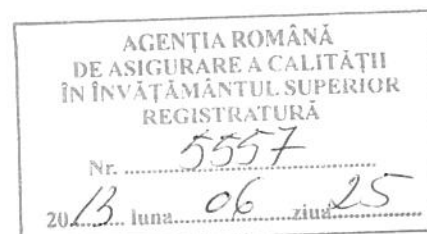


**EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT
FOR ARACIS OF
TRANSILVANIA UNIVERSITY OF BRASOV
2013**



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 evaluation process of Transilvania University of Brasov (UTBv). I have participated in quite a number of accreditation procedures but it was the second time that I evaluated a university maintained by the state. The audit took place between Wednesday 5 June and Friday 7 June 2013.

A huge evaluation team (27 members) took part in the accreditation process as UTBv is a rather enormous university with 18 faculties and approximately 20000 students.

The evaluation process began on Wednesday the 5th of June at 9 a.m. in the "U" building with the welcoming speech of the rector. Prof. univ. dr. ing. Ioan Vasile ABRUDAN also presented the management of UTBv, the representatives of the students and those colleagues who were responsible for the different programmes at the faculties. Then Prof. univ. dr. Iliăș NICOLAE told the introductory statements of the mission. After that the Rector talked about the history of the university and its present situation. I was surprised that UTBv had no debt at all. It is very unique nowadays referring to the economic crises. This was followed by a tour in the "U" building of the university to see the infrastructure of the University Library (central library) and we watched a short film about UTBv in Aula Magna.

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, students of the university.

In the morning I visited the Project Management Office and the International Relations Office and in the afternoon the evaluation team visited the University Research and Development Institute, then I went to the Faculty of Letters. At 5 p.m. we had an appointment with a group of 16 former students of UTBv and at 6 p.m. there was a one hour meeting with a group of 15 undergraduate students.

The team continued the evaluation process on Thursday the 6th of June. I had an appointment 9 a.m. at the Faculty of Law, 10 a.m. at the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences and 11.30 a.m. at the Faculty of Physical Education and Mountain Sports. In the afternoon I had the occasion to meet with the president of the senate and the vice-presidents. At 5 p.m. we had a one hour meeting with a group of about 21 graduates' employers.

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

General Statements

Transilvania University of Brasov operates according to the Constitution and the laws that govern the higher education system in Romania. UTBv is a state higher education and research public institution constituted as a legal entity which operates under the Ministry of Education and Science Order no. 4894/22.03.1991, a document which officially establishes the university's current name, but its history started in 1948, when the Brasov Forestry Institute was established on the basis of Decree no. 175/1948 and Decision no. 263327/1948 of the Ministry of Public Education.

UTBv functions according to the Bologna process, organising 18 faculties in Brasov. The faculties are conducting primarily teaching, scientific research and lifelong learning activities. The university has several BA (103) and MA (67) programs which are provided through full-time, part-time and distance learning education activities. Also, the university is recognized as an institution with the right to organize doctoral studies (18 areas of doctoral research). All study programmes of the university have been accredited/ authorized to operate.

The university has 20.261 enrolled students, out of which: 15.873 undergraduate students (13.214 full-time, 1.533 distance learning and 1.126 part-time); 3.867 master's degree students (3.685 full-time and 182 part-time); 521 doctoral students (285 full-time and 236 part-time). There are 11788 students whose studies are financed by the state; the others are paying fees for their studies.

Managerial Structure

The leadership of the university is organised in accordance with its legal obligations, which are stated in the university's charter and the structure can be followed very clearly in the organogram of UTBv. In terms of structure, the university is led by a Rector, who is supported by five Vice-Rectors. The Rector's duties include the strategic leadership of the university and representing the university at judicial and public bodies. He has formulated the quality policy and objectives, which are known and applicable in the entire university.

The Senate is the main decision making body of the university which consists of the faculties representatives. Besides the president, the vice-presidents (2) and chancellor, there are 87 persons in the Senate at UTBv (64 teaching staff and 23 students). Its activity is structured into six committees, four committees being coordinated by the vice-presidents (the Scientific Committee; the Quality Assurance and International Committee; the Didactic Committee; the Committee on Student Rights and Obligations) and chancellor is responsible for two (the Legal Committee and the Economic Committee).

The structure of the executive management of UTBv is the Administration Council that consists of the rector, five vice-rectors, the administrative director, deans, representatives of the students and invited members.

The university is divided into 18 faculties, which are further subdivided into departments. At the level of faculties, the management structure is the Faculty Council, which includes the dean, the vice-deans and representatives of teachers

and students. Each department is managed by the Council of the Department which includes the director of the department, and 3 - 7 members of the academic staff.

There are counselling, monitoring, internal assessment (e.g. the Committee for Monitoring, Coordination and Methodological Guiding of the Development of the System of Management Control) and support (e.g. the IT Office) structures.

The functional organizations (e.g. the Human Resources Division, the Student Residence Halls and Refectories Service) of UTBv are also well-structured and provide various services for the students and the staff.

The management activities are based on the integrated informational and communicational system, through the Internet as well as the Intranet.

Comment: UTBv has a coherent, integrated, transparent management system, based on an efficient and effective administration.

Teaching Staff

In the current academic year there are 1393 teaching positions at UTBv from which 788 are filled and some of the 605 vacant teaching positions are filled by 357 associate teaching staff. UTBv employs 577 administrative and non-teaching staff.

The number of employees has decreased by over 10% in the last years and the number of students reduced also at the same time. The number of students per member of the teaching staff is 17,69 $(788+357/20261)$.

The structure of the teaching staff seems to be balanced; 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. Non-permanent staff from outside the university is graduates in the respective domains and have accumulated experience in practical activities and/or in research. Every year the University evaluates the employees' performances.

Comment: The quality of human resources and the scientific potential at UTBv is on a good level. The transparencies of the personal records are clear. The ratio of students to teaching staff is very close to the OECD and European average level.

Facilities

UTBv has not got a unified campus. It is situated in different buildings in the city. I had the possibility to visit quite a number of them. I experienced that the condition of the buildings are on a very different level, a few of them has to be renewed (e.g. Faculty of Law and Faculty of Letters). A few offices of the academic staff are crowded. The space for the academic staff should be increased. There are also differences among the equipment's of the buildings.

UTBv also has two canteens and 13 dormitories, with a total of 4.233 beds. The new buildings of the University Research and Development Institute are very impressive, with a total area of 14.850 which has to be equipped completely and filled with activities. UTBv has good sport facilities (halls and sports fields). All these facilities provide a wide range of recreation and personal development activities for students, but they also should pay more attention to disabled students.

The Library of UTBv improves 553.065 books, 121.627 magazines and 46.338 volumes in Special Collections. The Library updates its documents in all fields in order to achieve the performance indicators set by international standards. In parallel with the development of the library publications fund as a source of information, the University Library provides access to international databases: ScienceDirect Journals, Thomson ISI, SpringerLink, Oxford Journals, Cambridge Journals, Scopus, EBSCO, Academic Search Premier, Sage Journals, MathSciNet, Forest Science Database, Institute of Physics, Wiley Blackwell Journals, Legis, Eurolegis. This became possible by upgrading the computerized system of the library, when an integrated system was created in 2006, which includes all the facilities necessary to manage the library.

UTBv ensures the printing of the lecture notes, textbooks and of the necessary documents for the implementation of the curricula by Transilvania University Press.

Comment: There is enough place for didactic and research activities. Facilities are well used and most of the educational spaces, what I have seen, fulfil every requirement of the European standards. It can be seen that UTBv invested in its

physical infrastructure a lot in the last few years. It is important to continue this procedure and renovate the old buildings.

Students

Each type of study program (BA/BSc, MA/MSc and PhD) is available for the candidates at UTBv. There is a decrease in the number of students if we compare the data with the last academic years.

UTBv offers flexible and modern distance learning and part-time education forms. Distance learning (DL) started in 1999 as a pilot action with two study programs, currently there are in the University 23 Bachelor's and Master's study programs which cover different domains: Humanist (Romanian Language and Literature – a Modern Language and Literature), economic (Management, Finance and Banking, Accounting and Management Informatics, International Business, Marketing, Economics of Trade, Tourism and Services), engineering (Automotive Engineering, Cynegetics, Economic and Industrial Engineering, Wood Processing Engineering, Energy Management), music (Music therapy), sports (Physical Education and Sports, Sports and Motor Performance) etc. The DL study programs are offered both locally (in Brasov), and at the territorial centre in Focsani, set up in 2001 by decision of the Senate of the University. At UTBv the implementation of the online courses destined to Distance Learning and Part-time Education, is based on the Moodle product.

During the discussion with the *former students* they seemed pleased with the members of the academic staff and the university. There has not been any criticism at all.

At the appointment with the *students*, I found them very open minded. They seem to be very loyal to their university and found most of the curricula and the academic staff very good. It was mentioned that the practice should be improved in some of the programs. They told us that it was also very difficult to find practice places in the public sector. They found the Erasmus Mobility Program very useful but there were sometimes problems with the recognition of the subjects which were taken abroad.

There are around 300 Erasmus Mobility agreements at UTBv. 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 210 (157/53 ERASMUS Student Mobility for Studies/ERASMUS Student Mobility for Placements) outgoing and 99 incoming students in the last academic year (2011-2012).

Comment: It is recommended to increase the number of students taking part in mobility activities especially doing a traineeship abroad. It will help the students to gain some practical experience abroad and it is also suits to EU recommendations.

At the meeting with *employers*, they seemed very satisfied with those students who graduated from UTBv although they brought up the lack of students practical knowledge. Most of the employers were representatives of different fields from industry (e.g. Siemens, Schaeffler, LMS Romania etc.) but there were representatives of public sector too (e.g. Governmental Organizations, Municipalities etc.) They also mentioned that they have good cooperation with UTBv for the student's practice.

Research

Scientific research in the university is structured into research centres, which are mostly interdisciplinary. There are 29 research centres at UTBv. Research activity within the university is coordinated by a vice-rector for Scientific Research and IT.

The Project Management Office is an administrative structure at UTBv which provides pre-award and post-award support for research and development project; monitors the on-going grants and projects. UTBv also operates support structure for technology transfer: Intellectual Property Office and Technology Business Incubator Pro-Energ. UTBv is engaged in scientific research through research master programmes as well as doctoral and post-doctoral programmes.

Scientific research is continuously monitored and evaluated annually. For this purpose, there were created appropriate grids and software applications. The results of the scientific activities are valorised by means of publications in dedicated journals

or publishing houses agreed by CNCSIS and UTBv also has its own scientific journal, Bulletin of Transilvania University of Brasov.

Research is materialised also in: textbooks for didactic purposes, books and monographs, scientific articles published in specialized reviews, accredited by national and international authorities, patents etc. There has been an increase in the number of patent applications.

The students are involved in scientific activity mainly through the framework of the master and doctoral programmes.

The ambition of UTBv in research activity is quite clear: the continuous improvement of the performance of research in the university, and increasing the visibility of UTBv in the European Research Space.

Comment: By creating the Research and Development Institute the conditions for an increase in the quality of scientific research have been created by providing a high-level infrastructure. It is worth strengthening much more the research cooperation with international companies.

Quality Management

UTBv pays a special attention to quality assurance. UTBv has structures, strategies, policies and procedures for quality assurance of the teaching and research processes. UTBv implemented a quality management system in compliance with the model ISO 9001.

In 2012 the responsibilities regarding quality were delegated to the Vice-Rector for University Internationalization and Quality Evaluation. The Vice-Rector manages the structures for quality assurance and evaluation: the Committees for Quality Assurance and Evaluation within the University – CEAC-U and within the departments – CEAC-D; The Quality Assurance Office – DAC, specialized structure which supports CEAC in accomplishing the specific processes related to quality. Besides the transparent quality assurance structure of UTBv, 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 UTBv are well organized. There is also *internal and external control of quality assurance*.

I am happy to declare my full and complete confidence in the quality assurance processes at UTBv, as well as the quality of its programs.

Conclusion

I was very much satisfied what I have experienced; seen, read and heard at the university. I hope that some of the comments which I made will help the university Management in the process of continual improvement.

I emphasize the following:

- To continue to invest in the physical infrastructure and facilities, as and when funds allow.
- I strongly suggest developing international links and collaborations to support international research activities and encourage students and academic staff taking part in exchange and mobility programmes.
- To involve the student's representatives much more in the decision-making processes and into management.
- To strengthen the relations with trade and industry actors for getting more information and feedback from the job market.
- The location and the traditions of Brasov is a great opportunity for UTBv in the central part of Romania.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to the Rector, Vice Rectors, Deans and all the University staff for the pleasant atmosphere and the support during my stay in Brasov. 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, 18-06-2013

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Péter Várnagy', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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