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Accreditation of Study Programmes Assessment Report

Institution: Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova

Study programme: Customs Law

Assessment committee:

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Dates of the assessment visit: 04.05.2015

Assessment committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA: 09.06.2015

Assessment committee received the comments of the institution under accreditation: 24.06.2015

Assessment committee approved the final version of component assessment with 4 votes in favour and 0 votes against.

Date: 03.07.2015

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I Summary of the assessment (mark with 'X'):

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
Study programme and its development			X
Teaching and learning		X	
Teaching staff		X	
Students		X	
Resources	X		

Short information about AESM from the self-evaluation report:

AESM is an academic higher education institution founded by the Government Decision of the Republic of Moldova no. 537 of 25 September 1991 having as a base the Faculty of Economics and Commerce of the State University of Moldova and the Institute of National Economy. AESM provides training in the general fields of study "Economics", "Law", "Exact Sciences" and "Public services".

Currently, according to the Bologna process, Bachelor degree studies are carried out within the general area of study: 38. Law. Since obtaining authorizations (2008), AESM has had master level academic groups in Financial - Fiscal Law and Economic Law (90 ECTS) as well as in Customs Law, Business Law and Financial - Fiscal Law (120 ECTS).

Master's School of Excellence in Economics and Business is a structural subdivision within the AESM, being the first of its kind created within the higher education institutions from Moldova, which ensures training for cycle II, master's degree. To carry out its activity the Master's School collaborates with several specialized department chairs such as the Public Law Chair that manages the Financial -Fiscal Law and Customs Law programs; the Private Law Chair which manages the Economic Law program.

Template for Assessment Report

Comments:

Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova (AESM) plans regularly its development. It has both the structure and the guiding principles for development in place. The study programme in Customs Law is authorized and functions in accordance with the normative acts. The title of a study programme is not consistent with its content. There are only 2 compulsory courses (Legal Customs Statements, Community Customs Law) and 1 optional course (Tariff and non-tariff regulation) directly devoted to the Customs Law issues. The objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme are not in coherence with the European Qualifications Framework. They need to be formulated in accordance with the EQF (level 7). The objectives, content and learning outcomes of this Master's study programme are not clearly distinguishable from those of the Bachelor's study programme. There are several courses within the MA Programme that seem to be the same or very similar to the courses from the 1st circle. In addition, the content of this MA programme is rather similar to the objectives, the content and the learning outcomes of the MA in Financial-Fiscal Law. The international experience suggests considering to emerge the MA programme in Financial – Fiscal Law with the MA programme in Customs Law.

The majority of the study programme is covered by full-time staff. Most of the teaching staff is born in 1970 – 1976 indicating to the relatively young spirit of the faculty. Taking into account just one programme, current faculty members have sufficient time to instruct students in order to provide them the knowledge. Taking into account that they cover two curricula (also Financial-Fiscal Law), sufficient time resource is not so evident anymore. The members of the teaching staff have an adequate teaching competence and they tend to improve their teaching methods constantly. There is no evidence of foreign teaching staff to be involved. The school still does not have enough resources (number of teachers/professors to cover all required and optional courses/ plans for research/ ideas for national and international cooperation) and clear understanding of solid academic research.

AESM has general principles for monitoring of academic progress in place. Even if there is no special system for that, the group is relatively small so the teachers can apply “custom made approach” while knowing the progress of most of the students anyway. Currently the financial resources of the AESM are adequate for conducting studies. The budget of the AESM in the last three to five years indicates institutional sustainability.

Commendations:

- general trends in the total number of students and graduates as well as the general budget of the AESM indicate institutional sustainability;

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- teaching and learning environment includes all facilities necessary for conducting studies (auditoriums, seminar rooms, laboratories, rooms for students' independent work and recreation, video projectors, internet etc.);
- all teaching staff members have PhD or equivalent degrees (except just one PhD student);
- teaching staff combines well theoretical knowledge and practical activities;
- school's general positive trend of fostering active teaching and learning methods;
- school's antiplagiarism system.

Recommendations:

- to seek for deeper internal synergy among three masters programmes in law;
- to encourage academic staff to participate in international grant application schemes and tenders;
- to promote research activities and research skills among the staff and the students;
- to pay more attention to the career development model of the faculty members;
- to develop a realistic strategy to attract more high quality students and minimise the drop-out rate;
- to apply for all incoming student the same admission procedures;
- to encourage international student exchange and short studies abroad.
- to update required reading lists by including more recent textbooks, monographs and most importantly scientific articles;
- to use more variety while choosing appropriate assessment methods;
- to invite foreign visiting professors to enrich the study environment in the master programme.

General comments concerning educational policy:

- the differences of the requirements for scientific master and for professional master should be made clearer both for local and international audience;
- to look for possibilities to reduce tensions caused by the dualistic situation where the teaching staff can be appointed and positioned both by the higher education institution and by VAK (through separate administrative procedures);
- rather strict policy of Academy of Science about limited numbers of "eligible institutions" whom to allocate research funds could be reconsidered in order to pursue research culture among wider academic community.

II Assessment areas and requirements

1. STUDY PROGRAMME AND ITS DEVELOPMENT	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'			X

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<p>Collected evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-evaluation report (SER); - Annexes of SER; - Internal regulations; - Additional documents received during the site visit; - Interviews with the management, teaching staff, students, graduates, employers. 	
<p>AESM plans regularly its development. The study programme in Customs Law is authorized and functions in accordance with the normative acts in force. The title of a study programme is not consistent with its content. There are only 2 compulsory courses (Legal Customs Statements, Community Customs Law) and 1 optional course (Tariff and non-tariff regulation) <u>directly devoted to the Customs Law</u> issues. The objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme are not in coherence with the European Qualifications Framework. They need to be formulated in accordance with the EQF (level 7). The objectives, content and learning outcomes of this Master’s study programme are not clearly distinguishable from those of the Bachelor’s study programme. There are several courses within the MA Programme that seem to be the same or very similar to the courses from the 1st circle. In addition, the content of this MA programme is rather similar to the objectives, the content and the learning outcomes of the MA in Financial-Fiscal Law. The international experience suggests considering to emerge the MA programme in Financial – Fiscal Law with the MA programme in Customs Law.</p> <p><u>Commendations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong practical approach within the programme; - The content of the programme provides the students with the opportunities to obtain both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. <p><u>Recommendations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To incorporate the MA programme in Customs Law in the MA programme in Financial – fiscal Law. 	
<p>1.1. REQUIREMENT: A higher education institution regularly plans its development: the higher education institution has a development plan accompanied by an action plan to ensure sustainability both in the institution and in a given study programme. The implementation of the action plan is analysed and forms the basis for planning of the next development period.</p>	
<p>Comments:</p> <p>AESM plans regularly its development. It has both the structure and the guiding principles in place. The strategic development plan is accompanied by action plans to ensure required developments and sustainability of the given study programme. According to SER there are the following strategic documents guiding the long term and short term development of AESM:</p>	

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- (I) AESM Strategic Development plan;
- (II) AESM Informatisation Strategy (2010-2015)
- (III) The Development strategy of the AESM Scientific Library (2011-2015)
- (IV) AESM staff development strategy.

According to SER the development strategy for AESM is reflected in the Strategic Development Plan for the period of 2012-2017 approved by AESM Senate meeting of 31.01.2012. The Strategic Development Plan is followed by the Annual Plan on the activities of the AESM approved also by Senate. The strategic development plan of the "Private Law" department chair, approved at the meeting of the chair No. 7 of 20.12.2011 and at the "Public Law" department chair, approved at the meeting of the chair No. 5 of 24.02.2012, states the development directions of the Master's programs inclusively. (Appendix B.1.A; B).

The annual working plan of the "Private Law" and "Public Law" chair departments is annually approved at the first meeting of the chair by the minutes No. 1 of each academic year, subsequently approved by the Faculty Council of "Economics and Law" by the minutes No. 1 of each year. After that the working plan is approved/ coordinated with the Vice Rector for Educational Affairs of AESM. He/she is the last acceptance/ approval stage of the yearly planned activities. According to Quality Manual also Masters School draws up the activity plan and quality objectives for the Master School each year. The latter ones are reviewed and approved by the Coordinating Council of MSEE. According to the information received during the meetings with the administration and the lecturers, the implementation of the action plan is analysed and forms the basis for planning of the next development period.

1.2. REQUIREMENT: A study programme is authorized and functions in accordance with the normative acts in force.

Comments:

MA programme in Customs Law was authorized by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova in 2010 (Annex to Order of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova no. 933 of 29 December 2010). The study programme is authorized and functions in accordance with the normative acts in force (e.g. the curriculum gives in total 120 ECTS, Master thesis gives 30 ECTS, etc.)

1.3. REQUIREMENT: The title of a study programme is consistent with its content.

Comments:

The title of a study programme is not consistent with its content. According to the curriculum there are 18 study disciplines/courses in the programme (9 – compulsory, 8 – optional, 1 – facultative). There are only 2 compulsory courses (Legal Customs Statements, Community Customs Law) and 1 – optional (Tariff and non-tariff regulation) directly devoted to the Customs Law issues. Also there are 1 compulsory (Legal Fiscal Statements) and 2 optional (International Tax Law, International Financial Law) courses indirectly devoted to the Customs Law issues. However, the presence of these courses in this programme seems to be artificial considering the existence the MA in Financial – Fiscal Law. All other courses are devoted to different fields of Law. In particular, there are several courses devoted to Criminal Law issues (Criminal Law

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(compulsory), Criminal procedural acts (compulsory), Contraventional Law (optional), Criminal Procedure Law (optional) Business Criminal Law (optional)). Considering that this programme and the programme in Financial – Fiscal Law have much in common, quite a few courses and programme’s goals are the same (according to the SER programme in Financial – fiscal Law aims at training specialists for the financial fiscal area, whose graduates acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to work as fiscal and customs inspectors (P.8)), it is recommended to combine these two programmes into MA programme “Financial, Fiscal and Customs Law”.

Recommendation:

- to incorporate the MA programme in Customs Law in the MA programme in Financial – fiscal Law.

1.4. REQUIREMENT: The conduct of studies, including the student workload of independent work and internship, support achievement of the objectives of the study programme.

Comments:

According to the information presented in the SER and obtained during the site visit the conduct of studies, including the student workload of independent work and internship in general support achievement of the objectives of this study programme. Since there is no official information on the organization and supervision of the independent work of students in the syllabi, it is recommended to amend the syllabi with such provisions.

1.5. REQUIREMENT: The objectives and learning outcomes of a study programme are in coherence with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The structure and content of the study programme is internationally comparable.

Comments:

According to the Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework the learning outcomes of the MA Programme should prescribe special knowledge, skills and competence. In particular, the knowledge for MA programme should be highly specialized, be the basis for original thinking and/or research. Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields is emphasized. The learning outcomes of the programme under evaluation define the specialized knowledge in the field of Financial and Fiscal Law (e.g., knowledge of different issues of Financial and Fiscal Law, as well as of other legal issues related to the financial and tax sectors), however, the formulation of this knowledge does not reflect the aspects of critical awareness and original thinking and/or research.

The formulation of skills should reflect special problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields. The learning outcomes of the programme under evaluation define skills primarily via the implementation of the legislation in financial and fiscal sectors and application of different practical methods; however, do not reflect the aspects of problem-solving skills necessary to develop new knowledge. The competence as part of the learning outcomes shall be formulated as ability to manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams. However,

Template for Assessment Report

these aspects are not reflected in the learning outcomes of the programme under evaluation. The structure and content of the study programme is not internationally comparable.

As to the international experience it should be noticed that the Customs Law issues are commonly presented within more complex MA Programmes in Financial Law issues (Master Programme in Financial, Tax and Customs Law implemented by the Higher School of Economics (National Research Institute, Moscow) (<http://www.hse.ru/ma/fnt/>); Master of Advanced Studies in International Tax Law applied by University of Leiden (Netherlands) (<http://www.itc-leiden.nl/MasterofAdvancedStudiesinInternationalTaxLa/tabid/245/language/en-US/Default.aspx>) or within the interdisciplinary MA Programmes (Master of International Customs Law and Administration implemented by the University of Cumberra (Australia) (<http://www.educations.com/study-abroad/university-of-canberra/master-international-customs-law-administration-167051>)).

Recommendation:

- to incorporate the MA programme in Customs Law in the MA programme in Financial – fiscal Law.

1.6. REQUIREMENT The objectives, content and learning outcomes of the Master's study programme are clearly distinguishable from those of the Bachelor's study programme.

Comments:

The objectives, content and learning outcomes of this Master's study programme are not clearly distinguishable from those of the Bachelor's study programme. There are several courses within the MA Programme that seem to be the same or very similar to the courses from the 1st circle, e.g., General Theory of Law (the same), Constitutional and Administrative Law (there are separate courses in Constitutional and Administrative Law within the bachelor's programme), Criminal Law (Penal Law), Criminal procedural acts (Penal Procedure Law). However, it should be considered that this MA programme is designed for non-law students. Therefore, the programme includes courses from the 1st cycle within 30 credits ECTS.

Recommendation:

- to incorporate the MA programme in Customs Law in the MA programme in Financial – fiscal Law.

1.7. REQUIREMENT: Study disciplines of the study programme are presented in a logical succession.

Comments:

Study disciplines and courses of the study programme are presented in a logical succession. There is an attempt to make up the curriculum following the logical succession: from the basic courses to the specific ones. However, the remarks mentioned above concerning the courses/curriculum shall be taken into consideration.

Template for Assessment Report

<p>1.8. REQUIREMENT: Development of a study programme takes into consideration the needs of the labour market.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> The information presented in the SER is common for all MA programmes under the evaluation. The expert committee did not witness enough clear evidences on the consideration of the needs of the labour market regarding this specific MA programme. According to the information provided by the Academy, from 7 graduates of the Customs Law programme 5 are employed and only 2 (28 %) of them are employed on the obtained qualification.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to incorporate the MA programme in Customs Law in the MA programme in Financial – fiscal Law. 	
<p>1.9. REQUIREMENT: Study programme development is a continuous process which, among others, involves feedback from students, employers and other relevant stakeholders.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> The study programme has been developed taking into account the ideas and suggestions mostly from teachers. According to the information presented in the SER and according to the information obtained during the site visit the feedback also from employers and students is used while the school is planning amendments and improvements.</p>	
<p>1.10. REQUIREMENT: The members of the teaching staff are aware of the objectives of a study programme and of their role in achieving these objectives.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> The members of the teaching staff are generally aware of the objectives of the study programme and of their role in achieving these objectives. The development of the curriculum could be considered as a process of giving input by the members of the teaching staff.</p>	
<p>1.11. REQUIREMENT: Study programme provides opportunities for further education at doctoral level.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> According to the SER (P. 25) at the moment, the Doctoral School of AESM does not encompass doctoral programmes in law because of the lack of financial resources. The level of master theses is satisfactory. However, the expert team witnesses that the practical part of the master theses are often more developed than the scientific one. Partially it can be explained by the lack of active involvement of students in the scientific activity described in section 2.9 of this Report. Therefore it is recommended to improve the requirements to the scientific level of the master theses and to enhance the master thesis supervision in this part. However, according to the information presented in the SER the graduates of the programme can continue their doctoral studies at different institutions of the Republic of Moldova. Currently, the master graduates in law of the AESM are enrolled as doctoral students.</p>	

2. TEACHING AND LEARNING	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'		X	
<p>Collected evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-evaluation report; - Annexes of SER; - Internal regulations and official decisions/policies of the schools; - Additional documents received during the site visit; - Interviews with the management, teaching staff, students, graduates. 			
<p>General comments:</p> <p>The overall systems for study management and improvements are in place. The feedback surveys are organized and the feedback is available both for the management and the staff. AESM tries to apply modern teaching strategies and techniques while being oriented towards active learning of the students. Also the internship management system is in place. The students usually find the place for internship by themselves. The school has made a major effort establishing all kind of systems and procedures, now much more emphasis should be put on the next stage – implementation of these policies and principles. There are analyses of students’ performance available, but often they are not systematic and they do not represent real analytical basis carrying more the character of being an “overview of the situation”.</p> <p>Commendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - various established systems and procedures for managing and improving both teaching and studying processes; - general positive trend of fostering active teaching and learning methods. <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to improve both teachers’ and students’ research knowledge and skills; - to update required reading lists by including more recent textbooks, monographs and most importantly - scientific articles; - to consider to include some required reading materials in English, to deliver some parts of the courses in English; - to include the information on teaching and learning methods in the syllabi of the courses; - to use more variety while choosing appropriate assessment methods; - to strengthen the requirements and monitoring of master theses preparation; 			

Template for Assessment Report

<p>- to pursue with the system for recognizing prior learning and work experience.</p>	
<p>2.1. REQUIREMENT: Study management is regulated, publicly available, and supports the achievement of learning outcomes. In course of study management development, the results of feedback surveys and the analysis of learning activities are taken into account.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> According to the information presented in the SER and according to the information received during the site visit, the study management is regulated by the internal regulations, they are publicly available on the AESM’s website and they support the achievement of learning outcomes. The feedback surveys are regularly organized. The results of such evaluations, as well as the analysis of learning activities are taken into account during the programme’s development.</p>	
<p>2.2. REQUIREMENT: Within the education process of study programme, efficient teaching strategies are applied (modern, interactive, teamwork-based, etc.) and oriented towards active learning of the students.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> In general AESM applies various teaching strategies and the school is oriented towards active learning of the students. According to SER (p. 29) teachers use teaching and learning methods and strategies which help the students in achieving the objectives of the taught course. The SER describes a lot of modern methods that are used by the teaching staff. In the process of teaching, learning and evaluating there are used interactive learning techniques, such as mosaic approach, gallery tour, three-stage interviews, case studies, problem-solving and others. According to official school policies the teaching strategies are applied, considering the following core principles: shifting from teaching to learning, focusing upon the master student; reconsidering the role of the teacher as an organizer and facilitator of the learning process. Even if during the meetings with different stakeholders there was still quite a lot confusions and different understandings what and how and with what purposes is used, the general trend of fostering active teaching and learning methods is existing in the school. At the same time it was very confusing and unclear how much these methods were used in practice. According to the students these methods are used very rarely or not at all. It is suggested to follow the official teaching policies of the school much more in practice. According to the official policies it is important for AESM that master students are aware of the needs to be involved in the process of their own training and the school is encouraging and motivating the master students' active participation in planning and managing their courses within the Master’s School. The individual work reflected in the programme seems to be feasible and appropriate. The school is making an effort to foster the students to accumulate new knowledge and develop new skills. However, it is recommended that the syllabi of the courses within</p>	

Template for Assessment Report

this MA programme should include the information on the methods presented above.

Recommendation:

- the syllabi of the courses within this MA programme should include the information on the methods presented above.

2.3. REQUIREMENT: Within the education process of study programme, up-to-date teaching materials are used.

Comments:

The list of teaching materials is more or less fine for local standards, but they need to get much updated for international standards. The reading materials of the most courses need to be updated through including more recent textbooks, monographs and scientific articles. Currently there are listed mostly just textbooks. It is suggested to consider among required reading materials also scientific articles from journals since the new and relevant/ up to date knowledge is often delivered more throughout the articles than in the books. It is also advised that some of the reading materials /some parts of the courses are written/ delivered in English in order to foster students' foreign language abilities.

Recommendation:

- to update the teaching materials in order to include more recent references and to broaden the list of scientific resources (e.g., to include scientific articles and monographs).

2.4. REQUIREMENT: Organisation of internship is clearly regulated, the requirements for the completion of internship are determined, the instructions for conducting the internship are available and the supervision of students in work environment is ensured.

Comments:

Organization of internship is regulated by the legislative acts and internal regulations of the school. The requirements for the completion of the internship are determined and the instructions for conducting the internship are available. According to the interviews the system is there, but the implementation is problematic. It is possible to fulfil the internship without actually learning and trying anything new. There was some confusion both on students and employers side about how effective an internship could or should be. On papers and according to regulations everything should be fine, but in practice the internship often does not offer the skills and learning opportunities shown in documents. Additionally, there is not enough supervision during internship.

According to the SER the students usually find the place for internship by themselves. They usually opt for the institutions/companies in which they are employed. Only in case the master student does not work or his / her working place doesn't meet the requirements of the study programmes, the department chairs look for an internship place for him/her. That is why the internship in reality might mean "just continuing the usual business at work". Pursuant to the alumni, the internship should be clearly separated to the categories of topical and institutional

Template for Assessment Report

<p>internships. The school should consider once more if the current internship system is the one they really want to pursue.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to reconsider the objectives and the requirements on students' internship in order to make it more efficient. 	
<p>2.5. REQUIREMENT: The higher education institution has a network of partner organisations offering internship opportunities for students and supporting the achievement of learning outcomes of study programmes.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the SER the internship partners of the AESM are: <i>Customs Service, International Drug Centre Joint Stock Co, ASITO Insurance Company, the Union of RM Lawyers, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Justice of RM, Superior Council of Magistracy, Lawyers BAR of Moldova, Youth League of RM, etc.</i> The interviews with the representatives of the employers, students and graduates proved that the organization of the internship (even if most people continue their usual work) could support the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme. The appropriate network is available, but more emphasis should be put on supervision and monitoring the achievement of learning outcomes of internship.</p>	
<p>2.6. REQUIREMENT: Assessment of learning outcomes of students is performed in accordance with the existing requirements. Assessment methodology is consistent with learning outcomes and includes feedback supporting student development.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>Assessment of learning outcomes of students is performed at the AESM in accordance with the existing requirements. According to the SER and the information presented during the site visit requirements regarding the evaluation of learning outcomes are included in the Regulation on the evaluation of students learning, approved by the Decision no. 5 of the AESM Senate of 24 February 2010, the second edition of which was in 2012 (Regulation on assessment of students' learning activity approved by the Senate on 14.03.2012). According to this regulation there are 30% for the interim activity and 70% - for the final exam. In particular, there are the following forms of evaluation: tests, reports, individual work, portfolio, esse, case studies. Written, oral and combined forms of examination can be used in accordance with the regulation mentioned above. Assessment methodology is consistent with learning outcomes and includes feedback supporting student development. During the interview the students informed that the teaching staff supports their progress on regular basis. The interim and final assessment of students' progress includes the feedback on study results. However, it is recommended to establish the system of monitoring of the residual knowledge of students In order to avoid possible overassessment of students' progress.</p>	
<p>2.7. REQUIREMENT: The higher education institution recognizes prior learning and work experiences.</p>	

Template for Assessment Report

Comments:

In accordance with p .48 of the Regulation on the organization of Master degree studies, the students with at least 2 years proven practical experience in the given field will be assigned with the necessary number of credits based on the assessment of competences and recognition of the practical experience by the specialized Department/Departments. Therefore there is a legal basis for the recognition of the prior learning and work experience. However the expert team was informed during the site visit that the procedure of the implementation of this provision requires further clarification by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova. Therefore there is currently no system in place that recognizes prior learning and work experience.

Recommendation:

- to establish the system of recognition of prior learning and work experiences based on the legislative provision mentioned above.

2.8. REQUIREMENT: Systematic analysis of achievement of learning outcomes is performed and improvement measures are undertaken.

Comments:

At the AESM the analysis of learning outcomes is performed within the Coordinating Council of the Master's School. This body in its turn develops reports on the achieved results and makes proposals to remove the identified drawbacks. The expert committee witnessed the system in place.

2.9. REQUIREMENT: Students are involved in research and development activities, the supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, applied projects, final thesis) is well organised and the satisfaction rate with the quality of supervision is high.

Comments:

Master students are involved mainly in activities related to development projects, for example, applied research, in which they collect in certain areas (e. g, commercial contracts or guarantees of performance of obligations) information, data, direct from the practice judicial participating in their analysis and draw conclusions. Also annual conferences, scientific symposia involving master students. However, the expert team during the site visit witnessed the necessity of the improvement of the students' participation in the scientific activity that will contribute to the enhancement of the further master theses preparation.

The preparation and defense of the master theses are regulated by the internal regulations developed in accordance with legislative requirements. However, the information obtained by the expert team during the site visit proves the necessity of the improvement of the procedure of the preparation of the master theses in part of scientific research as was mentioned in section 1.11 of this report. For instance, some master theses do not fulfill the requirements that are necessary for such papers. The absence of footnotes, footnotes to the references

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that are not included in the list of the references can be mentioned as samples. Therefore it is recommended to strengthen the scientific requirements to the master theses preparation and to enhance the monitoring of their fulfilment.

Recommendation:

- to strengthen the scientific requirements to the master theses preparation and to enhance the monitoring of their fulfilment;
- to improve both teachers' and students' research knowledge and skills.

3. TEACHING STAFF	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'		X	
<p>Collected evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-evaluation report; - Annexes of SER; - Additional documents received during the site visit; - Interviews with management, teaching staff, students and graduates. 			
<p>General comments:</p> <p>Based on the curriculum the majority of the study programme is covered by full-time staff. The programme's teachers largely overlap with the teaching staff of those who teach Financial-Fiscal Law programme. Although the latter programme was mentioned as the priority, there is no clear strategy at managerial level to diversify the faculty in order to maintain the sustainability of both programmes. Taking into account just one programme, faculty members have sufficient time to instruct students in order to provide them the knowledge. Taking into account that they cover two curricula, sufficient time resource is not so evident anymore.</p> <p>The members of the teaching staff have an adequate teaching competence and they tend to improve their teaching methods constantly. There is no evidence of foreign teaching staff to be involved. The school still does not have enough resources (qualified people, time, money) and clear understanding of solid academic research. Personal data/lists of publications of the teaching staff are referring mostly to various teaching manuals, textbooks, media articles, conference papers, etc. Since there is no common understanding of the concept of "research", there is also no real research plan that could be followed and monitored.</p>			

Template for Assessment Report

<p><u>Commendations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all teaching staff members, with the exception of one PhD student, have PhD or equivalent degrees; - most members of the teaching staff have an adequate teaching competence; - teaching staff carries “spirit of changes and youth”. <p><u>Recommendations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more focus should be put in promoting research activities and research skills among the staff; - to foster the culture to look for “additional funding” among the staff; - to find more resources for staff development (including training abroad, time for research and publishing, etc.); - to invite foreign visiting professors to enrich the study environment in the master programme. 	
<p>3.1. REQUIREMENT: The number and qualification of full-time teaching staff complies with the requirements established by legislation. At least 60% of the study programme is covered by full-time staff. 100% of full-time staff involved in the study programme have PhD degree or equal.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The number and qualification of full-time teaching staff of the programme complies with the requirements established by legislation. Based on the curriculum the majority of the study programme is covered by full-time staff. Teaching staff includes 9 members with PhD and 1 PhD student. The same teaching staff is also covering curriculum in Financial-Fiscal Law. The staff has impressive experience in teaching by years. According to the information received from the meeting with the teaching staff, quite a few members of the faculty are also contributing to the teaching process at other universities. However, the ASEM is still the main teaching institution for all permanent staff members. According to the SER, teaching positions are established in accordance with the regulation delivered by the Ministry of Education.</p>	
<p>3.2. REQUIREMENT: Distribution of full-time teaching staff by age, and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff, ensures the sustainability of studies in a higher education institution and a study programme.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>Most of the teaching staff is born in 1970 – 1976, which indicates to the relatively young spirit of the faculty. The faculty management is interested in having continuity in the master programme, including new and motivated staff members. Currently the distribution of full-time teaching staff by age, and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff, is likely to ensure the sustainability of the study programme from the teaching perspective. In order to constantly develop and motivate young teaching staff, creation of concrete career plans or advising on career planning could offer additional value.</p>	
<p>3.3. REQUIREMENT: The total number and qualification of teaching staff is – based on their responsibilities, workload and the</p>	

Template for Assessment Report

<p>number of supervised students – sufficient and adequate for achieving the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programmes at MA level.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> The programme’s teachers largely overlap with the teaching staff of those who teach Financial-Fiscal Law programme. Although the latter programme was mentioned as the priority, there is no clear strategy at managerial level to diversify the faculty in order to maintain the sustainability of both programmes. Taking into account just one programme, faculty members have sufficient time to instruct students in order to provide them the knowledge. Taking into account that they cover two curricula, sufficient time resource is not so evident anymore.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u> - to incorporate the MA programme in Customs Law in the MA programme in Financial – fiscal Law.</p>	
<p>3.4. REQUIREMENT: The members of the teaching staff have an adequate teaching competence and improve their teaching methods.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> The members of the teaching staff have a relatively adequate teaching competence and they tend to improve their teaching methods constantly. Most of the members of teaching staff have solid experience both in teaching and practice in the respective fields. In general, members of the faculty are motivated to improve their teaching methods. The feedback of the students to teaching is good and teaching staff is taking part in various self-development courses, e.g., TEMPUS training, Moodle training, ICT training as well as occasional visits to Romanian libraries. As areas of improvements much more emphasis could be put on developing e-learning space/ e-training skills.</p>	
<p>3.5. REQUIREMENT: The staff development system is effective: the members of the teaching staff have opportunities for self-improvement, staff development methods are applied by the higher education institution.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> The basic principles of the staff development system are in place. The SER lists also their requirements for the teaching staff established by an “internal quality insurance” system (see p. 38). The members of the teaching staff have had quite a few opportunities for self-improvement. Even if staff development methods are not applied systematically at AESM, the school has offered some useful training courses for the teachers, e.g. psychology of pedagogy, modern assessment methods etc. An additional advantage and increased motivation for the staff would be opportunities to fund teachers’ research and opportunities to go for foreign trainings/study trips. The teaching staff is motivated to elaborate elective courses and develop the courses deriving from the societal needs, e.g., e-trade law course starting from 2015. A recommendation for the school would be to find more opportunities to finance teachers research and teachers foreign study trips.</p>	

Template for Assessment Report

<p>3.6. REQUIREMENT: Visiting members of the teaching staff (including from foreign higher education institutions) are involved in teaching in a study programme.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> There is no evidence of foreign teaching staff to be involved. The idea presented during the site visit - to invite a professor from France - does not relate to the current activities. It is not apparent what would be the role and teaching workload of the planned visitor.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to invite foreign visiting professors to enrich the study environment in the master programme. 	
<p>3.7. REQUIREMENT: The members of the full-time teaching staff of a higher education institution regularly develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions and participate in international networks.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> Currently the members of full-time teaching staff of the AESM do not develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions nor participate in international networks. Very few occasionally happen to visit some foreign institutions/ happen to be abroad, but it is rather random and these visits do not take place due to AESM but despite the AESM. The SER reflects only few study visits from 2012 to Eastern European countries and a few trainings abroad. The teaching staff development plans presented during the site visit indicate that majority of trainings will be planned to be held in Moldova. The teaching staff clearly stated their need for new teaching materials and trainings abroad. At the same time also the foreign language skills among teaching staff could be improved before they would be ready to take full advantage of possible foreign trips. The fact that the teaching staff is mainly producing and using school textbooks/ handbooks, leads to the situation where simple research conducted by faculty members is minimal. By the SER and by the faculty members themselves, the teaching staff has to pay for their research activities (p 42 of the SER). This situation is certainly not sustainable for the institution or for the programme that should be taught by qualified scholars. If the school wants to pursue high quality peer reviewed research much more attention and resources should be designated for these aims.</p> <p><u>Recommendations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to find more resources for staff development (including training abroad, time for research and publishing, etc.). 	
<p>3.8. REQUIREMENT: Teaching staff are involved in national and international research projects and participate in forums, national and international scientific conferences.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> During the site visit the teaching staff was not involved in any medium or major national research project. Also no major involvement in international research was visible. The few projects that had an international element were rather initiated by foreign institutions or carried out</p>	

Template for Assessment Report

through the public procurement project. Only one project can be seen as having an international dimension (although related to the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova).

Clearly the school still does not have enough resources (qualified people, time, money) and clear understanding of solid academic research. Personal data/lists of publications of the teaching staff are referring mostly to various teaching manuals, textbooks, media articles, conference papers, etc. The expert team understands that in the Republic of Moldova the research is not sponsored directly by the state and the Academy of Sciences has a monopoly to filter applicants when considering their eligibility for international and domestic research projects, but the school itself could do more prioritizing research activities / promoting research skills among the staff. Currently conducted research by the staff is not systematically organised but rather depends on individual initiatives. There is no systematic financial support for research activities offered by the school or the faculty. The annually adopted research reports of the school do not include any relevant information about funding policy.

International cooperation seems to be initiated mostly from outside. Although there is an official requirement for every faculty member for self-improvement during a five-year period, there is no institutional plan to support it financially. The fact that the research/ international experience exchange is not a priority in practice is also reflected by the students who were not aware of consultation centre and international exchange programmes offered by the school. Then again teaching staff participates rather actively in local and national forums and conferences playing certainly an important role in local arena.

Recommendation:

- more focus should be put in promoting research activities and research skills among the staff.

3.9. REQUIREMENT: Research activities of the teaching staff are planned and monitored efficiently.

Comments:

Since there is no common understanding of the concept of “research”, there is also no real research plan that could be followed and monitored. Officially the Senate approves the plan of research activities and also monitors its implementation. The future plans as a part of the institutional strategy are not convincingly presented.

Every member of the staff undergoes attestation once in five years where also research produced is officially evaluated. There are also individual annual reports presented by the teaching staff members. These reports include a list of research-related activities. There is a tendency that the teaching staff is working hard with textbooks and reviewing syllabi rather than pursuing solid academic research.

In general two factors are working against pursuing for high quality research at AESM: firstly, the policy of Academic of Science is a decisive factor regarding how to allocate the research funding; secondly, the teaching staff is too practice-oriented and cannot lead the high-level

Template for Assessment Report

discussions on the developments in the area. Consequently, as there is no clear strategy on research and no subsequent funding scheme motivating the faculty members to conduct research that would correspond to the international standards, the situation cannot be assessed as satisfactory.

Recommendation:

- to foster the culture to look for “additional funding” among the staff.

4. STUDENTS	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'		X	
<p>Collected evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-evaluation report; - Annexes of SER; - Additional documents received during the site visit; - Tests (civil law, computer and foreign language) on acceptance on study; - Antiplagiarism system; - Internal regulations; - Interviews with the management, teaching staff, students, graduates, employers. 			
<p>General comments:</p> <p>The counselling principles for the students are in place. There was the Placement Centre and Business Incubator responsible for counselling of the students but now this unit has been reorganized to a new unit called the Career Guidance Centre that is still under reconstruction. The number of students going abroad is constantly growing at AESM (12 students from BA studies and 3 from MA studies went to abroad throughout the school in 2014) but according to the information provided by the stakeholders (teachers, students, etc.) nobody from the Customs Law has ever participated in any international mobility programmes.</p> <p>In the senate there are 12 elected students’ representatives among 56 members. Both in the Board of Directors of AESM and in the Coordinating Council of AESM there are two elected students’ representatives as well. The AESM has its own system for prevention of academic</p>			

Template for Assessment Report

fraud. Currently it is possible to apply it only on the written texts in Romanian while comparing the “inserted texts” with already available/defended theses at AESM. Still it is having a very strong psychological effect on the students who all knew about the system and who are “positively afraid of it”.

The AESM has general principles for monitoring of academic progress in place. Even if there is no special system for that, the group is relatively small so the teachers can apply “custom made approach” while knowing the progress of most of the students anyway. Due to the fact that not all students are equally evaluated before being accepted to AESM there is a higher risk that not all of them have enough capacities, skills or motivation to complete the study programme. Only 30 % of the employed graduates work in the designated fields where the obtained qualification is a requirement or an advantage.

Commendations:

- school’s antiplagiarism system.

Recommendations:

- to apply for all incoming student the same admission procedures;
- to improve the institutional monitoring system of career development of graduates;
- to obtain more feedback from graduates and employers;
- to establish fully functional Career Guidance Centre;
- to promote students’ representation schemes among students;
- to encourage international student exchange and short studies abroad.

4.1. REQUIREMENT: The admission requirements for student applicants are based on qualities necessary for completing the study programme. The admission of students is performed by procedures stipulated in the normative acts.

Comments:

According to the pt. 26 and 27 of the Government Decision no. 1455 on 24 December 2007 on approving the Regulation on the organization of higher master studies, all the applicants (the ones financed from the state budget and the ones paying tuition fees) must positively pass the competition for admission in profile disciplines, foreign language and computer use. At ASEM these procedures are applied only for applicants who would like to obtain state funding. The students who don’t want to compete for state funded places and pay the tuition fee by themselves are exempt from the exams. Due to the fact that not all students have to pass the exams before being accepted to ASEM there is a higher risk that not all of them have enough capacities, skills or motivation to complete the study programme. According to the information presented to the expert team there is a fluctuation in the percentage of the dropouts (44,5% during 2011-2013; 33,3 % during 2012-2014). It is

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<p>recommended for the Academy to improve the admission practice and to start fully respecting the normative procedures.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to improve the admission practice and to start fully respecting the normative procedures. 	
<p>4.2. REQUIREMENT: The counselling system of students (including study, career and psychological counselling) is planned/targeted and effective.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The counselling principles for the students are in place, but in reality the system is not effective enough. There was the Placement Centre and Business Incubator responsible for counselling of the students at AESM from 2002 until 2014. By now this unit has been reorganized leading to a new unit called the Career Guidance Centre which activity is focused on: (I) integration approach to career guidance process, considered as an integral part of the educational process; (II) train students in designing their own careers; (III) functional priority in career guidance; (IV) the capitalization of educational partnership, etc.</p> <p>The Centre is still in the process of being created and established and that is why it doesn't have any planned/targeted activities yet. It also doesn't have any staff employed yet. According to the plans the Centre is going to be responsible for the counselling system including career planning, studies and psychological counselling. According to the information provided by the students, just some of them know about the new Centre, part of them have heard about the Placement Centre and Business Incubator and no one has ever been addressed to their services. For a fruitful progress of the school it is vital that the new centre will start to function as soon as possible and will start to cover all the activities for which it was created. Also, it would very useful that the activities of the centre will be promoted/shared among all students.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - for a fruitful progress of the school it is vital that the new centre will start to function as soon as possible and will start to cover all the activities for which it was created; - it would be very useful that the activities of the centre will be promoted/shared among all students. 	
<p>4.3. REQUIREMENT: Students are provided with internal and external mobility opportunities.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the rules of organization studies in higher education, the students have right to be engaged and participate in mobility programs at national and international level, to complement the training process according to the educational path chosen. In this context the AESM created a Foreign Relations Service being responsible for mobility of the students. It has the priority direction to contribute to the development of</p>	

Template for Assessment Report

<p>partnerships with similar universities from abroad. For these purposes the unit develops collaboration agreements, organizes formal and informal meetings with representatives of the embassies and consulates, etc. Even when there is currently no student from the Customs Law curriculum taking advantage in available internal and external mobility activities, enough possibilities are open for the students.</p>	
<p>4.4. REQUIREMENT: Students participate in international mobility programmes. The percentage of students participating in student mobility is stable or growing.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> Master's students at ASEM can take advantage of the international exchange program and assistance provided through the Cooperation Programme between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova and the Ministry of Education of Romania (Project of academic mobility Action 2 Erasmus Mundus). Additionally there are also other EU and international programmes available.</p> <p>The number of students going abroad is constantly growing at AESM (12 students from BA studies and 3 from MA studies went to abroad through the school in 2014) but according to the information provided by the stakeholders (teachers, students, etc.) nobody from the Customs Law has ever participated in any international mobility programmes. It would be very useful for the school to encourage also the students from the Customs Law specialty to apply for the mobility programmes.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to encourage also the students from the Customs Law specialty to apply for the mobility programmes. 	
<p>4.5. REQUIREMENT: Students are involved in the decision-making process at different levels of the higher education institution.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> In the senate there are 12 elected students' representatives among 56 members. Moreover in the Board of Directors of AESM, in the Coordinating Council of the Master School and in the AESM Senate students have their representatives. Based on this it is possible to say that the students have their own voice in the decision-making process and both the school and the faculty give them the possibility to participate at all decision making levels.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the students don't know who exactly represents them in these bodies. It is very important that the ones not personally participating in the decision making processes still know about their representatives, the activities of these bodies and have periodical communication with them. It is recommended for the school and for the students themselves to promote the possibilities to be involved and to follow decision making processes within the school.</p>	

<p>4.6. REQUIREMENT: A system has been established for the detection and prevention of academic fraud.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> AESM has its own system for prevention of academic fraud. Currently it is possible to apply it only on the written texts in Romanian while comparing the “inserted texts” with already available/defended theses at AESM. All admitted theses for the defence must pass through this antiplagiarism system. Unfortunately the system doesn’t compare theses with books or journals and it doesn’t check international sources written in other languages (English, French, etc.). The results of the data processed by the system are checked by an expert committee who takes the decision to admit or not to admit the thesis for the final defence. Even if the system does not check too many sources, it is having a very strong psychological effect on the students who all know about the system and who are “positively afraid of it”. For the future development it would be even more useful if the system could be extended so that variety of the sources to compare with would be higher (books, journals etc.)</p>	
<p>4.7. REQUIREMENT: Higher education institution has a tracking mechanism of graduates’ employment and is monitoring the evolution of graduates’ career.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> The task on tracking the graduates’ employment and monitoring the evolution of graduates’ career is the responsibility of Marketing and Public Relations department. They keep some registers, but unfortunately they do not have a full information regarding the graduates’ employment and graduates’ career. In 2014 the school knows the information about the employment status of 7 graduates out of 20 graduates. Meanwhile, the school is in the process of fully establishing of Career Guidance Centre, which besides of other tasks mentioned above also will have the responsibility to collect the information regarding the alumni workability and working places. The Centre is going to employ 2 full time staff members who will responsible for collecting data regarding the graduates’ employment and career progress.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to improve the institutional monitoring system of career development of graduates. 	
<p>4.8. REQUIREMENT: The competitiveness of the graduates of a study programme is demonstrated by employment rate according to obtained qualification; unemployment rate; employment rate in other fields than the one studied within the programme.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> According to the statistics provided (information kept by the Academy),, the “value of the master studies” is a rather problematic aspect. At the</p>	

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level of the master's school about 50 % of the students have already been employed before starting the studies, 20 % have got working place during the studies and around 30 % are still looking for a job after half a year of graduation. Only 20-30 % of the employed graduates work in the designated fields where the obtained qualification is a requirement or an advantage. Based on the information received from the school there are 5 graduates of the Customs programme employed out of 7 and just 2 of them (28%) are working in the designated fields. It would be recommended for the school to focus more on this challenge to correlate admission numbers with the possibilities of employment.

Recommendation:

- to obtain more feedback from graduates and employers.

4.9. REQUIREMENT: There is a system in place for monitoring academic progress. Graduation of students per each year meets the legal requirements. Effective measures are implemented to reduce the drop-out rates.

Comments:

AESM has general principles for monitoring of academic progress in place. Even if there is no special system for that, the group is relatively small so the teachers can apply "custom made approach" while knowing the progress of most of the students anyway.

The drop-out rate in Customs Law specialty is specially high when comparing with other specialties (e.g. Financial-Fiscal Law). From 18 enrolled students 10 have graduated in 2013 (about 56 %), in 2014 from 30 enrolled students 20 have graduated (67%). The main reason for the drop out is immigration, but it is suggested for the school to pay more attention to the issue. Currently the most commonly applied measure is accepting the drop-out students back to the school. It will for sure provide some remedies for the drop-outs, but it might not prevent the drop-out rate as such.

5. RESOURCES	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'	X		

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Collected evidence:

- Self-evaluation report;
- Annexes of SER;
- Site visit tour to the library and facilities, including study rooms;
- Interviews with management, teaching staff and students.

General comments:

Currently the financial resources of the AESM are adequate for conducting studies. The budget of the AESM in the last three to five years indicates institutional sustainability. The teaching and learning environments meet the needs of conducting the programme. Classrooms are equipped with contemporary multimedia techniques. The university uses the *Moodle* system with the aim to reduce the administrative burden and to take up the contemporary e-learning environment. The dormitories and the school's medical service centre exist and meet the needs of the university. Electronic library started its activities in 2004 and includes access to about 10 000 journals. However, these databases are not too often used by students. The library includes a collection of books, majority of them are published in Romanian.

Commendations:

- General trends in the total number of students and graduates as well as the general budget of the AESM indicate institutional sustainability;
- Teaching and learning environment includes all facilities necessary for conducting studies (auditoriums, seminar rooms, laboratories, rooms for students' independent work and recreation, video projectors, internet etc.);
- Studies and other academic activities are supported by well-functioning information technology solutions, including the study information system, e-learning opportunities and communication portals for students and teaching staff;
- The students are provided with dormitories and medical service;
- various libraries support conducting studies through information sources available and through providing students with the opportunities for independent work.

Recommendations:

- it is recommended to establish a clear vision and strategy to ensure financial sustainability specifically for the law programs;
- there could be more entrepreneurial spirit in fund-raising activities (not only university-oriented but also related to the field of specific studies, e.g. law);
- the management should encourage academic staff to participate in international grant application schemes and tenders, find technical and administrative support as well as provide possibilities for self-financing when necessary;
- further steps should be taken to seek for internal synergy among three masters programmes in law in order to administer these programmes more efficiently;
- it is recommended to pay more attention to the career development model of the faculty members and clearly plan the costs for

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improving the quality of teaching and research;

- the university should develop a realistic strategy to attract more high quality students and minimise the drop-out rate;
- a concrete action plan should be adopted for tackling the problems deriving from the consequences of declining number of students and to increase the attractiveness of the given master programmes.

5.1. REQUIREMENT: The financial resources of a higher education institution are adequate for conducting studies, development activities related to studies and supporting the development of the teaching staff.

Comments:

Currently the financial resources of the AESM are adequate for conducting studies, for development activities related to studies and for supporting the moderate level of development of the teaching staff. The services, buildings, rooms and the equipment need some improvement, but are sufficient to cover the current needs of the master programme.

Figure 4 in the SER and corresponding statistics received during the site visit show a moderately positive financial trend of the school towards improving its financial sustainability. The difference between the annual income and annual expenses shows the financial stability of the institution. Currently the majority of income is coming from the state budget. 70% of the students are paying tuition fees and 30% are having state funded places. The recent discussion among the management of the AESM was focused on diversification of funding sources (e.g. attracting international research funding, possibility of rental of premises, etc.). According to the management of the school the financial situation has been improved already by some donations and scholarships offered by business circles. More financial support is expected from the alumni.

5.2. REQUIREMENT: Trends in the number of students and graduates, and the budget of a higher education institution in the last three to five years indicate sustainability.

Comments:

The budget of the AESM in the last three to five years indicates institutional sustainability. Also the general trends in the total number of the students and graduates in the school indicate sustainability in the field of economic studies, but the trends in the number of students and graduates in the law programmes are challenging (for all three MA programmes approximately 75 graduates all together, p.8). There is a general decreasing trend of the number of the students of the programme. Two programmes under evaluation (Financial-Fiscal Law, Custom Law, etc.) face constant decrease of the graduates. Even though the university management is aware of the risks that occur with gradual decline of the students, there is lack of coherent and multilevel (at programme-faculty-university levels) strategy to identify the challenges and possible remedies.

Template for Assessment Report

<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it is recommended to establish a clear vision and strategy to ensure financial sustainability specifically for the law programs; - there could be more entrepreneurial spirit in fund-raising activities (not only university-oriented but also related to the field of specific studies, e.g. law); - the management should encourage academic staff to participate in international grant application schemes and tenders, find technical and administrative support as well as provide possibilities for self-financing when necessary. 	
<p>5.3. REQUIREMENT: Teaching and learning environments have been developed according to the teaching and learning objectives, include all facilities necessary for conducting studies in a given study programme and are of adequate capacity considering the number of students (auditoriums, seminar rooms, laboratories, rooms for students independent work and recreation, video projectors, internet etc.).</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> The teaching and learning environments meet the needs of conducting the programme. Facilities necessary for conducting studies in the given study programme are of adequate capacity considering the number of students. Classrooms are equipped with contemporary multimedia techniques. The need for some physical improvement is recognised by the management and the faculty and it has been constantly dealt with based on the available resources. Some major drawbacks are “theoretical working places” for teaching staff – a large area where no individual equipped working places are available. The WI-FI environment throughout the school is very positive and encourages using modern ICT-techniques. However, the number of personal computers is very limited and the fact that the teachers have to share laptops makes research and teaching process rather complicated. The visiting team is convinced that the statistics related to learning environment presented by the university in SER is adequate and meets the criteria of higher educational institution.</p>	
<p>5.4. REQUIREMENT: Both the conduct of studies and other activities of a higher education institution are supported by up-to-date information technology solutions, including the study information system, e-learning opportunities, and communication portals for students and teaching staff.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> Studies and other academic activities are supported by rather well functioning information technology solutions. The computer classes are equipped by hardware and software corresponding to the current needs of the students. The university uses the <i>moodle</i> system with the aim to reduce the administrative burden and to take up the contemporary e-learning environment. However, at the current stage the e-learning environment is still limited and students are not aware of all the ICT-based opportunities, e.g. video conferencing centre, bridging activities, etc.</p>	
<p>5.5. REQUIREMENT: The students are provided with dormitories and medical service.</p>	

Template for Assessment Report

<p><u>Comments:</u> The dormitories and the school's medical service centre exist and meet the needs of the university. The financial cost for students of living in the dormitories is subsidized by the university. In medical centre the first aid and different services are provided by free. There is also an advisory centre of AESM providing physiotherapist rehabilitation.</p>	
<p>5.6. REQUIREMENT: A library supports the conduct of studies ensuring that up-to-date information sources are available, and provides students with the opportunities for independent work.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u> The library includes a collection of books, majority of them are published in Romanian/Russian. The English language literature is mainly available for economic studies. There are 11 000 copies of books for law studies in Legal Fund. Concerning to the journals there is only one English language journal related to law. The library has also an electronic catalogue. Electronic library started its activities in 2004 and includes access to about 10 000 journals. However, these databases are not too often used by students (when meeting with the students, they could not refer to any names of databases). Even the MOLD-Lex was not known among the students. The material about EU law is available through EUR-Lex DVD series (official journal of the European Union). The library has recently benefitted from different international projects that allowed updating library resources.</p>	