EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S
REPORT FOR ARACIS

UNIVERSITY OF ART AND DESIGN
IN CLUJ-NAPOCA
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 University of Art and Design Cluj-Napoca (UAD). The audit took place between 18-21 January 2022. The evaluation process was conducted online.

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

Conf. univ. dr. Mădălin Bunoiu – Mission Director

Prof. univ. dr. Ioan Calin Rosca – Coordinator of the Experts Evaluator Team

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

Prof. univ. dr. Doinita Sendre – Institutional Commission Expert

Prof.univ.dr. Daniela Constantin – Programme Expert

Prof.univ.dr. Marina Theodorescu – Programme Expert

Prof.univ.dr. Eugen Gustea – Programme Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Adriana Lucaciu – Programme Expert

Ioana Popescu – Technical Secretary

Meriacri Mircea – Student Evaluator (Aliantei Nationale a Organizatiilor Studentesti din Romania)

Armaselu Stefania-Maria – Student Evaluator (Uniunea Nationala a Studentilor din Romania)

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. Also the members of the evaluation team introduce themselves briefly. At 10:00 a.m. we had a preliminary meeting with the management of UAD, in order to establish the details of the evaluations both at the institutional level and at the level of university study programmes. Prof. univ. dr. Ioan Calin Rosca told the introductory statements of the mission and he also introduced the members of the evaluation team. Then Prof. univ. dr. Radu-Marcel Moraru (rector) had a welcoming speech and asked his colleagues to say a few words about their activities at UAD.

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 UAD. I talked with the Head of Department of Psycho-pedagogical Studies (DSPP); the representatives of the Centre for Information, Counselling, Career Guidance and Alumni (CICOCA); the representative of the Public and International Relations, Cultural and Community Programmes Department (CRPIPCC); and the vice-rector who is responsible for quality assurance at UAD. I attended all the sessions during these days.

My findings are based on the "Self-assessment Report" (2021), the information I have gained from the website of UAD (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

UAD 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. UAD is very important representative of the Romanian fine art higher education, enjoys national and international prestige.

The institution was last evaluated by ARACIS in 2015. UAD received the qualification "High Degree of Confidence.

UAD has a structure with two faculties: the Faculty of Fine Arts, the Faculty of Decorative Arts and Design. The faculties are further subdivided into departments.

The Faculty of Fine Arts has six BA (Painting, Sculpture, Graphic arts, Photo-video digital image processing, Conservation and restoration, Pedagogy of fine and decorative arts) and six MA (Painting, Sculpture, Graphic arts, Comics and animation, Photo-video, Conservation and restoration) programmes. The Faculty of Decorative Arts and Design has five BA (Ceramics – glass – metal, Textile Arts – textile design, Fashion design, Design, History and Theory of Art) and five MA (Ceramics – Glass, Textile Design, Fashion Design, Design, Contemporary Curatorial Practices) programmes. The university is recognized as an institution with the right to organize PhD studies, which offers a doctoral degree programme in the field of Visual Arts. All study programmes of the university have been accredited/ provisionally authorized to operate.

The Department of Psycho-pedagogical Studies (DSPP) of UAD mission is to assure education competences in the field of visual arts and in art history and theory, which prepares graduates, assuming an essential role in the professional education of the future and present teachers.

The university has 1111 enrolled students in the academic year of 2020-2021, which has been increasing since the academic year 2014-2015.

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

Comment: I have read quite a number of self-assessment reports since I began taking part in institutional evaluation processes but UNMB's evaluation report was one of the best because it was lack of frills.

Managerial Structure

The leadership of UAD is organised in accordance with its legal obligations. The democratic and efficient management system relies on the decision-making competencies specific to the management structures. The election mechanisms follow the principles of academic democracy at UAD. All the procedures are regulated.

The Senate of UAD represents the university community and is the highest decision-making and deliberation body at the institution. It is responsible for the coherent elaboration of the general development strategy of the university and its effective implementation. The operational management of UAD is provided by the university's Management Board (Board of Directors), which under the leadership of the rector and implements the strategic decisions of the University Senate.

Senate of UAD is composed of 75% teaching and research staff and 25% student representatives. All members of the University Senate, without exception, are elected by universal, direct and secret vote of all full teaching and research staff and all students. Each faculty will have representatives in the university senate, according to quotas. The President represents the University Senate in its relations with the rector.

The University Senate controls the work of the executive management of UAD and the Board of Directors through special committees. The reports of the committees are presented periodically and discussed in the University Senate. These are the basis for the resolutions of the University Senate.

The Board of Directors is made up of the rector, the vice-rectors, the deans, the general administrative director and a student representative, elected by the students based on their own methodology, approved by the Senate. The rector is the president of this board and three vice-rectors support his activities.

The method of appointing the rector based on general elections. The rector's duties include the strategic leadership and he legally represents UAD in its relations with third parties and carries out the executive management.

Monitoring, internal assessment (e.g. Monitoring Committee, Public Internal Audit Department, Committee for Quality Assessment and Assurance, Ethics Commission etc.) and functional (e.g. Public and International Relations, Cultural and Community Programmes Department; Centre for Information, Counselling, Career Guidance and Alumni; Communication and Information Technology Centre etc.) organizations can be found at UAD, which are also well-structured and provide various feedback and services for the students and the staff.

The management system internal communication is carried out through the Google platform and every member of academic and administrative staff has institutional e-mail address. The digitization of inter-institutional communication means is one of the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan for 2021-2024. UAD's website contains much information (most of them are not available in English), from legislation and announcements of interest to the academic community and the students.

Comment: UAD has a coherent, integrated, transparent management system, based on an efficient and effective administration. I recommend, in accordance with the Strategic Plan for 2021-2024, to speed up digitization and switch to safer internal platform for the intern communication, than the currently used, in the terms of cybersecurity.

Teaching Staff

UAD employs a mixture of full-time and part-time academic staff, supported by a team of administrators. In the academic year of 2020-2021 UAD employed 97 teaching staff. Of the 155 legally constituted posts, 97 are filled (out of which five are PhD students employed for a fixed period) and 58 are vacant. At the beginning of 2021 full professors within UAD occupied 62.58% of posts and full professors and associate professors occupied 37.41% of vacancies. Since the academic year 2014-2015 UAD has developed in increasing the number of teaching staff (from 84 to 97) by hiring teaching assistants from among doctoral students and hiring professors, associate professors and senior lecturers.

The structure of the teaching staff seems to be balanced. UAD 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 12 students to 1 teaching staff. It seems a bit high for me, as it is specific characteristic of fine art education, where many majors take place in classes with only a few students, which indicates high quality of evaluation and student-professor interaction.

Comment: The quality of human resources and the scientific potential at UAD are on good level. Teaching staff professionalism are the basis of the success of UAD. They have to maintain investing in human resource, if funds allows. It is one base of competitiveness.

Facilities

UAD does not have a unified campus. UAD operates in 11 buildings in which the two faculties and the Doctoral School and other academic and administrative structures are located.

It is very difficult to gauge that the infrastructure of UAD 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 UAD 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 the condition of the buildings are on different levels but most of the educational and research spaces fulfil every requirement of the European standards and they are well equipped. According to the students' opinion, only the dormitories are overcrowded. It is difficult to receive accommodation in them.

Comment: UAD holds enough spaces for teaching, artistic creation and research activities within its campuses. 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

infrastructures. UAD invested in its physical infrastructure when funds allowed. It is important to continue this procedure.

The info-documentary support for higher education and scientific research at UAD is assured by its library. The library has a large number of the most important current periodicals focusing on current artistic developments and production are also available to students. In the library, students have access to the basic bibliographical materials needed to study the topics covered in the subject sheets of the specialisations. In addition, each department provides in its own library for the students, within the study programmes, with discipline-specific learning resources in printed and/or digital format.

Comment: UAD holds enough spaces for teaching, artistic creation and research activities within its campuses, although further development is needed. Investment to material infrastructure has to be continued.

Students

High quality of study programmes (BA/BSc, MA/MSc and PhD) are available for the candidates at UAD. The number of students are over 1100 (including all levels, forms and types of studies) in the academic year 2020/2021 and the figures increased recently. There are only a few foreign students at UAD. The amount of information available in English for potential international students is not much at UAD.

According to the experience of the undergraduate students' meeting, they seemed to be very pleased with UAD and found the academic and administrative staff very good and helpful. They are generally pleased with the education, the circumstances and the infrastructure. Unfortunately not enough places are available in the dormitory.

During the discussion with the former students, they seemed pleased with the members of the UAD's teaching staff. The lack of sufficient management studies and entrepreneurial skills in the curriculum was mentioned. Those who had study experience, in the framework of Erasmus Mobility Programme, abroad mentioned that it was very beneficial for them. It

was emphasized that as UAD had very good professional relationship with different artistic organizations the best students could get a job easily.

There are over 100 Erasmus Mobility agreements at UAD and they used to participate in CEEPUS. The number of outgoing and incoming students at UAD participating in Erasmus Mobility Programme was increasing before the restrictions of pandemic. The figures were very impressive for the size of the university. The Erasmus Office of UAD manages mobility for students, professors and auxiliary staff.

UAD has international cooperation with over 100 cultural and professional institutions and organisations – universities, museums, galleries, cultural centres – all over the world. The focus of these partnerships is the exchange of experience, the organisation of joint artistic projects etc. Many of the bilateral partnerships have led to the signing of partnership contracts under the Erasmus+ Programme, which has strengthened the process of international mobility and cooperation. Responsibility for managing bilateral partnerships lies with the Public & International Relations, Cultural and Community Programmes Department.

We had a meeting with a group of about 10 representatives of employers Thursday at noon. They were satisfied with those students who graduated from UAD.

Comment: Increasing the number of international students would be an opportunity for UAD after the pandemic situation. Much more information available in English is needed on the website of UAD.

Research

UAD feels great responsibility for the support of scientific research and artistic creations. The main research directions at UAD are: "Research through art" and "Research about art".

The research and artistic creation activity is carried out according to the research plans undertaken by each department and is coordinated, at the Doctoral School level, by the director of the CSD. At the university level, research activity is coordinated by the vice-

rector responsible for research and artistic creation, through the Centre of Excellence in Artistic Creation, which reports to the vice-rector.

The Scientific Research and Artistic Creation Committee of the UAD's Senate, whose resolutions are implemented by the departments, under the coordination of the vice-deans, the director of the CSD and the vice-rector, examine the report. The scientific research/artistic creation activities of UAD consider national and international trends.

Research in UAD is oriented both on theoretical matters and practical matters. Research is materialised in specific directions: publication of articles, studies and books; participation in symposiums, conferences; organizing exhibitions, scientific research/artistic creation projects; editing catalogues and scientific study volumes etc.

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 ambition of UAD in research activity is quite clear: the continuous development of the performance of research in the university, and increasing the visibility in the Europe and worldwide.

Quality Management

UAD pays special attention to quality assurance as an integral part of the quality management system in the university, which is based on the DO then CHECK principle. The Quality Assessment and Assurance Committee has the task of verifying the activities undertaken by the Quality Assurance Department, coordinated by the vice-Rector and the Quality Management Representative. Department for Quality Assurance and the Monitoring Committee are responsible for the implementation of quality assurance programmes.

The present structure of quality assurance at UAD is stable, but I was informed that it was under reconstruction according to the recommendations of ARACIS given after the external evaluation of the doctoral studies recently.

Besides the quality assurance structure of UAD, the university concentrate on the different fields of quality assurance: quality assurance for management processes, quality assurance in teaching and scientific research. The regulations and the procedures of quality assurance are clear and transparent at UAD.

Comment: UAD has a responsive approach to improve the assessment, implementation and the results of the quality assurance system.

Conclusion

The basis of my report was the delivered documents and the data collected from the interviews. They were submitted to thematic content analysis. From the view of international expert I can confirm the high standard of UAD's activity in the Romanian higher education. 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 UAD 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.

Pécs, 31-01-2022

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