories need new and modern equipments. The information laboratory surface and its number of seats are in accordance with the number of students but most of the PCs which can be used by the students are out of date.

The educational spaces which are available developed very impressively. AGORA University offer to the academic community spaces with a total surface of more than 11 000 m², from which classrooms and seminar rooms with a total surface of 3800 m², suitable for more than 1200 students.

The library of AGORA University owns 2402 titles and 10,463 volumes on the fields of law, economics etc.

AGORA University has not its own student hostel. Regarding the accommodation, the University has proper leased spaces for the students (contract presented in annex). It is very laudable that AGORA University has its own sport hall on campus.

Disabled people cannot not move in the building of the University.

Comment: It is very important for the university *to continue investing* in its physical infrastructure. The lack of a canteen was mentioned when we had the appointment with the students.

Students

In the academic year of 2010/2011 there are about 550 students in five BA programs at AGORA University. (I haven't seen any data about the exact quantity of students but I was informed that there was a great decrease in the number students recently.)

Comment: According to the Bologna process it would be useful to provide for students the *access to take part in MA programs*. The human resource (academic staff) should be developed further more.

At the appointment with the students and during my discussions with them, I found them very open minded. Unfortunately there were only two students at the meeting who take part in the Law Program. They seem to be very satisfied with the education at the university and also pleased with the members of the academic staff.

There are quite a number of bilateral international agreements with different Universities but I was surprised that there is no Erasmus contract. The numbers of students participating in international programs are very few.

Comment: It is recommended to enter into more ERASMUS contracts and increase the number of students taking part in mobility activities. It will help the students to

gain some experience abroad and it is also suits to the EU recommendations which *inspire the students to study one semester abroad.*

At the meeting with employers, they seemed pleased with those students who graduated from AGORA University. I was delighted because there were representatives both of the private and public sector e.g. Banks, Companies, Chamber of Commerce, Courts, Municipalities and representatives of the Police etc. They also mentioned that there are good practices at AGORA University which can be useful for the student.

Research

Research activity is performed by the didactic staff and students. It is mainly organised through four research centers: Research and development AGORA SRL; Italo-Romanian Research Center; Center for European Studies; Center of Prevention and Control of Cross Border Crime (Euro-regional).

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

The scientific research appears mainly presented in papers at conferences and in articles. Publishing the research results the university is maintaining AGORA University Publishing House and encouraging the staff to publish, in cooperation with foreign authors as well. The senate approved the establishment of three journals: "AGORA International Journal of economics Sciences (C category)," AGORA International Journal of Juridical Sciences (B+) and "International Journal of Computers, Communication and Control (A Category).

AGORA University participates in international research collaborations by actions stipulated in Bilateral Agreements (e.g. Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italy; Universidade de les Illes Balears, Spain; Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III, France; The University of Belgrade, Serb Republic; University of Thessaly, Greece; University Tunis El Manar, Tunisia; Southeastern University of Florida, USA etc.)

Comment: The ambition of AGORA University in research activity is quite clear. They settled 4 priorities in their research strategy (human and material resources of the research centers; training students for research; material basis for research; publishing the research results). I recommend to AGORA University to accelerate reaching some the appointed aims because there are a lot to do in most of the above mentioned fields.

Quality Management

AGORA University develops and improves its own system of assuring the quality of the educational and research activity.

In the University structure the Commission of quality assurance and evaluation and at the Faculty level the Department of quality assurance were established. And they are operating based on the strategy and regulation developed and approved by the Senate.

Periodically, these bodies meet and analyze the compliance of institution's policy in quality domain at their levels. The results of these analyses are noted down in different reports.

AGORA University regularly reviews its courses and gathers student feedback.

Comment: In my opinion the structure and the procedures of quality assurance at AGORA University are well organized. There is also *internal and external control of quality assurance*.

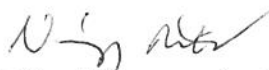
Conclusion

I recommend the institutional accreditation of AGORA University based on what I have experienced; seen, read and heard. I hope that some of the comments which I made in my report will help the University Management in the process of continual improvement.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to the Rector, the Dean and all the University staff for the pleasant atmosphere and the support during my stay in Oradea. Also much gratitude to my colleagues from 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.

Pécs, 19-11-2010



Péter Várnagy dr. jur., PhD

Associate Professor

University of Pécs

Hungary