

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education



External Evaluation Report (REE) for the procedure for obtaining a maintaining accreditation (MAC) of Doctoral Study Domain

Higher Education Institution/Education Provider Organization:	`Ştefan cel Mare` University of Suceava
Doctoral School:	Social and Human Sciences
Doctoral Domain:	Business Administration
The objective of the external evaluation:	Maintaining accreditation (MAC)



Members of the ARACIS Evaluation Panel

No.	Last Name and First Name	Team role	Signature
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I. Introduction

The external evaluation report for the doctoral field of Business Administration was prepared within ARACIS periodic evaluation procedures to assess institutional quality and progress between successive reviews. It analyses academic activities, resources, and results from 2021–2026, drawing on contributions from external experts and the self-evaluation team of the Doctoral School of Social and Human Sciences. The process included stakeholder consultation, institutional data collection, and an assessment of quality assurance policies.

“Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava (USV) is a comprehensive public university and a major academic institution in the Bukovina region. Founded in 1963 as a three-year Pedagogical Institute, it underwent several transformations before becoming a state university in 1990 under Government Decision No. 225.

USV's mission focuses on knowledge creation and dissemination through education, research, innovation, and entrepreneurship at international standards. It combines high-quality teaching with research and technological transfer across sciences, engineering, arts, and humanities, while supporting regional development and Bukovina's multicultural identity.

The university is governed through participation, transparency, and legality. Its structure includes 11 faculties and two doctoral schools within IOSUD-USV: Applied Sciences and Engineering, and Social and Human Sciences. USV offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs in 14 fields, together with vocational conversion and dual education pathways.

USV has consistently demonstrated strong external quality performance, receiving ARACIS's highest rating, “High Degree of Confidence,” in 2008, 2013, 2019, and 2025. Its international recognition includes an EUA institutional evaluation in 2010 and membership in the ERASMUS+-funded NEOLAiA Alliance. These achievements are supported by digitalized infrastructure and strong academic integrity policies.

II. Methods used

The external evaluation of the Business Administration doctoral field at “Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava followed a standardised methodology combining document review, on-site and digital verification, stakeholder consultation, and performance analysis.

1. Documentary Analysis

The evaluation examined the Internal Evaluation Report and its annexes, including academic and administrative records, governance structures, human resources, and the development of the field since 2009. It also reviewed curricula aligned with EQF level 8, with emphasis on research ethics, academic writing, and advanced methodologies. Institutional documents, including the University Charter, Quality Code, doctoral regulations R11 and R40, scientific activity reports, collaboration agreements, and strategic plans, were also analysed.

2. Verification of infrastructure and digital tools

Evaluators inspected the Research Centre in Management and Business Administration, specialised laboratories, and the University Library. They also assessed the SmartUMS and SmartPortal academic platforms, Turnitin's AI-detection functions introduced in 2024, and doctoral students' access to databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, and ScienceDirect through ANELIS Plus.

3. Consultations and interviews

Formal discussions were held with the CSUD Director, the Doctoral School Director, and the five tenured doctoral supervisors. Doctoral students and graduates were consulted regarding mentoring, academic support, and services such as the COACH USV project. Representatives of the socio-economic environment and institutional research partners were also interviewed.

4. Performance indicator analysis

The evaluation assessed scientific output and compliance with national standards. It verified that supervisors meet CNATDCU requirements and that doctoral students publish at least two papers indexed in ISI or Scopus. Institutional data were correlated with field observations to confirm that official procedures are effectively implemented.

III. Judgement on the extent to which the standards and performance indicators are fulfilled

DOMAIN A. Institutional capacity

Criterion A.1. Managerial and administrative structures and processes involving students and other stakeholders

Standard S.A.1.1. Organisational components and institutional processes

The HEI has organisational components in its structure, which function based on adequate competences, responsibilities, processes, and implementation procedures, and ensure an effective management system.

Indicator
I.P.A.1.1.1

For delivering the study programme/domain, the HEI has adequate organisational components and an adequate management system, which operate based on methodologies, regulations and procedures that are periodically reviewed as required by law.

Presentation of the state of facts

USV operates through a comprehensive management and organisational system comprising academic, managerial, administrative, Senate, and University Sports Club structures. IOSUD-USV provides the institutional framework for doctoral studies, while the Doctoral School of Social and Human Sciences manages the Business Administration field.

Its activities are governed by periodically reviewed methodologies, regulations, and procedures aligned with national legislation, including Higher Education Law No. 199/2023. Key documents include Regulation R48 on doctoral programs, the framework regulation for approving and evaluating study programs, the methodology for selecting the CSUD Director, the regulation governing CRED USV, and the Quality Code defining the university's quality management principles and structure.

Analysis of the state of facts

The analysis confirms that IOSUD-USV has a coherent management system, with clearly defined responsibilities and transparent decision-making. The Senate, Board of Directors, Faculty Councils, and Department Councils operate within appropriate competencies.

The annual review of regulations such as R40, R11, and PO-01 supports compliance with current legal and academic requirements. Transparency is ensured by publishing relevant regulations and reports online. The ARACIS rating of "High Degree of Confidence," most recently awarded in 2025, further confirms the effectiveness of the university's organisational and management structures.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Integrated Ethics Support:** CRED USV assists doctoral students in respecting academic ethics and deontology during thesis preparation.
- **Advanced Digitisation:** SmartUMS and SmartPortal enable a fully digital academic.
- **Student Participation:** Students hold at least 25% representation in major decision-making bodies, supporting participatory governance.
- **Quality Management:** All quality assurance processes are integrated into a unified Quality Code available to the academic community.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Standard S.A.1.2. Stakeholder engagement

The HEI proves that it engages the relevant stakeholders in developing methodologies and regulations, as well as implementation procedures.

Indicator I.P.A.1.2.1	The opinions of the faculty and department members, of the subsidiary or extension* and of other stakeholders are considered in the process of adopting and revising methodologies, regulations and implementation procedures.
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Presentation of the state of facts

USV applies a participatory governance model involving several stakeholder groups in developing and revising regulations.

- **Student Representation:** Students, including doctoral candidates, hold at least 25% of seats in the University Senate and faculty councils and are elected by universal, direct, and secret vote.
- **Drafting and Consultation:** CEAC prepares regulations, which are circulated by email or published online for public debate before approval.
- **Feedback Integration:** Faculty and student proposals are centralised and reviewed by the Senate before final adoption.
- **External Consultation:** The Business Administration program is regularly discussed with socio-economic partners to align curricula with employer expectations.
- **Supporting Documentation:** These processes are regulated by the **University Charter** ([Link I.1.5](#)), the **Quality Code** ([Link I.1.22](#)), and internal decisions on the management system ([Link I.1.6](#), [Link I.1.7](#)).

Analysis of the state of facts

The institution demonstrates active and documented stakeholder involvement in regulatory processes. By allocating 25% of decision-making positions to students, USV ensures that doctoral candidates can influence academic and administrative policies.

The use of institutional mailing lists and the university website for public consultation confirms operational transparency. Employer feedback is integrated into the curriculum, supporting responsiveness to labour market needs. The Internal Evaluation Report was also developed with input from domain managers, supervisors, and doctoral students, reflecting broad institutional consensus.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- USV demonstrates active stakeholder involvement by ensuring 25% student representation in decision-making bodies, allowing doctoral candidates to influence academic policies.
- Transparency is supported through public consultations via institutional email and the university website. Employer feedback informs curriculum updates, while the Internal Evaluation Report reflects contributions from managers, supervisors, and doctoral students.

Recommendations

Developing shared leadership capacities among all academic and administrative staff.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion A.2. The material resources and optimisation of the use of the material resources

Standard S.A.2.1. Material resources

The HEI owns adequate movable and immovable assets to enable it to carry out the study programme/domain.

Indicator I.P.A.2.1.1	The HEI legally owns venues for the related education, research and administrative processes, as well as for services for students, doctoral students and trainees, thus providing an enabling environment for living and studying, including for disabled
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* The faculty, department, subsidiary, extension - hereinafter "organisational components"

persons. Optimal venues are also provided for activities of the staff. Such venues are adequately equipped.

Presentation of the state of facts

"Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava has a diversified infrastructure that supports teaching, research, and administration. The Doctoral School of Social and Human Sciences provides dedicated spaces for the Business Administration doctoral program.

Modern classrooms, seminar rooms, specialised laboratories, and the Research Centre in Management and Business Administration support academic and research activities. Most equipment has been acquired within the last five years.

Doctoral students also have access to the University Library, five reading rooms, and major databases, including ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Scopus, and Web of Science, through ANELIS Plus.

The university provides seven dormitories, with an additional 842-place facility under development, as well as a restaurant, swimming pool, sports hall, and modern synthetic fields. Its infrastructure is accessible to people with disabilities through ramps, elevators, and specialised signage.

Analysis of the state of facts

The available resources are aligned with EQF level 8 requirements and support both academic activities and advanced research. Recent equipment acquisitions demonstrate USV's commitment to maintaining a competitive research environment.

Access to major international databases enables doctoral students to conduct high-level documentation. Efficiently organised offices, administrative resources, and specialised technical staff ensure suitable working conditions and continuous infrastructure maintenance.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **ANELIS Plus Access:** Doctoral students benefit from free, continuous remote access to major international databases, supporting the program's publication requirements.
- **Specialised Research Centre:** The Centre for Research in Management and Business Administration provides advanced technology dedicated to the field.
- **Integrated Support Infrastructure:** Modern laboratories, sports facilities, and dining services create a comprehensive academic and well-being environment.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Standard S.A.2.2. Management of material resources

The organisational components manage the movable and immovable assets used for the evaluated study programme/domain in an optimal, sustainable manner.

Indicator I.P.A.2.2.1	The movable and immovable assets are properly maintained to ensure optimal conditions for studying, living and research, as well as for work.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava ensures the permanent and sustainable management of its material base through a structured monitoring and maintenance system.

- **Regulatory Framework:** Maintenance of movable and immovable assets is regulated by Technical-Maintenance Office procedures covering preventive and corrective interventions. These procedures are available to the academic community through the CEAC website ([Link I.1.27](#)).
- **Operational Management:** Each faculty within the university has a designated asset manager who is directly responsible for the recording, administration, and maintenance of material assets ([Link I.2.2.1](#)).
- **Technical Support:** Specialised auxiliary staff continuously monitor and maintain laboratory equipment and doctoral training facilities.
- **Infrastructure Condition:** Equipment within the Research Centre in Management and Business Administration is regularly checked to ensure optimal operation.

Analysis of the state of facts

The analysis confirms that USV has an effective decentralised asset management system. Faculty-level asset managers and technical staff ensure that laboratory equipment remains operational and suitable for advanced research.

Documented maintenance procedures demonstrate a systematic approach to infrastructure upkeep. Recent investments, including the 2022 sports hall renovation and the 2024 modernisation of the sports dome, further reflect USV's commitment to providing appropriate working and living conditions.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Decentralised Accountability:** Faculty-level asset managers enable faster responses to maintenance needs and reduce administrative delays.
- **Expert Technical Monitoring:** Qualified auxiliary staff ensure proper monitoring and maintenance of research equipment.
- **Systematic Transparency:** Online publication of maintenance standards helps staff and students understand requirements and report issues.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion A.3. Adequate human resources and transparent staff recruiting procedures developed according to the law

Standard S.A.3.1. Human resources

The HEI has the required human resources to organise and deliver the evaluated study programme/domain.

Indicator I.P.A.3.1.1	The human resources of the organisational component are suitable to perform the activities pertaining to the evaluated study programme/domain. The teaching staff has the required qualifications and professional competences to teach the subject matters assigned to them in the job list.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The Business Administration doctoral field is supported by the Doctoral School of Social and Human Sciences and a stable team of five tenured USV doctoral supervisors.

- **Contractual Status:** 100% of the doctoral supervisors are tenured teaching staff at the USV, ensuring long-term institutional stability and continuity for the doctoral students.
- **Qualifications and Standards:** All five supervisors fully meet the CNATDCU minimum habilitation standards and are scientifically active in the international community.
- **Scientific Visibility:** The supervisors demonstrate high academic visibility through editorial positions in international journals (e.g., SAGE Open), active peer-review roles (e.g., over 113–138 verified reviews on Web of Science), and publications in top-tier (Q1/Q2) journals.
- **Supporting Documents:** Professional experience and areas of expertise are documented in the supervisors' CVs (Annex A.3.1.6) and the status of compliance with national standards is detailed in Annex A.3.1.7.

Analysis of the state of facts

Human resources are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate for the Business Administration doctoral field. Since 2021, four additional faculty members have completed habilitation, allowing the indicator to progress from "partially fulfilled" to "fulfilled."

The supervisor-to-student ratio supports personalized academic monitoring. PPSUA teaching staff also demonstrate strong expertise in research ethics, academic writing, and applied statistics, while supervisors' scientific performance exceeds national minimum standards and confirms international research capacity.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **100% Tenure Rate:** All doctoral supervisors are tenured at USV, ensuring institutional stability.
- **Exceeding National Standards:** Supervisors significantly exceed CNATDCU standards, especially in international visibility and citations.

- **Active Peer-Review and Editorial Roles:** Their extensive reviewing and editorial activity for international journals keeps the field connected to current research trends.

Recommendations

Developing international cooperation through integration into research networks, joint projects and competitive grants.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Indicator I.P.A.3.1.2	The HEI ensures professional and personal development for its staff.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava (USV) demonstrates a strong institutional commitment to the continuous improvement of its academic staff through several integrated mechanisms and strategic projects:

Institutional Training Projects: The **COACH USV project** ([Link A.3.1.2](#)) offers expert-led training in modern teaching methods, digital technologies, and transversal skills.

Career Advancement Support: ȘDȘSU supports eligible academic staff in obtaining habilitation and expanding the team of doctoral supervisors.

Research-Led Development: Staff integrate recent research into doctoral teaching and participate in national and international grants.

Technological and Digital Adaptation: USV DIGITAL and PED provide training in research data management and specialised software ([Annex A.3.1.9](#)).

International Networking: Staff benefit from USV's membership in the **NEOLAiA Alliance**, which provides exposure to European best practices in research and doctoral coordination ([Link I.1.4](#)).

Analysis of the state of facts

Professional development in the Business Administration doctoral field combines academic rigor with digital adaptability. USV provides accessible training, habilitation support, and opportunities to develop AI-assisted research skills, helping supervisors remain internationally competitive.

Investments exceeding 36 million lei in projects such as COACH USV and USV DIGITAL demonstrate sustained institutional commitment. Training in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies also prepares academic staff for a rapidly evolving research environment.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **The COACH USV Support Model:** COACH USV combines pedagogical training with legal, psychological, and IT counselling.

- **Strategic Habilitation Growth:** Targeted support increased the Business Administration field to five tenured doctoral supervisors.

Recommendations

Using AI as a strategic partner in research, supporting the achievement of habilitation and continuing sessions through the COACH USV project.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Standard S.A.3.2. Recruitment procedures	
Teaching staff recruitment procedures compliant with the provisions of the law.	
Indicator I.P.A.3.2.1	Recruitment procedures comply with the provisions of the law, and are established and carried out transparently.

Presentation of the state of facts

Recruitment of teaching staff and confirmation of doctoral supervisors within the AF doctoral program are governed by transparent procedures at the IOSUD-USV level, aligned with national legislation. The university follows these key mechanisms:

- **Public Competitions:** Filling teaching positions is conducted through regular public competitions for both permanent and fixed-term positions, as established by the staffing structure and university career legislation (Link A.3.2.1, Link A.3.2.2).
- **Promotion and Recognition:** There are specific methodologies for promotion exams (Link A.3.2.3) and an operational procedure for the recognition of doctoral supervisor status or qualifications obtained at accredited institutions abroad (Link A.3.2.5).
- **Doctoral School Affiliation:** The selection of members for the ȘDSȘU is formalised and based on strict scientific performance criteria (Link A.3.2.4).
- **Qualification Requirements:** Access to the supervisor position is strictly conditional upon obtaining a habilitation certificate. All currently active supervisors in the domain were selected through these transparent processes.

Analysis of the state of facts

USV's recruitment and affiliation system is transparent, rigorous, and aligned with national and European standards. Distinct methodologies and faculty-specific criteria ensure objectivity, equal opportunities, and non-discrimination. All requirements and results are published online. The establishment of a stable team of five high-performing tenured supervisors in the Business Administration field confirms the effectiveness of these procedures.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Specialised Selection Criteria:** Faculty-specific criteria aligned with the economic field ensure the selection of staff with suitable professional and scientific expertise.

Recommendations

Organizing competitions for tenured positions, supporting eligible staff for habilitation and expanding the leadership team.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion A.4. Digitalisation of institutional processes

Standard S.A.4.1. Digital transformation

The digital transformation process in the organisational component seeks to achieve administrative simplification and improve the quality of the services provided to the members of its own community, as well as to third parties.

Indicator I.P.A.4.1.1	The organisational component uses IT tools in its own procedures, to improve access and provide good quality services for the members of its own community and the indirect beneficiaries of education.
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Presentation of the state of facts

USV is undergoing an advanced digital transformation to streamline administration and improve educational quality.

- **IT Infrastructure:** SCTI manages campus-wide fibre-optic and wireless internet, supported by over 400 computers in laboratories and libraries (Link A.4.1.1).
- **Digital Administration:** Admission is fully online, while SmartUMS and SmartPortal manage financial, administrative, and academic processes (Link III.A.4.6) (Link A.4.1.6).
- **Teaching and Research:** Google Classroom, Microsoft 365, and ANELIS Plus provide digital learning tools and access to major scientific databases.
- **Academic Integrity:** Turnitin supports originality checks and, since October 2024, includes AI-generated content detection (Link III.A.4.5).
- **Transparency:** University websites and mailing lists ensure rapid communication and public consultation
- **Academic integrity:** To guarantee the originality of research, USV uses the Turnitin system, which was updated in October 2024 with specialized technology to detect content generated by AI.



Analysis of the state of facts

The analysis confirms that USV effectively uses digital tools to improve access and service quality. Google Workspace, MS Teams, and fully online administrative processes reduce bureaucracy for doctoral students and staff.

Investments exceeding 36 million lei in USV DIGITAL and PED demonstrate strong institutional commitment to modernisation. Turnitin's AI-detection capabilities strengthen research integrity, while remote access to international databases supports competitive doctoral research in BA.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- Integrated management ecosystem: SmartUMS and SmartPortal allow students to manage academic, financial, and accommodation information through a unified interface.
- Large-scale investment in digitization: The USV DIGITAL project supports process automation and the development of advanced student digital skills.

Recommendations

Expanding IT infrastructure, integrating new digital technologies and adapting IT services to European quality standards.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

DOMAIN B. Educational efficacy

Criterion B.1. Content and relevance of study programmes

Standard S.B.1.1. Content of study programme/s*

The study programme is based on a curriculum designed so that students can acquire the expected learning outcomes.

Indicator I.P.B.1.1.1	The study programme is developed and structured according to the expected learning outcomes, and organised based on transferable study credits. It includes all learning, teaching, practical training, research and evaluation experiences, which, together, lead to a higher education qualification.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The curriculum for the BA doctoral program at USV is designed to ensure that doctoral students achieve the advanced learning outcomes required for a third-cycle qualification.

Structure and Organisation: The first semester includes a 30-ECTS Advanced Training Program with compulsory and optional courses.

Learning Outcomes: The program develops advanced interdisciplinary knowledge, research and innovation skills, and scientific autonomy and responsibility.

Assessment and Verification: Progress is evaluated through exams, research monitoring, annual reports, and the public defence of the doctoral thesis. Course descriptions are available on the Doctoral School website ([Link B.1.1.3](#)).

Analysis of the state of facts

The analysis confirms that USV's Business Administration doctoral curriculum is modern, rigorous, and aligned with ARACIS standards and EQF level 8 requirements. Its structure supports a gradual progression from methodological training to independent research. ECTS credits are assigned to all compulsory activities, including publications, conferences, and research report defences, ensuring transparency and compatibility. Clearly defined learning outcomes, linked to course content and applied research, support the development of doctoral students' scientific maturity and autonomy.

* The term "programmes" concerns the external quality evaluation for the study programmes contained in a master/doctoral domain. The term "programme" shall be used hereinafter.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- Digital Skill Prioritisation: Correlating expected learning outcomes with subject syllabi and prioritising the development of advanced digital skills required for the creation of scientific productions.
- Research Infrastructure Integration: Using specialised infrastructure and software (such as the Centre for Research in Management and Business Administration) to conduct high-level applied research.

Recommendations

Correlating research themes with economic challenges and the transition to assessment models based on competence portfolios.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion B.2. Alignment of the curriculum with the qualification

Standard S.B.2.1. Alignment with the qualification level and the intended competences

In the curriculum design and development process, the organisational component seeks to ensure the qualification level, as well as correlation with the envisaged occupations.

Indicator I.P.B.2.1.2	The expected learning outcomes are correlated with the competences required by those occupations, according to the occupational standards and/or the European Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO).
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Presentation of the state of facts

The learning outcomes for the Business Administration doctoral field are clearly defined and aligned with level 8 of both the National and European Qualifications Frameworks.

- **Occupational Alignment:** These outcomes are directly correlated with the requirements of the **European Classification of Occupations (ESCO)** for a PhD in the field of Business Administration.
- **Documentation:** This correlation is detailed in the **AF Curriculum (Link B.2.1.1)** and is reflected in the syllabi of the specific disciplines taught within the program.

Analysis of the state of facts

The USV academic framework defines clear and measurable learning outcomes adapted to current technological and social challenges. The PhD in Business Administration prepares graduates for advanced research and leadership roles in academia and industry. The Doctoral School Council periodically reviews these outcomes to maintain alignment with labour market needs and international trends. Professional and transversal skills are integrated into course documentation, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Integrated Outcomes in Syllabi:** The practice of integrating clear, measurable outcomes into every subject syllabus, ensuring that performance standards are understood by both faculty and students.
- **Alignment with International Trends:** Adapting the curriculum to include interdisciplinary pathways and advanced analytical skills, ensuring that the researcher is developed as a high-performance "product".

Recommendations

Periodic updating of curricula and intensification of doctoral students' involvement in international projects and mobilities.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion B.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and evaluation

Standard S.B.3.1 Principles

The organisational component implements the principles of student-centred learning.

Indicator I.P.B.3.1.1	The organisational component ensures implementation of the student-centred learning in the curriculum and through the teaching strategies used in the learning and teaching activities and experiences.
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Presentation of the state of facts

- **ŞDŞSU** integrates student-centred learning through individualised training, participatory governance, mentoring, and support services.
- **Governance and Representation:** Students are active partners in governance, holding a **minimum of 25% representation** in the University Senate and Faculty Councils.
- **Support and Wellbeing:** USV provides an integrated support system via the **COACH USV centre**, offering psychological, legal, and IT counselling to combat isolation and burnout.
- **Technological Integration:** Interaction is facilitated through digital platforms like **Google Classroom** and **Microsoft Teams**, providing 24/7 access to teaching materials and research resources.

Analysis of the state of facts

- Alignment with EQF level 8 strengthens independent and critical decision-making. Co-authored publications also provide authentic mentoring and learning through research. The presence of continuous formative feedback and adapted study rhythms validates that the indicator is **fulfilled**.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Integrated wellbeing model:** The **COACH USV project** is a standout example of holistic support, addressing social integration needs of researchers alongside their academic training.
- **Innovative research infrastructure:** The use of specialised facilities, such as the **Research Centre in Management and Business Administration**, allows for applied, active learning that bridges theoretical knowledge with empirical research.

Recommendations

Prioritizing mentoring and using digital platforms to support doctoral student autonomy.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Indicator	The organisational component ensures opportunities for students to participate in academic mobility programmes organised in person and/or virtually.
I.P. B.3.1.2	

Presentation of the state of facts

The organisational component (IOSUD-USV) facilitates international academic mobility through a combination of strategic alliances, institutional agreements, and clear procedural frameworks:

- **Strategic Networks:** Membership in the NEOLAIa Alliance gives doctoral students access to broad European research and learning environment.
- **ERASMUS+ and Institutional Partnerships:** ŞDŞSU collaborates with European universities to support exchanges, intercultural learning, and doctoral mobility in Business Administration and related fields.
- **Procedural Framework:** Outgoing mobility follows procedures PO-SRIAE-01 and PO-SRIAE-02, while ECTS credits are fully recognised to ensure study continuity.
- **Supporting Documentation:** Detailed records are maintained in **Annex B.3.1.1** (Doctoral student mobility) and **Annex B.3.1.2** (Cooperation Agreement with Beira Interior University).

Analysis of the state of facts

The analysis confirms that the Business Administration doctoral field provides a strong framework for academic mobility. Participation in networks such as NEOLAIa and cotutelle agreements with institutions like the University of Beira Interior support deeper international research collaboration.

Clear selection and credit-recognition procedures ensure compliance with European standards and integrate mobility into doctoral training. These opportunities strengthen EQF level 8 competencies and prepare doctoral students for research in a global professional environment.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Double degree agreements:** The operationalisation of **international co-supervision agreements** that allow doctoral students to obtain degrees from two different European institutions.
- **Guaranteed credit recognition:** A robust administrative system that guarantees 100% recognition of credits accumulated abroad, preventing any extension of the study duration.

Recommendations

Adapting to new forms of interaction, such as virtual or hybrid mobility, to provide flexibility to professionally active doctoral students

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Standard S.B.3.2. Fairness

The organisational component provides fair opportunities for students.

Indicator I.P.B.3.2.1	The organisational component provides fair opportunities for students, in line with their potential and aspirations, taking into account the diversity of learning styles and abilities
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Presentation of the state of facts

The University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava (USV) addresses fairness through a series of fundamental institutional mechanisms designed to align opportunities with student potential and aspirations while respecting diversity.

- **Psychological and Professional Counselling:** Through the CCOC ([Link C.3.1.5](#)), doctoral students have access to psychological counselling and transversal skill development.
- **Support for Vulnerable Groups:** USV provides dedicated admission places, social scholarships, and material support for disadvantaged students and those with special needs ([Link B.3.1.5](#)).
- **Physical and Digital Accessibility:** [Link B.3.1.4](#) Ramps, elevators, institutional AI licenses, and free ANELIS Plus access reduce physical and financial barriers.
- **The COACH USV Project:** [Link B.3.1.7a](#) With funding exceeding RON 4.9 million, the project offers legal, psychological, IT, and Romanian-language support for doctoral students.

Analysis of the state of facts

The analysis confirms that the Business Administration doctoral field provides an inclusive and high-performing environment supported by accessible infrastructure, digital resources, and personalised services. Reserved admission places, material assistance, and COACH USV counselling reduce isolation and promote equal opportunities. Institutional access to advanced digital and AI tools also limits socioeconomic disparities and supports equitable participation in doctoral research.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Holistic Support Ecosystem:** The COACH USV project stands out for its multidisciplinary approach, offering weekly webinars on critical thinking and specialised counselling both in person and online.
- **Proactive Digital Equity:** The university's strategy to provide institutional licenses or fair alternatives for AI tools prevents academic disadvantages related to the cost of generative AI technology.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion B.4. Accessibility and efficiency of the resources and support services, adequate for learning

Standard S.B.4.1. Access to resources and services

The organisational component provides access to adequate resources and support services, according to the needs of the students.

Indicator I.P.B.4.1.1	The organisational component provides students, including those with special educational needs/disabilities, with access to resources and services designed to support the learning process, adequate for the individual learning needs, the study domain, the study cycle, and the form of organisation of the study programme.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava ensures extensive and equitable access to educational, technical, and support resources for all doctoral students, including those with special needs.

- **Research and Teaching Infrastructure:** The AF domain utilizes the **Center for Research in Management and Business Administration**, which is equipped with high-performance technology purchased mostly within the last five years.
- **Library and Documentation:** Students have access to a central library with over 245,000 volumes, including a specific collection of over 2,000 volumes and journals.

Analysis of the state of facts

The available resources are aligned with EQF level 8 requirements and support a safe, high-performance research environment. Adapted infrastructure is complemented by digital services and COACH USV support. Institutional access to AI tools promotes digital equity and prevents socioeconomic disadvantage. Resources are also tailored to individual needs and the specific demands of the field.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Holistic Support via COACH USV:** The multidisciplinary approach to student wellbeing, addressing mental health, social integration, and technical needs through a single institutional project.

Recommendations

Strengthening the training of doctoral students in the efficient use of electronic resources, databases and statistical software.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion B.5. Learning outcomes

Standard S.B.5.1. Definition and evaluation

Learning outcomes are adequately defined and evaluated.

Indicator I.P.B.5.1.1	Learning outcomes are adequately described, and they support understanding of the students' and teachers' expectations regarding the content of the subject matters in the curriculum.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The definition of learning outcomes at USV is designed to ensure a clear understanding of expectations for both doctoral students and teaching staff.

- **Integration into Curricula:** Learning outcomes are directly integrated into the course descriptions (Link B.5.1.1) and are explicitly correlated with specific objectives and assessment criteria.
- **Standardisation and Transparency:** All course descriptions follow a uniform format, allowing for consistent quality monitoring by the Doctoral School Council (Link B.5.1.2).

Analysis of the state of facts

The analysis confirms a rigorous system for defining, communicating, and assessing learning outcomes. These outcomes are measurable, integrated into academic activities, and aligned with CNC/EQF level 8 standards. The Individual Training Program, jointly designed by the doctoral student and supervisor, aligns expectations. Assessment through research projects, reports, presentations, and scientific articles directly reflects the declared learning outcomes.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Direct Curricular Correlation:** The systematic practice of correlating research results (proven through scientific publications or communications) with periodic evaluations as stipulated in the curriculum.
- **Systemic Transparency:** Providing comprehensive online information regarding doctoral students' obligations, deadlines, and available support forms, ensuring a high level of institutional transparency.

Recommendations

Facilitating the transition from master's to advanced research by introducing research methodology and strengthening the mentoring relationship.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Indicator I.P.B.5.1.2	Achievement of the learning outcomes is checked in ongoing examinations and study completion exams.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The verification of learning outcomes in the BA doctoral program is carried out through a systematic process involving both continuous monitoring and summative final evaluations.

- **Ongoing Assessments in the Advanced Training Program (PPSUA):** In the first semester, doctoral students complete 30 ECTS through exams, projects, presentations, and periodic evaluations. Results are managed through SmartUMS and SmartPortal.

- **Periodic Scientific and Progress Reports:** Annual progress and research reports assess literature review, methodology, and preliminary findings, providing continuous feedback from guidance and integrity committees (**Annex B.5.1.1**).
- **Research and Publication Standards:** Before thesis defence, students must publish at least two papers indexed in ISI/Clarivate or Scopus.
- **Final Verification (The Doctoral Thesis Defence):** The doctoral thesis undergoes similarity and AI-detection checks, CNATDCU compliance review, and public defence. Five theses were defended during the evaluation period, four receiving “Excellent” ratings (**Annex B.5.1.2**).

Analysis of the state of facts

The verification process confirms EQF level 8 competencies in advanced knowledge, synthesis, and research autonomy. Learning outcomes are progressively assessed through independent research, innovation, and scientific dissemination. Annual reports and mandatory publication requirements ensure objectivity and traceability. Overall, the process is continuous, rigorous, and based on research results that exceed national minimum standards.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Integrated Scientific Dissemination:** The practice of integrating **scientific publications and international conference participation** directly into the periodic evaluation of progress.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion B.7. Procedures and practices regarding the admission competition, the journey, recognition and equivalence of studies, and result certification

Standard S.B.7.1. Admission

The admission procedures and principles ensure access to higher education.

Indicator I.P.B.7.1.1

The organisational component applies the admission procedures.

Presentation of the state of facts

The admission process for the Business Administration doctoral program is governed by a robust regulatory and digital framework:

- **Regulatory Framework:** Admission is conducted according to **Regulation R10** (Regulations for the organisation and conduct of admission exams - [Link B.7.1.1.1](#)). The number of available positions is determined by **Regulation R11** ([Link B.7.1.1.4](#)) and specific allocation procedures ([Link B.7.1.1.5](#)).
- **Digitisation:** The process is **fully digitised** via a dedicated online platform that handles registration, document uploading, eligibility verification, and electronic communication.
- **Selection Criteria:** Candidates are evaluated based on previous academic performance, research activity (including publications), and a **mandatory admission interview** to assess scientific potential.
- **Equity and Transparency:** The university allocates separate places for candidates from socially and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. All topics proposed by supervisors and admission methodologies are published on the Doctoral School's website ([Link B.7.1.7](#)).

Analysis of the state of facts

The analysis confirms that IOSUD-USV applies a standardised, digital, and inclusive admission system. Academic rigour is combined with flexible online procedures to attract candidates capable of meeting the field's publication standards. Annual revisions ensure alignment with legislation and labour market needs. Publishing research topics and selection criteria online supports transparency, objectivity, and competition, while inclusive policies maintain equal access.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Proactive Recruitment for Vulnerable Groups:** The clear policy of reserving seats and adapting procedures for candidates with special needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Indicator I.P.B.7.1.2	Admission in higher education study programmes complies with the principles of fairness and equal opportunities, and with the establishing of support measures to ensure access of vulnerable groups at social and educational risk, including candidates with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
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Presentation of the state of facts

USV utilises a multidimensional approach to admission that integrates high academic standards with institutional inclusion policies designed to reduce socioeconomic barriers and ensure equitable access.

- **Regulatory Framework:** Admission is strictly regulated by internal regulations, such as **Regulation R10** (Link B.7.1.1.1), which contains explicit provisions for compliance with the principles of fairness and equal opportunities.
- **Special Allocated Places:** The institution reserves distinct places specifically for candidates from socially and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds (Link B.7.1.6).
- **Holistic Selection Methods:** Selection is not limited to academic averages; it includes a **holistic assessment** of professional performance, previous research, and scientific potential through a mandatory interview, which helps avoid exclusion based on atypical professional backgrounds.
- **Support for Candidates with Disabilities:** Active measures are implemented for candidates with special educational needs, including the adaptation of physical infrastructure with ramps and lifts.
- **The COACH USV Project:** This strategic initiative provides a support ecosystem that includes psychological, legal, and IT counseling to ensure that researchers from all backgrounds can succeed.

Analysis of the state of facts

IOSUD-USV combines academic rigour with inclusive admission policies. Reserved places for disadvantaged groups and selection criteria that consider both academic results and professional potential broaden access to doctoral studies.

Physical accessibility, free digital research resources, and COACH USV support help reduce educational, social, and psychological barriers for vulnerable students.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Inclusive Admission Design:** Reserved seating and adapted interview processes that prioritise scientific potential, ensuring that candidates with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds have a fair chance at enrolment.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Standard S.B.7.2. Academic journey of students	
The organisational component carries out actions supporting the students' academic journey.	
Indicator I.P.B.7.2.1	The organisational component applies the regulations concerning the students' professional activity.

Presentation of the state of facts

The University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava has established a comprehensive regulatory and procedural framework to facilitate and govern the professional activities of its doctoral students.

- **Regulatory Framework:** Student activity is governed by the **Framework regulations on students' professional activity** and specific internal procedures.
- **Mobility Recognition:** There is a dedicated procedure for the **recognition of study periods** completed during unregulated mobility (PO-SG-19), ensuring that international research experiences are formally credited.
- **Graduation Procedures:** The final phase of the professional path is governed by the **Procedure for the completion of doctoral studies**, which details the stages and conditions for the thesis defense.

Analysis of the state of facts

The Doctoral School applies a coherent and transparent monitoring system supported by clear procedures and specialised committees. Semester reviews of academic progress ensure that regulations actively

contribute to student success. The self-assessment form promotes responsibility and critical reflection, while collaboration between supervisors and the Doctoral School enables early identification of dropout risks and timely remedial measures.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Proactive Dropout Prevention:** Systematic semesterly monitoring of academic results followed by the implementation of **targeted remedial measures** to support struggling researchers.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion B.8. Internationalisation process

Standard S.B.8.1. Internationalisation

Improving the quality of education and research through internationalisation actions.

Indicator I.P.B.8.1.1

The organisational component carries out international cooperation actions supporting mobility of the members of its own community and collaboration in academic and research activities.

Presentation of the state of facts

The University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava (USV) implements an internationalization strategy that integrates consolidated institutional partnerships with specific collaborative research initiatives.

- **Strategic Networks and Alliances:** USV is a member of the **NEOLAiA Alliance**. The institution is also affiliated with the **International Association of Universities** and the **European University Association**.
- **Mobility Framework:** Specific institutional agreements at the faculty level target doctoral mobility in the field of Business Administration. These mobilities are governed by operational procedures **PO-SRIAE-01** (selection) and **PO-SRIAE-02** (organization and implementation).
- **International Co-supervision (Cotutelle):** Starting in the 2023-2024 academic year, a cooperation agreement was signed with the **University of Beira Interior (Portugal)** for the joint coordination of doctoral theses. A concrete example is doctoral student Denisa Chifan, whose thesis is currently co-supervised by Prof. Aurel Burciu (USV) and professors from the Portuguese institution.
- **Recruitment of International Students:** The domain actively attracts students from abroad, particularly from the **Republic of Moldova**, with three currently enrolled doctoral students and a recently defended thesis by a student from this region.

Analysis of the state of facts

International cooperation in Business Administration has evolved from mobility agreements to deeper research partnerships and joint academic involvement. Participation in NEOLAiA and formal cotutelle agreements strengthens the program's global relevance. International experts contribute to supervisory committees, while efforts to attract foreign students reinforce USV's regional role. Financial support and COACH USV integration services ensure that internationalisation is effectively embedded in the doctoral experience.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Systematic Inclusion of Foreign Experts:** The active involvement of researchers from diverse European institutions in the guidance committees of doctoral students to ensure international standards and perspectives.

Recommendations

Developing co-mentoring between universities and attracting foreign experts to the guidance committees.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion B.9. Scientific research results

Standard S.B.9.1 Scientific research in the education process

Scientific research activities support students in achieving the learning outcomes.

Indicator I.P.B.9.1.1	Learning based on scientific investigation and research results support and are capitalised upon in achieving the learning outcomes envisaged through the study programme.
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Presentation of the state of facts

Scientific research is the fundamental foundation of doctoral training at USV, with investigation results being directly integrated into the achievement of the study program's learning outcomes.

- **Research-Centred Process:** The educational process is centred on advanced research, specifically the development of doctoral theses that address current and relevant topics contributing to scientific research skills.
- **Regulatory Monitoring:** Research integration is governed by the **Doctoral Regulations** and is monitored throughout the entire duration of studies.

Analysis of the state of facts

Scientific research is the central component of doctoral education in BA. The training model increasingly integrates new technologies and societal impact requirements. Research findings, digital tools, critical thinking, and institutional support are embedded throughout the curriculum, assessments, and training plan, enabling students to achieve EQF level 8 competencies from admission onward.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Hybrid and collaborative research model:** The evolution of doctoral training into a model where high-level academic rigour is successfully combined with advanced digital tools.

Recommendations

Increased focus on scientific investigation based on real challenges in industry and society, plus strengthening of publication standards.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Standard S.B.9.2. Scientific research pertaining to the objectives of the study programme

The organisational component carries out scientific research activities aligned with the objectives of the evaluated study programme.

Indicator I.P.B.9.2.1	The results of scientific research are visible at national and international level in that scientific domain, and capitalised upon in an adequate manner.
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Presentation of the state of facts

Scientific research is a fundamental mission at USV, with results in the AF field demonstrating significant national and international visibility through the following data:

- **Scientific Visibility and Impact:** Publications in Web of Science journals and strong Q1/Q2 citation scores confirm high research visibility.
- **International Roles:** Supervisors serve on editorial boards and review for international journals.
- **Student Achievements:** Students participate in international events and publish in databases.

Analysis of the state of facts

Research results in the Business Administration field are highly visible and consistently exceed national standards. The habilitation of four additional tenured academics between 2022 and 2023 strengthened the program's research capacity. Requiring doctoral students to publish at least two ISI- or Scopus-indexed papers further supports continuous improvement in research quality and impact.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Exceeding national standards:** The program requires doctoral students to produce **five scientific papers** (with at least three in ISI/Clarivate or Scopus databases), which is significantly higher than the national requirement.
- **High-level peer review activity:** The extensive involvement of supervisors as reviewers for prestigious international journals (with hundreds of verified reviews) keeps the domain at the forefront of global scientific trends.



- **Editorial work:** Supervisors serving on the editorial boards of internationally recognized journals like SAGE Open enhances the global prestige of the Doctoral School.

Recommendations

Supporting young researchers to publish in top journals (Q1/Q2) and increasing participation in scientific consortia.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

DOMAIN C. Quality management

Criterion C.1. Quality assurance strategies and procedures, including in the field of academic ethics and conduct, which involve students, employers and other stakeholders and are applied in a consistent, transparent manner

Standard S.C.1.1. Application

Adequately implemented strategic directions, actions, and procedures

Indicator I.P.C.1.1.1	The organisational component consistently carries out actions and applies procedures, proving their impact on improving the quality of education at the level of the study programme
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Presentation of the state of facts

The University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava maintains a continuous and structured focus on the quality of education through established institutional components:

- **Strategic Planning:** The doctoral school has its own quality policy, which is integrated into its strategic and operational plans and corroborated with the **CEAC-USV operational plan**.
- **Annual Monitoring:** At the Council for Doctoral Studies (CSUD) level, an **Internal Quality Assessment Report** is prepared annually to provide a foundation for strategic and operational decisions.
- **Specific Actions:** The domain has established clear quality objectives correlated with the institutional mission, developed a **Teaching and Research Activity Plan**, and systematically adapted curricula to meet national quality standards and current labor market requirements.

Analysis of the state of facts

The quality management system is effectively implemented through CEAC and CSUD. Procedural rigor, data-based monitoring, annual audits, and specialized reports support continuous academic improvement. By aligning curricula with academic standards and employer needs, the program ensures that quality assurance directly contributes to doctoral education.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** The systematic preparation of an **annual Internal Quality Assessment Report** specifically for doctoral studies allows the institution to make evidence-based improvements to the program.
- **Integrated Quality Culture:** The seamless integration of the doctoral school's quality policy into the broader university-wide strategic and operational frameworks.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Standard S.C.1.2. Stakeholder engagement

The HEI proves that it engages the stakeholders who have relevant activity in applying the procedures.

Indicator I.P.C.1.2.1	The opinions of the members of its own community and of other stakeholders are taken into account in the procedure implementation process.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The involvement of the academic community and other stakeholders in the implementation of procedures is a formalized process integrated into the university's governance model.

- **Transparency and Consultation:** Community members are informed via **email or online announcements** regarding the implementation of procedures.

- **Participatory Mechanism:** Stakeholders can submit **proposals and updates** to these documents.

- **Accessibility:** All relevant documents under discussion are made public to ensure transparency.

- **Structured Engagement:** The process is built on several pillars: **representation in decision-making forums**, consultation with the socio-economic environment (**employers**), feedback and evaluation mechanisms, public debate, and digital transparency.

Analysis of the state of facts

The current management system is participatory and transparent, systematically integrating feedback from the academic community and employers into procedural reviews. Internal voting, quality audits, and digital consultation tools ensure that stakeholder input becomes part of institutional decision-making and supports continuous adaptation to community needs.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Stakeholders as active partners:** The transformation of community members and employers from mere beneficiaries of services into **active partners** who influence the design and execution of the regulatory framework.

- **Digital integration of feedback:** The systematic use of **digital platforms** to centralise opinions and integrate them into the institutional quality audit, ensuring that the academic program remains agile in the face of economic transformations.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion C.2. Functionality of education quality assurance structures, including in the field of academic ethics and conduct, according to the law

Standard S.C.2.2. Operation

Quality assurance and academic ethics and conduct organisational structures adequately perform their specific role and functions.

Indicator I.P.C.2.2.2.	The academic ethics commission operates based on the regulation approved by the University Senate, and performs actions that are compliant with the law, independently from any other structure or person in the higher education institution.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava (USV) has established a robust framework for academic ethics and deontology that operates with high procedural rigour:

- **Subcommittee Structure:** Within the committee, a specialised **subcommittee on research ethics** is organised to resolve issues specific to scientific research activities.
- **Proactive Integrity Mechanisms:** Every doctoral thesis and scientific paper is subject to mandatory verification to identify similarity percentages and original contributions.
- **Participatory Governance:** All documents governing ethics, including the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, are subject to public debate before Senate approval. Doctoral students are represented in these quality and ethics structures to ensure a participatory process.

Analysis of the state of facts

The USV Ethics Committee acts as an independent and rigorous integrity safeguard. Clear procedures and advanced verification technologies protect academic values and ensure that doctoral research remains ethically sound and scientifically reliable.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Public Debate and Participation:** Subjecting ethical codes to public debate and involving student representatives in the **CEAC** and ethics structures fosters a shared culture of honesty.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion C.3. Procedures for the initiation, monitoring and periodic review of the study programmes and domains and of the performed activities, involving students, employers and other stakeholders

Standard S.C.3.1. Procedures and implementation of procedures

The HEI has procedures for initiating, monitoring, and periodically reviewing the study programmes and domains and the performed activities, and applies them systematically.

Indicator I.P.C.3.1.1	The organisational component consistently applies the procedures, and proves their impact on quality assurance.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The initiation, monitoring, and periodic review of study programs and fields at USV are strictly governed by a stable regulatory framework:

- Consistent Application: The provisions of these documents are consistently applied whenever a new study program is initiated or during authorisation and periodic evaluation cycles.
- Documented Approvals: Official decisions to approve and authorise doctoral study programs within the ȘDȘSU are transparently available for review.
- Systematic Monitoring: Programs are systematically monitored through rigorous internal procedures, such as R40 and PO-01, ensuring a real impact on quality assurance.

Analysis of the state of facts

The analysis confirms an integrated management system combining regulatory rigour, data-based monitoring, and adaptive leadership. Digital standardisation and multi-level oversight ensure consistent, transparent, and fair management of doctoral activities. Because procedures are systematically applied and their effectiveness is demonstrated, the indicator is assessed as fulfilled.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- Integrated Management Model: The successful use of an integrated system where regulatory rigour is balanced with data-driven monitoring to maintain consistent academic standards.
- Digital Standardisation of Practices: Transforming bureaucratic regulations into functional daily practices through digital tools, ensuring that the management of the doctoral journey remains fair and rigorous.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Indicator I.P.C.3.1.2	Members of its own community and other stakeholders are involved in the procedure implementation process.
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Presentation of the state of facts

USV and the Council for Doctoral Studies (CSUD) utilize a model of participatory governance and co-creation to implement quality assurance procedures. This involves several key stakeholder groups:

- Doctoral Students: Students are essential partners in decision-making, holding a minimum 25% representation in the University Senate, Faculty Councils, and Doctoral School Councils.
- Employers and Economic Partners: The CSUD maintains close ties with the business community through regular consultations to update the curriculum.
- Academic and Administrative Staff: Procedures are developed through the Quality Assessment and Assurance Committee (CEAC) and are subject to broad consultation via institutional email lists (e.g., *allstud@usv.ro*) and the university website.
- Transparency: The process is supported by a digital ecosystem that ensures all community members have access to the information needed to participate effectively in quality monitoring.

Analysis of the state of facts

Community members actively contribute to the design and implementation of quality procedures. USV balances academic rigour with responsiveness to digital and economic change. Doctoral student representation and employer feedback help align academic requirements with labour market needs. Digital consultation platforms further support a transparent, inclusive, and participatory quality assurance process.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Systematic Market Alignment:** The practice of using workshops and career fairs not just for recruitment, but as feedback loops to continuously update the AF doctoral curriculum.

Recommendations

Transforming stakeholders from simple beneficiaries into active partners to ensure the sustainability and social relevance of the field.

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion C.4. Procedures for the periodic evaluation of the quality of the activities of teaching staff, auxiliary teaching staff, and administrative staff

Standard S.C.4.1. Procedures

Applying the methodologies and procedures contributes to improving the quality of the staff's activities.

Indicator I.P.C.4.1.1	The organisational component analyses the results of the students' biannual evaluation of teachers.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The Council for Doctoral Studies (CSUD) manages a structured process for evaluating the performance of teaching staff by doctoral students, adhering to a transparent regulatory framework:

- **Regulatory Framework:** The evaluation is conducted according to **Regulation R29** (Regulation on the evaluation of teaching staff performance) and **Procedure PO-01** (Procedure for the evaluation of teaching staff by students).
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Upon completion of the first semester of the advanced training program (PPSUA), doctoral students are invited to evaluate the program's utility via an online questionnaire.
- **Staff-Wide Evaluation:** The institution also maintains a procedure for evaluating the performance of auxiliary teaching and non-teaching staff, with these results being made public as well.

Analysis of the state of facts

CSUD and the Doctoral School use a structured process to improve teaching quality and adapt the Business Administration program to researchers' needs. Anonymous online questionnaires ensure objective feedback. CSUD uses the results as a governance tool, integrating student evaluations into decision-making and communicating findings to supervisors to support continuous performance improvement.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Program Utility Assessment:** The specific practice of inviting students to evaluate the utility of the training program at the end of the first semester, which provides mature insights into curricular relevance.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion C.5. Systematically updated databases on internal quality assurance

Standard S.C.5.1. Databases

The HEI uses databases to support internal quality assurance activities.

Indicator I.P.C.5.1.1	The organisational component systematically collects and analyses data required for the internal quality assurance process.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava utilises an integrated IT system to periodically collect essential data for institutional management. This system supports reporting to the Ministry of Education and facilitates the evaluation of university development through relevant indicators and periodic analyses.

- **Communication and Feedback:** The university maintains electronic discussion lists (e.g., allstud@usv.ro and doctoranzi@usv.ro) to disseminate information and hold virtual public debates on academic and quality issues.

- **Annual Reporting:** Both at the faculty and CSUD levels, **annual quality assessment reports** are prepared and presented to the public, drawing on data from these platforms.
- **Perception Surveys:** The CSUD utilises permanent discussion forums and surveys to collect feedback from doctoral students and teaching staff regarding the quality of research, education, and social life on campus.

Analysis of the state of facts

Internal quality assurance is based on a continuous feedback cycle. Data collected through IT systems and targeted questionnaires is converted into annual audit reports that guide improvements in education and research. By combining SmartUMS data with perception surveys, USV supports evidence-based management and maintains a comprehensive view of doctoral program performance.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Transformation of Raw Data into Action:** The established practice of converting digital data and survey results into formal annual audit reports that drive strategic academic decisions.
- **Participatory Quality Culture:** The use of dedicated discussion forums and surveys specifically focused on the **perception of social life and research quality**, ensuring that the "human" aspect of the doctoral experience is monitored alongside administrative metrics.
- **Transparent Digital Ecosystem:** Providing public access to self-assessment reports, quality policies, and legislation through a centralised and frequently updated CEAC platform.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion C.6. Transparency of information of public interest, including those regarding the study programmes and domains offered, and transparency regarding the related certificates, diplomas and qualifications

Standard S.C.6.1. Transparency

The organisational component ensures transparency of information, as required by the law.

Indicator I.P.C.6.1.1	The organisational component ensures publication and access to information of public interest regarding the evaluated study programme.
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Presentation of the state of facts

USV ensures transparency and public access to information through an integrated digital ecosystem and systematic reporting:

- **Online Accessibility:** Essential information, including the curriculum, course descriptions, associated qualifications, and teaching schedules, is centralised and publicly accessible on the USV website in the "Doctorate" section.
- **Graduation Transparency:** Standards for writing a doctoral thesis are public. Links to thesis abstracts, along with the date of defences, are posted at least **20 days before the event**.
- **Institutional Reporting:** All decisions of the University Senate and the Board of Directors are published online. Furthermore, data on academic progress and scientific results are included in the **annual Rector's Report** and quality assessment reports.
- **Direct Communication:** Important announcements are disseminated to doctoral students via institutional email addresses and dedicated discussion lists (e.g., *allstud@usv.ro*).

Analysis of the state of facts

The organisational component ensures transparency through an integrated digital ecosystem. Open access to validated information, from admission criteria to thesis abstracts, supports a culture of clear communication. Regular website updates provide candidates, students, and the public with accurate information throughout the doctoral process.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Early Defence Visibility:** The practice of posting thesis abstracts and full defence details at least 20 days in advance significantly enhances the transparency of the final research evaluation process.
- **Integrated Communication Flow:** Utilising institutional email lists in combination with web-based archives to ensure that all internal and external stakeholders are informed in real-time.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Indicator I.P.C.6.1.2	The organisational component ensures transparent decision-making processes.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava (USV) ensures that its decision-making processes are open and accessible to the entire academic community through several formalised mechanisms:

- **Systematic Online Publication:** Transparency is primarily guaranteed through the university's official website, where all decisions made by the Board of Directors and all resolutions passed by the University Senate are systematically published.
- **Public Debate Mechanisms:** The university utilizes public debate as a tool for transparency, allowing community members to discuss and provide feedback on significant regulatory or strategic documents before they are finalized.
- **Accessible Records:** Institutional governance is documented through specific digital archives, providing a clear and verifiable history of institutional management.

Analysis of the state of facts

USV has transformed decision-making into an open and participatory process. By publishing major academic and administrative decisions online, the university enables community members to monitor and influence institutional development. Digital transparency strengthens trust, accountability, and oversight, while participatory governance ensures that the doctoral field remains responsive to community needs.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **Full Digital Governance Trail:** The systematic online archiving of all Senate and Board of Directors' decisions provides a high level of institutional transparency that exceeds simple reporting requirements.
- **Community-Led Influence:** A governance model that allows members of the community to not only view decisions but also influence them through the mechanism of public debate and representation in management structures.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

Criterion C.8. Participation in external evaluation processes, according to the law

Standard S.C.8.1. Compliance with the external evaluation obligation

The HEI undergoes external quality evaluation as required by the law.

Indicator I.P.C.8.1.1	The organisational component carries out the procedures pertaining to the external quality evaluation process, aiming to organise the evaluated study programme as provided by the law.
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Presentation of the state of facts

The Doctoral School of Social and Human Sciences (ȘDȘSU) and the AF domain systematically undergo external evaluation procedures to ensure compliance with national legislation and ARACIS standards:

- **Accreditation History:** The BA doctoral field was established in 2009, building on the success of its accredited bachelor's and master's programs.
- **Consistent High Ratings:** USV has undergone institutional evaluations in 2008, 2013, 2019, and 2025, consistently receiving a "High degree of confidence" rating.
- **Stakeholder Involvement:** The preparation of evaluation documents involves the direct participation of doctoral supervisors, doctoral students, and representatives from the business community to reflect the actual academic and professional environment.

Analysis of the state of facts

The organizational component treats external evaluation as a strategic self-regulation tool rather than a legal formality. External feedback supports the institution's academic, financial, and technological sustainability. The continued accreditation of the field and the institutional rating of "High Degree of Confidence" confirm strong compliance with performance standards. The inclusive preparation of the Internal Evaluation Report also ensures a comprehensive, stakeholder-based assessment.

Aspects that constitute best practice examples

- **External feedback as strategic driver:** The practice of using recommendations from external evaluators to trigger concrete administrative and academic improvements, such as increasing the number of tenured supervisors or updating curricula to EU standards.
- **Inclusive internal reporting:** Formally including doctoral students and business community representatives in the drafting and verification of Internal Evaluation Reports, ensuring a transparent and multi-perspective self-audit.

Recommendations -

The indicator is: fulfilled.

IV. SWOT Analysis

Strengths:	INTERNAL FACTORS ①		
✓ Consistent "High Degree of Confidence" institutional rating from ARACIS across multiple evaluation cycles. ✓ Integrated management system and clear organizational components supported by stable regulatory frameworks. ✓ 100% tenure rate for doctoral supervisors within the university. ✓ Scientific performance exceeding national minimum standards for all doctoral supervisors. ✓ Mandatory internal publication standards for students higher than national requirements. ✓ Advanced digital transformation including the fully integrated SmartUMS and SmartPortal management ecosystem. ✓ Strategic internationalization through membership in the NEOLAiA Alliance and ERASMUS+ networks. ✓ Operational international co-supervision (cotutelle) and double degree agreements. ✓ Systematic inclusion of foreign			Weaknesses: ✓ Academic integrity challenges: The ongoing difficulty of managing the originality of scientific papers and preventing academic fraud despite the use of the Turnitin system. ✓ Mentoring and dropout risks: The potential ineffectiveness of semester-based remedial measures for doctoral students who struggle to keep pace with advanced research. ✓ Researcher burnout and isolation: Risks associated with the high intensity of independent critical thinking, which requires a robust support ecosystem.

experts in supervisory and guidance committees. ✓ Modernized research infrastructure, including the Research Center in Management and Business Administration. ✓ Inclusive admission design with reserved places for socially and educationally disadvantaged candidates. ✓ Learning model based on collaborative publishing between students and their guidance committees.		
SWOT analysis		
Opportunities: ✓ Substantial and Targeted EU Funding: Access to programs like Horizon Europe and specific EU funding flows for Artificial Intelligence (AI) provides opportunities to prioritize research into ethical AI and industrial digital transformation. ✓ Strategic AI Integration: AI technology offers the opportunity for the doctoral field to move beyond simple writing assistance to utilizing AI as a strategic partner in research operations. ✓ Deep Tech and AI Initiatives: European programs and doctoral networks now require interdisciplinary training and co-supervision, which the domain can leverage by integrating AI-related management topics. ✓ Strengthening International Alliances: The university's integration into strong networks, such as the NEOLAiA Alliance, and the expansion of ERASMUS+ partnerships provide a solid foundation for mobility and the exchange of	 EXTERNAL FACTORS	Threats: ✓ AI and Methodological Change: The rapid adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is fundamentally rewriting research agendas in economics and management. This requires a constant update of data, reproducibility standards, and governance considerations to avoid producing graduates with outdated skills. ✓ Generative AI (GenAI) Integrity Risks: The ability of GenAI to produce "synthetic" content poses a significant threat to research integrity, as it can often evade traditional plagiarism detection techniques. ✓ The "Relevance Paradox": There is an increasing external criticism that academic research is becoming disconnected from the practical needs of the business world, being perceived as too theoretical and lacking immediate real-world impact. ✓ Sustained Demographic Decline: A shrinking college-



global best practices. ✓ Expansion of Joint Coordination: There is a significant opportunity to increase the number of jointly coordinated theses (cotutelles)—such as the existing agreement with the University of Beira Interior in Portugal—and to involve more international experts from prestigious institutions in guidance committees. ✓ Strategic Economic Partnerships: Expanding relationships with the socio-economic sector allows for the correlation of thesis topics with real market needs, effectively transforming academic research into a tool for practical innovation. ✓ Cross-cutting and interdisciplinary approaches: The nature of the BA field facilitates collaboration with other areas such as history, geography, and public policy, allowing for a broader perspective on global challenges like sustainability and business ethics. ✓ Demonstration of Public Value: Current trends toward "Global Thinking, Sustainable Impact" allow the Doctoral School to demonstrate its public value through direct contributions to regional regeneration and social inclusion.		age population is steadily reducing the pool of available and qualified candidates for doctoral studies. ✓ Funding and Budgetary Volatility: Pressures on institutional budgets can lead to the reduction or postponement of doctoral admissions due to a lack of funded positions. ✓ Geopolitical Tensions and Mobility Barriers: Declines in international student mobility rates and broader geopolitical tensions are reducing the pool of international doctoral candidates and research assistants that many faculties depend on. ✓ Difficult employment prospects: Limited hiring opportunities in both academia and industry increase the pressure on graduates and the institutional need to provide more transferable, non-academic skills for alternative career pathways.
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V. Extent to which the standards and performance indicators are fulfilled, and recommendations



No.	Performance Indicator	Extent to which it was fulfilled (F/PF/UF)	Recommendations
DOMAIN A. Institutional capacity			
1.	I.P.A.1.1.1 For delivering the study programme/domain, the HEI has adequate organisational components and an adequate management system, which operate based on methodologies, regulations and procedures that are periodically reviewed as required by law.	F	
2.	I.P.A.1.2.1 The opinions of the faculty and department members, of the subsidiary or extension and of other stakeholders are considered in the process of adopting and revising methodologies, regulations and implementation procedures.	F	Developing shared leadership capacities among all academic and administrative staff.
3.	I.P.A.2.1.1 The HEI legally owns venues for the related education, research and administrative processes, as well as for services for students, doctoral students and trainees, thus providing an enabling environment for living and studying, including for disabled persons. Optimal venues are also provided for activities of the staff. Such venues are adequately equipped.	F	
4.	I.P.A.2.2.1 The movable and immovable assets are properly maintained to ensure optimal conditions for studying, living and research, as well as for work.	F	
5.	I.P.A.3.1.1 The human resources of the organisational component are suitable to perform the activities about the evaluated study programme/domain. The teaching staff have the required qualifications and professional competences to teach the subject matters assigned to them in the job list.	F	Developing international cooperation through integration into research networks, joint projects and competitive grants.
6.	I.P.A.3.1.2 The HEI ensures professional and personal development for its staff.	F	Using AI as a strategic partner in research, supporting the achievement of habilitation and continuing sessions through the COACH USV project.
7.	I.P.A.3.2.1 Recruitment procedures comply with the provisions of the law and are established and carried out transparently.	F	Organizing competitions for tenured positions, supporting eligible staff for habilitation and expanding the leadership team.
8.	I.P.A.4.1.1 The organisational component uses IT tools in its own procedures, to improve access and provide good quality services for the members of its own community and the indirect beneficiaries of education.	F	Expanding IT infrastructure, integrating new digital technologies and adapting IT services to European quality standards.
DOMAIN B. Educational efficacy			
9.	I.P.B.1.1.1 The study programme is developed and structured according to the expected learning outcomes and organised based on transferable study credits. It includes all learning, teaching, practical training, research and evaluation experiences, which, together, lead to a higher education qualification.	F	Correlating research themes with economic challenges and the transition to assessment models based on competence portfolios.

No.	Performance Indicator	Extent to which it was fulfilled (F/PF/UF)	Recommendations
10.	I.P.B.2.1.2 The expected learning outcomes are correlated with the competences required by those occupations, according to the occupational standards and/or the European Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO).	F	Periodic updating of curricula and intensification of doctoral students' involvement in international projects and mobilities.
11.	I.P.B.3.1.1 The organisational component ensures implementation of the student-centred learning in the curriculum and through the teaching strategies used in the learning and teaching activities and experiences.	F	Prioritizing mentoring and using digital platforms to support doctoral student autonomy.
12.	I.P.B.3.1.2 The organisational component ensures opportunities for students to participate in academic mobility programmes organised in person and/or virtually.	F	Adapting to new forms of interaction, such as virtual or hybrid mobility, to provide flexibility to professionally active doctoral students.
13.	I.P.B.3.2.1 The organisational component provides fair opportunities for students, in line with their potential and aspirations, considering the diversity of learning styles and abilities.	F	
14.	I.P.B.4.1.1 The organisational component provides students, including those with special educational needs/disabilities, with access to resources and services designed to support the learning process, adequate for the individual learning needs, the study domain, the study cycle, and the form of organisation of the study programme.	F	Strengthening the training of doctoral students in the efficient use of electronic resources, databases and statistical software.
15.	I.P.B.5.1.1 Learning outcomes are adequately described, and they support understanding of the students' and teachers' expectations regarding the content of the subject matters in the curriculum.	F	Facilitating the transition from master's to advanced research by introducing research methodology and strengthening the mentoring relationship.
16.	I.P.B.5.1.2 Achievement of the learning outcomes is checked in ongoing examinations and study completion exams.	F	
17.	I.P.B.7.1.1 The organisational component applies the admission procedures.	F	
18.	I.P.B.7.1.2 Admission in higher education study programmes complies with the principles of fairness and equal opportunities, and with the establishing of support measures to ensure access of vulnerable groups at social and educational risk, including candidates with special educational needs and/or disabilities.	F	
19.	I.P.B.7.2.1 The organisational component applies the regulations concerning the students' professional activity.	F	
20.	I.P.B.8.1.1 The organisational component carries out international cooperation actions supporting mobility of the members of its own community and collaboration in academic and research activities.	F	Developing co-mentoring between universities and attracting foreign experts to the guidance committees.

No.	Performance Indicator	Extent to which it was fulfilled (F/PF/UF)	Recommendations
21.	I.P.B.9.1.1 Learning based on scientific investigation and research results support and are capitalised upon in achieving the learning outcomes envisaged through the study programme.	F	Increased focus on scientific investigation based on real challenges in industry and society, plus strengthening of publication standards.
22.	I.P.B.9.2.1 The results of scientific research are visible at national and international level in that scientific domain, and capitalised upon in an adequate manner.	F	Supporting young researchers to publish in top journals (Q1/Q2) and increasing participation in scientific consortia.
DOMAIN C. Quality management			
23.	I.P.C.1.1.1 The organisational component consistently applies the procedures, and proves their impact on quality assurance.	F	
24.	I.P.C.1.2.1 The opinions of the members of its own community and of other stakeholders are taken into account in the procedure implementation process.	F	
25.	I.P.C.2.2.2. The academic ethics commission operates based on the regulation approved by the University Senate, and performs actions that are compliant with the law, independently from any other structure or person in the higher education institution.	F	
26.	I.P.C.3.1.1 The organisational component consistently applies the procedures, and proves their impact on quality assurance.	F	
27.	I.P.C.3.1.2 Members of its own community and other stakeholders are involved in the procedure implementation process.	F	Transforming stakeholders from simple beneficiaries into active partners to ensure the sustainability and social relevance of the field.
28.	I.P.C.4.1.1 The organisational component analyses the results of the students' biannual evaluation of teachers.	F	
29.	I.P.C.5.1.1 The organisational component systematically collects and analyses data required for the internal quality assurance process.	F	
30.	I.P.C.6.1.1 The organisational component ensures publication and access to information of public interest regarding the evaluated study programme.	F	
31.	I.P.C.6.1.2 The organisational component ensures transparent decision-making processes.	F	
32.	I.P.C.8.1.1 The organisational component carries out the procedures pertaining to the external quality evaluation process, aiming to organise the evaluated study programme as provided by the law.	F	

Summary Table of Performance Indicators – Degree of Fulfillment

Evaluation Domain	Number of Performance Indicators		
	Fulfilled	Partially fulfilled	Unfulfilled
Domain A. Institutional capacity	Fulfilled		
Domain B. Educational efficacy	Fulfilled		
Domain C. Quality management	Fulfilled		
Total	Fulfilled		

VI. Conclusions

The evaluation of the Business Administration (BA) doctoral domain at the University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava (USV) underscores a high-performance academic environment. USV has consistently maintained the "High Degree of Confidence" rating from ARACIS (2008–2025), a status validated by the fulfillment of all 32 performance indicators for this field.

A primary strength is the stability of its human resources, featuring a 100% tenure rate for the five doctoral supervisors who all exceed national CNATDCU standards for scientific visibility and citations. The program's rigor is evidenced by internal publication requirements requiring students to produce at least five scientific papers, with at least three in prestigious ISI/Scopus databases—far surpassing national minimums. Consequently, four of the five most recent theses were rated "Excellent" by external reviewers.

The EQF Level 8 curriculum is supported by a sophisticated digital ecosystem, including the Smart UMS/SmartPortal management platforms and the USV DIGITAL project. Research integrity is protected by AI-generated content detection in the Turnitin system and the specialized CRED USV department. Furthermore, participatory governance ensures that students hold at least 25% representation in all major decision-making bodies, including the University Senate.

Internationalization is a strategic pillar, highlighted by USV's membership in the NEOLAiA Alliance and operational cotutelle agreements with partners like the University of Beira Interior in Portugal. Students utilize modern facilities, including the Research Center in Management and Business Administration, and receive holistic support through the COACH USV project, which provides legal, psychological, and IT counseling to prevent researcher burnout.

Given the comprehensive alignment with quality standards, the evaluation panel proposes Maintaining Accreditation (MAC) for the **Business Administration** doctoral study domain.

Following the completion of the accreditation/maintaining accreditation procedure, the decision of the evaluation panel is: **Maintaining accreditation (MAC)**.*

VII. Annexes

Enclose the schedule of the on-site visit, the list of the documents reviewed, as well as any other documents that are relevant for the evaluation procedure, which are referred to in the EER and cannot be accessed through links.

* When the external quality evaluation for accreditation is performed with undergoing the procedure for obtaining a provisional authorisation to operate.