# Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ARACIS

## External Evaluator's Report

# TRANSILVANIA UNIVERSITY OF BRASOV (UNITBV) Brasov 12-14.06.2023

#### A) Introduction

The Transilvania University of Braşov, (UNITBV), is the only higher education institution in Brasov. The UNITBV history spans to 1948 when the Brasov Silviculture (Forestry) Institute was established<sup>1</sup>. The university status has been awarded in 1971, and in 1991, the University of Brasov has been renamed the Transilvania University of Brasov<sup>2</sup>.

As the only (comprehensive) university in the regional center, UNITBV is one of the key city hubs, attracting more than 20,000 students, and supporting the local economy and community.

The university consists of 18 Faculties, delivering 99 Bachelors and 67 Master level programs in the fields of Engineering Sciences, Mathematics & Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Biomedical & Biological Sciences, Arts & Humanities, and Science of Sports & Physical Education. In addition, UNITBV organizes Doctoral studies in 22 fields<sup>3</sup>. The vast majority of programs are delivered in Romanian, with some provided in English, German, or French.

University organizes its' activities across several buildings in Brasov, which include teaching/learning spaces, auditoriums, administration buildings, dormitories, canteens, and sports facilities.

The UNITBV is a research-active institution, with a modern Research center on the outskirts of the city, comprising 12 buildings and 30 research centers. Besides that, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, UNITBV, 2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Transilvania University of Brasov brochure, 2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Annual Report 2022, UNITBV, 2023

university is a center of the local cultural scene with five cultural centers<sup>4</sup> regularly organizing exhibitions, concerts, and other cultural events.

## B) General Statements

Regardless that the Internal Evaluation Report (including links and annexes) provides most of the necessary information regarding the UNITBV, it has been presented in a very formal manner. Having in mind quite the short duration of the evaluation visit, it would be recommendable to find a form that will introduce the institution for the first time. Great examples are two brochures – the Transilvania University of Brasov & Annual Report 2022, which would be even better if containing some additional information e.g. city map with campus locations.

The overall tone of the Internal Evaluation Report (IER) is purely technical and flatly narrative, with insufficient analytics and self-criticism. It would be more rewarding for the institution to emphasize weaknesses in order to prove the awareness and dedication to improvement.

The University Strategic Plan emphasizes the common University functions and doesn't include sufficient progressive or future-oriented components. The operational plans are replicating strategic goals only adding ownership and defining stakeholders. In discussions with the leadership, it is clarified that the Strategic Plan is commonly developed during the Rectors' candidacy campaign, addressing votes expectations rather than real development vision.

The structure of IER includes four key chapters: Presentation of the Transilvania University of Brasov, Evaluation of compliance with regulatory requirements, standards, and performance indicators, and SWOT analysis. Additional 107 Annexes have been provided as evidence quoted within the report.

During the visit, the ARACIS evaluation team requested and received some additional informative documents that were very supportive in assessing institutional performance.

The university website (<u>https://www.unitbv.ro/</u>) is well-designed, dynamic, and attractive, providing major information (in two languages – Romanian & English) about the institution.

ARACIS and the host institution have provided the evaluation team to visit the premises and meet with the university management, representatives of students, graduates, employers, teaching and administrative staff members, as well as quality and ethics committee teams. During the meetings, more insights from various perspectives have

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> <u>https://www.unitbv.ro/en/</u>

provided better insight into the institution and processes within.

The enrollment trends at the university levels are stable, showing a slight increase during the last past years (Figure 1):

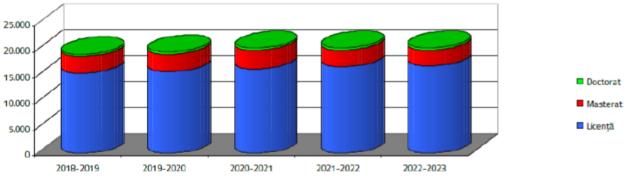


Figure 1: Number of students in 2018-2022

The majority of the student population comes from Brasov and other South-Transilvanian counties<sup>5</sup>. The indicator that has to be taken into consideration is a high drop-out rate at some of the faculties<sup>6</sup>, which has been tackled in the period 2017-2021<sup>7</sup> by project "Rose" but the issue persisted.

Comments/Recommendations:

B.1. It is recommended to prepare and design the next Self-Evaluation report to be more appealing and user-friendly for the Evaluation team members; provide hyperlinks to annexes stored in the cloud, emphasize major institutional achievements, and add data tables and visuals (similar to in the Annual report 2022).

B.2. It is recommended to prepare the next Self-Evaluation report with more analytics and emphasis on weaknesses and efforts to continuously improve.

B.3. Strategic Plan shall be revised and updated before the mid of the Rector's mandate to reflect the leadership vision and embed key aspirations and actions (within the operational plan) to be taken on the way until the end of the mandate and beyond.

B.4. Explore additional ways to support students at risk and reduce dropouts without jeopardizing academic rigor.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Annual Report 2022

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> file:///C:/Users/msavic/Downloads/3.1%20Analiza\_abandon%20scolar\_2021-2022%20(1).pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> https://unitbv.ro/cercetare/rezultatele-cercetarii/fonduri-structurale/arhiva-proiecte-rose.html

#### C. Teaching Staff

During the last five years, the extent of fulfillment of the teaching positions at the UNITBV varies by around 40% (Table 1).

Academic year	Total		Out of which Prof.		Professor			Assoc. Prof			Lecturer			Assist.		
	post.	0	V	cons.	Т	Ο	V	Т	0	V	Т	0	V	Т	0	V
2018-2019	1554	726	828	0	273	193	80	250	203	47	854	265	589	177	65	112
2019-2020	1552	735	787	0	274	198	76	249	205	44	836	271	565	163	61	102
2020-2021	1764	721	1043	0	277	195	82	259	209	50	998	270	728	230	47	183
2021-2022	1672	692	980	0	249	175	74	262	209	53	956	261	695	205	47	158
2022-2023	1629	696	933	0	254	182	72	263	204	59	892	261	631	220	49	171

*Table 1:* O – Occupied, and V – Vacant teaching staff positions

Regarding the teaching process, boundaries between faculties are not strong, and a large number of teaching staff teaches at programs delivered by other schools. However, there is a misbalance between teaching staff and student numbers between faculties (Table 2), showing some deficiencies in the faculties of Mechanical Engineering, Food & Tourism, Economic Sciences & Business, Psychology, and Law, as well as a surplus in the faculty of Furniture design and Wood Engineering:

					No. of Teaching		
		Bachelor	Master		staff teaching at		Teaching staff/Student
		students	students	SUM students	Faculty programs	No of Teaching staff	ratio (ONLY TEACHING
	FACULTY	2022/23	2022/23	2022/23	(2022/2023)	at the Faculty	STAFF FROM FACULTY)
1	Faculty of Mechanical Engineering	1570	228	1798	321	47	38.26
2	Faculty of Technological Engineering and Industrial Management	816	174	990	307	38	26.05
3	Faculty of Materials Science and Engineering	216	99	315	122	22	14.32
4	Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science	1334	186	1520	370	58	26.21
5	Faculty of Silviculture and Forest Engineering	400	136	536	187	18	29.78
6	Faculty of Furniture Design and Wood Engineering	91	54	145	81	34	4.26
7	Faculty of Civil Engineering	289	70	359	85	27	13.30
8	Faculty of Food and Tourism	598	104	702	165	17	41.29
9	Faculty of Product Design and Environment	619	128	747	289	44	16.98
10	Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science	785	193	978	151	48	20.38
11	Faculty of Economic Sciences and Business Administration	2424	446	2870	368	56	51.25
12	Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences	1083	275	1358	297	23	59.04
13	Faculty of Physical Education and Mountain Sports	635	144	779	128	23	33.87
14	Faculty of Music	134	74	208	111	26	8.00
15	Faculty of Medicine	1486	152	1638	403	92	17.80
16	Faculty of Letters	852	154	1006	181	64	15.72
17	Faculty of Law	1415	217	1632	61	31	52.65
18	Faculty of Sociology and Communication	1039	176	1215	194	28	43.39

Table 2: Teaching Staff and Teacher-to-Student ratio per faculty

The UNITBV has introduced the model of performance-related financial stimulations for faculty members<sup>8</sup>, which has been praised by the teaching staff representatives as fair and highly motivating<sup>9</sup>. Regardless, during the meetings with the leadership team, Rector expressed that the conditions and packages that the university may offer are still behind the competition, which negatively affects the recruitment process.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Rector's presentation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Meeting with representatives of the teaching staff

Comments/Recommendations:

C.1. The performance-based financial stimulation model is highly commended and shall be used as a best practice example.

C.2. University shall explore alternative models for engaging more teaching staff at deficient faculties; Suggestion would be to collaborate closely with industry and create feasible schemes for engaging experts and experienced professionals as the adjunct (part-time) faculty.

## D. Education programs

As the sole HE provider in Brasov, UNITBV is structured as a comprehensive university, comprising 18 Faculties covering the fields of Engineering Sciences, Mathematics & Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Biomedical & Biological Sciences, Arts & Humanities, and Science of Sports & Physical Education. The university offers 99 Bachelor's and 67 Master's level programs and organizes Doctoral studies in 22 diverse scientific fields<sup>10</sup>. Several programs are delivered in one of the foreign languages (English, German<sup>11</sup>).

Program delivery, especially in practice-oriented disciplines is designed in a way that the theoretical classes are delivered in classrooms (where some possess minimal profession-related didactical items), while the practical part takes place in the Research & Innovation Institute building. In this way, students are enabled to implement their theoretical knowledge in practice and test the extent of their competence. However, most of the programs lack sufficient offers of elective courses that may enhance students' motivation for studies<sup>12</sup>.

Actions related to the study program evaluation are lacking a structured approach based on learning outcomes (program & course level) and measuring their achievements.

During the meeting with student representatives, they mentioned that oral exams are lacking and that cheating on exams is quite common.

Around 30% of inquired UNITBV alumni consider their study programs as not sufficiently appropriate for their future employment<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Annual Report 2022, UNITBV, 2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Transilvania University of Brasov, UNITBV, 2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Meeting with Student representatives

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> <u>https://alumni.unitbv.ro/images/Home/RapoarteInsertie/Raport\_insertie\_2022.pdf</u>

According to the detailed student enrollment trends submitted by the UNITBV accreditation liaison, some of the study programs show significant declines in enrollment (e.g. Economic Engineering in Mechanics, Wildlife Management, while some maintain a low number of students (e.g. Materials Science, Wood Processing Engineering, Industrial Design in English). Faculty representatives agreed that most of these programs are important to be maintained, but have to be better marketed with an emphasis on employment opportunities<sup>14</sup>.

#### Comments/Recommendations:

D.1. Analyze ways for revising the program offerings to align with the industry needs. The extent of intervention may span from minor changes, joining a few majors, to radical intervention and redesign of the overall curriculum that shall implement gradual specialization at all education levels.

D.2. Increase the number of elective courses across the study programs, and align them with the up-to-date needs of the industry.

D3. Explore and implement promotional measures to market programs with low enrollments that are considered important for either the labor market or the local community.

D.4. Revise the assessment and examinations to avoid cheating and enhance students' creativity and proactive learning.

D.5. (for ARACIS) Explore ways to raise the culture of the outcome-based approach in higher education, with emphasis on cascading learning outcomes from program to course level and vice-versa, and aligning outcomes, teaching approach, and assessment methods.

#### E. Students

The overall number of students (Figure 1) enrolled in UNITBV study programs is quite stable. Most of the students come from Brasov and surrounding counties (Prahova, Bacau, Buzau, etc.)<sup>15</sup>. Students who are not from Brasov are offered over 4000 accommodation places in two dorms (Memorandum & Colina). Subsidized quality meal plans are provided in university canteens.

Students participate in governing bodies of UNITBV, however, their extent of motivation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Meeting with Faculty representatioves

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Annual Report 2022, UNITBV, 2023

to vote or to be elected as a representative is quite low. During the meeting with the student representatives, some stated that are not interested in not recognizing the potential for impact, while some others stated that they were not informed regarding elections.

The recently launched Student@UniTBv application has already gained significant popularity and got warmly accepted by UNITBV students. The application provides personalized access to all information and both academic and non-academic services<sup>16</sup>. In addition, UNITBV students are well connected via their Facebook page that they utilize for sharing important information and socializing.

The career guidance & counseling center has only two permanent employees and organizes activities by coordinating with representatives of Faculties. None of the staff (permanent nor assigned) does possess a specialization in career counseling, and psychological help is prioritized. Psychological help may be requested by e-mail or by web page or app. There were extended requests for support after the pandemic.

Generally, the decision to seek career guidance lies with the student. Tools are available, but numbers are low. As a part of group activities, the Career Guidance & counseling center organizes workshops to guide students in careers, inviting businesses and providing certain training in preparing for work. There is also guidance (Career days) from students to students, where Master students support Bachelor students in career-related matters. The Center intends to support students with disabilities; however, its current capacity doesn't allow more action, especially in the area of learning disabilities<sup>17</sup>.

The highest dropout rates are in Engineering and the lowest in Medicine & Law. Potential dropout students are attended to be supported, however, there is no methodology for early identification. There's no procedure for the transfer between programs delivered by different faculties. In such cases, students have to reapply as enrolling again. Some faculty reports in the past identify the problem of dropout students, and indicate certain psychological issues to be tackled in order to reach improvement<sup>18</sup>.

#### Comments/Recommendations:

*E.1.* Analyze ways for enhancing the scope and capacity of student support, with a special focus on students in academic risk; Explore and implement more preventive than

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Rector's presentation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Meeting with Career guidance & counselling center staff

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> "There are a lot of data captured within, including some of the information I have been curious to see (e.g. admission rates at the faculty of Technology & Industrial management, or comprehensive dropout data captured by the Career Centre). It would be great to see how the UNITBV intends to tackle some of the identified issues in order to continuously improve" (e.g. to support students who "would rather give up than fight" (report of M.Vasliescu from the Faculty of Forestry).

reactive measures to support.

E.2. Enhance the capacity and competence of the Career guidance & counseling center by employing more permanent staff members and organizing professional development in career guidance and support students with learning disabilities.

E.3. Develop the comprehensive student journey framework to guide students from application to employment

E.4. Having in mind the number of students beginning a professional career as freelancers, it is advisable to explore providing more insights such are legal guidelines or success stories.

E.5. Establish a stable channel for student complaints and initiatives via administrative or managerial structure (e.g. via Vice-Rector's office) to ensure that the student voice will be heard and responded to.

## F. Research & Scholarship

UNITBV is a research-intensive university that continuously nourishes its capability primarily within the Interdisciplinary Doctoral School and the Research & Development Institute (Figures 2 - 7):

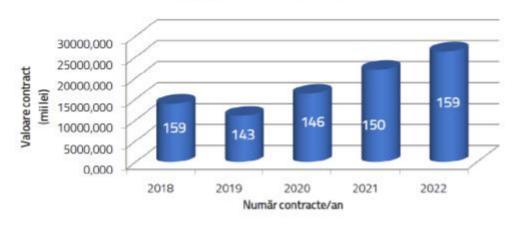


Figures 2-7: UNITBV Research & Development Institute

The Research & Development Institute has been inaugurated in 2016 and integrated 30 research centers. The investment for the Institute complex, located in Brasov outskirts,

is mainly acquired by the EU projects and grants<sup>19</sup>. Institute hosts all key lab and workshop student classes, intending to attract their appetite for research and innovation.

During the last five years, the UNITBV research production shows continuous growth. Since the last accreditation the volume of research grants more than doubled (Figure 8), and the number of ISI publications rose by 30% (Figure 9)<sup>20</sup>:



Dinamica contractelor finantate UNITBV (proiecte nationale, internationale, FDI, FSE si contracte cu terti)

Figure 8: Volume of Project Grants – annual growth

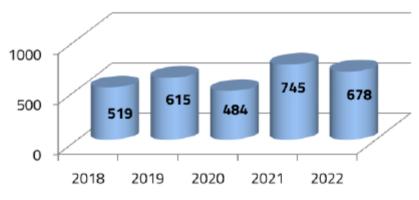


Figure 9: Number of ISI publications – annual growth

From the data above, it is clear that the leadership vision to stimulate research production is effective. However, during the meetings with leadership, Rector stated that the university struggles to attract more researchers to fully engage in Institute capacities.

The overall research capacity is additionally supported via several scholarship schemes such as are Transilvania University of Braşov Scholarship for international mobility" annual award, Postdoctoral Internships for advanced research, and the Transilvania

<sup>19</sup> Annual Report 2022, UNITBV, 2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Annual Report 2022, UNITBV, 2023

#### Fellowship<sup>21</sup>.

## Comments/Recommendations:

F.1. In addition to the UNITBV highly commendable performance-based stimulation scheme, it is recommended to explore closer collaboration with local and international industry partners in the field of applied research, and jointly engage in the Research & Innovation Institute activities and projects.

#### G. Community support and employability

UNITBV positions itself as a catalyst for community development, tending to add value to various entities within the economic and socio-cultural environment. The forms of partnership and support include applied research, life-long education activities, consulting and expert services, cultural events, etc.<sup>22</sup>

UNITBV is dedicating significant efforts to collaborating with the industry on applied research. The growth in contract values over the last five years shows the efficiency of these activities (Figure 10):

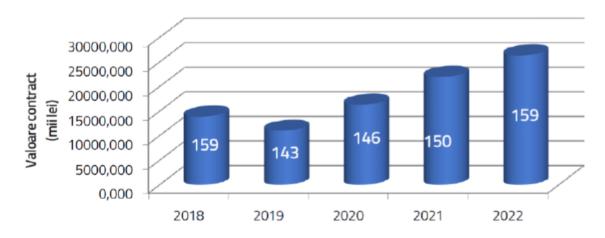


Figure 10: Value and number of applied projects in the last five years<sup>23</sup>

The meeting with employers has confirmed the extent of confidence of the local economy and community in UNITBV. Several representatives have confirmed that the university both takes initiative and responds to the initiatives brought by employers. Channels of communication vary (Rector, central units, faculties), but all are effective. The overall opinion about the graduates' readiness for work is positive, with minor remarks that students may be lacking some soft skills.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, UNITBV, 2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, UNITBV, 2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, UNITBV, 2023

It is to be commended that UNITBV collaborates closely with various municipal entities striving to respond to local government initiatives. One of the initiatives is related to the development of specialization in Family Medicine under the Medical Faculty, to support health services in rural areas.

During the meeting, some of the employers' representatives expressed their concern regarding the adjustment of programs to current industry needs, and the ability of faculties to engage agile approach to respond to technology innovation.

UNITBV website provides students with access to internships<sup>24</sup>, as well as job opportunities<sup>25</sup>. The Employability rate analysis<sup>26</sup> based on Alumni surveying shows a significant number of students are being employed during their studies. It is encouraging, but in some cases, it results in dropouts or discouraging to continue studies<sup>27</sup>.

The overall employability rates within the report (79,15% for Bachelor, 90.85% for Master) shall be taken with reservation, due to the size of the respondents' sample.

## Comments/Recommendations:

G.1. Explore opportunities to add to the educational provision smaller forms of learning packages such are (stackable, credit-bearing) micro-credentials to respond to emerging industry needs, at the same time providing opportunities to learners to upskill/reskill or certify their micro-learning.

G.2. Negotiate with industry more partnership agreements guaranteeing successful students' employment upon graduation.

## H. Facilities and Financial Resources

The Transilvania University of Brasov possesses more than 20 buildings or facilities in Brasov and Brasov suburbs. Facilities include teaching/learning spaces, research labs, sports courts, event spaces, dormitories, canteens, etc. There are two specialized didactic centers out of Brasov (Sanpetru & Garcin). In addition, the Evaluation team has visited some of the future facilities that are in the construction stage. Internal Evaluation report has provided overall specification of gross areas that overpass 70,000 sqm<sup>28</sup>, without specification of the dedicated area of learning spaces. Estimating from the gross space specification, It is likely that the university may require some additional learning spaces.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> <u>https://unitbv.ro/stagii-de-practica-si-internship.html</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> https://unitbv.ro/oportunitati-de-angajare-studenti

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> https://alumni.unitbv.ro/images/Home/RapoarteInsertie/Raport\_insertie\_2022.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Interviews with leadership

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> LISTA CORPURILOR DE CLĂDIRI, Annex I25

During the last three years, there is a stagnation trend in overall revenues (Table 3), which may indicate insufficient efforts to seek additional sources of income:

REVENUES (Lei)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Sums received from the Ministry of Education as core funding and special allowances	170,041,389	236,930,714	252,689,265	241,555,107	244,951,129	
Own revenues from tuition fees and other revenues	21,193,237	22,590,665	25,402,654	26,803,439	27,706,246	
Revenues from scientific research, design, consultancy and expertise	20,353,520	16,480,185	18,502,726	17,107,342	26,292,809	
Total	211,588,146	276,001,564	296,594,645	285,465,888	298,950,184	

## Table 3: Total revenues – Annual trend

UNITBV facilitates its finances centrally, utilizing a professional team of 21 staff, all university graduates. Allocation of financial resources across faculties is distributed mostly proportionally to the number of students, while the rest is project-based, where the senior leadership team jointly brings decisions regarding allocation. Expenditures are verified monthly<sup>29</sup>.

The typical procurement process lasts for one month or two, or even more in case of complex orders from externally raised funds that need additional verifications and approvals.

Decisions regarding fees for students who are not paid from the budget are made based on demand. In general, tuition fees for self-financing students are lower than for budget students, and popular programs are charged more<sup>30</sup>.

Dormitories provide accommodation not only for students but also for visiting faculties. Suites for faculty are well equipped and support attracting guest lecturers.

#### Comments/Recommendations:

H.1. Explore additional sources of revenues to improve the financial base, enable further developments and attract teaching and research staff.

H.2. Continue investment in the educational base and enhance the areas dedicated to teaching/learning.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Meeting with the Finance department

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Meeting with the Finance department

## I. Quality Management

The UNITBV quality management system has been introduced in 2002<sup>31</sup>, by introducing the implementation of the ISO 9001 model. Self-Evaluation report indicates that the further developments of the institutional quality system were systematic, and based on best European practices<sup>32</sup>.

The current QA system is structured around two entities – the QA Committee and the QA Office, as per the university organizational chart<sup>33</sup>, and reports to the Pro-Rector for Internationalization and Quality Evaluation. Both entities implement a number of tools following the Quality Manual, which is, unfortunately, accessible only from the University portal (not from the public domain). The Self-Evaluation Report remained short in presenting the extent of analytics in the QA processes, as well as the impact of the implemented tools and processes. What raised the awareness of the Evaluation team was the low level of students' interest to participate in quality-related processes as they either fear from professors they are evaluating or not recognizing the tangible impact of their participation.

Regardless of the obvious efforts to enhance the capacity of the QA system, there is still a vast space for improvement.

- Utilization of data
- Revision of policies & procedures
- Closer follow-up of academic indicators (e.g. exam falling rates)
- End-to-End Follow-up of the relevant processes (closing the loop)
- More focus on effectiveness and impact

## Comments/Recommendations:

I.1. Prepare and deliver the quality culture campaign to raise awareness of all internal stakeholders regarding the necessity of continuous quality improvement.

I.2. Ensure that all quality-related processes "close the loop" by implementing a full PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle.

I.3. Enhance efforts in improving quality-related processes by utilization of data, revision of policies & procedures, closer follow-up of academic indicators (e.g. exam falling rates), and adding more focus on effectiveness and impact.

I.4. (for ARACIS) Stipulate Internal Quality Assurance systems and dedicated units'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, UNITBV, 2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, UNITBV, 2023

<sup>33</sup> https://www.unitbv.ro/despre-unitbv/informatii-de-interes-public/organigrama

scope in accreditation standards and organize supportive workshops to guide institutions on how to enhance the quality Culture.

I.5. (for ARACIS) Explore ways to raise the culture of the outcome-based approach in higher education, with emphasis on cascading learning outcomes from program to course level and vice-versa, and aligning outcomes, teaching approach, and assessment methods.

### J. Internationalization

UNITBV dedicates a lot of effort to promote itself on the international stage. 30 study programs are delivered in foreign languages (English, German)<sup>34</sup>. 445 foreign students from 78 countries are enrolled at UNITBV on a full-time basis, while more than 170 are participating in student exchange schemes (mostly Erasmus +)<sup>35</sup>. University has international partnership agreements with more than 670 universities from all continents except Australia, however, clear evidence is provided to prove if all are active. Moreover, UNITBV nourishes international exposure by participating in 12 academic associations, and four cultural foundations (Confucius Institute, French Lectorate, Fulbright Foundation, DAAD).

At the same time, more than 360 UNITBV students participate in outbound exchange programs. As per students' representatives' testimony, there are enough opportunities for academic experience abroad.

Almost 300 faculty members had an opportunity to participate in international mobilities during 2022, while the university received almost 600 foreign academicians participating in conferences, workshops, study visits, teaching activities, and research projects.

The English version of the university web page is rich and contains all the necessary information for foreign students<sup>36</sup>.

#### Comments/Recommendations:

J.1. Organization of study programs in foreign languages is highly commended and shall be considered a good practice.

J.2. Analyze the extent of engagement within the international collaboration projects, and focus on a lower number of really active partnership programs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Institutional Self-Evaluation Report

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Annual Report 2022

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> <u>https://www.unitbv.ro/en/</u>

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

The Transilvania University of Brasov is a comprehensive academic institution providing higher education primarily for students from Brasov and surrounding southern Transilvania counties. Regardless it is still a quite young university, it has proven its maturity to successfully support the local industry and act as an innovation, research, and culture hub within the city and the whole region.

UNITBV has a mature QA system that still needs certain adjustments, especially in the fields of quantitative analysis, stakeholder engagement, and ensuring closing the loop. In addition, accreditation-related self-evaluation reports are expected to be more appealing and analytic.

University robustly maintains its academic rigor, which in some programs leads to high dropout rates. The student support system is not sufficient enough to provide alternatives to these students and more efforts are needed to ensure that disadvantaged students are not being left behind.

There is an obvious effort for the continuous improvement of study and work conditions at the UNITBV. The university leadership team is well organized and streamlined in their actions. The teaching staff performance-related stimulation system is considered a good practice that shall be disseminated. However, there is a need to better promote low-enrolled programs, and seek additional sources of revenues to improve material base.

The Research & Development Institute is a state-of-art facility, with great potential that depends on engaging a sufficient number of competent and motivated staff. Alternative tools shall be needed to release their full capacity.

UNITBV is internationally oriented, and provide significant opportunities for students and staff to gain international experience either at home or abroad. The number of study programs delivered in foreign languages, along with the Romanian language course for foreign students is another of the good practices that shall be disseminated.

Finally, the overall impression after the visit provides the trust that the current leadership and the institution at large possess sufficient capacity to support continuous growth and respond to outstanding challenges, at the same time maintaining alignment with the national and international standards of academic quality and rigor.

In Braşov / Abu Dhabi June 12 - 25, 2023

International Expert for Institutional Evaluation

Dr. Marko Savic