

# **A R A C I S**

**Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

**Evaluation of Doctoral Studies – IOSUD Evaluation**

**Universitatea “Aurel Vlaicu” din Arad, România**

**I n t e r n a t i o n a l   E x p e r t   R e p o r t**

27<sup>th</sup> September 2021

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Context of this evaluation**

This report summarizes my findings as International Expert from the Evaluation of Doctoral Studies – IOSUD of the “Aurel Vlaicu” University of Arad (UAV) by ARACIS from September 13 to 18, 2021. In order to perform this evaluation, ARACIS has nominated an evaluation team of 14 experts (Mission Director Prof.univ. Dr. Neculai-Eugen Seghedin, Mission Scientific Coordinator Prof.univ. Dr. Oliviu Felecan, International Expert Prof.univ. Dr. Winfried Müller, PhD Student Expert Ingrid Orosz, IOSUD Expert Prof.univ. Dr. Stan Răzvan Nicolae, IOSUD Expert Prof.univ. Dr. Valer Micle, Technical Secretary Conf.univ. Dr. Irina Cozmîncă and three peers (Coordinator, International Expert, PhD Student) for each of the 3 doctoral study domains of UAV. In view of the Covid-19 pandemic this evaluation was organized in hybrid format. ARACIS and UAV arranged online conferences and a one day on-site visit to UAV by the Romanian evaluation team members in order to perform the required examinations.

Overall, I want to congratulate ARACIS and IOSUD at UAV for having made this evaluation possible under difficult conditions. I am very grateful to the Mission Director Prof.univ. Dr. Neculai-Eugen Seghedin and the Mission Scientific Coordinator Prof.univ. Dr. Oliviu Felecan for conducting this extraordinary evaluation process in a very efficient and careful way. My special thanks go to the Technical Secretary Conf.univ. Dr. Irina Cozmîncă for giving me the opportunity to participate in this evaluation and for her friendly way of holding contact with me, preparing the evaluation so well and providing all necessary information and support for the procedure.

I also give my cordial thanks to the Director of IOSUD at UAV Prof.univ. Dr. Florentina Daniela Munteanu for the friendly welcome and for assisting me by additional information during the visit. Last but not least I want to thank the interpreters providing translations into English during the meetings.

## **1.2 Organizational Details of the “Aurel Vlaicu” University of Arad (UAV) with a focus on IOSUD**

“Aurel Vlaicu” University is located in Arad, in the West of Romania, close to the Hungarian border. It originates in the Institute of Sub-Engineers started in 1972 and was accredited by a government decreed in May 1990 as a public university and 1991 named in honour of the Romanian engineer and aviation pioneer Aurel Vlaicu.

According to the Law of National Education 2011, UAV is governed by the Senate, the Rector and the Administrative Council. The Senate provides the legal framework and rules for the operational management of the institution. It consists of 43 members (11 students). The Rector together with 3 Prorectors is responsible for the operational management of the institution and represents the institution to the outside. The Administrative Council is formed of the Rector, the 3 Prorectors, the 9 Deans, the Administrative Director and one student representative.

UAV has established an Institution for Organizing Doctoral Studies (IOSUD) which is led by a Director and the Council for Doctoral Studies (CSUD). The Director of IOSUD is appointed following a public competition and occupies this position for a period of 4 years. The CSUD consists of the IOSUD Director, 4 members chosen through universal vote of the doctoral advisors of the Interdisciplinary Doctoral School of IOSUD, 3 members appointed according fixed rules by the Rector and 2 PhD student representatives chosen through universal vote of doctoral students.

The financial resources of the University do mainly come from the government and fees from students. According to the provided information the revenue in 2020 was about 65.500.000 Lei.

The main university building is situated in B-dul Revoluției nr. 77, 310130 Arad. According to the provided information and the observations made during the on-site visit on September 17, the patrimony of UAV is well managed. Buildings, lecture rooms and research facilities and other installations are up to date and of international standard.

Currently UAV is organised in 9 Faculties (Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Food Engineering, Tourism and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Exact Sciences, Faculty of Sciences Education, Psychology and Social Work, Faculty of Theology, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, Faculty of Design), 9 Departments as well as IOSUD.

In connection with the Law of National Education 2011, UAV was ranked among the "Teaching and Scientific Research Universities".

The research of UAV is based on 3 research institutes, a technological incubator and 14 research centres at faculty level.

The institution offers Bachelor, Master und PhD programmes. Currently the Faculties organize 33 Bachelor programmes and 31 Master programmes. IOSUD offers by its Interdisciplinary Doctoral School the 3 doctoral programmes Philology, Theology (Orthodox Theology, Evangelical Theology) and Environmental Engineering.

In the academic year 2020/21 there were 3.971 Bachelor-, 1.509 Master- and 94 PhD-students as well as 148 students in special courses enrolled at UAV.

In 2020/21 there were 213 teaching and research staff members working at UAV. 171 positions were vacant. The current number of doctoral advisors is 17.

UAV is well respected in the community. The educational programmes of UAV and the research performed are very important for the development of Arad and the region close to the Hungarian border.

## **2. Methods and Tools used in the Evaluation**

My observations are based on the analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and Annexes for the IOSUD-UAV consisting of 54 + 4 pages, documents concerning the legal framework for IOSUD in Romania and guidelines for the external evaluation of IOSUD provided by

ARACIS, the homepage of UAV, the information obtained from the online interviews during the evaluation and the feedback received from Romanian evaluation team members after the on-site visit. In order to complete my view of IOSUD at UAV, I received on request additional information from the Director of IOSUD-UAV (cf. enclosed documents “Additional Information 1” and “Additional Information 2”). From the colleagues evaluating the PhD programme Theology I received a document concerning the influence of the Orthodox Church on research activities of staff and students in the PhD programme Theology ( cf. Rumänisches Patriarchat 23 Juli 2021 – 6619) and about a disciplinary investigation against the Rector of UAV (cf. Hotărâre CNECSDTI nr. 4 / 28.01.2021). Furthermore, I studied the reports from the ARACIS Institutional Evaluation of UAV in 2018 and the EUA Institutional Evaluation of UAV in 2013.

In preparation and during the evaluation I attended the following online-meetings arranged by ARACIS and UAV:

<b>Friday, 10.09.2021</b>	Online meeting
12:00 - 13:00	IOSUD and domain evaluation panel (technical meeting preparing the evaluation)

<b>Monday, 13.09.2021</b>	Online meetings
09:00 - 09:45 15 connected devices	IOSUD and domain evaluation panel (technical meeting)
10:00 - 10:45 28 connected devices	IOSUD and domain evaluation panel & representatives of UAV's management
11:00 – 11:45 21 connected devices	IOSUD evaluation panel & Director of CSUD and the drafting team of SER
12:00 - 12:45 23 connected devices	IOSUD evaluation panel & representatives of CSUD and Interdisciplinary Doctoral School
18:00 – 18:45 12 connected devices	Philology domain evaluation panel & PhD students & Winfried Müller (guest)

<b>Wednesday, 15.09.2021</b>	Online meetings
15:00 - 15:45 28 connected devices	IOSUD evaluation panel & PhD students
16:00 - 16:45 23 connected devices	IOSUD evaluation panel & Doctoral coordinators

<b>Thursday, 16.09.2021</b>	Online meetings
09:00 - 09:45 22 connected devices	IOSUD and domain evaluation panel & Ethic Commission
10:00 - 10:45 19 connected devices	IOSUD and domain evaluation panel & QA Commission and QA Department
11:00 - 11:45 22 connected devices	IOSUD and domain evaluation panel & Directors of research centres and labs
15:00 - 15:45 20 connected devices	IOSUD and domain evaluation panel & PhD graduates
16:00 – 16:45 23 connected devices	IOSUD and domain evaluation panel & employers

<b>Friday, 17.09.2021</b>	Online meeting and on-site visit to UAV
09:00 - 10:00 12 connected devices	IOSUD and domain evaluation panel (technical meeting to identify specific issues during on-site visit)
10:00 – 18:00 on-site visit	Romanian members of IOSUD and domain evaluation panel

<b>Saturday, 18.09.2021</b>	Online meetings
10:00 - 10:45 13 connected devices	IOSUD and domain evaluation panel (technical conclusion meeting)
11:00 - 11:45 18 connected devices	IOSUD and domain evaluation panel & representatives of UAV

### 3. Analysis of ARACIS's 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.*

UAV has established an Institution Organizing Doctoral Study Programmes (IOSUD-UAV) for the organization of its 3 doctoral study programmes Philology, Theology and Environmental Engineering offered by its Interdisciplinary Doctoral School. In-force legal provisions and regulations set by the Senate are respected.

**Performance Indicator A.1.1.1.** *The existence of specific regulations and their application at the level of the IOSUD, respectively at the Doctoral School(s):*

*(a) the internal regulations of the administrative structures (the institutional regulations for the organization and conduct of doctoral studies programs, the regulation(s) of Doctoral School(s));*

The doctoral studies are conducted in accordance with the regulations for the organization and functioning of the IOSUD-UAV (Senate R.63 from 20.02.2020 - Anexa IOSUD\_45). The regulations for IOSUD are documented in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and Annexes and were verified and confirmed in the meetings during the evaluation.

*(b) the Methodology for conducting elections at the level of the Council of University Doctoral Studies (CSUD), respectively at Doctoral School(s) including elections by the students of their representatives in CSUD/Council of the Doctoral School (CSD) and the evidence of their conduct;*

The election processes for CSUD are clearly defined and follow the legal requirements. But student interest in university affairs is limited and many PhD students do not even know their representatives in CSUD.

*c) the Methodologies for organizing and conducting doctoral studies for the admission of doctoral students, for the completion of doctoral studies;*

Methodologies are clearly defined and documented. Conditions for the admission contest are published on the website (cf. document M.09 from 15.12.2020 – Anexa IOSUD\_48).

*d) the existence of mechanisms for recognizing the status of a Doctoral advisor and the equivalence of the doctoral degree obtained abroad;*

There exist clear regulations (cf. document M.06 from 25.07.2019 – Anexa IOSUD\_49).

*e) functional management structures CSUD/Council of the Doctoral School with evidence of the regularity of meetings;*

CSUD usually assembles twice per semester.

*f) the contract for doctoral studies;*

The doctoral thesis contract stipulates the rights and obligations assigned to IOSUD, to the doctoral students, and to the doctoral advisors (cf. Anexa IOSUD\_50).

*g) internal procedures for the analysis and approval of proposals about doctoral study programs based on advanced academic studies.*

IOSUD has defined internal analysis and approval procedures regarding proposals on the topic and themes of doctoral programmes.

*Recommendations:*

Following the Bologna principle that students should be involved as much as possible into the development of the university and their study programmes, UAV should try to strengthen the participation of students in university affairs.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

***Performance Indicator 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.*

The regulations of IOSUD (cf. Senate R.63 from 20.02.2020 – Anexa\_IOSUD\_45) provide criteria, procedures, and mandatory standards with respect to the admission of new doctoral advisers (as well as regulations for the revocation), the decision-making process for training programmes of the doctoral studies, the change of a doctoral advisor, the circumstances a doctoral programme can be discontinued, the prevention of fraud and plagiarism, the access to research resources, the students' attendance obligations.

*Recommendations:*

According to the principle of subsidiarity, subordinate bodies and monocrats (director of IOSUD, supervisors) should have more autonomy. Not all decisions - concerning individuals - should need approval by the Administrative Council and/or the Senate.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

***Performance Indicator\* A.1.1.3<sup>1</sup>.*** *Doctoral schools included in IOSUD are organized as disciplinary or interdisciplinary disciplines/thematic, according to Article 158, paragraph (7) of the Law of National Education No. 1/2011 with subsequent amendments and additions.*

The 3 doctoral studies offered by IOSUD at UAV are organised by the Interdisciplinary Doctoral School respecting the Romanian legislation concerning doctoral studies and the ARACIS regulations for IOSUD. But there is a lot of "homemade" bureaucracy and lack of autonomy for IOSUD. For nearly all actions – even decisions like the extension of years for doctoral students - final approval by the Administrative Council and/or the Senate is necessary.

*Recommendations:*

Cf. recommendations indicator A.1.1.2.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

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

IOSUD has set all necessary steps to carry out the doctoral studies.

***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.*

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<sup>1</sup> The indicators marked with an asterisk (\*) hold a special status, referring exclusively to the evaluation of doctoral schools, as per Article 12 from the annex No.1 of the Order of the minister of education No. 3651/12.04.2021 approving the Methodology for evaluating university doctoral studies and the system of criteria, standards and performance indicators used in the evaluation. In case they are not fulfilled, the Agency extends a period of maximum 3 years to IOSUD to correct the respective deficiencies.

The university management IT platform provides digital information systems for the registration of all doctoral students and storage of all individual study programmes.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator A.1.2.2.** *The existence and use of a software program and evidence of its use to verify the percentage of similarity in all doctoral theses.*

UAV has implemented an anti-plagiarism system following the technical specifications of the sistemantiplagiat.ro platform (cf. Anexa\_IOSUD\_51). As a benefit of the anti-plagiarism check, out of 32 PhD students registered for the public defense of the doctoral thesis since 2016 all candidates have been admitted for support.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

## **Criterion A.2. Research infrastructure**

Standard A.2.1. The IOSUD/doctoral schools have a modern research infrastructure to support the conduct of doctoral studies' specific activities.

According to the provided written information, the data from the homepage and the observations made during the on-site visit, UAV possesses a modern and adequate research infrastructure. There are 3 research institutes, a technological incubator and 14 research centres at UAV.

**Performance Indicator A.2.1.1.** *The IOSUD/the doctoral school(s) present proof of possessing or having rented adequate spaces for research activity specific to doctoral studies (laboratories, experimental fields, research stations etc.)*

The patrimony of UAV is well managed. Buildings, lecture rooms, research facilities, and student service installations are up to date and of international standard.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator A.2.1.2.** *The IOSUD/doctoral school(s) has/have collaboration agreements with higher education institutions, research institutes, research networks for joint partnerships and have access for using various research infrastructures; the offer for research services is presented publicly using a dedicated platform.*

UAV has agreements with institutions and organizations in 26 countries, 67 ERASMUS agreements and 13 exchange agreements with HE institutions in non-EU countries.

Moreover, ULBS has signed numerous cooperation agreements with private companies and research institutes.

But it is not clear how active and alive some of these agreements are. Moreover, no strategy for choosing partner institutions can be seen.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator A.2.1.3.** *The IOSUD/doctoral school(s) proves that it is/are concerned with permanent renewal of the research infrastructure to provide doctoral students access to up-dated research resources, by applying to various funding competitions and using own university resources for acquiring new research infrastructure.*

The research infrastructure of UAV is based on the 3 research institutes, the technological incubator and the 14 research centres at faculty level. During the last 5 year UAV has invested 2.312.270 Lei from its own funds into its research infrastructure, that means less than 500.000 Lei per year. This seems to be a small amount for the renewal of the research infrastructure.



But in the explanations given in “Additional information 2” it is stated that there is also a considerable amount invested to the research infrastructure coming from projects.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

### **Criterion A.3. Quality of Human Resource**

Standard A.3.1. At the level of each Doctoral School there are sufficient qualified staff to ensure a quality educational process.

The didactic and research staff affiliated to IOSUD is highly qualified and complies with the legislation. But the number of PhD supervisors in Philology should be increased and some supervisors from abroad should be included into IOSUD too. Moreover, 171 out of 384 teaching and research staff positions are vacant.

**Performance Indicator \*A.3.1.1.** *The share of Doctoral advisors coordinating simultaneously more than 8 doctoral students but not more than 12 during their doctoral studies<sup>2</sup> does not exceed 20%.*

According to the provided data (cf. SER), there are 17 doctoral advisers at UAV. But the supervising duties are not distributed equally. UAV states that the required indicator percentages will be fulfilled within the academic year 2021/22.

*Recommendations:*

Distribute supervising duties more equally as soon as possible.

**The indicator is partially fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator A.3.1.2.** *At least 50% of all teaching/research staff involved in teaching/research activities related to training programs for advanced university studies or in individual research/art creation programs have a full-time employment contract for an indefinite period with the IOSUD.*

All didactic activities related to the doctoral study programmes are delivered by qualified doctoral supervisors. In the fields of Theology and Philology 75% of total teaching activities are covered by tenured teachers, in the field of Environmental Engineering 83,33% (cf. SER).

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

## **Domain B. EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

IOSUD-UAV meets the needs of the society and the labour market on the top academic level of the education. It provides specialists in Philology, Theology and Environmental Engineering to work in scientific positions.

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

Standard B.1.1. Candidates admitted to doctoral studies demonstrate academic, research and professional performance and are diversified as social representation and by gender.

The analysis of the written documents and the meetings with doctoral students and graduates verified the characteristics requested.

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<sup>2</sup> 3 years for the doctoral university studies with the duration stipulated at Article 159, paragraph (3), respectively 4 years for the doctoral university studies with the duration stipulated at Article 174, paragraph (3) of the Law of national education No.1/2011 with subsequent amendments and additions, with additional extension periods approved as per Article 39, paragraph (3) of the Code of doctoral studies approved by the GD No. 681/2011 with subsequent amendments and additions.

**Performance Indicator \*B.1.1.1.** 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. Interviewing the candidate is compulsory, as part of the admission procedure.

The admission regulations are clearly defined and documented (cf. document M.09 from 15.1.2020 – Anexa\_IOSUD\_48) and fulfill legal requirements. But some legal constraints such as international PhD candidates have to prove the knowledge of the Romanian language hinders the recruitment of international PhD students. This legal condition contradicts the intentions for internationalization of doctoral studies in Romania.

*Recommendations:*

Try to change legislation with respect the requirement to command Romanian for international PhD students.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator B.1.1.2.** The IOSUD/doctoral school(s) have a policy for stimulating enrollment of doctoral students coming from disadvantaged social environments, by allocating reserved positions in the admission procedure and/or granting special scholarships, as well as organising support programs to prevent drop-outs.

There are grants and means by subsidizing tuition fees or by other benefits for students from disadvantaged social environments. But the number of these supports is quite limited and does not consider regional differences. Students are not fully aware of the possibilities of financial support. Working load of the majority of PhD students beside their academic studies is very high and affects the quality of their thesis or hinders the completion of PhD studies within 3 years .

*Recommendations:*

Supportive instruments for students of disadvantaged social environments and geographical regions should be further expanded and the percentage of students receiving financial support increased. More assistance for fully working PhD students is needed.

**The indicator is partially fulfilled.**

## **Criterion B.2. The content of doctoral programs**

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

The concentration of the training program to the first semester hinders the continuous support of PhD students. The Bologna idea that supervision of PhD students should be changed from being a private relationship between one professor and one PhD student to becoming a collective research group inclusion is not supported by this concentration.

**Performance Indicator 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. The training program based on advanced university studies in each field includes at least 3 disciplines and at least one of the disciplines is studied in-depth (cf. Anexa\_IOSUD\_47). But as already mentioned, the concentration of the the training program to the first semester hinders the continuous scientific support and integration of PhD students.

*Recommendations:*

The training program should be expanded over all three years of the PhD studies and completed by subjects in order to develop creativity and critical behaving as well as interdisciplinary thinking. Students should be trained not only to follow rules but also to discuss and take influence on their formation.

**The indicator is partially fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator 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.*

Ethics and Intellectual Property are topics in the training programmes of all 3 doctoral disciplines.

*Recommendations:*

Cf. the remarks and recommendations under Criterion B.2. and Indicator B.2.1.1.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator 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<sup>3</sup>.*

From the discussion during the online meetings results, that UAV has defined learning outcomes for all doctoral fields based on the mission of the field. But the link <https://core.uav.ro/raport-fise-discipline> provided in the SER is not accessible without password. Moreover, in the meetings with students, graduates and advisors I observed deficits with respect to interdisciplinary research activities and the critical and creative attitude of students. Students do not show much interest for improvements and changes of their study processes.

Staff and students from the PhD programme Theology report that they need a "blessing" by the Orthodox Church for the participation at research projects and the attendance of conferences.

*Recommendations:*

Make learning outcomes of PhD fields better accessible for interested persons.

Strengthen interdisciplinary thinking of students and motivate them to be more creative and active in university affairs.

IOSUD-UAV should take care that academic freedom of teaching and research is guaranteed within all PhD programmes and there is no outside influence on the research activities in the PhD programme Theology.

**The indicator is partially 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.

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<sup>3</sup> Or by what the graduate should know, understand and to be able to do, according to the provisions of the Methodology regarding inscription and registration of higher education qualifications in the the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education (RNCIS) approved by the Order No.3475/2017 with subsequent amendments and additions.

IOSUD-UAV has provided on request comprehensive data (cf. Additional Information 1) describing international activities of doctoral students. But there are only few really international activities with respect to the attention of international conferences abroad and publications in international refereed journals.

**Performance Indicator B.3.1.1.** *For the doctoral school there are in place mechanisms for valorification of the results of doctoral studies in accordance with the specificity of the particular domain (i.e. technological transfer, products, patents in the case of exact sciences; products and services for social sciences and humanities; festivals, contests, recitals, sports competitions; cultural-arts orders in the vocational domain; presentations at national and international conferences, publication of research results in national and international publications, engaging doctoral students in writing research-development projects etc.)*

UAV has established several supportive instruments for the dissemination and capitalization of the research results of PhD students (financial support for scientific conferences, publication of articles, scholarships, etc.). One advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic was, that there was a big number of scientific conferences which were arranged in online modus. Hence, participation was less expensive. But for international visibility and strengthening contacts with the international research community it is also necessary to meet other researchers at conferences personally.

*Recommendations:*

The participation in online conferences is a good thing, but international experience and contacts should be obtained also by the attendance of conferences organized in the traditional way with speakers being present. Hence, as soon as there are again international conferences arranged with participants present, I recommend to motivate and support students for the attendance of international conferences, with a focus on conferences not organized at UAV. Similarly, staff and students should increase publications in international refereed journals.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

#### **Criterion B.4. Quality of doctoral theses**

##### **Standard B.4.1. Doctoral theses fulfil high quality standards**

IOSUD-UAV has established procedures to guarantee the quality of doctoral theses. The assessment is always based on the judgement of several qualified scientists. But as already mentioned, the quality of theses should be benchmarked also by presentations at international conferences abroad and by publication in international refereed journals.

**Performance Indicator B.4.1.1.** *At the level of IOSUD, the percentage of theses non- validated, at the level of General Council of the National Council for Attestation of University Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates (CNADTCU), without the right of further amendments and re-organizing the process of public defending, is not exceeding 5% in the last 5 years.*

Not applicable. There were no invalidated doctoral theses at UAV during the evaluation period.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

#### **Domain C. QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

Not least by the influence of ARACIS, quality assurance and quality management have a high value at Romanian universities. IOSUD-UAV has established many instruments in order to

monitor and improve quality of doctoral education. But it is not completely clear, to what extent the implemented internal regulations for QA really contribute to improving the quality of education and research. The QA instruments of UAV are mainly based on the ISO regulations for QA, which do not fully correspond to the needs of higher education institutions. The process of embedding a quality culture at UAV is still not finished.

#### **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.** *The IOSUD 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 doctoral school(s), 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 academic and social services (including participation to various events, publication of papers etc.) and counselling made available to doctoral students.*

IOSUD monitors the scientific activity of doctoral advisors. Admission procedure and obligations of doctoral students are regulated and publicly available. There exist several support services for PhD supervisors and doctoral students (attendance of conferences, publication of articles).

##### *Recommendations:*

Observe that bureaucratic burden does not superimpose the benefits of evaluation procedures. Make results and consequences of evaluations visible for all members of UAV. Motivate students to take a more active role in quality assurance procedures. Strengthen the intentions of the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” published by ENQA 2015 within UAV’s quality procedures.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator C.1.1.2.** *Students’ associations and, according to the case, representatives of students organise elections in the community of doctoral students, for positions in the CSUD, by universal vote, direct and secret, all doctoral students having the right of electing or being elected.*

The representatives of doctoral students in CSUD are elected by universal, direct and secret ballot of all doctoral students.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator C.1.1.3.** *Students’ associations and, according to the case, representatives of students organise elections in the community of doctoral students at the level of each doctoral school, for positions in the councils of doctoral schools, by universal vote, direct and secret, all doctoral students having the right of electing or being elected.*

Doctoral schools are managed by the corresponding Faculties. Student representatives in Faculty Councils are elected by universal, direct and secret ballot of students.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator \*C.1.1.4.** *Following the internal evaluation, IOSUD and the doctoral schools draft strategies and policies aiming to eliminate the identified deficiencies and to stimulate scientific and academic performance of IOSUD.*

UAV elaborates an operational plan, which is subsequently updated with the degree of fulfillment of the objectives. Identified deficiencies are included in this procedure for improvements. But the SER prepared by UAV for the IOSUD evaluation was an imposition for the evaluation team. The report is not readable without permanent search in Annexes and UAV's homepage. Much important information is missing (cf. Additional Information 1). It is not self-critical and does not describe actual problems and challenges of IOSUD-UAV.

*Recommendations:*

The improving aspect of the evaluation procedure should be more emphasized. The elaboration of the SER could be a very fruitful procedure providing a good base for improvements and further developments. IOSUD-UAV has missed the chance to use this self-evaluation process for a discussion of its current situation and to define priorities and perspectives for the future. I encourage UAV to consider future evaluations not as inspections but rather as a chance to receive the advice of experienced peers.

**The indicator is partially 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.

There is only few information on IOSUD and PhD studies in English at UAV's homepage.

**Performance Indicator 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:*

- (a) the IOSUD/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 the training study 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) information on the opportunities for doctoral students aiming to attend conferences, to publish articles, awarding scholarships etc.*
- (j) links to the doctoral theses's 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.*

All relevant information for doctoral students, potential candidates and doctoral advisors is publicly available via the links given on pages 48 and 49 of the SER. But currently the links are only in Romanian language.

*Recommendations:*

In order to attract international students and to increase international visibility of IOSUD-UAV all the information should be available also in English language.

**The 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.** *All doctoral students have free access to one platform providing academic databases relevant to the doctoral studies domain of the their thesis.*

Doctoral students have free access to online platforms of relevant academic sources and data including the platform “AnelisPlus” via the UAV libraries.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator 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.*

In accordance with the regulations regarding the organization and development of the final exam, doctoral students have access to the sistemantiplagiat.ro platform.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator 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.*

All doctoral students have access to scientific research laboratories or other facilities according to the specific domain(s) within their doctoral school, subsequent to a request approved by the doctoral advisor and in keeping with the availability of the infrastructure.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

### **Criterion C.3. Internationalization**

Standard C.3.1. IOSUD/Doctoral school has a strategy in place and it is applied to enhance the internationalization of doctoral studies.

This is one of the areas where IOSUD-UAV should set further steps. The international strategy of IOSUD-UAV is not very visible. The number of publications in refereed international journals and the presentations of research results at international conferences abroad has to be increased. Internationalization at home (lectures given in English, visiting professors from abroad, etc.) has to be strengthened. The required knowledge of the Romanian language (a legal condition) and the missing comprehensive information in English for foreign PhD candidates hinder the recruitment of international students.

**Performance Indicator \*C.3.1.1.** *IOSUD, for every doctoral school, 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%, wich is the target at the level of the European Higher Education Area.*

UAV has signed partnership agreements with institutions in 26 countries all over the world. There are 67 ERASMUS and 13 ERASMUS+ agreements with universities. And UAV lists 2024 economic partners mainly from the region. These contracts are also open for PhD students. UAV lists in its answer to “Additional Information 1” more than 150 contributions of students to international scientific conferences during the evaluation period.

But it is difficult to decide, how active these agreements are. Moreover, there cannot be identified a clear strategy behind the numerous contracts.

*Recommendations:*

IOSUD-UAV should develop a clear internationalization strategy and strengthen internationalization at home. Participation of doctoral students and teaching staff at international conferences organized abroad should be increased. It is different experience to present scientific results in English at an international conference abroad compared with a conference organized by the home university. The recruitment of international students for doctoral studies should be intensified.

**The indicator is partially fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator C.3.1.2.** *IOSUD supports, including providing financial support, to the organization of doctoral studies in international co-tutelage or invitation of leading experts to deliver courses/lectures for doctoral students.*

There are no doctoral supervisors coming from a foreign research institution. But UAV lists in its answer to "Additional Information 1" the names of 21 foreign experts involved in the activity of IOSUD during the evaluation periode. Nevertheless, the involvement of international experts into the activities of IOSUD-UAV seems to be very limited.

*Recommendations:*

International relations should be strengthened. IOSUD should try to include more international experts into the supervision of doctoral theses.

**The indicator is partially fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator \*C.3.1.3.** *At least 10% of the doctoral theses of every doctoral schools of the IOSUD are drafted and/or submitted in an international foreign language or are organised in international co-tutelage.*

During the evaluation periode 26 PhD theses in Romanian were completed. According to the provided data, IOSUD is only starting to motivate PhD students to write their thesis in an international foreign language. Currently there are two PhD students preparing their thesis in English.

*Recommendations:*

Strengthen efforts in all three doctoral areas to make research and research results internationally more visible. Intensify links to the international scientific community in all research fields. Support the elaboration of doctoral theses written in an international foreign language.

**The indicator is partially fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator C.3.1.4.** *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<sup>4</sup> etc.).*

IOSUD-UAV participates in international educational fairs and is a member of EUA. There are regulations for the financial support of international activities (conferences, publications, etc.). But the involvement of international experts into IOSUD-UAV is very limited.

*Recommendations:*

International cooperations in the supervision of PhD theses and their defending should be increased. IOSUD should look for international co-advisors. The actual financial support for

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<sup>4</sup> Doctoral studies are completed by presenting the doctoral thesis in public session in front of a committee whose members hear and judge the final public presentation of the thesis



PhD students attending international conferences abroad and performing international research activities seems to be very small and should be increased.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

#### **Criterion C.4. System for assurance of ethical and academic integrity**

Standard C.4.1. IOSUD/Doctoral school has a functional and efficient system in place for prevention and assuring ethical and academic integrity norms

UAV has a Code of Ethics including all university members and cycles of education and an Ethics Commission. All scientific papers are checked by the sistemantiplagiat.ro.

UAV has in place processes and structures to prevent and act upon fraudulent behavior. The Ethics Commission functions well with respect to misconduct of students and regular staff. But as soon as senior university members are involved, Ethics Commission and QA people are overstrained by the situation.

In order to avoid damage of the reputation of UAV and specially of IOSUD-UAV, the institution should be vigilant about criticisms from outside. It is not the question if criticisms on the management of UAV are correct or not, but the institution has to react in order to avoid a damage of its reputation and should start an open discussion involving staff, students and stakeholders on problematic issues.

**Performance Indicator C.4.1.1.** *IOSUD, applies the current provisions regulating ethics, deontology/academic integrity, respectively to academic freedom and has developed:*

- *policies based on prevention regarding possible violations of the Code of ethics and academic integrity, demonstrated by public positionings, studies, analyses or measures taken;*
- *practices and mechanisms for preventing fraud, from an institutional perspective as well as from the perspective of the doctoral students;*
- *practices for preventing possible fraud in academic activity, research or any other activity, including active measures for preventing and avoiding plagiarism of any kind, as well as promoting ethical and integrity/deontology principles or observing intellectual property norms, authors' rights and other related rights, among all members of the academic community;*
- *administrative instruments which allow applying effective and eliminatory sanctions;*
- *mechanisms and measures to assure equal opportunities and protection against intolerance and discrimination of any kind;*

*IOSUD monitors and permanently evaluates these practices and can prove they are applied to all activities and engagement of students in all these processes, and the results of the monitoring is made public yearly or whenever it becomes necessary.*

The Ethics Commission publishes regularly reports on the findings and actions. But sensitive cases involving senior university members are not discussed or solved.

##### *Recommendations:*

The existence and work of the Ethic Commission have to be commended. But an ethics commission formed by members only from the institution will not be able to handle sensitive cases like corruption and academic misconduct of senior university members.

As I have mentioned already on other occasions, one solution for this problem could be to install inter-university ethics commissions with half of the members coming from the institution and the other half from other universities.

Start an open discussion involving staff, students and stakeholders on problematic issues related to the institution.

**The indicator is partially fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator C.4.1.2.** *All intimations regarding suspicion of plagiarism related to doctoral theses have been analysed and resolved by the IOSUD within the time interval legally established for expressing in writing its position regarding the intimation received.*

Not applicable. There were no cases of plagiarism concerning PhD theses during the evaluation periode.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator C.4.1.3.** *Annual Reports of the Ethics commission of the IOSUD contain information on the stage of solving each case of intimation or own-initiative intimation regarding violation of norms or ethical aspects relevant for university doctoral studies, description of the facts, the findings from the assessed institution's documents and the evaluation visit itself.*

The annual reports of the Ethics Commission contain information on all discussed cases following notifications.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator C.4.1.4.** *The measures taken by IOSUD after the final decision of CNADTCU to withdraw the title of "doctor" following accusations of plagiarism have addressed all the aspects mentioned in CNADTCU's decision and in the current legislation.*

Not applicable. During the evaluation period there was not any doctoral degree from UAV withdrawn by CNADTCU.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator C.4.1.5.** *The measures aiming to prevent academic fraud in the doctoral studies, taken by IOSUD, could be:*

- a) *Suspension of the right to advise newly enrolled doctoral students, for a period of 3 years, in the case of doctoral advisors having coordinated a doctoral thesis with a definitive decision of withdrawal of the "doctor" title for plagiarism;*
- b) *Exclusion from the IOSUD of the doctoral advisor having coordinated at least two doctoral theses with definitive decisions of withdrawal of the "doctor" title for plagiarism;*
- c) *Suspension of the right to organize the admission process of new doctoral students in the Doctoral studies domain, for a period of 2 years, if in the respective domain a doctoral thesis has been finalized and defended with a definitive decision of withdrawal of the "doctor" title for plagiarism.*

In the case of academic fraud, IOSUD states to react according to the measures mentioned (cf. SER).

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator \*C.4.1.6.** *The scientific reviewers members in the commissions for public defense of two or more doctoral theses with definitive decisions of withdrawal of the "doctor" title for plagiarism, have not been nominated in other commissions for public defence of doctoral theses for a period of at least 3 years.*

Not applicable. During the evaluation period there was no "doctor" title withdrawn for plagiarism.

**The indicator is fulfilled.**

**Performance Indicator C.4.1.7. IOSUD has a database open to the public containing all the doctoral theses defended in the institution beginning at least in 2016 in a format including: the domain, author, doctoral advisor, title of the thesis and the thesis in electronic format (if there is an agreement of the author).**

All doctoral theses defended at UAV since 2016 are included in a database. The theses are published also on the website <https://rei.gov.ro/teze-doctorat> of the Ministry of Education and Research. But there is no direct link on UAV's homepage to all PhD theses.

**Recommendations:**

Provide open information on doctoral theses also on UAV's homepage.

**The indicator is partially fulfilled.**

## 4. SWOT Analysis

<b><u>Strengths:</u></b>	<b><u>Weaknesses:</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Director and members of IOSUD-UAV show very high identification and are highly committed to the institution.</li> <li>* The qualification of doctoral advisors is high. Several supervisors perform research together with industrial and academic organizations outside UAV.</li> <li>* The educational programmes and the research activities of UAV are of great importance for the development of the region and form an obvious counterpart to the strong Hungarian university in Szeged.</li> <li>* UAV has very good links with local society and economy.</li> <li>* PhD graduates work in a wide variety of jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* UAV is not enough self-critical and considers an evaluation rather as an inspection than as a chance for improvement.</li> <li>* There is no clear international strategy for IOSUD. The involvement of foreign experts is low. There are no foreign PhD supervisors. Mobility of teachers and students is quite low.</li> <li>* The concentration of the PhD training program to the first semester hinders the continuous support of PhD students and the inclusion of PhD students into specific research groups.</li> <li>* Doctoral students are not very critical and not very active in university affairs.</li> <li>* The number of PhD grants and financial support for PhD students is relatively low.</li> <li>* The load of working PhD students is very heavy and there is a high dropout rate.</li> <li>* Similar to other Romanian universities UAV has a favor for bureaucracy and collective decisions. UAV is highly centralized and there is a lack of autonomy for lower levels. The principle of subsidiarity is not realized.</li> <li>* The great number of vacant staff positions effects the quality of teaching and research.</li> </ul>

<p><b><u>Opportunities:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* UAV is located in an important and very interesting region at a gateway to Western Europa close to the Hungarian border. This means an excellent starting position for internationalization and the cooperation with companies involved in export and import activities.</li> <li>* Good location for the recruitment of international staff and students.</li> <li>* Living costs in Romania are quite affordable.</li> <li>* Existence of national and European research programs to finance doctoral and post-doctoral research.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Threats:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Legal constraints and “homemade bureaucracy”.</li> <li>* Legal requirement for international PhD candidates to command Romanian.</li> <li>* Efforts of the Orthodox Church to take influence on research activities in Theology.</li> <li>* Open disciplinary cases against the Rector.</li> </ul>
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## 5. Overview of judgments awarded and of the recommendations

The following table summarizes the key judgements and key recommendations included in the chapters above:

No.	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
1	<b>Indicator A.1.1.1. b)</b>	The election processes for CSUD are clearly defined and follow the legal requirements. But student interest in university affairs is limited and many PhD students do not even know their representatives in CSUD.	Following the Bologna principle that students should be involved as much as possible into the development of the university and their study programmes, IOSUD-UAV should try to strengthen the participation of students in university affairs.
2	<b>Indicator A.1.1.2.</b> <b>Indicator A.1.1.3.</b>	The 3 doctoral studies offered by IOSUD at UAV are organised by the Interdisciplinary Doctoral School respecting the Romanian legislation and the ARACIS regulations. But there is a lot of “homemade” bureaucracy and lack of autonomy for IOSUD. For nearly all actions – even decisions like the extension of years for doctoral students - final approval by the Administrative Council and/or the Senate is necessary.	According to the principle of subsidiarity, subordinate bodies and monocrats (director of IOSUD, supervisors, etc.) should have more autonomy. Not all decisions - concerning individuals - should need approval by the Administrative Council and/or the Senate.

3	<b>Indicator A.3.1.1.</b>	There are 17 doctoral advisers at UAV. But the supervising duties are not distributed equally. UAV states that the required indicator percentages will be fulfilled within the academic year 2021/22.	Distribute supervising duties more equally as soon as possible.
4	<b>Indicator B.1.1.1 .</b>	The admission regulations are clearly defined and documented and fulfill legal requirements. But some legal constraints such as international PhD candidates have to prove the knowledge of the Romanian language hinders the recruitment of international PhD students.	Try to change legislation with respect the requirement to command Romanian for international PhD students.
5	<b>Indicator B.1.1.2.</b>	There are grants and means by subsidizing tuition fees or by other benefits for students from disadvantaged social environments. But the number of these supports is quite limited and does not consider regional differences. Students are not fully aware of the possibilities of financial support. Working load of the majority of PhD students beside their academic studies is very high and affects the quality of their thesis or hinders the completion of PhD studies within 3 years .	Supportive instruments for students of disadvantaged social environments and geographical regions should be further expanded and the percentage of students receiving financial support increased. More assistance for fully working PhD students is needed.
6	<b>Criterion B.2.</b>  <b>Indicator B.2.1.1.</b>  <b>Indicator B.2.1.3.</b>	The concentration of the training program to the first semester hinders the continuous support of PhD students. The Bologna idea that supervision of PhD students should be changed from being a private relationship between one professor and one PhD student to becoming a collective research group inclusion is not supported by this concentration. Moreover, in the meetings with students, graduates and advisors I observed deficits with respect to interdisciplinary research activities and the critical and creative attitude of students. Staff and students from the PhD programme Theology report that they need a "blessing" by the Orthodox Church for the participation at research projects and the attendance of conferences.	The training program should be expanded over all three years of the PhD studies and completed by subjects in order to develop creativity and critical behavior as well as interdisciplinary thinking of PhD students. Students should be trained not only to follow rules but also to be more creative and active in the formation of their studies. IOSUD-UAV should take care that academic freedom of teaching and research is guaranteed within all PhD programmes and there is no outside influence on the research activities in the PhD programme Theology.

7	<b>Standard B.3.1.</b>  <b>Indicator B.3.1.1.</b>	IOSUD-UAV has provided on request comprehensive data (cf. Additional Information 1) describing international activities of doctoral students. But there are only few really international activities with respect to the attention of international conferences abroad and publications in international refereed journals.	Motivate and support staff and students for the attendance of international conferences, with a focus on conferences organized at UAV. Staff and students should increase publications in international refereed journals.
8	<b>Domain C.</b>  <b>Indicator C.1.1.1.</b>	Not least by the influence of ARACIS, quality assurance and quality management have a high value at Romanian universities. IOSUD-UAV has established many instruments in order to monitor and improve quality of doctoral education. But it is not completely clear, to what extend the implemented internal regulations for QA really contribute to improving the quality of education and research. The QA instruments of UAV are mainly based on the ISO regulations for QA, which do not fully correspond to the needs of higher education institutions. The process of embedding a quality culture at UAV is still not finished.	Observe that bureaucratic burden does not superimpose the benefits of evaluation procedures. Make results and consequences of evaluations visible for all members of UAV. Motivate students to take a more active role in quality assurance procedures. Strengthen the intentions of the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" published by ENQA 2015 within UAV's quality procedures.
9	<b>Indicator C.1.1.4.</b>	UAV elaborates an operational plan, which is subsequently updated with the degree of fulfillment of the objectives. Identified deficiencies are included in this procedure for improvements. But the SER prepared by UAV for the IOSUD evaluation was an imposition for the evaluation team. The report is not readable without permanent search in Annexes and UAV's homepage. Much important information is missing (cf. Additional Information 1). It is not self-critical and does not describe actual problems and challenges of IOSUD-UAV.	The improving aspect of the evaluation procedure should be more emphasized. The elaboration of the SER could be a very fruitful procedure providing a good base for improvements and further developments. IOSUD-UAV has missed the chance to use this self-evaluation process for a discussion of its current situation and to define priorities and perspectives for the future. I encourage UAV to consider future evaluations not as inspections but rather as a chance to receive the advice of experienced peers.
10	<b>Criterion C.2.</b>  <b>Indicator C.2.1.1.</b>	There is only few information on IOSUD and PhD studies in English at UAV's homepage.	In order to attract international students and to increase international visibility of IOSUD-UAV all the information should be available also in English language.

11	<b>Standard C.3.1.</b>  <b>Indicator C.3.1.1.</b>	<p>This is one of the areas where IOSUD-UAV should set further steps. The international strategy of IOSUD-UAV is not very visible. The number of publications in refereed international journals and the presentations of research results at international conferences abroad has to be increased.</p> <p>Internationalization at home (lectures given in English, visiting professors from abroad, etc.) has to be strengthened.</p> <p>Legal constraints and the missing comprehensive information in English for foreign PhD candidates hinder the recruitment of international students.</p> <p>UAV has signed numerous partnership agreements and ERASMUS contracts with research institutions and universities. There are also more than 2000 economic partners, mainly in the region. These contracts are also open for PhD students. But it is difficult to decide, how active these agreements are. Moreover, there cannot be identified a clear strategy behind these numerous contracts.</p>	<p>IOSUD-UAV should develop a clear internationalization strategy and strengthen internationalization at home. Participation of doctoral students and teaching staff at international conferences organized abroad should be increased.</p> <p>The recruitment of international students for doctoral studies should be intensified.</p>
12	<b>Indicator C.3.1.2.</b>	<p>There are no doctoral supervisors coming from a foreign research institution. But UAV lists in its answer to "Additional Information 1" the names of 21 foreign experts involved in the activity of IOSUD during the evaluation periode. Nevertheless, the involvement of international experts into the activities of IOSUD-UAV seems to be very limited.</p>	<p>International relations should be strengthened. IOSUD should try to include more international experts into the supervision of doctoral theses.</p>
13	<b>Indicator C.3.1.3.</b>	<p>During the evaluation periode 26 PhD theses in Romanian were completed. According to the provided data, IOSUD is only starting to motivate PhD students to write their thesis in an international foreign language. Currently there are two PhD students preparing their thesis in English.</p>	<p>Intensify links to the international scientific community of all PhD fields. Support the elaboration of doctoral theses written in an international foreign language.</p>
14	<b>Indicator C.3.1.4</b>	<p>IOSUD-UAV participates in international educational fairs and is a member of EUA. There are regulations for the financial</p>	<p>International cooperations in the supervision of PhD theses and their defending should be increased. IOSUD should look for international</p>

		support of international activities (conferences, publications, etc.). But the involvement of international experts into IOSUD-UAV is very limited.	co-advisors. The actual financial support for PhD students attending international conferences abroad and performing international research activities seems to be very small and should be increased.
15	<b>Standard C.4.1.</b>  <b>Indicator C.4.1.1.</b>	UAV has a Code of Ethics including all university members and cycles of education and an Ethics Commission. All scientific papers are checked by the sistemantiplagiat.ro. UAV has in place processes and structures to prevent and act upon fraudulent behavior. The Ethics Commission functions well with respect to misconduct of students and regular staff. But as soon as senior university members are involved, Ethics Commission and QA people are overstrained by the situation. In order to avoid damage of the reputation of UAV and specially of IOSUD-UAV, the institution should be vigilant about criticisms from outside. It is not the question if criticisms on the management of UAV are correct or not, but the institution has to react in order to avoid a damage of its reputation and should start an open discussion involving staff, students and stakeholders on problematic issues.	The existence and work of the Ethic Commission have to be commended. But an ethics commission formed by members only from the institution will not be able to handle sensitive cases like corruption and academic misconduct of senior university members. As I have mentioned already on other occasions, a solution for this problem could be to install inter-university ethics commissions with half of the members coming from the institution and the other half from other universities. Start an open discussion involving staff, students and stakeholders on problematic issues related to the institution.
16	<b>Indicator C.4.1.7.</b>	All doctoral theses defended at UAV since 2016 are included in a database and published also on a website of the Ministry of Education and Research. But there is no direct link on UAV's homepage to all PhD theses.	Provide open information on doctoral theses also on UAV's homepage.



## **6. Conclusions and general recommendations**

IOSUD-UAV is well-established and recognized by the society. Doctoral Studies at UAV are very important for the region of Arad and for Romania. Teachers and programmes reflect the latest scientific achievements and are of international standard. All significant legal requirements (Romanian legislation concerning doctoral studies, ARACIS performance indicators for IOSUD) are more or less respected.

Nevertheless, there are some areas, where IOSUD-UAV should set further steps and develop or improve:

### **6.1 Reduce internal bureaucracy and increase decentralization following the principle of subsidiarity**

Beside the lack of autonomy of Romanian universities there is also a big amount of “homemade bureaucracy” at UAV. Despite of the usual Romanian favor for bureaucracy and collective decisions, UAV should follow the principle of subsidiarity and give more power to CSUD and PhD supervisors. Not every individual decision should need the approval of the Administrative Council and/or the Senate.

### **6.2 Encourage students to develop more independence and creativity in order to become critical members of our society**

Students seem not to be really engaged in academic affairs including improvements of their studies and the IOSUD. Strengthening the involvement of PhD students in university issues could also help to reduce the high drop-out rate.

### **6.3 Increase international activities of IOSUD-UAV**

Up to now, the international strategy of IOSUD-UAV is not very visible. Participation in international and EU research projects, encouraging publications in foreign languages, inclusion of more international researchers into IOSUD-UAV and mobility of staff and students should be further developed. The inclusion of international Experts to IOSUD and the recruitment of international students for doctoral studies should be intensified.

### **6.4 Address the problem of external criticism on UAV's rector by starting an open discussion with staff, students and stakeholders on problematic issues.**

In order to avoid damage from UAV and IOSUD-AUV, outside criticisms - regardless of origin and correctness - should not be ignored.

### **6.5 Defend academic freedom**

IOSUD-UAV should establish supportive instruments for the participation of staff and students in research activities without the “blessing” of the Orthodox Church.

## **7. Final remarks on the ARACIS evaluation procedure of IOSUD**

The current ARACIS evaluation procedure for IOSUD is strictly conducted in correspondence with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The focus is on 36 performance indicators, the evaluated institution has to prove. The ARACIS evaluation procedure for IOSUD is certainly an important step for quality assurance in doctoral education in Romania. The process is very well organized and works with excellent peers. But the procedure is more or less an inspection and as a consequence of a bad evaluation an institution could lose accreditation of PhD programmes. Hence, the evaluated institutions try to present themselves as good as possible and hardly mention any problems. The documentation and the verification of all the indicators means a high bureaucratic workload for the institutions and the members of the evaluation teams. What I am missing in the procedure is more motivation for evaluated institutions to think in organizational and qualitative improvements. Indicator C.1.1.4. should be more strengthened. Currently the institutions only work for the formal proof of the numerous indicators and are not encouraged to be more self-critical and to make better use of the evaluation procedure by looking also into the future and not only into the past. Hence, I recommend a revision of the IOSUD evaluation procedure reducing bureaucracy, merging similar indicators and strengthening the part on improvements and future goals.

My remarks and recommendations should assist IOSUD-UAV and ARACIS to proceed their successful way for high quality in doctoral education in Romania into the future.

## **8. Annexes**

- Schedule of the IOSUD-UAV evaluation visit
- Evaluation Panels for IOSUD-UAV
- Additional Information 1
- Additional Information 2
- Rumänisches Patriarchat 23 Juli 2021 - 6619
- Hotărâre CNECSDTI nr. 4 / 28.01.2021

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