

**EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S
REPORT FOR ARACIS
UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST
2020**

Introduction

I was appointed as a Foreign External Evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) and was consequently invited to join the evaluation team online for the institutional evaluation process of University of Bucharest (UB). The audit took place between Monday 23 November and Friday 27 November 2020. A huge evaluation team (29 members) took part in the accreditation process, as UB is a rather giant university with 19 faculties and over 33000 students.

This evaluation process was also special as it was the first online conducted audit for me with ARACIS. The evaluation process began on Monday 23 November at 9:30 a.m. at Zoom platform with online meeting between UB representatives and the Evaluation Team to establish the details of the visit. After the welcoming speech of Prof. univ. dr. Marian PREDA the rector, Prof. univ. dr. Radu OPREAN the mission director introduced the representatives of the students and those colleagues who were responsible for the evaluation of different programmes in the team. Then Prof. univ. dr. Calin ROSCA told the introductory statements of the mission.

In my role as Foreign Expert Evaluator, I was responsible for establishing an overview of the whole university and therefore I asked for special meetings with quite a few representatives of different bodies at UB (e.g. the Ethics Committee; the International Relations Direction; the Department of Counselling and Career Guidance; the Students'

Hostels-Dining Rooms and Students' Activities Department; professors who are responsible for bachelor or master programmes conducted in English at UB etc.).

I tried to attend most of the common sessions during the week as an observer, but at the same time, I asked for short English summaries about these meetings (e.g. meeting with UB graduates; meeting with representatives of the labour market) as they were conducted in Romanian language.

Probably for technical reasons I could not connect to the online closing meeting at the Webex platform on Friday (27 November).

General Statements

University of Bucharest is a public higher education institution, operates according to the Constitution, the laws that govern the higher education system in Romania and also on the basis of the University Charter and of its own internal regulations. UB is one of the most important representative of the Romanian higher education, enjoys national and international prestige, its tradition extending over 150 years.

In 2015 the institution was evaluated by ARACIS. As a result of the evaluation the institution was awarded the "High Degree of Confidence" qualification.

UB functions according to the Bologna process, organising 19 faculties. The faculties are conducting primarily teaching, scientific research and lifelong learning activities. The university has several BA (97) and MA (215) programs which are provided through also distance learning education activities. The university is recognized as an institution with the right to organize PhD studies in 22 doctoral schools. All study programmes of the university have been accredited/ authorized to operate. The university has 33767 students, out of which: 22799 undergraduate students; 8954 master's degree students; 2014 PhD students and 873 foreign students.

Managerial Structure

The leadership of the university is organised in accordance with its legal obligations.

The Senate is the main decision making body the supreme governing board of the university which consists 119 members, of which 89 professors and 30 students. The members of the Board of Directors, as well as the director of the General Directorate of Secretariat of the University, are permanent guests at the Senate meetings. The bodies and functional structures of the Senate are the Senate President, Senate Presidium, Senate Standing Committees, Secretariat and ad hoc committees.

The Administrative Council of the University of Bucharest ensures the operational management of the University's structures, as a management body with administrative decision-making power. The rector is the president of this council and nine Vice-Rectors support his activities. The deans, the general administrative director and the student representative appointed by the students' members of the Senate are also members of the Administrative Council.

The Rector's duties include the strategic leadership of the university and representing the university at judicial and public bodies. He has formulated the quality policy and objectives, which are known and applicable in the entire university.

The university is divided into 19 faculties, which are further subdivided into departments (74). UB has 1 research institute and 143 research centres, 22 doctoral schools, 8 research stations, 1 museum, 1 botanical garden, 2 publishing houses.

At the level of faculties, the management structure is the Faculty Council, which includes the dean, the vice-deans and representatives of teachers and students. There are counselling, monitoring, internal assessment (e.g. Committee for Evaluation and Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Analysis Committee of the Use of Resources etc.) and functional (e.g. Human Resources Department, IT&C Department, Students' Hostels-Dining Rooms and Students' Activities Department etc.) organizations of UB are also well-structured and provide various services for the students and the staff.

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

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

Teaching Staff

In the academic year of 2019/20 there were 2613 teaching positions at UB from which 1274 were filled and 1339 were vacant, covered by basic teaching staff as hourly pay (1023 positions) and covered by associate teaching staff as hourly pay (316 positions). UB also employs more than 500 researchers.

The student-professor ratio (tenured and associate teaching staff) during the academic year 2018-2019 was 13,7 across the institution, which indicates high quality of evaluation and student-professor interaction. The optimal student-professor ratio is set with a view to ensuring the quality of teaching and research.

The structure of the teaching staff seems to be balanced. Every year the University evaluates the employees' performances.

Comment: The quality of human resources and the scientific potential at UB is on a very good level, but the workload of the teaching staff is high. The ratio of students to teaching staff is better than the European average level.

Facilities

UB does not have a unified campus. Most of the faculties are situated in different buildings in the city. The needs of education and research in accordance with the areas where the educational processes take place.

UB has 18 dormitories with 5274 beds and also operates a canteen. UB has good sports facilities, 11 places in Bucharest and one more in Sinaia (140km from Bucharest in the mountains) for mountain sport activities. All these facilities provide a wide range of recreation and personal development activities for students.

The info-documentary support for higher education and scientific research at UB is assured by „Carol I” Central University Library in Bucharest with its 16 branches.

The library’s collection amounts to a total of 2,401 147 volumes at the end of 2019 (of which 1,659,042 volumes are found in the branch libraries), serial publications: 25,725 titles, 424 771 volumes and 2,536,833 leaflets from different fields.

Both in the central unit and in the branches of the library, the access is free to e-books, bibliographic references, bibliometric information and to more than 20 scientific databases which contain approximately 65 000 titles from periodical publications. The Central University Library and its branches offer a rich depository of books and access to databases.

UB ensures the printing of the lecture notes, textbooks and of the necessary documents for the implementation of the curricula with the help of two publishing houses. The Publishing House of the UB issues over 250 new titles yearly. ARS DOCENDI Publishing House has an academic and cultural profile.

UB pays special attention to persons with disabilities and the necessary conditions has been created for them in its locations.

Comment: UB has adequate infrastructure with some minor problems. It seems that renovation of old buildings are needed. The place for educational and research activities are enough.

Students

Quite a number of study programs (BA/BSc, MA/MSc and PhD) are available for the candidates at UB.

I could not attend the online appointment with the undergraduate students but I had the possibility to talk with six representatives of different students’ associations. I found them very open minded. They seem to be very pleased with UB and found the academic staff

very good. Most of them are involved in different decision-making bodies on faculty or university level.

Wednesday at noon, we had an online meeting with a group of about 50 former students. I was present as an observer because it was conducted in Romanian, which I do not understand except a few words, and I did not want to make any interruption in the process. I asked for an English summary from a colleague of UB, who was responsible to help my activity.

Most of the former students who attended the meeting have been working in the field what they have studied at the university. The following subjects were tried to be explored during the meeting: their experience as students, actual field of work, teachers' qualifications, details about the courses they followed and suggestion on quality improvement. Generally, they seemed pleased with the members of the academic staff, the career opportunities and the university. There was almost no criticism.

UB students have several opportunities to take part in Erasmus+ Programme at hundreds partner universities. The number of mobilities increased in the previous years. Of course this academic year and the second half of last academic year are exception, because of the pandemic situation. International Relations Department manages mobilities for students, professors and auxiliary staff.

Thursday at noon, at the meeting with a group of about 30 employers I followed the same procedure, for the same reason, as I did it on Wednesday. Representatives of the public and private sectors were both present. The following subjects were tried to be discussed during the meeting: the collaboration with UB, the collaboration with the faculties, the procedures of the collaboration; the internships. They were very satisfied with those students who graduated from UB. They also mentioned that they have good cooperation with UB for the student's practice. They would appreciate frequent meetings between them and faculty representatives to develop collaborations based on specific needs.

Research

Scientific research in the university is structured into research groups and centres, which are hosted either at departmental level or at the Research Institute of the University of Bucharest (ICUB). There are 92 research groups and centres at UB. One of the vice-rectors is responsible for research activity within the university.

The Directorate of Research Programmes Management has also an important role in order to streamline the administrative process and to decrease the level of bureaucracy through the activity of project officers.

Scientific research is continuously monitored and evaluated annually. The results of the scientific activities are valorised by means of publications in dedicated journals or publishing houses. Research is materialised also in: textbooks for didactic purposes, books and monographs, scientific articles published in specialized reviews, accredited by national and international authorities, patents etc.

UB has strong cooperation with academic institutions, private companies and non-governmental organizations from Romania and abroad.

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

Quality Management

The internal quality management system is very well described in Self-Assessment Report of UB. The university pays a special attention to quality assurance. At the central level, the responsibility for quality assurance belongs to the Committee for Evaluation and Quality Assurance (CEAC), which follows the Regulations for CEAC organization and functioning. CEAC is the structure in charge of devising and implementing a quality management system across UB. The Rector has direct responsibility for the quality management at institutional level, but he delegates it to the vice-rector in charge of Quality management, Social responsibility and the Relation with social partners, who acts as President of CEAC.

CEAC is supported by the Quality Management Department, whose role is to offer assistance and consultancy both to the central commission, and to the similar bodies at faculty level, in implementing and developing a quality management system in UB.

Besides the transparent quality assurance structure of UB, the university concentrate on the different fields of the quality assurance: quality assurance for management processes, quality assurance in teaching and scientific research.

I had the chance to interview not only with director of the Quality Management Department but also with the other relevant stakeholders.

Comment: In my opinion, the structure and the procedures of quality assurance at UB are well organized. There is also internal and external control of quality assurance.

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

Conclusion

The basis of my report what I have read in the "Self-Assessment Report for External Evaluation at Institutional Level" and I have gained from the website of UB, what I have heard during the meetings and interviews. I was very much satisfied what I have experienced although everybody knows the limits of an online audit.

The students' motivation, the staff (teachers, researches and administrators) commitments and professionalism are the basis of the success. I think that UB deserves a "High degree confidence" rating of ARACIS.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to leadership of UB and all the university staff for the support during the evaluation process. Also thanks to ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this online evaluation process.

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