

**EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT
FOR ARACIS OF
CONSTANTA MARITIME UNIVERSITY
2022**

Introduction

I was appointed as a Foreign External Evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) and was consequently invited to join the evaluation team for the institutional evaluation process of CONSTANTA MARITIME UNIVERSITY (CMU). The audit took place between Wednesday 23 November and Friday 25 November 2022. Having participated in many online assessments over the past few years, this process has now been completed with an on-site visit.

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

Prof. univ. dr. Marius Gabriel Petrescu – Mission Director

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

Prof. univ. dr. Laurentiu Rece – Advisory Commission Expert

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

Prof. univ. dr. Mihaela Amoraritei – Program Expert (Navigatie si transport maritime si fluvial [conducted in English] - IF)

Prof. univ. dr. Sorin-Stefan Biris – Program Expert (Electromecanica navala [conducted in English] - IF)

Prof. univ. dr. dr. Mircea Neagoe – Program Expert (Electromecanica - IFR)

Prof. univ. dr. Maria Brojboiu – Program Expert (Electromecanica - IFR)

Aila Veli – Technical Secretary

Radu-Anton Moldovan – Student Evaluator (ANOSR)

Stefanut Iulian Buhus – Student Evaluator (UNSR)

The evaluation process began on Wednesday 23rd November at noon with preliminary meeting of the evaluation panel members and the introductory statements

(purpose, objectives and detailed presentation of the evaluation schedule) of Prof. univ. dr. Marius Gabriel Petrescu. He also introduced the evaluation team. Next Prof. Violeta Ciucur the Rector and Prof. Cornel Panait the President of the University Senate welcomed the evaluation team, and the management of CMU was also introduced.

From 12:30 p.m. the evaluation team discussed the most important aspects that should be considered during the audit. Between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., the experts visited most the educational and research infrastructure of CMU. In my role as Foreign Expert Evaluator, I was responsible for establishing an overview of the whole university. Although my schedule was very tight as I took part in the organized meetings, I also asked for extra meetings with a few representatives of CMU (Rector, Head of Study Office). I was allowed to move freely, talking to members of staff and students of the university. At 6 p.m., we had an appointment with the representatives of employers (~ 15 persons).

The team continued the evaluation process on Thursday 24th November starting at 9 a.m. and ending at 6:30 p.m. In the morning, we had a consultation with the representatives of the Accounting and Financial Department, then we met the representatives of the Student Career Counselling Department, the Quality Assurance Management Department of CMU and the representatives of the Ethics Committee. At noon, we had an appointment with the teaching staff members of CMU. In the afternoon, we had a meeting with undergraduate students (~ 40 prsons) and the graduates (7 persons) also.

The evaluation process was finished on Friday 25th November when the team of experts prepared the final report. In the morning, I had extra meeting with the Rector and the staff of the Study Office. The evaluation process was conducted in open and collegial manner.

My findings are based on the "Self-evaluation Report" (2022), the information I have gained from the website of CMU (the availability of information in foreign languages is much better at CMU than the average at Romanian universities) and I have heard during the meetings.

General Statements

The Maritime University in Constanta is a public higher education institution, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, accredited, with legal personality, which functions on the basis of the Romanian Constitution, National Education Law no.1/2011 and all the legal provisions concerning higher education. CMU is an important representative of the Romanian naval education.

The institution was last evaluated by ARACIS in 2016. CMU received the qualification “High Degree of Confidence”. CMU functions according to the Bologna process.

CMU has two faculties, which are further subdivided into departments:

- The Faculty of Navigation and Naval Transport
 - Department of Fundamental Sciences and Humanities
 - Department of Navigation
 - Department of Economic Engineering in Transports
- The Faculty of Marine Engineering
 - Department of Electronics and Telecommunications
 - Department of Engineering Sciences in the Electrical Field
 - Department of Engineering Sciences in the Mechanical Field and Environment
 - Department of Department of General Engineering Sciences

The two faculties offer 18 study programmes at all level (BA, MA and PhD) of which three are also conducted in English. The Faculty of Navigation and Naval Transport has two Bachelor (Navigation and Waterborne Transport; Engineering and Management in Transports) and five Master (Engineering and Management in Maritime and Multimodal Transport; Offshore Oil and Gas Technology and Management; Management of Integrated Transport Systems; Engineering and Management in Maritime & Port Fields; Maritime Transports) programmes. The Faculty of Marine Engineering has five Bachelor (Marine Engineering; Electrical Engineering; Electrical energy systems engineering; Engineering and Environmental Protection in Industry; Technologies and Telecommunication Systems) and five Master (Advanced Techniques in Marine Engineering; Advanced Engineering in the Oil and Gas Industry; Modern Concepts in Marine Engineering; Engineering and

Environmental Protection in Industry; Circuits and Integrated Systems for Communications) programmes. CMU is recognized as an institution with the right to organize doctoral studies. A PhD programme is also available in Engineering Science (Mechanical Engineering).

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

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

The university had 3547 enrolled students in the academic year of 2021/22, out of which: 2535 undergraduate students, 996 master's degree students and 14 PhD students.

Managerial Structure

The leadership of the university is organised in accordance with its legal regulations and the structure can be followed very clearly in the organogram of CMU.

The management structures in the CMU are:

- The Senate, the Board of Administration, the Council for University Doctoral Studies at university level
- The faculty council at the faculty level
- Department Council, at department level

The management functions in CMU are:

- Rector, Vice-Rector, General Administrative Director, Director of the Council for Doctoral University Studies
- Dean, Vice Dean, at faculty level
- Head of department, at department level

The Senate is the main decision making body of the university which consists 27 persons (20 teaching staff, 7 students). The elections are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the National Education Law in force, Law 1/2011. The elections are constituted, respectively established on a mandate basis. A mandate lasts 4 years. The election mechanisms follow the principles of academic democracy.

The Senate works with three specialized committees (the Committee for Education and Quality Assurance, the Committee for Scientific Research and Informatization, the Committee for Social Issues and Students).

The board of administration consists of the Rector, Vice-Rectors, Deans, the General Administrative Director and a student representative. The Board of Directors is supported in its activity by advisory commissions (the University Professional Ethics and Deontology Commission, the Quality Assessment and Assurance Commission, the Professional Guidance Commission for Students, the Commission for Solving Social and Disciplinary Problems of Students, the Equivalence Education Commission studies).

In terms of structure, the university is led by a Rector, who is supported by three Vice-Rectors. The Rector's duties include the strategic leadership of the university and representing the university at public bodies.

The structures and management positions are detailed in the Organization and Operation Regulations of the university, which describe in detail the duties of all departments in the Organisational Plan as well as the subordination relationships between departments of CMU.

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

Teaching Staff

According to the self-assessment report of CMU, the university had 139 teaching positions (97 occupied and 47 vacancies) and 117 auxiliary and non-teaching positions at the end of 2021.

Although the human resource quality is on good level at CMU, but the age-groups seem to be unbalanced among the teaching staff. The vast majority of the teaching staff is over 50. It means that they are experienced, but CMU should pay attention to its human resources development plan in order to ensure adequate young academic staff. The ratio of teaching staff to students is too high (1/29) if we compare with OECD and European average level.

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

Facilities

CMU has not a unified campus. It has three premises: the central headquarters in the centre of Constanta (Mircea cel Batran Street); the Nautical Training Centre is located on the banks of Mamaia Lake; the Neptun University Sports Complex. The different locations are situated rather far from each other in the city. I had the possibility to visit Nautical Training Centre and the Library of CMU. The library was moved to a new location not long ago.

The central building is housing the Faculties of Navigation and Marine Engineering, three Research centres, Nautica Publishing House, administrative and teaching departments, classrooms and 3 floors of student dormitories. The Nautical Training Centre is located on the banks of Mamaia Lake. It has multifunctional laboratory with electromechanical equipment, training stations, training and drilling centre, learning and teaching areas, a students' hostel and a variety of nautical crafts and rescue boats.

The accommodation capacity of the university is over 500 places. The university has spaces for cultural and sport activities for students, but I have not seen canteen at campus.

High-tech simulating systems can be found at CMU, which needed very strong software and IT backgrounds. It seems that the educational and research spaces fulfil every requirement of the European standards of this campus.

The collection of the library consists of approx. 41000 printed and online books, printed and online periodicals, doctoral theses, navigation standards, maps etc. The activity of the library is computerized, using the "TinREAD" software. The number of places for students in university reading room are very limited. The library updates its documents in all fields in order to achieve the performance indicators set by international standards. In parallel with the development of the library publications, the material infrastructure should be improved too.

CMU ensures the printing of the lecture notes, textbooks and of the necessary documents for the implementation of the curricula by its own publishing house.

Comment: There is enough place for didactic and research activities. Facilities are well used and most of the educational spaces, what I have seen, fulfil the requirements of the European standards. It can be seen that CMU invested in its physical infrastructure as much as the budget allowed in the last few years. It is important to continue the investments.

Students

CMU has high quality of study programmes (BA/BSc, MA/MSc and PhD) are available for the candidates. CMU has 3454 (2560 BA + 882 MA + 12 PhD) enrolled students in academic year 2022/2023 out of which 34 are international undergraduate students. In the academic year 2017/2018 the university had 4532 (3662 BA + 844 MA + 26 PhD) enrolled students. It can be said that the total number of students is decreasing comparing the data of the past five years. It is very common tendency in most of the higher education institutes because of the demographic problems and economic crises. CMU offers also flexible short-term attendance education forms.

At the meeting with representatives of the employers, they seemed very pleased with those students who graduated from CMU. Most of representatives were from the private sector. The cooperation is operating well between CMU and the employers. It was mentioned that the employers had already formulated minor modification requests related to the curricula a couple of times, which have been only partially implemented.

At the appointment with the undergraduate students (approx. 40 participant out of which 8-10 were international students), I found most of them very open minded and pleased with the university, the circumstances and the infrastructure. They seemed to be very loyal to their university and found most of the curricula and the academic staff good. International students mentioned that the tuition fees were very reasonable at CMU and they found the dormitories to be on a good standard.

During the discussion with the former students, they seemed satisfied with the members of the academic staff and the university. They gained competitive knowledge at CMU, so they could cope with different situations as members of international teams.

The university is involved in the international maritime community and numerous international cooperation. They have several bilateral agreements with maritime universities. CMU is also active in Erasmus Mobility programme. An increasing trend can be recognized of Erasmus traineeship mobility at CMU. According to the data provided by CMU, the number of the students participating in Erasmus Programme is high.

In December 2016 CMU has become a Marlins Approved Test Centre. English language testing and certification is now available for Romanian and foreign students.

Comment: The number of students who take part in Erasmus Mobility Programme at CMU is over the average rate, comparing with most of other higher education institutes in Romania. It would be worth increasing the number mobility for studies also.

Research

CMU feels great responsibility for the support of scientific research and makes this a priority. The university has seven Research Centres and each of them is affiliated to a teaching department. A vice-rector coordinates research activity within the university. Research activity at CMU is transparent. Scientific research is continuously monitored and evaluated annually.

The research topics, included in the medium-term research strategy 2021-2025, are in line with the scientific areas of the bachelor, master and doctorate fields, at the same time they are connected to the requirements of the socio-economic environment. The information gained on EERIS (Engage in the European Research Infrastructures System) platform, CMU's research centres offer different research and technological services for potential customers.

The results of the scientific activities are valorised by means of publications in dedicated journals or publishing houses agreed by CNCS. CMU also publishes its own scientific journal in English (Journal of Marine Technology and Environment) twice a year. Research is materialised also in textbooks for didactic purposes, books and monographs, scientific articles published in specialized reviews etc. CMU periodically also organizes scientific events (scientific sessions, conferences, round tables, exhibitions etc.) that increase the prestige of the university within the academic research community.

Comment: The ambition of CMU in research activity is quite clear. The conditions for an increase in the quality of scientific research have been created by providing a high-level infrastructure. It is worth continuing the research cooperation with international partners and increase the visibility of CMU in the European Research Space.

Quality Management

CMU pays a special attention to quality assurance and it is in central place in its operation. CMU has structures, strategies, policies and procedures for quality assurance of the teaching and research processes. At the university level, the Commission for Assessment and Quality Assurance (CEAC_U) is established, quality commissions at the level of each faculty, department can be found.

The internal assessment and quality assurance by CEAC_U is carried out through the Quality Assurance Department administrative structure directly subordinated to the Rector.

Besides the transparent quality assurance structure and procedures of CMU, the university concentrate on the different fields of the quality assurance: monitoring and periodically reviewing study programmes and activities; quality assurance in teaching and scientific research; accessibility of learning resources; information management; periodical external quality assurance; transparency of public interest information regarding the academic programmes etc.

CMU has also been audited by international agencies, such as Bureau Veritas Quality International (UKAS) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).

Comment: In my opinion, the structure and the procedures of quality assurance at CMU are well organized. There is also internal and external control of quality assurance. I am happy to declare my full and complete confidence in the quality assurance processes at CMU, as well as the quality of its programmes.

Conclusion

The basis of my report is what I have experienced, seen, heard during the meetings and interviews at CMU, I have read in the institutional self-assessment report and information gained from the website. I hope that some of the comments, which I made, will help the university Management in the process of continual improvement.

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

Finally I would like to express my thanks to the leadership of CMU and all the university staff for the pleasant atmosphere and the support during my stay in Constanta. As well much gratitude to my colleagues from the evaluation team for the professional, open and gentle way in which the audit was conducted.

Also thanks to ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this evaluation process in Romania.

Pécs, 10-12-2022

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