The External Evaluation Report of a Doctoral Study Domain - SNSPA

The Doctoral Study Domain of POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Contents

I. Introduction

The External Evaluation Report of a Doctoral Study Domain of Political Science in SNSPA was prepared with the outcomes from three different sources. First, the online evaluation visits from 12 July to 16 July 2021 is one of the main sources. Online meetings with academics in the department, PhD students, ARACIS experts and other shareholders provide a good insight to me as an external evaluator.

Second, the documents in the ARACIS cloud are used for evaluation. The big difficulty here is that most documents are in Romanian. The internal evaluation of the doctoral domain is English is a useful one.

Third, the web pages of the university, faculty, and department are visited. The main web page of the Faculty of Political Science in English (snspa.ro) is good to get a general overview on the school. But the PHD programs' page is only in Romanian and difficult to get detailed info on the faculty/department.

II. Methods used

During the evaluation of the doctoral study domain of Political Science, there are three different tools. First are the online meetings with ARACIS experts, school officials and professors of the SNSPA, the Faculty of Political Science and the Department of Political Science and European Studies, and the PhD students and graduates. Second was the documents provided by ARACIS cloud. Third is the evaluation of websites of the university, the faculty, department, and centers.

Because of the online meetings due to the pandemic, there was no chance to visit physical structures of the campuses for external evaluators. Therefore, this report does not include the evaluations of the physical capacities of classrooms, library, research centers, lecture halls, career center, student residences, cafeteria, sports ground etc.

There were online meetings with doctoral students and graduates in political science. There were also online meetings with school officials and professors for the doctoral domain of political science.

The report mainly focuses on the quality of education in the doctoral domain of political science.

III. Analysis of performance indicators

Domain A. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

SNSPA has delivered by four faculties and related departments on social sciences. SNSPA is a compact university focusing on economic and administrative sciences basically.

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

SNSPA is a public university founded in 1991. The main sources come from government money.

Performance Indicator A.1.1.1.

The Doctoral Studies within SNSPA started in 2000, after gaining the capacity of organizing doctoral studies in the field of Political Science depending on the Order of the Minister of Education and Research no. 4212/20 July 2000. There is a certain methodology running the Council of Doctoral School including student representative. Doctoral supervisor system is functioning goo with 15 faculties.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator A.1.1.2.

The doctoral school meets mandatory criteria, procedures, and standards according to binding the Government Decision No.681/2011. The online visits of the external evaluator approved this.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator A.1.2.1.

The IT system provided by the documents and the website is good enough to keep track of doctoral students and their academic background.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator A.1.2.2.

The existence and use of an appropriate software program provided by the documents and the website is good enough to keep track of doctoral students and their academic background.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Standard A.1.3.

The online visits and the presented documents mostly in Romanian have given little chance for an external evaluator to analyze properly the criteria on using financial resources in efficiency.

Performance Indicator A.1.3.1.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.1.3.2.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator. The PhD students easily get grants more than 20%.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.1.3.3.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator. More than 10% of the total amount of doctoral grants are used for doctoral students' academic activities and training.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Criterion A.2. Research infrastructure

The doctoral domain of Political Science at SNSPA has a strong research infrastructure.

Performance Indicator A.2.1.1.

Since February 2013, SNSPA has joined the Association of Universities, Research and Development Institutes, and Central University Libraries in Romania - ANELIS. In 2017, SNSPA continued its collaboration with ANELIS, being a partner in the ANELIS PLUS 2020 program. Through this association SNSPA gained access to the following electronic resources: EBSCO, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, Cambridge Journals, Springerlink, Wiley, Web of Science, Scopus, de Gruyter Books, CAB eBooks. Since 2004, SNSPA has had access to JSTOR resources, based on a contract concluded by the university and the supplier company. These international databases provide a good opportunity for PhD students to conduct their research easily.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Criterion A.3. Quality of Human Resources

Within the doctoral field of Political Science / International Relations, 15 members, of which 13 are tenured professors and 2 are associates, who meet the minimum standards according to the Order of the Minister of Education and Research no. 6129/2016.

Performance Indicator A.3.1.1.

Minimum three doctoral thesis advisors for the doctoral domain meet the minimum standards of the CNATDCU. The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.3.1.2.

All doctoral advisors have a full-time employment contract for an indefinite period with the IOSUD.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator A.3.1.3.

15 faculties in the doctoral domain of Political Science have a good record of publications and academic assessments. The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.3.1.4.

There are currently 183 PhD students in the Political Science domain. Each supervisor out of 15 has 12,2 PhD students. This is a bit higher than 12 limits.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program partially meets the standards of this indicator.

Recommendations: The doctoral domain of Political Science should not get any PhD student for an academic year. Alternatively, the Department of Political Science and European Studies should recruit one more professor.

The indicator is partially fulfilled.

Performance Indicator A.3.2.1.

The academic of the doctoral domain of Political Science have a good record of publications and almost all have at least 5 Web of Science or ERIH-indexed publications. The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.3.2.2.

All 15 faculties in the doctoral domain of Political Science are active in their scientific field and acquire at least 25% of the score requested by the minimal CNATDCU standards. The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Domain B. EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

SNSPA has usually attract qualitative and diverse students to its programs including doctoral ones.

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

Doctoral domain of Political Science attracts qualitative and diverse students.

Standard B.1.1.

There are generally high demands to the Political Science PhD program.

Performance Indicator *B.1.1.1.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Standard B.1.2.

Academic standards of the students accepted to the doctoral demands are high.

Performance Indicator *B.1.2.1.

The doctoral students are selected within the candidates who have good academic skills. The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.1.2.2.

The dropout rate of PhD students 2 years after their admission does not exceed 30%. In the last 3 years, only 4 PhD students have been expelled. The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Criterion B.2. The content of doctoral programs

Standard B.2.1.

The training program is appropriate to improve doctoral students' research skills and to strengthen ethical behavior in science.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.1.

The training program based on advanced studies for PhD students in Political Studies takes place during the first year of doctoral studies. Among the 11 subjects there is also a fundamental subject for developing the abilities and competencies of PhD students for statistical data processing and for in-depth study of the research methodology. The subject is called Qualitative research in the social sciences - Interview Method   and is taught by Lecturer Miruna Butnaru-Troncotă.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.2.

he training program based on advanced studies of PhD students in Political Studies includes an independent subject dedicated to ethics in scientific research and intellectual property. The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.3.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.4.

Each PhD supervisor has in their research team a supervising committee made of the PhD supervisor and other teaching staff members. The selection is based on the expertise of professors in the field of each PhD thesis and / or on research methodologies applied by the PhD student in doctoral research. The selection is also based on the compliance of professors with the minimum CNATDCU reference criteria in force for the position of associate professor, for their field of activity (according to the specific criteria of the specialized CNATDCU committee).

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.5.

The number of faculties in the department of Political Science and European Studies is 18. Together with teaching assistants and research assistants in the department, it is assumed that the department has enough academic staff providing doctoral guidance which does not exceed 3:1.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

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

Standard B.3.1.

The research is capitalized by PhD students through scientific conferences, scientific publications, technological transfer, patents, products, and service orders.

Performance Indicator B.3.1.1.

According to Appendices SPB.3.1.1., the doctoral students meet minimum publication criteria. The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *B.3.1.2.

The PhD students of Political science has an active participation to the national and international conferences. The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *B.3.2.1.

Standard B.3.2.

The doctoral school turns to a significant number of external scientific referees in the committees for public defense of PhD theses.

Performance Indicator *B.3.2.1.

According to Appendix B.3.2.1, the doctoral domain meets the criteria 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 PhD supervisor, in a year.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *B.3.2.2.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Domain C. QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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

Standard C.1.1.

There is an institutional framework and there is a procedure that is applied for monitoring internal quality assurance as well as relevant internal quality assurance policies.

Performance Indicator C.1.1.1.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator as follows below:

a) the scientific activity of the PhD supervisors.

b) the infrastructure and logistics necessary for carrying out the research activity.

c) the procedures and subsequent rules based on which the doctoral studies are organized.

d) the scientific activity of PhD students.

e) the training program of PhD students based on advanced university studies.

f) social and academic services to the doctoral students.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *C.1.1.2.

During the doctoral training internship, PhD students implemented feedback mechanisms to identify their needs and their general level of satisfaction with the doctoral study program to improve the academic and administrative processes continuously.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

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

Standard C.2.1

The relevant information for PhD students, future candidates, and the information of public interest are available for consultation in electronic form.

Performance Indicator C.2.1.1.

The doctoral school, through IOSUD, publishes information on the website of the organizing institution - http://doctorat.snspa.ro/, in compliance with the general rules on data protection. The IOSUD-SNSPA has ensured the transparency and visibility of information of public interest through the website dedicated to the Doctoral School that proposes a friendly interface and a comprehensive content.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully 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.

According to SPC Appendix.2.2.1, all PhD students have free access to the platform with academic databases that are relevant to the Political Studies field of doctoral studies through ANELIS subscriptions (http://snspa.ro/cercetare/biblioteca/baze-de-date-electronice/), both inside the SNSPA and outside the institution. Remote mobile access is based on the user account, which is configured individually, according to the Access Guide to SNSPA databases. One account can be set up for mobile access to the EBSCO database and another account for all other databases (except JSTOR) on the e-information platform.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.2.2.2.

SNSPA acquires an annual subscription for the Sistemantiplagiat.ro software, which identifies and compares similarities between the analyzed paper (paper, article, PhD thesis) with Internet resources and the database consisting of internal documents uploaded to the system. The result of the analysis is then communicated in a similarity report that includes 3 factors (the first factor indicates the linguistic independence of the paper's author, the second factor refers to unauthorized borrowings, and the third factor refers to the texts cited by the author).

The analysis of the PhD theses is performed within the Doctoral School. The process of identifying the similarities is stated in the Institutional Regulations for organizing and carrying out doctoral programs as a mandatory condition for the public defense of PhD theses. This is a way for the SNSPA Doctoral School to prevent fraud in scientific research, and the result of this process can be found in the PhD supervisor's report. The software archives the papers in an internal database, so that the analysis considers not only online resources, but also previously archived papers. The service transmits the similarity report, as well as the Interpretation Guide for the Sistemantiplagiat.ro Similarity Report to the administrator who initiated the verification.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.2.2.3.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Criterion C.3. Internationalization

Standard C.3.1.

There is a strategy, and it is applied to increase the degree of internationalization of doctoral studies.

Performance Indicator *C.3.1.1.

There were 19 ERASMUS mobilities for PhD supervisors and 41 mobilities for PhD students within the Multidisciplinary Doctoral School of SNSPA, both in EU and non-EU countries in the period 2015-2019.

On 4 February 2020, SNSPA organized the launch of CIVICA, the European University of Social Sciences, a European university consortium, selected by the European Commission as one of the European pilot universities(http://snspa.ro/lansarea-universitatii-europene-de-stiinte-sociale-civica-la-snspa/). CIVICA, which brings together 8 major European institutions of higher education in the fields of social sciences, humanities, business management and public policy, hosts a total of 50,000 students and 10,000 professors. Together, in their activities, they rely on an increasingly strong combination of teaching, research, and innovation to increase and share knowledge as a public good and facilitate civic responsibility throughout Europe and beyond. The CIVICA members are Bocconi University (Italy), Central European University (Austria and Hungary), European University Institute (Intergovernmental), Hertie School (Germany), National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (Romania), Sciences Po (France), Stockholm School of Economics (Sweden), and The London School of Economics and Political Studies (UK).

In 2020, the ACADEMIC CONNECT project -- Partnership and international visibility for the promotion of teaching and research excellence of SNSPA was organized (the total budget approved by CNFIS is 303,000 RON and the duration of the project is 8 months).

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.3.1.2.

According to SPC Appendix.3.1.2c., under the auspices of the European university consortium CIVICA, Romanian PhD students can register for the lectures of any professor who teaches specialized subjects within the doctoral study programs related to the partner universities. the International Online Week was organized between 7-10 December 2020 as part of the project ACADEMIC CONNECT -- Partnership and international visibility for the promotion of didactic and research excellence of SNSPA, CNFIS Institutional Development Programs, CNFIS-FDI-2020-057.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.3.1.3.

According to SPC Appendix.3.1.3, the internationalization of the activities during doctoral studies is supported by practical measures within IOSUD-SNSPA. But many international activities either cancelled or organized online since March 2020 because of the pandemic.

The findings from the assessed institution's documents and the online evaluation visits have indicated that the doctoral program meets the standards of this indicator.

The indicator is fully fulfilled.

IV. SWOT Analysis

Strengths:	Weakness:
✓ A high quality of PhD education. ✓ A high quality of academic staff. ✓ A high quality of student profile. ✓ Various mobility opportunities for the students under Erasmus and CIVICA. ✓ Good record of participation to national and international conferences. ✓ Good record of publications for PhD students in national and international academic journals. ✓ The centers functioning under the department and the faculty strengthens students' research capacity. ✓ Various research funds and grants for PhD students. ✓ PhD graduates have got better jobs and administrative and financial promotion after getting PhD degree.	✓ Increasing number of PhD students. ✓ Two different close departments under the names of "The Department of Political Science and European Studies" and "The Department of International Relations and European Integration (DIREI)". ✓ Lack of the department's social media account and activities in social media.
Opportunities:	**Threats:**
✓ Getting more internationally reputed PhD program.	✓ Outnumbered PhD students in coming years if the current problem cannot be addressed properly.

V. Overview of judgments awarded and of the recommendations

No.	Type of indicator (*,C)	Performance Indicator	Judgement	Recommendations
1	A	A.3.1.4	Each supervisor out of 15 has 12.2 PhD students. - partially fulfilled	The doctoral domain of Political Science should not get any PhD student for an academic year. Alternatively, the department should recruit one more professor.
2	C	C.3.1.1.	Good level of internationalization - fully fulfilled	The doctoral domain should attract more international students if the department are promoted more abroad.

VI. Conclusions and general recommendations

The Political Science doctoral domain of SNSPA has a well-established academic structure. There is a high quality of PhD education in Political Science thanks to the high quality of academic staff in the department. The academic staff of the department have a good record of academic publications and close involvement with various academic institutions. The supervising system in the doctoral domain works well. The department provides good mobility opportunities to its PhD students through Erasmus, CIVICA, and other bilateral cooperation. Grants and research funds are good enough for PhD students to conduct their research and to develop academic skills. The PhD students have a good record of academic publications. The PhD students also participate actively in national and international conferences.

I have two main recommendations:

First, it is quite confusing that there are two different departments under the names of "The Department of Political Science and European Studies" and "The Department of International Relations and European Integration (DIREI)". Many external visitors of the university and its web page likely assume that these two departments are the same. These two departments should be re-named as "The Department of Political Science and International Relations" and "The Department of European Studies and Regional Integration" under the Faculty of Political Science to avoid confusion with shareholders.

Second, the number of the centers named in the web page and documents are different. Some centers are organized under the department and some others are listed under the faculty. The centers should act as think tanks as much as possible to get more impact factors from domestic and international public and shareholders. Developing an interactive web page in English is a must to be an active member of the international think tank community. The centers should publish op-eds, policy briefs, and reports apart from academic articles. The centers should organize conferences with other think tanks, national and international organizations apart from only academic activities. The centers should have their own social media accounts and make regular sharing to increase awareness of their entities and products.

VII. Annexes

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