

**EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT FOR ARACIS  
OF "GEORGE BARITIU" UNIVERSITY OF BRASOV**

**Brasov, 2013**



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 Baritiu” University in Brasov. The audit took place between Wednesday 16 October and Friday 18 October 2013.

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

Prof. univ. dr. Adrian Lungu (“Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati) – Mission Director

Prof. univ. dr. ing. Marius Bulgaru (Technical 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. Neculai Seghedin (Gheorghe Asachi Technical University) – Institutional Commission Expert

Assoc. Prof. dr. Daniela Zapodeanu (University of Oradea) – Program Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Alexandru Chis („Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca) – Program Expert

Assoc. Prof. dr. Mirela Gorunescu (“Nicolae Titulescu” University of Bucharest) – Program Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Iacob Constanta (University of Craiova) – Program Expert

Oana Sarbu – Technical Secretary

Robert Kristof (ANOSR) – Student Evaluator

Dicu Marius (UNSR) – Student Evaluator

The evaluation process began on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October at 9 a.m. in the Senate Room with the introductory statements of the mission by Prof. univ. dr. Adrian Lungu and he also asked the members of the evaluation team to introduce themselves. Then Professor Bulgaru presented the introductory statements of the mission. Next the President of UGB welcomed the evaluation team and introduced the rector and the deans of the university. This was followed by a tour of the university to see the infrastructure of UGB.

Between 10.30 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 40 undergraduate students of UGB. At 6 p.m. we had another meeting with 4 graduate students. The first day ended with a meeting of the evaluators.

The team continued the evaluation process on Thursday the 17<sup>th</sup> of October starting at 9 a.m. and lasted until 7.30 p.m. At 6 p.m. there was one hour appointment with 2 graduates' employers.

The evaluation process was finished on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> of October 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.

### General Statements

UGB seems to operate according to the Constitution and the laws that govern the higher education system in Romania. UGB is a private higher education institute and has been operating since 2002.

It has five faculties:

- Faculty of Law (Brasov)
- Faculty of Economics (Brasov)
- Faculty of Physical Education and Sports (Brasov)
- Faculty of Finances and Banking (Ploiesti)
- Faculty of Administrative Sciences (Ploiesti)

At present UGB offers 7 programs of bachelor degree university studies that are accredited or have a temporary authorization in Brasov and Ploiesti and in principle

UGB could start five master's degree programs. UGB changed the programs according to the European Bologna process (3-2-3) since 2005.

Although UGB had 566 enrolled students last year (2012/2013) the university had not any students in the first year; but this academic year (2013/14), as I was informed, 196 students started their studies at UGB in the first year.

I did not have the time to visit the campus of UGB in Ploiesti but I experienced that the material infrastructure at the campus in Brasov is under the optimal requirements.

I was surprised that UGB had not any international cooperation either in the fields of research or in the field of education.

It was very confusing for me that some parts of the institutional self-assessment report of UGB had been unclear for me. (Exact data were missing or some figures were different comparing to the information I got at UGB.)

Also a lot of wishes were formulated in the self-evaluation report but I had not experienced many of them.

### Managerial Structure

The management of the university seems to be 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.

The organizational structure of UGB is quite large for its size if we compare it to the number of students and teachers.

Within UGB the managing activity functions on different decision levels. In my opinion the organizational structure of UGB vertically is too much divided.

**Comment:** Probably there is not enough human resource at UGB who could complete all the tasks which are attached to this structure.

## Teaching Staff

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

The number of academic staff at UGB is 59 in the academic year of 2012/13. There are 42 employees in the academic staff who are employed full-time by the university and 12 (20,33%) of them are professors and associate professors. There are 17 part-time employees in the academic staff and 9 (52,94%) of them professors and associate professors. There are 42 PhD holders (71,18%) of all academic staff members at UGB but the rate of PhD holders is much higher among the non-permanent academic staff (88, 23%).

I did not see the human resource development plan of UGB and I could not find any data about the technical and administrative staff.

**Comment:** The human resource development plans for the future should be realized. The number of the non-permanent academic staff could be reduced. Although the part-time lecturers could be leading practitioners in their field or well qualified professors, that may be very beneficial for the students, but these lecturers usually do not have enough time for the students. I strongly recommend increasing the number professors and associate professors among the full-time employees in the academic staff.

## Facilities

The University functions in four buildings (A, B, C, D) at the campus in Brasov.

Most of the educational activity is going on in "Building A" which has got 6 classrooms. A small library with little space and with a reading room (equipped with 25 computers) is also situated here. The library has a total number of 1344 titles, with 65.870 volumes of books and periodicals. There is a little foreign literature in the library but all the bulletins were published in Romania.

"Building B" is an office-block. The first floor is used by the university where are the offices of the leadership and the administrative units of UGB are situated. Different business companies are on the other floors.

In "Building C" besides the sports hall and ceremonial hall three seminar room can be found. The facilities of the sports hall are very limited.

There were computer labs in "Building D". Except for the computer labs I didn't see any other laboratories during my visit.

Generally I can put down that most of the equipment of the educational spaces are much more under the requirement of the European standards. Most of the PCs which can be used by the students are out of date. 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. Disabled people cannot move in the buildings of UGB.

**Comment:** UGB should invest in its physical infrastructure they should reach the European standards in the future. The lack of material base is one of the weakest points of UGB.

### Students

In the academic year of 2012/2013 there are about 566 students at UGB.

Besides the organized appointments I also had the possibility to visit a lecture of management of the first year students at the Faculty of Economics and in the break could talk with them. Of course they had not too much experience but one of the most important reasons of their selection among higher educational institutions was that they could study in the afternoons and evenings at UGB.

The undergraduate students at the appointment were fairly active. They were pleased with the education and the circumstances. Their choices were influenced the most that UGB offered a flexible learning possibility and the fees are lower compared

to other private universities. They mentioned that unfortunately society's recognition of a degree issued by a private university is much lower. They also pointed out that the relationship between students and teachers is very good. The members of the academic staff are very helpful.

There was not too much reaction on tougher questions.

UGB operates a Centre for Counselling and Career Guidance but career advice is given by head of chairs.

**Comment:** I would rather appreciate if advice was given by professional career counselors.

UGB is not taking part in any international or European projects with different universities and I was surprised that there is no Erasmus contract.

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

At the meeting of the graduate students one of them, who had previous experience at state universities, mentioned that he didn't feel much difference between a private or a state university. It was also pointed out that UGB is stricter than other private universities in Brasov.

At the meeting with the representatives of the employers there were only two persons. One of them was from the public sector (IRS) and the other was from the private sector (Raiffeisen Bank). They seemed to be very satisfied with those students who graduated from UGB. They told us that preferred UGB to other private universities which were operating in Brasov. In their opinion there are quite many problems with the regulation of internship.

## Research

The academic staff develops scientific research activities, capitalized through didactic materials, publications in specific magazines or publishing houses in the country, through scientific communications, presented within sessions, conferences and symposiums organized by UGB or within other universities in the country. Actually I got information about only one conference organized by UGB. The presentations of this conference are published in a conference proceeding.

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

The academic performance of UGB is decreased in the last two years quite lot, although scientific level hadn't been very high before the mentioned period. There were only 3 publications (2 – B+ CNCSIS; 1 – ISI Web of Knowledge) at UGB in 2012.

They have published, in cooperation with different publishing houses, 377 books since 2002 but most of them are used for educational purposes.

UGB organizes scientific communication sessions for didactic staff and students and the communications are published in the University News Letter.

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:** Most of the members of academic staff should increase their number of publications and I would also 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 a special attention to the quality assurance. A central committee (Assessment and Quality Assurance Commission) of quality assurance supervises all activities at university level. It 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.

UGB has structures, strategies, policies and procedures for quality assurance of the teaching and research process; and also an informatics system which collects, and analysis data and information for the assessment and institutional quality assurance. (Unfortunately I did not have the time to get know this informatics system.)

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

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

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

I emphasize the following:

- As the lack of material base is one of the weakest points of UGB, they should invest in physical infrastructure and facilities when funds allow.



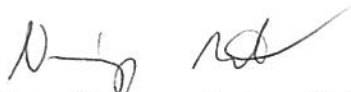
- Another weak point at UGB is the presentation and the verification of the results of scientific research (e.g. the reduced number of publications, the lack of scientific infrastructure etc.)
- I strongly suggest developing international links and collaborations to support international research activities and encourage students taking part in exchange and mobility programmes.
- I understand that budgetary pressures are such that it is becoming increasingly difficult to invest in human resources; but it is very important to provide to the academic staff the opportunities for development and retain a highly qualified staff, but it is worth the university's being cognizant of this as an on-going issue.

To summarize my remarks and observations I think that the activity of UGB does not meet the requirement of the European standards of education and scientific research. In the present situation of UGB hasn't reached the level of limited confidence.

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 Brasov. Also 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.

Pécs, 31-10-2013



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