

The Assessment Decision of the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education

12/10/2015

**A proposal to the Minister of Education
of the Republic of Moldova to**

ACCREDIT

the Master's study programme

"Criminal Sciences and Criminology"

at Alecu Russo State University of Bălți

FOR 3 YEARS

Acting in accordance with the authorization granted by the § 10 (4) of the Universities Act and sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) and based on section 33.3 of the document "Requirements and Procedure for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Moldova", the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education shall state the following.

1. On February 23, 2015, the Director of EKKA approved by her order the following composition of the

Assessment Committee:

Aalt Willem Heringa – Chair	Professor of (Comparative) Constitutional and Administrative Law, Faculty of Law, Maastricht University, Holland
Aušra Rauličkyte	Adviser to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova
Aliis Liin	Legal Counsel, University of Tartu, Estonia
Stela Buiuc	Deputy Director, Centre for Legal Approximation, Ministry of Justice, Moldova; PhD Student, Law Department, State University of Moldova

2. The Assessment Visit to Alecu Russo State University of Bălți took place on May 20, 2015.
3. The Assessment Committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA on July 6, 2015. The Assessment Committee received the comments of Alecu Russo State University of Bălți on July 22, 2015, and approved the final version of the component assessments on September 9, 2015.
4. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the assessment report containing the component assessments to the members of the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education on September 24. The assessment report forms an integral part of the assessment decision. The report will be made available on the EKKA website.
5. **The component assessments were as follows:**

Study programme and its development	Partially conforms to requirements
Teaching and learning	Partially conforms to requirements
Teaching staff	Partially conforms to requirements
Students	Partially conforms to requirements
Resources	Partially conforms to requirements

6. The EKKA Quality Assessment Council discussed the assessment report along with the comments of Alecu Russo State University of Bălți and other relevant materials at its session on October 12, 2015, with the participation of 9 Council members. The Council decided to point out the following strengths and areas of improvement of the Master's study programme "Criminal Sciences and Criminology":

6.1.

Study programme and its development	Partially conforms to requirements
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Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The strategic planning of the development of the study programme is informal. There is no systematic implementation of the development plan and no system for using the experience of the previous periods for planning the next period. There has been no actual developing of the study programme since 2009. It is advisable to clearly plan, implement and monitor the development of the study programme and involve teaching staff, students and employers in these processes.
- The title, content and learning outcomes of the study programme are not consistent. It is recommended to analyse, first of all, the objectives and learning outcomes of the

programme, incorporate more courses focusing on criminal law and criminal procedure law and then rephrase the title of the programme according to the objectives and learning outcomes.

- The teaching staff is aware of the objectives of their own courses, but they have not been thinking how their courses contribute to the achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of the whole study programme. It is recommended to introduce measures that create a common understanding about the objectives of the study programme among the teaching staff and awareness of their role in achieving these objectives.
- The study-load of the students is not more than 20 hours per week and this is not sufficient for a full-time programme. It is recommended to increase the study load of the students in order to meet the 60 ECTS per annum study load and challenge students to the full.
- It is not clear according to which criteria the size of the courses (ECTS credits) are chosen.
- There is no actual cooperation with the representatives of the labour market about the development of the study programme.
- In the MA thesis almost none of the content is based on international literature other than that published in Romania and Russia. It is recommended to set as a requirement for the Master thesis the use of at least some sources in English or French languages.
- It is recommended to improve the foreign language skills of the staff and students.

6.2.

Teaching and learning

Partially conforms to requirements

Strengths

- It is commendable that an electronic feedback system has been developed, avoiding filling in questionnaires on paper. The electronic system helps to save time of both the students and staff, better preserve and analyse the results of feedback, and make it more easily accessible to wider circle of counterparts.
- Active cooperation takes place with a network of partner organisations offering internship opportunities for the students of the "Criminal Sciences and Criminology" MA programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- It is recommended to introduce a course on a regular basis for the teaching staff about modern and interactive teaching methods and to encourage them to use these in the teaching process. Furthermore, it is recommended to send teachers abroad more extensively with the purpose to learn from foreign teaching experiences, to undergo foreign experiences and learn from IT and other didactical tools in University education.
- The period of internship is too short for 10 ECTS. It is recommended to analyse the duration of the internship and the volume of work the students have to do during the

internship and adjust them so that the weekly workload of the students would be reasonable and achievable.

- The average grades are very high. It is strongly advisable to analyse the present grading system and the practice of implementing this system and give the teaching staff instructions about its correct implementation. If the reason for high grades is really the outstanding performance of almost all of the students, the level of teaching at this MA programme is undoubtedly too low and should be revised.
- There is no system of implementing recognition of prior learning and work experience in the University and no cases of actual recognition have been recorded. It is recommended to encourage the academic mobility and implement the national legislation by creating a transparent and internationally comparable system of recognizing prior learning experience acquired abroad or in other Moldovan universities as fulfilling parts of the study programmes.
- It is recommended to make the analysis of achievement of learning outcomes a systematic procedure and use those analysis as well as feedback gathered from the students and employers for building up the continuous process of developing the study programme.
- In writing their MA theses, the students use outdated materials. The vast majority of the references are to the sources published more than 10 years ago and earlier. There are no references to the materials in the English language and other foreign languages besides Russian. It is recommended to invest in improving the command of foreign languages of the staff and students and to introduce them the resources of electronic legal databases and to teach the students how and when to use them.
- The students are not involved in research and development activities to a sufficient extent. It is recommended to systematically gather feedback about the satisfaction with the quality of supervision from the students after they have defended their thesis and use this feedback for improving the skills of supervision of the teaching staff.
- It is recommended to publish all the regulations about study management on the website.

6.3.

Teaching staff	Partially conforms to requirements
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Areas of improvement and recommendations

- It is necessary to strengthen the research component of the staff, so that the master programme is fully supported by high level research made by staff members in the domain of the programme. It is also necessary to build a clear and ambitious research goal and strategy in order to enable the foregoing, i.e., high research level of the staff.
- For the quality and competitiveness of the programme it is necessary to invest in international staff mobility, based upon a clear strategy of aims and partners. Taking into account the content of the programme, a much wider range of international partners is necessary to ensure quality of the programme.

- It could be considered to invite practitioners as guest lecturers to various courses of this programme.
- The financial burden of participation in the international scientific conferences and publication of scientific articles is resting on lecturers. It is recommended to find resources at the institutional/Faculty level to support the participation of lecturers in international scientific conferences.

6.4.

Students	Partially conforms to requirements
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Strengths

- Clear and transparent admission requirements are in place.
- There are good cooperation relations and mobility opportunities with universities from Romania.
- The academic staff has taken an effort to build a tailor made programme, aimed at the region, for which it has forged close contacts with the labour market.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Currently, the University has no unit dealing with career guidance and psychological counselling. It is recommended to have in place well-established systems for career guidance, psychological counselling and a tracking mechanism for monitoring the career development of the graduates.
- The University is recommended to further encourage student mobility and develop cooperation relations with institutions from other EU countries.
- The university should better learn about the labour market needs in other parts of the country and ensure that the graduates are equally competitive outside the northern region. The University is recommended to further encourage student mobility and develop cooperation relations with institutions from other EU countries
- The University has no specific anti-plagiarism software in place. It is recommended to enhance the system for detection and prevention of academic fraud and to use its own anti-plagiarism software, and to quickly put in place an effective anti-plagiarism programme for all written student work.
- Currently, no well-established tracking mechanism of the graduates' employment and on their career evolution is in place.

6.5.

Resources	Partially conforms to requirements
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Strengths

- The Criminal Sciences and Criminology programme is run on a small sized facility of a truly campus University. This has many benefits for an academic programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The student numbers for the programme have shown instability over the past 3 years
 - The restricted budget of the institution merits improvement in order to establish a programme which can substantially and safely meet the minimum requirements and be fully sustainable.
 - The existing information technology solutions need to be improved and structurally incorporated in the processes of decision-making and feedback.
 - It is recommended to invest substantially in funding of the study programme in all its requirements. This is the more so necessary since in the domains of criminal science and criminology many developments take place with regard to criminal science and expertise which requires access to literature and expertise of many disciplines.
 - It is recommended to invest in the information systems.
 - There is a need to invest in the library with the purchase of up-to-date literature and foreign books and periodicals.
- 7.** According to section 33.3 of the document "Requirements and Procedure for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Moldova", if all five of the component assessments are "partially conforms to requirements", the Quality Assessment Council shall analyse the strengths and areas of improvement of the study programme and decide to make a proposal to the Minister of Education to accredit the study programme for a period of three years, or not to accredit the study programme.
- 8.** The Council analysed the strengths and areas of improvement of the study programme and taking into account that:
- The academic staff has taken an effort to build a tailor made programme, aimed at the region, for which it has forged close contacts with the labour market.
 - The number and qualification of full-time teaching staff complies with the requirements established by legislation. The distribution of full-time teaching staff by age, and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff ensures the sustainability of the study programme.
 - Lecturers have adequate teaching competences and are using various interactive teaching methods.
 - Active cooperation takes place with a network of partner organisations offering internship opportunities for the students of the MA programme.

- There are good cooperation relations and mobility opportunities with universities from Romania.
- The graduates of the MA programme are competitive on the labour market of the northern region of the country.

the Council DECIDED

To make a proposal to the Minister of Education of the Republic of Moldova to accredit the Master’s study programme “Criminal Sciences and Criminology” at Alecu Russo State University of Bălți for a period of three years.

The decision was adopted by 9 votes in favour and 0 votes against.

9. Contestation:

- 9.1.** Evaluation proceedings conducted by EKKA may be disputed if the proceedings do not comply with the procedure provided for in this document. The challenge is filed with the Management Board of the Archimedes Foundation within 30 working days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding.
- 9.2.** The assessment decision by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council may be disputed after adoption of the corresponding administrative decision by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova.

Tõnu Meidla
Chair of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council