

EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT FOR ARACIS

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ARTS FROM BUCHAREST 2022

Introduction

I was appointed as an International Evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) and was consequently invited to join the evaluation team for the institutional evaluation process of the National University of Arts from Bucharest (NUAB). The audit took place between 25-28 January 2022. The evaluation process was conducted online.

The evaluation team consisted of the following members, in addition to myself:

Conf. univ. dr. Madalin Bunoiu – Mission Director

Prof. univ. dr. Adriana Giurgiu – Coordinator of the Experts Evaluator Team

Prof. univ. dr. Viorel-Aurel Serban – Advisory Commission Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Ioan Calin Rosca – Institutional Commission Expert

Prof. univ.dr. Daniela Constantin – Programme Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Liviu Malita – Programme Expert

Prof. univ.dr. Daniela Chiorean – Programme Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Adriana Lucaciu – Programme Expert

Ioana Popescu – Technical Secretary

Alina Ionascu – Student Evaluator (ANOSR)

Costel Marian Dalban – Student Evaluator (UNSR)

The evaluation process began on Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at Zoom platform with a preliminary meeting for the preparation and harmonization of the evaluation stages in the mixed work mode at institutional level and at the level of university study programmes. The mission

director asked the coordinator of the experts to share the main aims of the audit. Prof. univ. dr. Adriana Giurgiu asked the members of the team to share their previous impressions about NUAB. Everybody agreed that no major problems were detected previously at NUAB. At 10:00 a.m. we had a preliminary meeting with the management of NUAB, in order to establish the details of the evaluations both at the institutional level and at the level of university study programmes. After the introductory statements of the mission director, the coordinator of the experts introduced the members of the evaluation team. Then Prof. univ. dr. Catalin-Mihai Balescu (rector) had a welcoming speech and asked his colleagues to say a few words about their activities at NUAB.

In my role as an international evaluator, I was responsible for establishing an overview of the whole university and therefore I asked for additional meetings with a few members of the staff at NUAB. I talked with the representatives of the Centre for the analysis and creation of artistic image; the representatives of the Research centre in conservation and restoration of the work of art; the International Relations Coordinator (Oana Bordeanu); and the vice-rector who is responsible for quality assurance (Prof. univ. dr. Eugen-Alexandru Gustea) at NUAB. I attended also all the official organized sessions during these days.

My findings are based on the "Self-evaluation Report" (2021), the information I have gained from the website of NUAB (the availability of information in English is very limited) and I have heard during the meetings and interviews. The meetings and interviews were conducted at Zoom platform.

General Statements

NUAB is the largest and one of the most important institution of artistic higher education in Romania, with about 1500 students, three cycles of studies (bachelor, master and doctorate) structured in three faculties and a Doctoral School. NUAB tradition extending over 150 years.

NUAB is a public higher education institution, operates according to the Constitution, the laws and other normative acts that govern the higher education system in Romania and also on the basis of the University Charter and of its own internal regulations. The

institutional self-evaluation report of NUAB was structured in compliance with all the juridical regulations and the external evaluation methodology, standards, reference and indicators of ARACIS. The institution was last evaluated by ARACIS in 2015.

NUAB has a structure with three faculties: the Faculty of Fine Arts; the Faculty of Decorative Arts and Design; the Faculty of Art History and Theory. The faculties are further subdivided into departments.

The Faculty of Fine Arts has five Bachelor (Painting, Sculpture, Graphic, Photography – computer image video processing, Fine and Decorative Arts Pedagogy) and Five Master (Painting, Sculpture, Graphic arts, Photography and dynamic imaging, Education through Visual Arts) programmes. The Faculty of Decorative Arts and Design has seven Bachelor (Theory and research, Mural Art, Textile arts – textile design, Ceramics – Glass – Metal, Design, Fashion – clothing design, Scenography and artistic event) and eight Master (Theory and research, Mural Art and public space, Environmental textile arts, Ceramics – Glass – Metal, Interior and public space design, Object design and visual communications, Fashion and costume design, Stage and performance design) programmes. The Faculty of Art History and Theory has two Bachelor (Art History and Theory, Conservation and restoration) and two Master (Visual and Curatorial Studies, Conservation and restoration of cultural heritage) programmes. The Department for training of teaching staff (DPPD) included in the Faculty of Art History and Theory organizes psycho-pedagogical training programmes aimed at certifying specific competences for the teaching profession, which prepares graduates, assuming an essential role in the professional education of the future and present teachers. NUAB is recognized as an institution with the right to organize PhD studies.

According to the organisation chart of NUAB has a well-designed administrative structure, which meets the institutional needs of the university in order to achieve its mission and objectives.

Comment: NUAB's evaluation report is very well structured, meets the requirements, which are need for an institutional evaluation processes. The report is accompanied by digital annexes, which contained information materials on all mandatory standards required for institutional evaluation.

Managerial Structure

The leadership of NUAB is organised in accordance with its legal obligations. The complex governance structure allows the representation of all stakeholder. The structure and content of the internal regulatory framework includes nearly every required element. Only the existence of an electoral code for student representatives is questionable.

The Senate of NUAB is the highest decision-making and deliberation body at the institution, which is chaired by the president. The rector's duties include the strategic leadership of the university and representing the NUAB in different external relations. The obligations of the rector are defined in the University Charter and in his job description. The operational management of NUAB is provided by the Administrative Council, which includes the rector, the vice-rector, the deans and the administrative general director. The deans coordinate the three faculties and the faculty council. The faculties are composed of departments. These are coordinated by department directors.

Monitoring, internal assessment and functional organizations can be found at NUAB, which are also well-structured and provide various feedback and services for the students and the staff.

Management system is based on the integrated information systems that provides data records for functional departments of university. NUAB has implemented an Internal Managerial Control System (SCIM), which functional mechanisms comply with the regulatory standards including the internal control systems.

Comment: NUAB has a coherent, integrated, transparent management system, based on an efficient and effective administration. I propose to clarify the regulatory background for the election of student representatives and on the base on that the real involvement of students in decision making in those matters they are affected.

Teaching Staff

The human resource of NUAB is made of academic and administrative staff. The university employs a mixture of full-time and part-time academic staff. In the academic year of 2020-2021 NUAB employed 189 teaching staff (118 tenured and 71 associated). Every full-time teacher has a PhD, while only around half of part-time teachers have a PhD.

The academic staff quality is on a good level, but the structure of the teaching staff has to be improved. There are only two full professors who are in their fifties. For this reason, NUAB might persuade the experienced lectures to become associate professors and the experienced associate professors to become professors in order to maintain the academic quality.

The ratio is approximately 7,5 students to 1 teaching staff. Due to the nature of teaching that is practical and personal-based, the ratio between staff and students is necessarily has to be small, and it is important for the NUAB to be able to maintain these ratio in order to continue to deliver high-quality education to its students.

Comment: The quality of human capital and the scientific potential at NUAB are on a good level. It is an important base of competitiveness. Teaching staff professionalism are the basis of the success of NUAB. The ratio of students to teaching staff is decent. In my opinion a minor ageing problem can be found the composition of the teaching staff, which might cause difficulties in the future. The human resource development plans for the future should be realized.

Facilities

It is very difficult to gauge that the infrastructure of NUAB fulfil all the requirements (classrooms, laboratories, libraries etc.) without being presence on site myself. According to the Self-assessment Report and the experiences of my colleagues, who took part in the site visit, it seems that NUAB has the necessary resources to carry out a high quality educational process in accordance with the curricula and the number of students. They experienced, that in the period since the last evaluation a number of renovation and repair

works have been carried out on university-owned buildings. Most of the educational, research spaces fulfil every requirement of the European standards, and they are well equipped.

NUAB does not have a unified campus. The university operates in seven buildings (rectorate and administration, faculties, gallery, hostel).

It is very important to continue the development project for the extension and remodelling of the university headquarters. The project aims consolidating and restoring Robescu House and the UNArte Library, which are owned by the university. This first stage of the project is currently at an advanced stage of implementation.

Comment: NAUB's spaces for teaching, artistic creation and research activities within its campuses are limited, although the facilities are well used and most of the educational spaces fulfil every requirement of the European standards. The students can take advantage of the existing infrastructure. It is important to continue the development project for the extension and remodelling of the university headquarters, when funds allows.

NUAB has its own library with 46,200 books, periodicals and specialist courses. The library has subscriptions to a large number of specialist periodicals covering the areas of expertise of the specializations.

The university has several social services for the students. NUAB has its own dormitory where 353 students can be accommodated. NUAB also has a Career Counselling and Guidance Centre where specialized staff work to guide students. I have not read about a canteen or sport facilities for the students at the university.

At the level of each study programme, internships are carried out with different professional partners from outside the university, with whom internship agreements are signed.

Comment: The learning resources, student support and social services have enough quality, but some improvements are required.

Students

NUAB has high quality of study programmes (BA/BSc, MA/MSc and PhD) are available for the candidates. NUAB had 1417 (948 BA + 351 MA + 118 PHD) enrolled students in academic year 2021/2022 and 1503 (1048 BA + 352 MA + 130) students in the academic year 2016/2017. It can be said that the total number of students is slowly decreasing comparing the data of the past five years.

Although NUAB has quite a number of international partners and Erasmus agreements with different higher education institutes, the university internationalisation actions to recruit foreign students are not satisfactory. Only a few foreign students enrolled in the study programmes of NUAB. The amount of information available in English for potential international students is also very limited.

NUAB has an Erasmus+ Office run by two part-time employee. The number of outgoing Erasmus students were increasing until the outbreak of the pandemic. The figures were quite impressive for the size of the university. I could not gain exact information about the incoming students of Erasmus Mobility.

Comment: I propose for NUAB to set up an international relations department, including also the Erasmus Office and even other units, in which all international issues could be integrally handled.

The undergraduate students were active at the meeting. They were pleased with the quality of education and the circumstances but it was also mentioned that in a few cases space in the laboratories are too small for the practical activities. Otherwise, they seemed to be very pleased with NUAB and found the academic and administrative staff very good and helpful.

During the discussion with the former students, they seemed also pleased with the members of the NUAB's teaching staff. They would appreciate more elective courses in the curriculum.

At the meeting with employers, they seemed very satisfied with those students who graduated from NUAB. Most of the employers were representatives of different fields of arts (e.g. museums, galleries, puppet theatre etc.). The majority of them would recommend NUAB's graduate students to other employers.

Research

UNMB feels great responsibility for the support of scientific research and artistic creations. Research policies are developed and carried out by the Scientific Research Council. The research topics, included in the research plans, are in line with the scientific areas of the bachelor, master and doctorate fields, at the same time they are connected to the requirements of the socio-economic environment. Beside the individual scientific research of the academic staff, seven active research centres do research activity within the university of which two centres are CNCSIS accredited.

Research in NUAB is oriented both on theoretical matters and practical matters. The scientific research activities capitalized through didactic materials, publications in specific magazines, through scientific communications. These are presented within exhibitions, catalogues, scientific research/artistic creation projects etc.

According to the self-evaluation report with its annexes and the information gained on EERIS (Engage in the European Research Infrastructures System) platform, NUAB's research centres offer different research and technological services for potential customers.

The research results and artistic performances are appreciated nationally and internationally through awards for creation and performance, citations in journals and specialized reviews.

Comment: The permanent renewal of the research infrastructure at NUAB ensures students access to current research resources. It is necessary individual motivation of students to develop research interest and to go into scientific discourse.

Quality Management

NUAB has structures, strategies, policies and procedures for quality assurance of the teaching and research processes. A central committee (Commission for Quality Evaluation and Assurance) of quality assurance supervises all activities at university level, but the stakeholders are involved at faculty (Faculty Council, Dean, Directors of Departments) and administrative (directors and heads of departments) level also. The information and evaluation results are processed annually in order to collect the quality evaluation report (Quality Committee Report).

In my opinion, the structure and the procedures of quality assurance at NUAB are well organized. There is also internal and external control of quality assurance. The improvements introduced at UNAB have solved several issues about quality assessment.

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

Since 2014, NUAB has received the ISO 9001 certification, which was subsequently renewed periodically regarding the quality management system. UNAB institution is internationally recognized through the IQNet partnership.

Comment: I recommend setting up a Quality Assurance and Evaluation Department at NUAB, which gives operational assistance for Commission for Quality Evaluation and Assurance and coordinate all quality assurance activities.

Conclusion

The basis of my report what I have read in the "Self-Assessment Report" and I have gained from the website of NUAB, what I have heard during the meetings and interviews. The documents were submitted to thematic content analysis. I was satisfied what I have experienced although everybody knows the limits of an online audit. I hope that some of the

comments, which I made, will help the university management in the process of continual improvement.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to leadership of NUAB and all the university staff for the support during the evaluation process. Also much gratitude to my colleagues from the evaluation team for the professional, open and gentle way in which the audit was conducted. Also thanks to ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this online evaluation process.

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