

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT SCIENCES - „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA“ UNIVERSITY OF IASI – Faculty: PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL-POLITICAL SCIENCES

Field of the doctoral university studies: SOCIOLOGY

I. INTRODUCTION

The Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi is the oldest University in Romania, founded in 1860. In 1990, the Faculty of Philosophy was established as an autonomous faculty within „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University from Iași. In 2008, the Faculty of Philosophy changed its name to the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences due to desire to better respond to changing socio-economic environment and labour market needs. Each Department at the Faculty is led by a Department Director and the Department Council. In addition to BA and MA level programmes, the the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences offers doctoral degree programmes in four domains of doctoral studies: Philosophy, Sociology, Political Sciences and Communication Sciences. The Doctoral School was established in 2005 and is governed by the Director of the Doctoral School and by the Doctoral School Council (CSD), who are elected for a 5 years mandate. The domain of Sociology, within the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi (AICU) as an Organizing Institution for University Doctoral Studies (IOSUD), and under review in this evaluation report has a delineated mission, academic purpose and objectives.

During the process of external evaluation the academic staff and domain's management were relatively open in their communication, in spite of the fact that they could have been even more open and concise in presenting the key set of information in their self-evaluation report. From the evidence presented during online meetings one can conclude that the domain of sociology operates within the Romanian legal framework regulation HEI (higher education institutions). The domain of sociology has some valuable strengths but also some major weaknesses, which fits into the wider perception of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi as of university that still does not qualify into top 1000 universities globally (QS Ranking and Shanghai Ranking scores). More detailed account of the major strenghts, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are to be found in the section IV. SWOT ANALYSIS.

The domain of Sociology and doctoral supervisors who constitute it contribute to the work of 3 scientific centres: Centre for Gender Equality in Science, Institutul Virtual de Cercetare UAIC and Grup de Cercetare în Sociologie și Asistență socială. The domain representatives presented evidence that they participate in international research projects such as COST Action and Erasmus+. Doctoral supervisors within the domain are also engaged in publication activies and stand behind several scientific journals: Revista de Cercetare și Intervenție Socială, Analele Științifice ale UAIC. Serie noua. Secțiunea de Sociologie și Asistență Socială and Revista de Economie Socială. Out of three aforementioned journals only Revista de Cercetare si Interventie Socijala has been indexed in both Scopus and Web of Science databases. Since 2012 the domain of Sociology has enrolled 126 doctoral students. In the period from 2015-2020 there were 75 students enrolled cumulatively and 36 students successfully finished their studies.

The evaluation for the domain of Sociology was conducted on behalf of the evaluation team composed of: Prof. univ. dr. Horațiu Mihai Rusu (Universitatea “Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu), Associate Professor Kristijan Kotarski (University of Zagreb) and Roland Olah (PhD student, Universitatea din Oradea). The evaluation started on 9th of July and ended on 17th of September.

II. METHODS USED

- Analysis of the internal evaluation report of the field of doctoral field Sociology
- Analysis of other documents requested in physical format (list of all courses in English, proof of participation in international projects, the prototype of the student evaluation form, examples of evaluation, the structure of the programme and allocation of ECTS points, budgetary-related information, etc.)
- Online meetings with: the doctoral coordinators, directors of research centers, professors, doctoral coordinator of the doctoral field Sociology, students, graduates, employers

Unfortunately, due to pandemic restrictions I was not able to travel to Romania as an external evaluator. Therefore, the visit of the physical premises of the IOSUD was conducted by Prof. univ. dr. Horațiu Mihai Rusu, whom I contacted frequently to obtain valuable pieces of information that was not available in the digital format.

III. ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Domain A. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

Criterion A.1. The administrative, managerial institutional structures and the financial resources

Standard A.1.1. The institution organizing doctoral studies (IOSUD) has implemented the effective functioning mechanisms provided for in the specific legislation on the organization of doctoral studies.

Performance Indicator A. 1.1.1.

The performance indicator is fulfilled. The documents that were available through the enclosed hyperlinks in the self-evaluation report, as well as documents delivered upon request provide sufficient written evidence that the doctoral programme has or is subject to:

- (a) the internal regulations of the Doctoral School;
- (b) the Methodology for conducting elections for the position of director of the Council of doctoral school (CSD), as well as elections by the students of their representative in CSD and the evidence of their conduct;
- (c) the Methodologies for organizing and conducting doctoral studies (for the admission of doctoral students, for the completion of doctoral studies);
- (d) the existence of mechanisms for recognizing the status of a Doctoral advisor and the equivalence of the doctoral degree obtained abroad;
- (e) functional management structures (Council of the doctoral school), giving as well proof of the regularity of meetings;
- (f) the contract for doctoral studies;
- (g) internal procedures for the analysis and approval of proposals regarding the training for doctoral study programs based on advanced academic studies

Furthermore, additional round of interviews with programmes's management enabled the final check of the written documents. There were no major anomalies detected and all functioning mechanisms are in place.

The Doctoral School is headed by Prof. dr. Nicolae Râmbu and the domain of Sociology is represented by Prof. dr. Nicu Gavriluță. Students are well-represented within the management body (they hold 3 out of 11 votes) and the management body meets regularly to discuss and decide on key issues.

Standard A.1.2. The IOSUD has the logistical resources necessary to carry out the doctoral studies' mission.

Performance Indicator A.1.1.2.

The indicator is fulfilled. The doctoral school' Regulation includes mandatory criteria, procedures and standards binding on the aspects specified in Article 17, paragraph (5) of the Government Decision No. 681/2011 on the approval of the Code of Doctoral Studies. The most important issues are clearly regulated and there are no legal grey zones with regard to: conflict mediation, enrollment, prolongation of studies, selection and change of doctoral supervisors, curriculum modification, monitoring supervision, examination procedure, etc. It is praiseworthy that this kind of regulation is available in English, which unfortunately was not the case for many documents during this evaluation. It is accessible via this hyperlink:

https://www.fssp.uaic.ro/images/files/REGULAMENT_ENGLEZ_ds.pdf

Performance Indicator A.1.2.1.

The existence and effectiveness of an appropriate IT system to keep track of doctoral students and their academic background of the IOSUD under evaluation has been mostly demonstrated. eSIMS platform that can be accessed via <http://simsweb.uaic.ro> enables the monitoring of academic progress of every student. Unfortunately, the self-evaluation report does not provide detailed information with regard to functionalities and possibilities offered by the system. Furthermore, one remaining issue to be addressed is the creation of e-mail addresses with institutional domain that are used by all students. This issue has been raised by students in the suggestions for improvement. **However, the indicator is fulfilled, given the most important issues are addressed.**

Performance Indicator A.1.2.2.

The leadership of the doctoral domain in Sociology demonstrated both written and oral commitment to preventing cases of academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Besides appropriate software being in place, the interviewed students also said that they feel strong anti-plagiarism culture. The doctoral school supervisors and PhD students have the access to Turnitin software to prevent and detect plagiarism. The software licences were presented as an evidence. It would be highly advisable to create a database with all submitted PhD theses for the final check for plagiarism. **The performance indicator is fulfilled.**

Standard A.1.3. The IOSUD makes sure that financial resources are used optimally, and the revenues obtained from doctoral studies are supplemented through additional funding besides governmental funding.

Performance Indicator A.1.3.1.

The approximate budget available to both doctoral advisors and students within the domain of Sociology is hard to calculate due to excessive centralisation of financial reporting at the University level. According to the information presented to the reviewer, the programme has students which are granted scholarship by both the Ministry and the University, as well as students who pay their own tuition fee of 5.000 Leu per academic year. There is also a special quota for vulnerable groups and foreign residents. In spite of the requested data on their specific ratio, the provided information lacked necessary clarity on the amount of scholarship collected on the market (cases when students pay themselves for their study). The programme receives funding from various sources which are both private and public, as well as domestic and international. This was demonstrated by a detailed table of all international projects at the domain of Sociology over the 2015-2020 period. During online meetings with the academic staff, there was no reference to significant financial constraints imposed upon them. **The performance indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator A.1.3.2.

The domain under evaluation has not provided necessary information to make this assessment. **Therefore, there is no evidence that this criterion has been fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator A.1.3.3.

This indicator is partially fulfilled.

Criterion A.2. Research infrastructure

Standard A.2.1. Doctoral schools have a modern research infrastructure that supports the development of activities specific to doctoral studies.

Performance Indicator A.2.1.1.

Unfortunately, the reviewer was not able to travel *in situ* and perform a check of the research infrastructure. Nevertheless, the doctoral programme's management provided ample written evidence that it possesses cutting-edge and relatively new infrastructure, starting with lecture halls, computer rooms and labs, as well as access to the library that offers all the necessary books and learning materials to students and professors. **The indicator is fulfilled.**

Criterion A.3. Quality of Human Resources

Standard A.3.1. Doctoral programme in domain of Sociology has the required number of qualified staff with the necessary experience for its implementation.

Performance Indicator A.3.1.1.

Four out of seven doctoral supervisors meet minimum requirements of the National Council for Attestation of University Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATDCU) in force at the moment of carrying out the evaluation. They are: Prof.dr. Stefan Marian Cojocaru, Prof. dr. Cristina Gavrilita, Prof. dr. Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu and Prof. dr. Nicu Gavrilita. Those information are retrievable via the following hyperlink:

<https://www.fssp.uaic.ro/departamente/scoala-doctorala/autoevaluare/conducatori-de-doctorat>

Therefore, this is more than 50% threshold as stipulated in the Annex 3 and as set by the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research (MENCS) Order no. 6129/2016. **The indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator A.3.1.2.

With regard to the indicator that at least 50% of all doctoral advisors have a full-time employment contract for an indefinite period with the IOSUD, one can impartially confirm that **this indicator has been fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator A.3.1.3.

The study subjects in the education program based on advanced higher education studies pertaining to the doctoral domain are taught by teaching staff or researchers who have a good academic track-record and have achieved respectable academic standards. All of this could be verifiable by looking at their CVs and their Google Scholar profiles. **Hence, the indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator A.3.1.4.

At the moment none out of seven doctoral supervisors exceed the threshold of mentoring 12 doctoral students. However, 2 doctoral supervisors supervise 12 PhD candidates and 4 of them supervise 10 PhD candidates, which is more than 20%. **The programme partially fulfills this performance indicator.**

Standard A.3.2. The Doctoral advisors within the domain are carrying out a scientific activity visible at international level.

Performance Indicator A.3.2.1.

The PhD supervisors within the doctoral school carry out a scientific activity that is visible internationally. At least half of PhD supervisors in the doctoral domain of Sociology have at least 5 publications indexed in Web of Science or ERIH in journals, and this was relatively easy to check, either

by accessing their Google Scholar/Web of Science profiles. All supervisors besides Prof. Dumitru Stan have more than 100 Google Scholar quotations and their H-indices range from 5-21. However, on top of that, they participated in various international conferences and are part of prestigious epistemic networks and associations. **The indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator A.3.2.2.

More than 50% of the doctoral thesis advisors in the evaluated domain have at least 5 Web of Science- or ERIH-indexed publications in magazines of impact over the period of last five years and remain scientifically active, as evidenced by the fact that they surpassed at least 25% of the score required by the minimum CNATDCU standards in force at the date of evaluation, necessary and mandatory to obtain the certificate of qualification, over the period of last five years. **The indicator is fulfilled.**

Domain B. EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Criterion B.1. The number, quality and diversity of candidates enrolled for the admission contest

Standard B.1.1. The institution organizing doctoral studies has the capacity to attract candidates from outside the higher education institution or a number of candidates exceeding the number of seats available.

Performance Indicator B.1.1.1.

Over the last five years the doctoral domain in Sociology has attracted enough of students from other universities. The ratio between the number of graduates of masters' programs of other higher education institutions, national or foreign, who have enrolled for the doctoral admission contest within the past five years and the number of seats funded by the state budget, put out through contest within the doctoral domain has never fallen only once below 0,2. Nevertheless, the five-year average amounts to 0,41. Alternatively, the average ratio between the number of candidates within the past five years and the number of seats funded by the state budget put out through contest within the doctoral studies domain was approximately 1,75 based on expert's calculation. **The indicator is fulfilled.**

Standard B.1.2. The institution organizing doctoral studies has the capacity to attract candidates from outside the higher education institution or a number of candidates exceeding the number of seats available.

Performance Indicator B.1.2.1.

Admission to doctoral study programs is based on selection criteria including: previous academic, research and professional performance, their interest for scientific or arts/sports research, publications in the domain and a proposal for a research subject. The process is competitive and is composed of both written test (50% of the overall score) and interview (50% of the overall score). One downside of the process is the fact that the overall grading of candidates appears to happen with

insignificant difference between their total scores (9,5-10), which raises some questions of how rigorous this procedure really is. **This indicator has been fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator B.1.2.2.

Based on expert's calculation, the 5-year average drop-out rate amounts to 5,5%. While this criterion **has been administratively fulfilled**, this drop-out rate is too low and it raises some doubt whether the system has been rigorous enough.

Criterion B.2. The content of doctoral programs

Standard B.2.1. The training program based on advanced university studies is mostly appropriate to improve doctoral students' research skills and to strengthen ethical behavior in science.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.1.

The training program, which is based on advanced studies of PhD students in the domain of Sociology, contains the following subjects – Ethics and Academic Integrity, Paradigms of Knowledge and Communication and Methodology of Elaborating a Scientific Paper. Hence, the training program based on advanced academic studies includes at least 3 disciplines relevant to the scientific research training of doctoral students; at least one of these disciplines is nominally intended to study in-depth the research methodology and/or the statistical data processing. **Hence, this indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator B.2.1.2.

As stated in the programme's self-evaluation report, PhD students in the domain of Sociology can take up a at least subject dedicated to ethics in scientific research and intellectual property (Ethics and Academic Integrity). **The indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator B.2.1.3.

The self-evaluation report does not mention the term 'learning outcomes' even once. The mechanisms and the proof of their existence have been scarcely explained and not provided in a consistent manner (scattered through syllabuses). There is no mention of the exact list of methodological competences which students acquire. Therefore, the structure and the list of topics covered within the courses do not provide enough evidence that cutting-edge qualitative and quantitative methods are taught in theory and practice. There is no list of topics per every of the 14 weeks of classes and how are they logically interconnected. **Hence, this indicator is partially fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator B.2.1.4.

All along the duration of the doctoral training, doctoral students in the domain receive counselling/guidance from functional guidance commissions, which is reflected in written guidance and feedback or regular meeting. The monitoring of the fulfillment of the PhD students' tasks is made possible with monthly sheets, signed by the doctoral thesis supervisors and filed by the Secretariat of the Doctoral School. The selection of the committee members is based on the expertise of professors in the field of each doctoral thesis and/or research methodologies applied by the doctoral student in doctoral research, as well as on the fulfillment by teachers of the minimum criteria of CNATDCU for the position of associate professor, references for the field of activity, etc. **The indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator B.2.1.5.

According to the self-evaluation report the in the doctoral domain of Sociology there were 70 students enrolled at the end of March 2021. At the same time, there are 24 doctoral supervisors attending their needs. Therefore, there the required ratio of 3:1 is met. In spite of the fact that the number of doctoral advisors has increased since 2012 from 4 to 7, the number of students has increased at an even faster pace. Recommendation: employment of post-doctoral researchers within competitive projects funded by external grants since additional students will definitely increase the required ratio. **The performance indicator is fulfilled.**

Criterion B.3. The results of doctoral studies and procedures for their evaluation

Standard B.3.1. Doctoral students capitalize on the research through presentations at scientific conferences, scientific publications, technological transfer, patents, products and service orders.

Performance Indicator B.3.1.1.

PhD students in the domain of Sociology have a sustained scientific activity. The reviewer of the programme received a list of publications (with corresponding hyperlinks) published by students who defended their thesis in the last five years. **Therefore, the indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator B.3.1.2.

The ratio between the number of presentations of doctoral students who completed their doctoral studies within the evaluated period (past 5 years), including posters, exhibitions made at prestigious international events (organized in the country or abroad) and the number of doctoral students who have completed their doctoral studies within the evaluated period (past 5 years) amount to 2,7 (102 presentations divided by 27 students). **The performance indicator is fulfilled.**

Standard B.3.2. The Doctoral School engages a significant number of external scientific specialists in the commissions for public defense of doctoral theses in the analyzed domain.

Performance Indicator B.3.2.1.

This performance indicator stipulates that the number of PhD theses assigned to a specific referee from a higher education institution, other than the evaluated IOSUD, must not exceed two (2) for the theses that are supervised by the same doctoral supervisor, in a year. According to evidence presented, there are several instances which show that this indicator was occasionally violated, but this had happened prior to the moment when the aforementioned rules were imposed. Over the last several years, this indicator has been taken into account and compliance is registered. **Hence, the indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator B.3.2.2.

Therefore, the ratio between the doctoral theses allocated to one scientific specialist coming from a higher education institution, other than the institution where the defense on the doctoral thesis is organized, and the number of doctoral theses presented in the same doctoral study domain in the doctoral school does not exceed 0.3 considering the past five years, as can be inferred from the presented evidence. **Hence, the indicator is fulfilled.**

Domain C. QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Criterion C.1. Existence and periodic implementation of the internal quality assurance system

Standard C.1.1. There are an institutional framework and procedures in place and relevant internal quality assurance policies, applied for monitoring the internal quality assurance.

Performance Indicator C.1.1.1.

After taking into account the following assessed criteria:

- (a) the scientific work of Doctoral advisors;
- (b) the infrastructure and logistics necessary to carry out the research activity;
- (c) the procedures and subsequent rules based on which doctoral studies are organized;
- d) the scientific activity of doctoral students;
- e) the training program based on advanced academic studies of doctoral students;
- f) social and academic services (including for participation at different events, publishing papers etc.) and counselling made available to doctoral students;

There are plenty of evidence that all necessary steps have been taken to insure high standards of quality management, both with regard to students being able to assess their supervisors and *vice versa*. **The indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator C.1.1.2.

After holding interviews with doctoral students and checking available evaluation forms that solicits valuable students' feedback on teaching and supervision quality, the reviewer can attest that doctoral study program implements sufficient mechanisms to enable feedback from doctoral students allowing to identify their needs, as well as their overall level of satisfaction with the doctoral study program in order to ensure continuous improvement of the academic and administrative processes. However, in the future it is highly advisable that the procedure is streamlined even more, is more transparent to external evaluators and becomes a regular feature of quality management. **The indicator is fulfilled.**

Criterion C.2. Transparency of information and accessibility of learning resources

Standard C.2.1. Information of interest to doctoral students, future candidates and public interest information is available for electronic format consultation.

Performance Indicator C.2.1.1.

The doctoral school, through IOSUD, publishes information on the website of the organizing institution, in compliance with the general regulations on data protection, about:

- a) the regulations of the doctoral school;
- b) the admission regulations;
- c) the doctoral studies contract;
- d) the regulations for completing the studies, which should also include the procedure for publicly defending the thesis;
- e) the contents of the study programs;
- f) the scientific profile and research themes/topics of the PhD supervisor in the field, as well as their institutional contact data;
- g) the list of PhD students in the field with their basic information (year of registration; supervisor);
- h) information about the standards for the drafting of the PhD thesis;
- i) links to abstracts of PhD theses to be defended publicly, as well as the date, time, and place where they will be defended, at least 20 days before the defense.

All of the aforementioned facts have been checked on the programme's webpage. **Hence, this indicator is fulfilled.**

Standard C.2.2. The IOSUD/The Doctoral School provides doctoral students with access to the resources needed for conducting doctoral studies.

Performance Indicator C.2.2.1.

The University offers the opportunity to PhD students to access the following databases: Science Direct Freedom Collection, Scopus, SciFinder (CAS), MathSciNet etc. Through „Mihai Eminescu” University Library from Iași, they have access to other representative databases such as: SpringerLink Journals, ProQuest Central, Emerald Journals, Science Journals, Thompson Reuters, Oxford Journals, SAGE Journals HHS Collection, EBSCO, Wiley Journals etc. Online meetings with students and graduates confirm this statement to be true. **The indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator C.2.2.2.

Each PhD student has access, upon request, to an electronic system verifying the degree of similarity with other existing scientific or artistic creations. However, it is highly recommendable that the software is used more often, not only when submitting the final thesis, but also when students carry out other research work as well. **The indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator C.2.2.3.

As stated in the self-evaluation report: *All PhD students registered within the Doctoral School from the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences have access to the research infrastructure available within the Organizing Institution of Doctoral Studies (IOSUD), from „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, as it is one of the rights of the PhD student, as they are formulated by art. 16 from the Institutional Regulation for the Organization and Operation of the Doctorate Studies, proving that throughout the progress of the cycle of doctoral studies, the PhD student has the right ... (d) to benefit of the logistics, the documentation centers, the libraries and the University equipments for the preparation of their research projects and of the PhD thesis.* The online meeting with students and graduates confirm this statement. Hence, **the indicator is fulfilled.**

Criterion C.3. Internationalization

Standard C.3.1. There is a strategy in place and it is applied to enhance the internationalization of doctoral studies.

Performance Indicator C.3.1.1.

According to the self-evaluation report and conducted interviews with major stakeholder the IOSUD has concluded travel agreements with foreign universities and research institutes carrying out activities in the studied field, aiming at PhD students and teachers mobility. The doctoral domain can draw upon 22 international agreements. Overall, 40% of students have embraced the opportunity for academic mobility, out 70 students enrolled over the course of last five years. In spite of this, more of this kind of mobility-related activities should be enticed in the coming years, if the programme wants to achieve a certain improvement in the overall quality. This was detected as one of the threats since online meetings with students and graduates revealed a lot of unused potential in this area. **The performance indicator is fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator C.3.1.2.

In the evaluated doctoral study domain, support is not sufficiently granted, including financial support, to the organization of doctoral studies in international co-tutelage or invitation of leading experts to deliver courses/lectures for doctoral students. The self-evaluation report does not provide a detailed list of evidence that the doctoral domain hosted or co-organized multiple workshops, seminars, roundtables and guest lectures. There are 3 doctorates which are the result of co-tutelage and apparently, multiple external experts have been invited to hold lectures. However, the doctoral domain did not provide evaluators with concrete names, surnames, dates and lecture topics. Hence, **this performance indicator is partially fulfilled.**

Performance Indicator C.3.1.3.

The evidence presented in the self-evaluation report does not weigh in favour of stating that internationalization of activities during doctoral studies is sufficiently supported by practical measures (for example, participation in educational fairs to attract international PhD students; inclusion of international experts in supervising committees or defense for PhD theses, publication of research in ISI journals, mobility of doctoral supervisors, etc.). The domain of Sociology did not present key metrics which form the backbone of its internationalization strategy, as well as credible evidence which attest the latter's execution. Besides, there are precisely 0 foreign experts included in the supervising committees and only 4 papers on behalf of the students were published either in Web of Science or Scopus journals (none of which happened since 2018). Finally, the word 'internationalization' is vaguely used only four times through the self-evaluation report. **Therefore, this performance indicator is partially fulfilled.**

IV. SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dedicated and pretty well-trained academic staff immersed into broader social environment through valuable contribution to social work community in Romania• Significant number of agreements covering academic mobility• Satisfactory level of access to international databases and computer equipment• High percentage of doctoral students being included in teaching at the bachelor's and master's level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relatively narrow list of offered courses and no reference to dynamic study fields such as Economic Sociology• No courses taught in English• No publicly available strategy for both the domain's and Faculty's internationalization• Insufficient diversification of doctoral committees with regard to external members• No sufficient interest for embracing academic mobility opportunities due to

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of three academic journals, one of which is indexed in Web of Science and Scopus (Revista de Cercetare si Interventie Sociala) • Mostly satisfied students and graduates who praise their supervisors' dedication and professionalism • Competitive candidate selection procedure 	<p>relatively high average age of doctoral students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor organisational capacity, as evidenced by the lack of preparatory work ahead of evaluation (too many documents were initially missing or no references to them have been made in the self-evaluation report) • No clear reference to the learning outcomes • Lack of training in quantitative methods
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to leverage existing international partnerships and foster new ones • Improvement in funding options and research reputation by applying for more internationally prestigious and competitive projects such as Jean Monnet Centres of Excellence • Organisation of more conferences and workshops to demonstrate domain's wider societal importance (inclusion of employers, decision-makers, citizens, etc.) • Inclusion of doctoral students in the work of scientific centres within the domain • Increased academic staff and student mobility offers the potential for significant upgrading of skills and competences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very poor language skills on behalf of academic staff • Potentially too much of a flexibility for doctoral students in designing their personal academic curriculum, who might then in turn easily miss out on the core competencies within the discipline studied, as well as clear structure to be followed • Poor visibility and communication with regard to the domain's active role in international scientific projects • Lack of academic resources based on online meetings with graduates • Significant backsliding in Revista de Cercetare si Interventie Sociala's ranking (IF) over the past three years (both in Scopus and Web of Science database) • Student-to-teacher ratio which might reach the tipping point that leads to rapid deterioration in quality

V. OVERVIEW OF THE JUDGEMENTS AWARDED AND OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
1.	PI	<p>A.1.1.1. The existence of specific regulations and their application at the level of the Doctoral School of the respective university doctoral study domain:</p> <p>a) the internal regulations of the Doctoral School;</p> <p>b) the Methodology for conducting elections for the position of director of the Council of doctoral school (CSD), as well as elections by the students of their representative in CSD and the evidence of their conduct;</p> <p>c) the Methodologies for organizing and conducting doctoral studies (for the admission of doctoral students, for the completion of doctoral studies);</p> <p>d) the existence of mechanisms for recognizing the status of a Doctoral advisor and the equivalence of the doctoral degree obtained abroad;</p> <p>e) functional management structures (Council of the doctoral school), giving as well proof of the regularity of meetings;</p> <p>f) the contract for doctoral studies;</p> <p>g) internal procedures for the analysis and approval of proposals regarding the training for doctoral study programs based on advanced academic studies.</p>	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
2.	PI	<p>A.1.1.2. The doctoral school' Regulation includes mandatory criteria, procedures and standards binding on the aspects specified in Article 17, paragraph (5) of the Government Decision No. 681/2011 on the approval of the Code of Doctoral Studies with subsequent amendments and additions.</p>	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
3.	PI	<p>A.1.2.1. The existence and effectiveness of an appropriate IT system to keep track of doctoral students and their academic background.</p>	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
4.	PI	<p>A.1.2.2. The existence and use of an appropriate software program and evidence of its use to verify the percentage of similarity in all doctoral theses.</p>	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
5.	IP	<p>A.1.3.1. Existence of at least one research or institutional / human resources development grant under implementation at the time of submission of the internal evaluation file, per doctoral study domain under evaluation, or existence of at least 2 research or institutional development / human resources grant for the doctoral study domain, obtained by doctoral thesis advisors operating in the evaluated domain within the past 5 years. The grants address relevant themes for the respective domain and, as a rule, are engaging doctoral students.</p>	<p>The performance indicator is fulfilled.</p>	
6.	PI *	<p>A.1.3.2. The percentage of doctoral students active at the time of the evaluation, who for at least six months receive additional funding sources besides government funding, through scholarships awarded by individual persons or by legal entities, or who are financially supported through research or institutional / human resources development grants is not less than 20%.</p>	<p>Not fulfilled.</p>	<p>Improvement in collating relevant statistical data with regard to the structure of enrolled students.</p> <p>Improvement in the financial reporting, in order to be able to present a clear and congruent calculation of the required percentage in the future.</p>
7.	PI *	<p>A.1.3.3. At least 10% of the total amount of doctoral grants obtained by the university through institutional contracts and of tuition fees collected from the doctoral students enrolled in the paid tuition system is used to reimburse professional training expenses of doctoral students (attending conferences, summer schools, training, programs abroad, publication of specialty papers or other specific forms of dissemination etc.).</p>	<p>Partially fulfilled.</p>	<p>Improvement in the financial reporting, in order to be able to present a clear and congruent calculation of the required percentage in the future.</p>
8.	CPI	<p>A.2.1.1. The venues and the material equipment available to the doctoral school enable the research activities in the evaluated domain to be carried out, in line with the assumed mission and objectives (computers, specific software, equipment, laboratory equipment, library, access to international databases etc.). The research infrastructure and the provision of research services are presented to the public through a specific platform. The research infrastructure described above, which was</p>	<p>The performance indicator is fulfilled.</p>	

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
		purchased and developed within the past 5 years will be presented distinctly		
9.	CPI	A.3.1.1. Minimum three doctoral thesis advisors within that doctoral domain, and at least 50% of them (but no less than three) meet the minimum standards of the National Council for Attestation of University Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATDCU) in force at the time when the evaluation is carried out, which standards are required and mandatory for obtaining the enabling certification.	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
10.	PI *	A.3.1.2. At least 50% of all doctoral advisors have a full-time employment contract for an indefinite period with the IOSUD.	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
11.	PI	A.3.1.3. The study subjects in the education program based on advanced higher education studies pertaining to the doctoral domain are taught by teaching staff or researchers who are doctoral thesis advisors / certified doctoral thesis advisors, professors / CS I or lecturer / CS II, with proved expertise in the field of the study subjects they teach, or other specialists in the field who meet the standards established by the institution in relation with the aforementioned teaching and research functions, as provided by the law.	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
12.	PI *	A.3.1.4. The percentage of doctoral thesis advisors who concomitantly coordinate more than 8 doctoral students, but no more than 12, who are themselves studying in doctoral programs does not exceed 20%.	The performance indicator is partially fulfilled.	
13.	CPI	A.3.2.1. At least 50% of the doctoral thesis advisors in the evaluated domain have at least 5 Web of Science- or ERIH-indexed publications in magazines of impact, or other achievements of relevant significance for that domain, including international-level contributions that indicate progress in scientific research - development - innovation for the evaluated domain. The aforementioned doctoral thesis advisors	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
		<p>enjoy international awareness within the past five years, consisting of: membership on scientific boards of international publications and conferences; membership on boards of international professional associations; guests in conferences or expert groups working abroad, or membership on doctoral defense commissions at universities abroad or co-leading with universities abroad. For Arts and Sports and Physical Education Sciences, doctoral thesis advisors shall prove their international visibility within the past five years by their membership on the boards of professional associations, membership in organizing committees of arts events and international competitions, membership on juries or umpire teams in artistic events or international competitions.</p>		
14.	PI *	<p>A.3.2.2. At least 50% of the doctoral thesis advisors in a specific doctoral study domain continue to be active in their scientific field, and acquire at least 25% of the score requested by the minimal CNATDCU standards in force at the time of the evaluation, which are required and mandatory for acquiring their enabling certificate, based on their scientific results within the past five years</p>	<p>The performance indicator is fulfilled.</p>	
15.	PI *	<p>B.1.1.1. The ratio between the number of graduates of masters' programs of other higher education institutions, national or foreign, who have enrolled for the doctoral admission contest within the past five years and the number of seats funded by the state budget, put out through contest within the doctoral domain is at least 0.2 or the ratio between the number of candidates within the past five years and the number of seats funded by the state budget put out through contest within the doctoral studies domain is at least 1,2.</p>	<p>The performance indicator is fulfilled.</p>	
16.	PI *	<p>B.1.2.1. Admission to doctoral study programs is based on selection criteria including: previous academic, research and professional performance, their interest for scientific or</p>	<p>This indicator is fulfilled.</p>	<p>Full transparency in terms of admission exam (required reading list publicly available on the webpage). The procedure</p>

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
		arts/sports research, publications in the domain and a proposal for a research subject. Interviewing the candidate is compulsory, as part of the admission procedure.		should lead to a greater variation in admission exam results that resemble more to results normally expected in the Gaussian world.
17.	PI	B.1.2.2. The expelling rate, including renouncement / dropping out of doctoral students 3, respectively 4, years after admission does not exceed 30%.	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
18.	PI	B.2.1.1. The training program based on advanced academic studies includes at least 3 disciplines relevant to the scientific research training of doctoral students; at least one of these disciplines is intended to study in-depth the research methodology and/or the statistical data processing.	This indicator is fulfilled.	
19.	PI	B.2.1.2. At least one discipline is dedicated to Ethics and Intellectual Property in scientific research or there are well-defined topics on these subjects within a discipline taught in the doctoral program.	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
20.	PI	B.2.1.3. The IOSUD has mechanisms to ensure that the academic training program based on advanced university studies addresses „the learning outcomes”, specifying the knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy that doctoral students should acquire after completing each discipline or through the research activities.	This indicator is partially fulfilled.	There is no clear list of learning outcomes in terms of strengthening of methodological background and the list of obligatory courses does not offer broader perspective to students that are at the beginning of their academic journey. The list of elective courses should be expanded. The reviewer should get the full information pertained to both qualitative and quantitative methods taught, as well as corresponding software packages used. Syllabuses should make a precise description of topics presented to students every single week within the academic calendar. The study domain offers too much of a flexibility, which

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
				might be a good option for extremely dedicated, talented and diligent students, of which there are few. Other students would profit from a clear structure and more interaction with doctoral advisors and their colleagues through interactive seminars. It seems that there is not sufficient emphasis put on team work and presentation skills.
21.	PI	B.2.1.4. All along the duration of the doctoral training, doctoral students in the domain receive counselling/guidance from functional guidance commissions, which is reflected in written guidance and feedback or regular meeting.	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
22.	CPI	B.2.1.5. For a doctoral study domain, the ratio between the number of doctoral students and the number of teaching staff/researchers providing doctoral guidance must not exceed 3:1.	The performance criterion is fulfilled.	In spite of the fact that the number of doctoral advisors has increased since 2012 from 4 to 7, the number of students has increased at an even faster pace. Recommendation: employment of post-doctoral researchers within competitive projects funded by external grants.
23.	CPI	B.3.1.1. For the evaluated domain, the evaluation commission will be provided with at least one paper or some other relevant contribution per doctoral student who has obtained a doctor's title within the past 5 years. From this list, the members of the evaluation commission shall randomly select 5 such papers / relevant contributions per doctoral study domain for review. At least 3 selected papers must contain significant original contributions in the respective domain	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
24.	PI *	B.3.1.2. The ratio between the number of presentations of doctoral students who completed their doctoral studies within the evaluated period (past 5 years), including	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
		posters, exhibitions made at prestigious international events (organized in the country or abroad) and the number of doctoral students who have completed their doctoral studies within the evaluated period (past 5 years) is at least 1.		
25.	PI *	B.3.2.1. The number of doctoral theses allocated to one specialist coming from a higher education institution, other than the evaluated IOSUD should not exceed two (2) in a year for the theses coordinated by the same doctoral thesis advisor.	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	Improved management of the procedure, by inclusion of abroad network of specialists from additional IOSUD, especially those from abroad.
26.	PI *	B.3.2.2. The ratio between the doctoral theses allocated to one scientific specialist coming from a higher education institution, other than the institution where the defense on the doctoral thesis is organized, and the number of doctoral theses presented in the same doctoral study domain in the doctoral school should not exceed 0.3, considering the past five years. Only those doctoral study domains in which minimum ten doctoral theses have been presented within the past five years should be analyzed.	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
27.	PI	C.1.1.1. The Doctoral school in the respective university study domain shall demonstrate the continuous development of the evaluation process and its internal quality assurance following a procedure developed and applied at the level of the IOSUD, the following assessed criteria being mandatory: a) the scientific work of Doctoral advisors; b) the infrastructure and logistics necessary to carry out the research activity; c) the procedures and subsequent rules based on which doctoral studies are organized; d) the scientific activity of doctoral students; e) the training program based on advanced academic studies of doctoral students; f) social and academic services (including for participation at different events, publishing papers etc.) and counselling made available to doctoral students.	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
28.	PI *	<p>C.1.1.2. Mechanisms are implemented during the stage of the doctoral study program to enable feedback from doctoral students allowing to identify their needs, as well as their overall level of satisfaction with the doctoral study program in order to ensure continuous improvement of the academic and administrative processes. Following the analysis of the results, there is evidence that an action plan was drafted and implemented.</p>	<p>The performance indicator is fulfilled.</p>	
29.	CPI	<p>C.2.1.1. The IOSUD publishes on the website of the organizing institution, in compliance with the general regulations on data protection, information such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the Doctoral School regulation; b) the admission regulation; c) the doctoral studies contract; d) the study completion regulation including the procedure for the public presentation of the thesis; e) the content of training program based on advanced academic studies; f) the academic and scientific profile, thematic areas/research themes of the Doctoral advisors within the domain, as well as their institutional contact data; g) the list of doctoral students within the domain with necessary information (year of registration; advisor); h) information on the standards for developing the doctoral thesis; i) links to the doctoral theses' summaries to be publicly presented and the date, time, place where they will be presented; this information will be communicated at least twenty days before the presentation. 	<p>The performance indicator is fulfilled.</p>	
30.	PI	<p>C.2.2.1. All doctoral students have free access to one platform providing academic databases relevant to the doctoral studies domain of their thesis.</p>	<p>The performance indicator is fulfilled.</p>	
31.	PI	<p>C.2.2.2. Each doctoral student shall have access, upon request, to an electronic system for verifying the degree of similarity with other existing scientific or artistic works.</p>	<p>The performance indicator is fulfilled.</p>	

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
32.	PI	C.2.2.3. All doctoral students have access to scientific research laboratories or other facilities depending on the specific domain/domains within the Doctoral School, according to internal order procedures.	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	
33.	PI *	C.3.1.1. IOSUD, for every evaluated domain, has concluded mobility agreements with universities abroad, with research institutes, with companies working in the field of study, aimed at the mobility of doctoral students and academic staff (e.g., ERASMUS agreements for the doctoral studies). At least 35% of the doctoral students have completed a training course abroad or other mobility forms such as attending international scientific conferences. IOSUD drafts and applies policies and measures aiming at increasing the number of doctoral students participating at mobility periods abroad, up to at least 20%, which is the target at the level of the European Higher Education Area.	The performance indicator is fulfilled.	Putting even more emphasis on creating favourable set of incentives for doctoral students to use the opportunity for academic mobility.
34.	PI	C.3.1.2. In the evaluated doctoral study domain, support is granted, including financial support, to the organization of doctoral studies in international co-tutelage or invitation of leading experts to deliver courses/lectures for doctoral students.	This performance indicator is partially fulfilled.	The domain should increase its activities with regard to organising various workshops in international co-tutelage and invite more leading experts to deliver courses/lectures.
35.	PI	C.3.1.3. The internationalization of activities carried out during the doctoral studies is supported by IOSUD through concrete measures (e.g., by participating in educational fairs to attract international doctoral students; by including international experts in guidance committees or doctoral committees etc.).	This performance indicator is partially fulfilled.	The imperative to design a clear internationalization strategy with attainable KPIs (key performance indicators), to be followed by necessary resources for the latter's execution. There should be at least one course offered in English to attract foreign students.

Out of 35 performance indicators listed in the The External Evaluation Report of a Doctoral Study Domain (Annex 3) the doctoral programme in Sociology fulfilled 29 of them, while 5 performance indicators are partially fulfilled. One indicator is not fulfilled at all. Overall, the reviewer recommends

that the programme is accredited for the duration of five years since there were no more than 8 performance indicators, that have not been either totally or partially unfulfilled. However, there are several key areas where more effort is needed in order to improve the mediocre performance. First, the domain needs a clear internationalization strategy with KPIs (key performance indicators), to be followed by necessary resources. Second, the domain needs to provide a detailed set of learning outcomes which is visible and comprehensive to all stakeholders. All syllabuses have to be streamlined and equipped with detailed description of key topics covered in the course and how there are mutually aligned. The structure of the domain is too loose, especially with regard to methodological skills. In that regard, there is more evidence needed that advisors equip students with a clear set of competences in the area of quantitative and qualitative methods. Third, the doctoral superadvisors should improve their language skills since only 2 out of 7 were capable of communicating with reviewer in English. A situation like this opens up a lot of questions with regard to how the programme could improve its international prestige and visibility, as well as ensure sufficient quality. Fourth, the student-teacher ratio threatens to spiral out of control in the long run. Hence, the programme should better balance this ratio, either by mobilizing additional resources or by temporary reducing the enrollment quota. Fourth, doctoral superadvisors should extend the reach of their publications by publishing more often in foreign journals. In reviewer's opinion there are too many publication in Romanian journals which are ISI publications (Scopus and Web of Science), potentially opening up the issue of conflict of interest. Fifth, the work of research centres should be better integrated with the development of precious research skills on behalf of students. Sixth, the future self-evaluation report should be carefully crafted in order to provide a detailed set of information and corresponding evidence of their fulfillment to any reviewer, without triggering a steady stream of additional requests to furnish missing information. The ongoing process of evaluation revealed sometimes poor coordination among members of the domain, as well as insufficient aggregation and representation of information necessary to make a reliable assessment according to all 35 performance indicators (Annex 3). Hence, there is a lot of scope for progress in the domain of transparency and data presentation.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The domain of Sociology at Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University) represents an almost equal balance of strengths and weaknesses. Hence, the overall performance could be labelled as only mediocre. However, there are multiple opportunities at hand that are more than enough to counterbalance any of the identified threats, as listed in the SWOT analysis above. The evaluation team has come up to a conclusion that the domain of Sociology within the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences fulfills slightly more than minimum number of formal indicators that are necessary for the continuation of its work. A decision is proposed to fully accredit the above mentioned doctoral programme in Sociology for the duration of five years. However, there are numerous and substantial objections to the programme's quality, as stated above. We hope that our suggestions will be more than helpful in raising the programme's overall quality over the course of next five years, in order to contribute to better positioning of the Alexandru Iona Cuza University on international metrics such as Shanghai Ranking and QS Ranking, thereby creating a virtuous cycle of academic excellence.

VII. ANNEXES

No annexes.

In Zagreb, 28th of September 2021

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