

Accreditation Agency
in Health and Social Sciences



Expert Report

on the periodical evaluation of

the Bachelor Study Program

**“Tourism Geography”
(at Baia Mare)**

at Vasile Goldis Western University of Arad

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1 Introduction

Study programs in Romania require authorization for provisional functioning, as established by Law no. 87 of 2006, which approved Emergency Decree no. 75 of 2005. The Romanian Ministry of National Education is responsible for authorizing provisional functioning of the study programs. According to the Law of National Education no.1 of 2011 (hereinafter “Law of National Education”) Art. 150, Par. 1, the decision of whether to grant authorization is contingent upon the evaluation and subsequent recommendation of the study program by an external quality assurance agency registered in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

After authorization for provisional functioning has been granted by the Romanian Ministry of National Education, the applicant higher education institution may enroll students in the respective study program. Following the successful graduation of three subsequent cohorts (taking approximately five years for three-years study programs), the higher education institution must submit its application for accreditation. The accreditation procedure is similar to that for authorization for provisional functioning: an external evaluation by an EQAR-listed quality assurance agency takes place on the basis of which the Government decides whether to accredit the study program.

The AHPGS Accreditation Agency was tasked with the periodical evaluation of the Bachelor study programs offered by the Vasile Goldis Western University of Arad, Romania as a part of the external institutional evaluation. In October 2016, the relevant documents for the evaluation of the study programs were forwarded to the experts in order for them to review the available information, to determine particular strengths and weaknesses, and to identify any open questions regarding the study programs in writing. The on-site visit of the University took place on December 4, 5 and 6, 2016.

The following six Bachelor study programs were subjects of the periodical evaluation procedure:

Faculty of Economics, Computer Science and Engineering, Department of Economics:

- “Economy of Trade, Tourism and Services (at Sebis)”;
- “Business Administration”;

- "Business Administration in English";
- "The Accounting and Bookkeeping Information Systems (at Satu Mare)";
- "Tourism Geography (at Baia Mare)".

Faculty of Social Sciences, Humanities, Physical Education and Sports, Department of Psycho-Socio-Humanities Sciences:

- "Communication and Public Relations".

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS nominated the following experts to conduct the on-site visit:

As representatives of academic institutions:

Alexander Bordan

Student at the Albert-Ludwigs-University in Freiburg, Germany; Graduate of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the Albert-Ludwigs-University in Freiburg, Germany; Member of the Student Union Committee for foreign students at the Albert-Ludwigs-University in Freiburg, Germany.

Prof. Dr. Marion Halfmann¹

Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences in Kleve, Germany; Vice President for Teaching, Learning and Further Education; Professor for Business Administration, Marketing and market-oriented management.

Prof. Dr. Axel Olaf Kern

¹ *The experts shown in italics have participated in the on-site visit of the University.*

Professor for health economics; Vice Dean of the University of Applied Sciences, Department of Social Work, Health and Nursing in Ravensburg-Weingarten, Germany.

Prof. Dr. Edgar Kössler

Catholic University of Applied Science in Freiburg, Germany; Professor for Management and Formation, President and CEO.

Prof. Dr. Silke May-Landgrebe

Westphalian University of Applied Sciences in Bocholt, Germany; Professor for Business Administration and Tourism; Member of the Commission for Quality Improvement of the University of Applied Sciences; Founding member of the German Society for Tourism Science.

Prof. Dr. Björn Maier

Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University in Mannheim, Germany; Dean of Students; Professor for Business Administration; Director of Studies Health Care Management and Controlling.

Prof. Dr. Sonja Munz

Munich University of Applied Sciences in Munich, Germany; Head of Department of Tourism.

Prof. Dr. Dirk Reiser

Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences in Kleve, Germany; Faculty of Society and Economics, Professor for Sustainable Tourism Management.

Prof. Dr. Franca Ruhwedel

Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences in Kamp-Lintfort, Germany; Faculty of Society and Economics, Professor for Finance and Controlling.

Prof. Dr. Philipp Schorn

Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences in Kleve, Germany; Faculty of Society and Economics; Professor for Business Administration with a focus on Accounting.

The proceedings of the **Program Accreditation Process** conform to the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) as well as to Art. 150 and Art. 193 of Romania's *Law no. 1 of National Education* of Romania, 2011; the *Quality Evaluation Activities Guide for University Study Programmes and for Higher Education Institutions: Part 1 Study Programmes Accreditation External Evaluation Guide* and the *Methodology for External Evaluation, Standards, Standards of Reference, and List of Performance Indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education*.

During the periodical evaluation process, the expert group surveyed the proper implementation of the criteria, standards and performance indicators as specified in the above-mentioned legal texts, as well as the compliance of the program with the normative criteria, as stated in the *Methodology*.

The following **Expert Report** summarizes the results of the on-site visit and the evaluation of the application documents. Since it investigates the fulfillment of the standards and criteria specified in the "Methodology", the structure of the Expert Report follows the logical succession of these criteria, as they are formulated in the document.

The following **Fields of Activity** pertaining to the program and the University were assessed by the expert group with respect to the corresponding criteria

and standards: (A) Institutional capacity, (B) Educational effectiveness, and (C) Quality management.

2 The study program to be periodically evaluated

The Bachelor study program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare) offered by the Vasile Goldis Western University of Arad, Romania, Faculty of Economics, Computer Science and Engineering, Department of Engineering and Computer Science, Field of Natural Sciences, is a full-time program taught in Romanian with a regular duration of three years/six semesters.

The main objective of the Bachelor study program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare) is to provide students with advanced knowledge and skills related to tourism geography in a Romanian context. 180 credit points (CP) according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) are required to graduate from the program; one CP is equivalent to 25 workload hours. The total workload of the program is 4,622 hours, of which 1,826 are contact hours (including 90 hours of practical training/internship) and 2,796 are independent study hours. However, the University explains that implementation of credit points is based on national legislation and, thus, that the allocation of credit points for workload hours can vary. The experts note that the study program is in accordance with the national requirements.

The program curriculum consists of 41 modules, of which 29 are obligatory and six out of twelve are optional, i.e. there is a choice between modules each semester. Additionally, there are six elective modules that can be freely chosen as an addition to the curriculum.

Admission requirements of the program include a high school diploma or equivalent. International applicants also have to present a Romanian language certificate proving their knowledge of the Romanian language during registration. Students are informed about the amount of the tuition fees in advance.

Upon completion of the study program, students are awarded with the academic degree of Bachelor of Tourism Geography. The diploma is issued by the Vasile Goldis Western University of Arad on the standardized graduation documents approved by the Romanian Ministry of National Education. Students complete their studies by passing the final examination and successfully composing and defending their Bachelor thesis. According to the regulations applied at the University, the assessment of the Bachelor thesis is added to the total amount of 180 credits (180 credits plus ten credits for the Bachelor

thesis). Again, the experts take note that the study program is in accordance with the national requirements.

There are 60 study places annually available in the program. Admission takes place every winter semester. The first cohort of students has graduated in the academic year 2010/2011 (underlining the last five graduate promotions following the positive decision for authorization for provisional functioning in 2006).

Currently, 89 graduates have completed their studies. Graduates are trained for both career development in national tourism practice and potential further academic work in the form of Master and doctoral studies. With reference to a survey on the labor market for graduates, the University states that there is a growing demand for qualified personnel in the field of tourism and services.

The University confirms in a formal declaration that the "Quality Evaluation Activities Guide for University Study Programmes and for Higher Education Institutions: Part I Study Programmes Accreditation External Evaluation Guide" has been respected, i.e. the "Compulsory Normative Requirements for Study Programmes Accreditation" have been followed with regard to:

- the legal organization framework and functioning of the higher education institution as an education providing institution, its mission and objectives;
- the teaching staff;
- the educational process content;
- the students;
- scientific research; an
- the material basis.

After the examination of the application documents and the on-site visit, the experts affirm and appreciate that the national regulations have been heeded and implemented as stated-above.

3 Expert Report

On September 15, 2016, the application documents of the University were made available to the expert group for written evaluation. The expert group assessed the program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare) based on the Romanian standards and regulations specified under Section 1. They also examined the factual and other program-related aspects described in the documents. The results of this expert review were forwarded to AHPGS in October 2016.

The on-site visit was carried out on December 4, 5 and 6, 2016, according to the previously agreed-upon schedule. The expert group was accompanied by representatives of AHPGS.

In the course of the on-site visit, the experts conducted interviews with University and Faculty management, study program directors, teaching personnel, a group of current University students and a group of graduates.

On the first day of the on-site visit, the experts inspected the learning premises and the facilities available at the University in Arad, namely the University library, seminar and course rooms as well as the department offices.

In the evening following the preliminary meetings and the guided tour of the University, the experts exchanged their first impressions of the study program and of the University in general. They held extensive talks about the application documents and reviewed the results of the written evaluations. As a result of the first day, a number of initial questions had been answered; at the same time, however, new issues and open questions arose. At the end of the evening discussions, the expert group agreed upon the plan for the next day of the on-site visit.

The second day of the on-site visit was dedicated to talks with the president of the county council and the vice-mayor of the city of Arad as supporters of the University. Moreover, the expert group had talks with students and graduates as well as final talks with the University representatives.

A. Institutional Capacity

A.1. Institutional, administrative and management structures

Vasile Goldis Western University of Arad achieved institutional establishment by the Law no. 240 of April 20, 2002. In April 2009, the University was certified by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). Based on that, it is assured that the University meets the requirements set by the national Romanian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Currently, the University has six faculties: the Faculty of Medicine; the Faculty of Pharmacy; the Faculty of Dentistry; the Faculty of Economic Sciences, Computer Science and Engineering; the Faculty of Social Sciences, Humanities and Physical Education and Sports; and the Faculty of Juridical Sciences. The University is also comprised of an Institution Organizing Doctoral Studies (IODS) with two doctoral schools: Doctoral School of Biology and Doctoral School of Medicine. There are 43 Bachelor degree programs and 24 Master degree programs offered by the University. In total, 5,900 students are enrolled at the University in the academic year 2016/2017.

In addition to the campus in Arad, the University is also located in Sebis, Satu Mare, Baia Mare, Zalău and Marghita. The Bachelor study program "Tourism Geography" is solely offered in Baia Mare. Aside from "Tourism Geography", the following programs are offered in Baia Mare: "The Accounting and Bookkeeping Information Systems", "Marketing", "Primary and Pre-school pedagogy" and "Marketing and Sustainable Rural Development". Currently, there are 259 students studying in Baia Mare, 47 are enrolled in "Tourism Geography".

There are branch managers in every study location who ensure the operative management of the branches. The branch manager and the individuals responsible for certain study programs are kept in permanent connection with University, Faculty and Department management bodies in meetings in Arad. Irrespective of the location, a study program has the same curriculum.

During the on-site visit, the expert group assessed the compatibility of the written documentation and the University's mission and objectives.

Based on the information obtained during the on-site visit as well as the information provided in the written documentation, the experts have determined that the main objective of the University is to offer a variety of higher education study programs which meet the needs of the Romanian labor market and which are compatible with national and international standards of education.

The University strives to contribute to the social and cultural life of the local community, and to facilitate the application of quality management mechanisms and thereby increase the implementation of Romanian educational law. In addition to that, the University aims to develop a Master and doctoral training system and to promote lifelong learning opportunities and programs.

Another aspect of the University's mission is the sustainment and further intensification of research activity among students, thus enabling them to contribute to the general advancement of knowledge in their respective fields. The scientific research strategy of the University covers three fundamental aspects namely (1) basic and applied research; (2) development (generating innovative prototype products and services through research); and (3) innovation (implementation of innovative services and products in the socio-economic environment).

The expert group has been convinced of the University's commitment as an institution toward offering high quality educational opportunities. It was asserted that the University and its study programs function within the Romanian legal framework and that the institution promotes academic integrity and freedom among its students. Furthermore, the University regularly monitors its own activities.

In addition to the above-mentioned facts, the experts gave the University's active involvement in the social structures of the region of Arad and in other nearby areas a particularly positive assessment. It was clearly emphasized that the stakeholders of the University, particularly the city of Arad, recognize that the University plays an integral and essential role in the development of the whole region. Therefore, they provide the University with a great amount of support and assistance.

Internal assessment and audit processes take place in order to monitor the achievement of the above-mentioned objectives. The University has developed a code of ethics, which is communicated to all members of the institution.

The experts observed an active collaboration between the administrative and teaching structures, and have also identified a clear division of the hierarchical units and their functions in the University. All members of the University are aware of the strategy of the institution and actively contribute to the achievement of its goals.

The Department of Engineering and Computer Science complies with the general regulations of the whole University and, at the same time, with the regulations applied on the level of the Faculty of Economics, Computer Science and Engineering. With regard to the administrative structure behind the collaborations between the department, faculty and university units, the experts encourage to look for common interests and to combine forces and resources.

With regard to the aspect of internationality, the experts positively noticed the measures already put in place by the University in order to pursue its international orientation. The University achieves mobility of its students by means of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and by taking part in Erasmus exchange programs. Furthermore, the University follows the standards specific for the field of geography determined by the National Quality Assurance (ARACIS) and the Romanian Ministry of National Education. At the moment the University hosts students from 18 countries within and outside of the European Union. Until now, the Faculty of Economics, Computer Science and Engineering had 12 outgoing students to Hungary and the Czech Republic. Among its Erasmus partners, the University names such institutions as the University of Calabria and the University of Bari in Italy as well as the University of Grenoble in France. Similar mobility opportunities are offered to the teaching staff.

From the experts' point of view, the University should present its internationalization measures in a more open and distinct manner so that, apart from maintaining its significant role in the region, it could further promote its attractiveness and unique character differentiating it from other higher education institutions.

The experts discern the potential for further development in the strategic alignment of the Faculty and of the University in general.

The experts define the current teaching and research mission of the institution as rational and well-defined. Furthermore, the University pursues clear and

achievable objectives, in accordance with the legal norms and the requirements of the national qualifications framework. The University mission also contains region-specific elements which are simultaneously relevant for the whole country.

Taking these facts into account, the expert group regards Criterion A.1 as fulfilled.

A.2. Material resources and infrastructure

The University currently has sufficient material and financial resources to offer the Bachelor program “Tourism Geography” (at Baia Mare). This was verified by the expert group during the on-site visit. The experts had the chance to see the facilities within the University in Arad, such as the library and lecture halls. The lecture halls and seminar rooms are well-equipped for teaching and learning processes. Based on the documentation and through an exemplary visit in the branch in Baia Mare the expert group assets that the external learning locations also offer adequate material resources.

Currently, the University has adequate resources that enable students and teaching personnel to acquire broad experience in academic studies and work. Access to a library of the university and an e-learning platform is possible. The expert group encourages the University library to establish partnerships with similar institutions (libraries, publishing houses) both within the country and abroad, in order to provide students and teachers with access to a wider range of databases as well as educational and scientific material. The expert group also encourages the University to provide the “Tourism Geography” students increased access to IT resources in the area of tourism and also to e-journals, e-books and international literature in the Baia Mare branch.

The present study program is offered for 60 students per year. From the experts’ point of view, the resources of the University are sufficient with regard to the number of prospective students and the required teaching staff.

For the winter semester 2015/16, 22 students applied and all of them were accepted and enrolled. Nevertheless, the experts noted that there were 60 approved vacancies. Therefore, the experts recommend regulating a minimum number of enrolled students for the study program in order to function (keeping in mind the cost-benefit ratio).

Taking into account the University's endeavor to enhance its infrastructure and to improve the teaching and learning settings, the expert group considers Criterion A.2 to be fulfilled.

With regard to the aspect of financing, the experts recognize that the University, whose main source of funding is students' tuition fees, is quite restricted in terms of finding new resources. This is caused by the declining number of students in the region, as a result of significant demographic changes in Romania. As a response to the current difficult situation, the experts recommend raising the amount of tuition fees for international students. In addition, it is recommended to develop a fundraising system to generate external financial support for the students. This should include local industries, private donors and alumni.

B. Educational Effectiveness

B.1. Content of the study program

The study program "Tourism Geography" at Baia Mare (Bachelor of Tourism Geography) is affiliated to the Faculty of Economics, Computer Science and Engineering, Department of Engineering and Computer Science, Field of Natural Sciences. The program's mission, its general and specific learning objectives, its curriculum and its outcome competences were presented at the on-site visit. The curriculum description specifies the learning results expressed in the form of cognitive, professional and affective results achieved by the end of each course. However, the experts point out that the module descriptions should be more standardized. Also the competence-oriented approach should be clearly visible in the description of the module contents. Moreover, module descriptions should disclose a mandatory methodological foundation in research in the curriculum – also because the Faculty of Economics, Computer Science and Engineering names scientific research, e.g. networking for sustainable economic growth and promoting entrepreneurial culture and entrepreneurship training in the business environment of Arad, as its main objective. Therefore, the structured approach to integrate research activities in the curriculum (training of scientific working skills including relevant scientific research methods) should be made clear.

As its main objective, the Faculty of Economics, Computer Science and Engineering names the evaluation of tourist potential of the Maramures County

and the North-West region of Romania in general. Further objectives are the implementation of rural tourism as an alternative to the sustainable development of villages with significant tourist potential and the study of tourist markets and flows.

The study program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare) is aimed at a wide range of employment positions, for instance as a tourism analyst (in local or county councils, town halls or ministries), travel agent, tourism manager, tourist activity organizer, internal and external tour guide and tourism researcher in research centers.

With regard to the improvement of graduates' employment opportunities, the University emphasizes the importance of such factors as being in compliance with European norms of international recognition, realization of student-centered education, development of cooperation programs with other European countries, enhancement of students' and teachers' mobility, and provision of continuous education.

The study program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare) aims at training students to become specialists for the field of tourism but also to be able to work in institutions involved in research activities. Program graduates acquire, for example, skills to design strategies for sustainable tourism development, interpret different ways to organize tourist activities and apply economic data and geography knowledge to optimize travel planning. Nevertheless, there does not seem to be an adequate scope for development of a research culture. This could also be facilitated by a more streamlined and focused research approach. The compulsory subjects cover subjects like "General Physical Geography", "Tourism Geography", "Relief Tourist Potential" and "Tourism Accounting". In view of accumulating a specialized vocabulary in a language of international use, students must attend English, French, German or Spanish as a mandatory module. Nevertheless, in view of the international component of tourism, the expert group recommends an increase of English language classes and modules in English.

Alongside the theoretical curriculum an internship focusing on practical training is mandatory in the study program "Tourism Geography" (Baia Mare). This practical training takes place in companies for three weeks (90 hours in total) in the summer holidays after the fourth semester. The study program has an

internship instructor in the University and the companies are primarily situated in Baia Mare and in Maramures county.

With regard to academic competences, students are trained to conduct research projects and write scientific papers. Furthermore, they are encouraged to actively use different librarian and digital information sources and communication facilities. The University emphasizes that socio-professional integration of students and graduates is one of its main goals, which is implemented through the organized meetings between students and prospective employers.

With regard to the students' development of social responsibility and personal development in the course of studies, the University points out that it has its own University Ethics Code. The code lays down rules of conduct, ethics and deontology for all members of the academic community of the University.

Looking at the objectives of the program, the expert group noticed that the contents of the curriculum predominately deal with the geographic theory instead of tourism economic related subjects, including English language classes, which could meet market requirements more adequately. In order to safeguard the objectives of the "Tourism Geography" program and that graduates can effectively work in the tourism sector, the following modules/contents could be implemented/are recommended: Introduction to Tourism Geography, Market Research, Strategies and Methods of Tourism, Development Planning, Health and Nature Tourism, Intercultural Communication in Tourism, Excursions etc. Besides, Corporate Social Responsibility could be a distinguishing feature in the curriculum beyond Health and Nature Tourism.

The credit system applied in the study program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare) and at the University in general complies with the *Order of the Romanian Ministry of Education no. 3617/2005* on the generalized application of the European Credit Transfer System. Nonetheless, the amount of workload (in hours) for one credit point should be regulated and stipulated in an easily accessible way. Moreover, some credit points for the mandatory modules are allocated above the 180 credit points, which are necessary in order to graduate.

In this regard, the experts have also discussed the process for the recognition of externally achieved credit points. The University recognizes credits obtained in other universities if they comply with the regulations on students' professional activity, the equivalence of credits is evaluated by an internal credit recognition committee that works inside each faculty. From the experts' point of view, the recognition of credits transferred from other universities (domestic and abroad) should be regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.²

The study program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare) covers 180 ECTS credits with additional 4 credits awarded for the "Physical Education" modules. The Bachelor exam is credited with an additional 10 credits. The curriculum is comprised of 41 modules. The program is offered on a full-time basis only (six semesters/three years). The total workload of the program is 4,622 hours, which is divided into 1,826 contact hours: 320 hours for optional courses, 90 hours of practical training, 120 hours for thesis composition; and 2,796 hours of independent work.

Due to the high number of modules (often credited with less than 5 CP) the workload for students seems to be relatively high. The student workload should be evaluated on a regular basis in order to make sure that students are not overloaded, for example, with examinations. Besides, the implementation of evaluation results to improve the study programs should be clearly documented. The experts also suggest combining smaller modules into larger units in order to reduce the student workload regarding examinations.

The graduation examination consists of two parts: writing the Bachelor thesis and passing the Bachelor exam (which consists of two parts: a written test and final presentation of the thesis) according to the *Methodology on the*

² Relevant excerpts from the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention:

- Article 3.3 (5): The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfill the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.
- Article 5.1 (1): Each Party shall recognize periods of study completed within the framework of a higher education program in another Party. This recognition shall comprise such periods of study towards the completion of a higher education program in the Party in which recognition is sought, unless substantial differences can be shown between the periods of study completed in another Party and the part of the higher education program which they would replace in the Party in which recognition is sought.

Development of the Bachelor Exam at the Faculty of Economics. Students are given a cumulative grade based on their performance in the two parts of the Bachelor exam. For the graduation examination, 10 CP are awarded on top of the 180 CP of the study program.

The type of examination and assessment for each course is based on the expected competences. The expert group, however, noticed that the majority of examinations are based on multiple-choice tests which put a higher focus on fact knowledge. In order to not only test the students' knowledge but also their understanding of a specific topic and ability to work scientifically, different forms of assessment such as writing scientific essays could be included in the forms of examination and assessment.

For the evaluation of students' performance in exams, the University applies a 10-point grading system, 1-3 being the lowest grades and 10 being the highest grade. The document *Guidelines for Drafting and Defending the Bachelor Thesis and Master Dissertation* provides students with information on the general schedule and structure of composing and defending a Bachelor thesis.

The minimum passing grade is 5, but the minimum passing average for the final Bachelor examination, which encompasses a written test and defense of a Bachelor thesis, is 6. According to the *Regulation on professional activity* it is allowed to have a retake session and a reexamination session with the approval of the Senate. The Bachelor exam can be passed in two examination sessions.

The expert group evaluates that the courses' content and examinations are considered to be feasible and capable of being accomplished within the envisaged period of time. The fundamental structure of the study program is mainly coherent and reasonable, however, with possibilities for improvement in the areas of tourism economy, graduate employability, and forms of examination and assessment.

The study program is aimed primarily at the needs and the labor market of the Baia Mare and Romanian North-West region. Therefore, regional demands are integrated into the curriculum.

The admission procedures in the program are determined by the *Regulations for admission to Bachelor, Master and doctoral studies* on the University level.

Based on that, the experts confirm that the University applies a transparent policy regarding the admission procedure. The study programs admission requirements include a high school diploma or equivalent (weighted average of the baccalaureate exam average grade (80 %) and the grade in the Romanian Language and Literature test (written test) at the baccalaureate (20 %)), a language competence certificate in Romanian for foreign students. There is no subject specific test for applicants to the study program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare).

Besides, all applicants have to submit a certificate of their state of health (regardless of the study program they apply for), which has to include information about possible chronic illnesses.

From the experts' point of view, the admission procedure of the program complies with the requirements of the University as well as with national standards. The experts point out that the admission procedure provides equal opportunities to all applicants regardless of gender, origin or social class.

Based on the described conclusions, the expert group considers Criterion B.1 to be partly fulfilled.

The module descriptions should be more standardized. Moreover, the competence-oriented approach should be clearly visible in the description of the module contents. Moreover, module descriptions should disclose a mandatory methodological foundation in research in the curriculum.

The recognition of credits transferred from other universities (domestic and abroad) should be regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

B.2. Learning outcomes

From the experts' point of view, the study program can be successfully classified within the Romanian higher education system. Nevertheless, the expert group highlights that the final qualification might not fully respond to the demands of the national labor market since a number of graduates do not work in the tourism sector. The experts suggest that the economic and English language component of the "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare) program should be emphasized more.

Besides, the experts noticed a possible demand for e-learning and blended-learning courses since many students worked alongside their studies. Therefore, the experts encourage the University to take into account the possibility of distance learning in the curriculum of the study program.

The knowledge, competencies and abilities gained throughout the study program correspond to the final academic degree to be awarded. The teaching and didactic methods are student-oriented.

Considering these facts – as observed from the application documents and during the on-site visit – the expert group sees Criterion B.2 as fulfilled.

According to the University, the main responsibility of each course instructor is to apply student-centered methods of teaching and to create a productive learning environment. Furthermore, course instructors are responsible for the development of students' degree specific as well as general competences, which are specified in the course descriptions provided by the University.

The University explains that "Tourism Geography" study program has no shared courses. The first year of the study program mainly consist of fundamental subjects (60 CP), whereas the second and third year of studies contains subjects that are specific for the program (120 CP). Besides, the practical training and the thesis are counted among the program-specific modules.

The University explains that at the department of Economics in Arad all courses in the first year of study are shared courses. The expert group would welcome a similar approach in the branch offering shared courses with other study programs and, thus, stimulating interdisciplinary skills through exchange and collaboration between students enrolled in different programs would be beneficial.

The practical activity, which has been described under Criterion B.1, enables students to adapt to real life circumstances and to directly apply their theoretical knowledge.

A module such as "Policies in Tourism and Sustainable Development" serves to cultivate students' abilities of social commitment and also to encourage their personal development. Furthermore, the experts highlight the possibility for students to choose elective modules as an addition to their compulsory curriculum. Elective modules, for instance "Ecotourism" or "Accountancy in

Tourism”, are awarded with credit points for extra-curricular activities. Such a reward can effectively motivate students to participate in various projects, conferences, seminars and scientific experiences. Hence, they will be able to broaden their academic perspectives, learn about the latest developments in respective fields of tourism geography, and meet other students and scholars with similar interests.

The educational concept of the study program is coherent and well-designed. The distribution of direct contact, indirect contact and individual study hours is well-balanced. Within the modules, adequate forms of teaching (e.g. lectures, seminars, practical work, tutorials) are employed.

The discussions with a group of students and graduates revealed an outstanding level of satisfaction with the University on their part. Among other aspects, they valued the intensive counseling they receive in the program as well as the approachability of the teaching staff particularly highly. These advantages in academic guidance stem from the open atmosphere and communication ethics within the Faculty, as well as due to a well-balanced student-teacher ratio.

Regarding student support measures, members of the teaching staff have regular office hours in which they can provide academic guidance to individual students. Moreover, there is an internship instructor responsible for the study program.

The program achieves its learning outcomes also by various equipment and modern technologies, ranging from blackboards/whiteboards to flipcharts, computers and video projectors.

The University explains the establishing of the “Tourism Geography” study program in the Baia Mare branch with the fact that Maramures County has the highest touristic potential in Romania with, for example, several mineral springs and ski resorts being located in the county. Furthermore, the University explains that the “Tourism Geography” program in Baia Mare is a niche that is not covered by any other university in the area.

Among the reasons for having chosen the “Tourism Geography” study program offered by the Vasile Goldis Western University mentioned by current students during the on-site visit discussion, the experts underline a favorable

correspondence between the “financially affordable” study programs and the high quality of teaching standards.

The experts urge the University to encourage its alumni more to pursue post-graduate studies at the institution.

Based on the described conclusions, the expert group considers Criterion B.2 to be fulfilled.

B.3. Scientific research activity

During 2007 and 2014, the University has organized five international conferences and five international summer schools. It has obtained an international patent and has presented 24 scientific papers at international and national conferences.

From the experts’ point of view, the University develops and implements short-, mid- and long-term research projects, which include collaborations with international higher education institutions and participation in scientific conferences and workshops. The expert group was able to ascertain that there are currently sufficient financial and material resources for promoting research activity.

In terms of further development opportunities, the experts recommend promoting research among students and the teaching staff and to create a structured approach to integrate research activities in the curriculum of the study program. This includes the training of scientific working skills and relevant scientific research methods (e.g. methodological courses such as “statistics”) so that the research profile will become evident (see B.1). Moreover, the evaluation of research should be clearly documented.

It should be emphasized that the University has an “Institute of Life Sciences”. It is accredited by the Romanian Academy of Medical Sciences as a medical research unit constituting a part of the research platform of the Academy of Medical Sciences. Hence, the “Institute of Life Sciences” enables the members of the University to conduct research project on a high scientific level.

Considering these observations, the expert group regards Criterion B.3 as fulfilled.

B.4. Financial activity

Currently, the University holds and receives sufficient revenue for running the study program as well as the related activities. The expert group observed the results of the financial activity at the University. The experts determine the annual tuition fees for Romanian students as appropriate given the non-profit status of the University.

Criterion B.4 is, thus, regarded as fulfilled.

Nevertheless, as has been mentioned under Criterion A.2, the experts recommend that the University increases the amount of tuition fees for international students in order to be able to maintain a solid financial basis of the institution.

It also could be helpful for a sustainable financing to look for other financial options besides the tuition fees of the students.

The experts point out that the University has heeded the experts' suggestion given on their last visit to integrate the University's strategic considerations into one consistent business plan, where the financing options are clarified.

C. Quality Management

C.1. Quality assurance strategies and procedures

The University has developed a quality assurance system implemented by means of corresponding evaluation procedures. The University presented its quality assurance system in the written documents and also during the discussions of the on-site visit.

The quality assurance system of the University consists of the following units: the Evaluation and Quality Assurance Commission (CEAC), Quality Assurance Commissions from faculties, Vice-rector for Institutional Strategy and Quality Management, and Quality Assurance Department (QAD). The members of the Evaluation and Quality Assurance Commission and of the Quality Assurance Department are approved by the University Senate. The function of the QAD is to monitor the entire teaching activity of the program as well as the conduction of examination sessions. The University has developed a Quality Manual, which defines the objectives and the organizational structure of quality assurance procedures as well as units involved in it. With regard to the trans-

parency of the quality assurance policies and developments, the University annually issues an “Internal evaluation report of the quality of education and research”. After approval by the University Senate, the report is published on the official website of the University at the end of each academic year.

During the visit and the discussions with the responsible people, it became obvious that the University’s quality assurance system involves both teachers and students in the assessment of the teaching process, continuous evaluation of the courses, and monitoring and mentoring of students within the Faculty.

The process of quality assurance can be described as follows: the Quality Assurance Commission from the faculty submits its conclusions regarding the internal audit report, along with the results of peer reviews, to the Faculty Council. At the end of each year, the data for the given period, including evaluations of teaching performance, is gathered and further directed to the Senate to take corrective action and issue the quality improvement plan.

The University has an internal quality management system. Students take part in the quality management system; they are required to fill out course evaluations and provide feedback on the teaching performance. The results are processed by the Quality Assurance Commission, which then integrates the final recommendation into its report.

Considering the thorough implementation of the quality assurance system and the active participation of all University members in quality assurance procedures, the expert group concludes that Criterion C.1 is fulfilled.

Nevertheless, the experts note that the Internal Quality System (IQS) of the Vasile Goldis University is based on ISO norms and follows a Total-Quality-Management approach. On the longer run, this might be perceived as a disadvantage as it tends to lead to a quite bureaucratic system of internal control and regulation and might reduce flexibility. The experts emphasize the importance of keeping an IQS system as lean as possible to ensure long-term acceptance and sustainability.

C.2. Procedures on the periodical initiation, monitoring and revision of the programs and activities carried out

The experts highlight that the quality management is ensured by central and decentral commissions and a quality management department. The commissions act in accordance with the quality assurance strategy of the University. Moreover, a quality manual is approved by the Senate each study year. Students assess all teaching staff regularly.

The University implements procedures of periodical revision and evaluation of the study program "Tourism Geography" by the stakeholders involved. Hence, the teaching staff is required to conduct self-evaluations and peer assessments annually. Students evaluate the teaching process every six months.

Based on the information of the written documents and the observations from the on-site visit, the experts conclude that the study program is evaluated by different stakeholders on a regular basis by means of rational and effective methods.

The assessment of the teaching personnel is discussed in detail below, under Criterion C.4.

The University maintains communication with graduate students through the Alumni Association, whose function, among others, is to distribute questionnaires to graduates and, thus, to contribute to the correlation between the objectives of the study program and the needs of the labor market. The professional degree awarded to students at the end of studies corresponds to the set of competences and practical skills taught in the program. Nevertheless, the experts emphasize that the geographic component of the study program is stronger emphasized than the touristic component.

The experts underline that the quality assurance system of the University enables productive application of the obtained teaching and learning evaluation results. This refers to the introduction of necessary corrective measures and better organization of the program courses, as well as the improvement of teaching methods, envisaged in coming academic years.

Considering these facts, the experts conclude that Criterion C.2 is fulfilled.

C.3. Objective and transparent procedures of learning results evaluation

Based on students' evaluations, the teaching process and the learning outcomes undergo a constant optimization process. Additionally, the university has established clear examination rules and a structured process for dealing with exceptional cases. Furthermore, the form of examination is clearly specified for each module.

The evaluation and examination of students' performance is implemented according to the University's *Regulation on the Examination and Grading of Bachelor/Master Students*.

In order to qualify for the final examination of a module, students must have met all subject requirements: attendance, passing the ongoing assessments and practical works. These are presented to the students by the lecture coordinator in the first course lesson. There are 35 examinations: 21 written and 14 oral. According to Romanian standards, over 50% of the assessment forms must be exams.

The final assessment in each course can be conducted in the form of a colloquium or an examination. Colloquiums are forms of examinations taken in optional courses, practical activities, or in some complementary courses (such as Foreign Languages or Physical Education).

Students' actions in case of appeal and re-examinations are well-defined and described in the regulations of the University. Hence, there are clear procedures established for the above-mentioned examinations and students are informed of these procedures in advance. The main function of examinations conducted in the program is to objectively evaluate students' achievement of the specific learning outcomes.

Taking the above-mentioned facts into account, the expert group concludes that Criterion C.3 is fulfilled.

Nevertheless, the expert group recommends that the overall percentage of knowledge based multiple-choice tests is reduced and more skill-oriented forms of examination, like case studies, seminar papers and projects, are implemented.

Additionally, from the experts' point of view, the credit points awarded for writing the Bachelor thesis constitute an important part of an academic study

process and require a considerable amount of effort and time investment from students. This input should therefore be reflected appropriately in the workload of 180 credit points of the study program. This is a standard practice on the international level.

C.4. Periodical evaluation procedures of teaching staff quality

There are 9 teachers employed in the program "Tourism Geography": one professor (11.11 %), three associate professors (33.33 %), and five lecturers (55.56 %).

Overall, the teaching and academic staff of Arad University show a high level of commitment and potential for the execution and further development of the study programs they are responsible for. The expert group came to the conclusion that there is a strong corporate identity and positive group dynamics among the university and faculty administrations.

Teachers' performance is evaluated at the University of Arad every year. Results of these annual evaluations serve as the basis for promotion proposals.

The selection and employment of teaching staff are based on the principle of public contest; these procedures are regulated by the University's *Contest Methodology for Employment on Academic Positions* as well as by the Romanian legal requirements (Law of National Education no. 1/2011, Government Decision no. 457/2011, Government Decision no. 36/2013, Order no. 6560/20.12.2012, Order no. 4204/15.07.2013). According to these regulations, teaching and other positions are publicly announced and the University chooses candidates for these positions based on an open and independent contest procedure. These procedures are transparent and available for potential candidates from the academic and work field. By means of such transparent contest regulations, the University seeks to strengthen its competitiveness as well as its national and international visibility.

Based on the written documentation and the observations during the on-site visit, the experts concluded that the professional and academic qualifications, as well as the amount of teaching staff, are appropriate and sufficient for successful implementation of the program submitted for accreditation. The student-teacher ratio is 6:1, which satisfies students' demand for academic support and guidance.

Based on these facts, the expert group considers Criterion C.4 to be fulfilled.

Regarding the question of continuous education opportunities for the teaching staff, Vasile Goldis Western University of Arad became the first private university in Romania to be attested as an institution implementing doctoral degree studies starting with the year 2005. In 2007, the University obtained the right to offer postgraduate specialty medical training in residency and also training in the second residency. Nonetheless, the experts recommend that more opportunities for didactic continuing education for teachers should be offered and an incentive scheme could respectively be developed.

The teaching staff is periodically evaluated by means of both peer and student reviews. Student evaluations are performed at the end of each semester. They are anonymous, which encourages an objective assessment. The results of the reviews are discussed in the University Senate meetings. Following these meetings, students are informed about the results of the evaluations.

Should any member of the teaching staff receive an unsatisfactory evaluation result, a course of action will be implemented in order to eliminate the existing problems. Hence, the results are carefully monitored and the improvements are continuously observed. If there is no improvement after a maximum of three evaluation periods, the respective member of the teaching staff will be dismissed.

Peer evaluations are also performed regularly. They are based on the criteria of performance and human interaction. These procedures are monitored by the quality assurance unit of the department in which the assessed person is tenured. Further on, peer evaluation results are analyzed and summarized by the head of the department; afterwards, they are presented to the Faculty Council as part of the quality assurance audit.

According to the University's *Contest Methodology for Employment on Academic Positions*, candidates for assistant teacher positions are required to hold a doctoral degree. The experts suggest that the University might consider the doctoral degree as a non-obligatory condition. This will allow the University to increase its chances to find sufficient additional personnel and at the same time facilitate the academic advancement of students who are either in the process of obtaining a doctoral degree or just starting their doctoral studies.

Such students could receive a chance to enhance their didactic skills already during their doctoral studies.

From the experts' point of view, although the University has already achieved considerable progress in terms of teacher exchange opportunities, there is still some room for improvement. Hereby, the experts particularly underline the advancement of the internationalization strategy of the University by means of teaching experience exchange with other higher education institutions abroad.

C.5. Learning resources accessibility

During the on-site visit, the expert group had an opportunity to see the condition of University study premises and learning resources in Arad. Overall, it was concluded that the University offers appropriate facilities in sufficient number and good quality for the execution of its study programs and also for the study program "Tourism Geography" in the branch in Baia Mare.

Seminar and classrooms used for the education of students are all provided with modern digital and technical equipment. The students have access to two libraries: the Central University Library in Arad (Tudor Arghezi) and the Baia Mare Library. The Central Library's opening hours are: Monday to Friday 09:00-20:00 and Saturday 09:00-12:00. The opening hours of the Baia Mare Library are: Monday to Friday 10:00-14:00 and Saturday 09:00-13:00. Both libraries have longer opening hours during examination sessions.

The "Tourism Geography" study program provides its students with 2,201 titles in electronic catalogues; 15 titles of teachers, two national, one international regular subscriptions. Moreover, there are five subscription databases (LEGISplus, Web of Science (Thomson Reuters), Science Direct, SpringerLink, CEEOL) and an integrated record of publications: TINLIB. The library contains print and internet resources for academic research. Students can order books or find necessary scientific publications in the online library of the University. It is also worthwhile to mention the considerable number of high quality computer stations available for all students. Nevertheless, the experts recommend increasing access to e-journals and e-books in the Baia Mare branch.

The material resources and the library funds are currently sufficient to provide students with an optimal learning environment. Additional facilities, such as Italian, French and German cultural centers, sport complex, a botanical garden

and others are also available for students' personal development. The University encourages students' learning processes by offering resources and opportunities for extra-curricular activities.

Considering these facts, the expert group regards Criterion C.5 as fulfilled.

The University offers various forms of academic supporting and counseling to students, including consultations, tutorials, therapy and mediation services.

The expert group also addressed the question of access-friendly facilities for students with disabilities. The University demonstrated that nearly all classes are constructed and equipped in a way that allows students with physical restrictions to attend the courses without impediments. For example, seminars and courses are held on the ground floor of the building and special assistance is provided. The University states that five students with disabilities are currently enrolled at the University.

The aspect of diversity and students' rights regarding disabilities and chronic illnesses, is regulated by Art. 5 in the "University Code of the Rights and the Obligations of the Students of Vasile Goldis Western University of Arad". The University states that it supports students who come from unfavorable environments, foster homes students with disabilities and chronic illnesses by granting educational and social scholarships to facilitate the payment of tuition fees. Moreover, individual strategies for each particular case are adopted so that the implementation of student-centered learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.

C.6. Systematically updated database, with regard to the internal quality assurance

The University has an internal quality assurance system, which was also surveyed during the on-site visit. The University has established structures for monitoring and developing the quality assurance concept. Parts of the internal quality assurance system are regular peer and student reviews, as well as feedback meetings organized for this purpose. A more detailed description can be found under Criteria C.3 and C.4.

A regular track of the evaluation and review results is maintained by the University and strategies for the necessary improvement are therefrom designed. A corresponding electronic system and database are also implemented.

The expert group sums up that the quality management information is updated on a regular basis and that results are delivered to relevant target groups.

The expert group considers Criterion C.6 as fulfilled.

In terms of continuous development opportunities, the experts suggest expanding the University's information management system in order to enable storage of the large amount of data and the information collected in the course of quality assurance procedures, and then to apply this information in order to take strategic decisions on the institutional level. Thereby, the information management system of the University should facilitate the realization of the institutional strategy in general.

C.7. Transparency of public interest information concerning study programs

The results of quality assurance activities are summarized in a report, which is annually published on the website of the University.

The University promotes its study program through the University's webpage, local printed media, and by running open days and workshops in high schools and other institutions. The information is also available through a printed Student Guide. There is also information concerning the compensation regulations for students with disabilities documented and published.

The experts point out that the University is currently translating its webpage into English language so that international students and teachers also have the opportunity to access the information provided by the University.

The experts conclude that the faculty provides accurate and updated information on qualifications, study programs, diplomas, teaching and research staff, student facilities and any other aspects.

Thus, the expert group considers Criterion C.7 to be fulfilled.

C.8. Functionality of education quality assurance structures, according to the law

During the interviews with the University management, the board of the University and the representative of the units responsible for the quality assurance activities, the expert group was provided with an overview of the quality evaluation mechanisms and institutional structures.

The Quality Management Commission regularly elaborates and reviews all corresponding policies and strategies as well as operational procedures.

The expert group was able to ascertain the validity of the information provided in the application documentation, and its accordance with the legal framework, as stated in the "Methodology". Quality assurance and evaluation is well-developed at the University. Structured processes and an evaluated organization underline the importance of the quality management at the University; the organization strives for continuous improvement. Central and decentral staff is involved in the quality assurance process.

Thus, Criterion C.8 is considered to be fulfilled.

For more details on the structure, functioning and members involved in the Quality assurance procedures at the University see also Criteria A.1, A.2 and C.1.

4 Evaluation summary

The main task of the expert group during the on-site visit and the peer review was to assess the study program and verify its compliance with European and Romanian regulations (*see part 1 Introduction*).

In the view of the expert group, the program "Tourism Geography" at Baia Mare (Bachelor of Tourism Geography) complies with Romanian regulations, as specified in the "Methodology" and the "Law of National Education". Hence, the study program complies with the pertinent Romanian standards, criteria and performance indicators, as well as with all legal normative requirements.

In general terms, the experts give a particularly positive evaluation to the University's active involvement in the social structures of the region of Arad and of other nearby areas. It has been clearly emphasized that the stakeholders of the University, particularly the city of Arad, recognize the University's integral and essential role in the development of the whole region and therefore, provide it with the necessary support.

It must be positively highlighted that it became more than obvious during the students' discussion session, that the students' satisfaction level with their studies and the University is near excellent. Almost all students chose Vasile Goldis University because of its good reputation in areas such as local accessibility, study conditions and especially student-teacher communication and learning support. The community-based orientation is maintained as one of the strengths of the University, which tries to support the national labor market with qualified graduates.

The documentation provided by the University and the favorable results of the on-site visit enable the expert group to recommend maintaining the accreditation of the study program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare), offered by the Vasile Goldis Western University of Arad, to the Accreditation Commission of AHPGS.

Given the fact that the program meets all normative requirements and standards listed in the performance indicators determined by the Romanian national quality assurance agency, the expert group also recommends maintaining the

accreditation of study program “Tourism Geography” (at Baia Mare) by the Romanian Ministry of National Education.

Based on the Expert Report, the Accreditation Commission outlines the following conditions:

- The recognition of credits transferred from other universities (domestic and abroad) has to become regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. (B.1)
- The module descriptions have to become more standardized. Also the competence-oriented approach should have to become clearly visible in the description of the module contents. Moreover, module descriptions should disclose a mandatory methodological foundation in research in the curriculum. (B.1)

At the same time, the experts attempt to provide constructive feedback and recommendations for further improvement regarding the concept, structure and content of the program, i.e. the implementation of international criteria to enhance its connectivity within the European network and to increase its appeal for international students seeking international exchange and possibilities to study abroad.

The following recommendations are thus proposed for the University’s consideration:

A) Institutional Capacity:

- With regard to the administrative structure behind the collaborations between the department, faculty and university units, the experts encourage to look for common interests and to combine forces and resources. (A.1)
- The University could present its internationalization measures in a more open and distinct manner so that, apart from maintaining its significant role in the region, the University could further promote its attractiveness and unique character differentiating it from other higher education institutions. (A.1)
- The University library could establish partnerships with similar institutions (libraries, publishing houses) both within the country and abroad, in order

to provide students and teachers with access to a wider range of IT resources, data bases as well as learning and scientific material. (A.2)

- With regard to the aspect of financing, it is recommended to adequately raise the amount of tuition fees for international students and to look for other financing options besides the tuition fees, in order to maintain a sustainable financial basis of the institution. (A.2 and B.4)
- The University could develop a fundraising system to generate external financial support for the students. This could include local industries and private persons as well as alumni. (A.2)
- The University should regulate that the study program requires a minimum number of enrolled students to function. (A.2)

B) Educational Effectiveness:

- The student workload should be evaluated on a regular basis in order to make sure that students are not overloaded, e.g. with examinations. Besides, the implementation of evaluation results to improve the study programs should be clearly documented. The experts also suggest combining the smaller modules into larger units in order to reduce the student workload regarding examinations. (B.1)
- The expert group recommends especially in connection to the international aspect of tourism an increase of English language classes and modules in English. (B.1)
- The program could focus more on tourism economic related subjects which could meet market requirements more adequately: Introduction to Tourism Geography, Market Research, Strategies and Methods of Tourism, Development Planning, Health and Nature Tourism, Corporate Social Responsibility, Intercultural Communication in Tourism, Excursions etc. (B.1)
- In order to test not only the students' knowledge but also their understanding of a specific topic and ability to work scientifically, different forms of assessment such as writing scientific essays, case studies, seminar papers and projects should be included in the forms of examination and assessment. (B.1 and C.3)

- The University could encourage its alumni more to pursue postgraduate studies at the institution. (B.1)
- The University could take into account the possibility of distance learning in the curriculum of the study program. (B.2)
- The branch could offer shared courses with other study programs. (B.2)
- The University should promote research among students and teaching staff and create a structured approach to integrate research activities in the curriculum of the study program. This includes the training of scientific working skills and relevant scientific research methods so that the research profile will become evident. Moreover, the evaluation of research should be documented.

C) Quality Management:

- The University should provide the "Tourism Geography" students with increased access to e-journals, e-books and international literature in the Baia Mare branch. (A.2 and C.5)
- The University should strive for an Internal Quality System as lean as possible to ensure long-term acceptance and sustainability. (C.1)
- The number of credit points awarded for the composition and successful defense of the Bachelor thesis should be raised to reflect the thesis' importance in the study program and the considerable amount of student effort and time invested therein. This is a standard practice on the international level. (C.3)
- Given the fact that tourism has a national but also international component, the University should further develop the teaching staff regarding the necessary level of competences in foreign languages. (C.4)
- There could be more opportunities for didactic continuing education for teachers and an incentive scheme could respectively be developed. (C.4)
- The University should consider the possibility of employing on assistant positions without the mandatory requirement of a doctoral degree. (C.4)

- Students should be provided with more information regarding the different types of scholarships. (C.5)
- The University could expand its information management system so that it will be possible to save the large amount of data and the information collected in the course of quality assurance procedures, and then to apply this information in order to take strategic decisions on the institutional level. (C.6)

5 Decision of the accreditation commission

Decision of the accreditation commission of the 14 March 2017

The proposed resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS is based on the University's application, as well as the expert review and the on-site visit described in the Expert Report.

The on-site visit of the University took place on 4-6 December 2016 according to the previously agreed schedule.

The accreditation decision is based on the Expert Report. The Expert Report, i.e. the proceedings of the Periodical Evaluation Process conform to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as well as to the Law no. 1 of National Education of Romania, 2011, Art.150, and Art.193; the Quality Evaluation Activities Guide for University Study Programs and for Higher Education Institutions: Part 1 Study Programs Accreditation External Evaluation Guide, and the Methodology for External Evaluation, Standards, Standards of Reference, and List of Performance Indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS discussed the procedural documents and the recommendation of the expert group.

The standard study period in the full-time program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare) is three years/six semesters. The study program comprises 41 modules of which 29 are obligatory and six out of twelve are optional, i.e. there is a choice between these modules each semester. Additionally, there are six elective modules that can be freely chosen as an addition to the curriculum. The bachelor study program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare) is completed with the conferral of the academic degree "Bachelor of Tourism Geography".

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS considers that most Criteria (according to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as well as to the Law no. 1 of National Education of Romania, 2011, Art.150, and Art.193; the Quality Evaluation Activities Guide for University Study Programs and for Higher Education Institutions: Part 1 Study Programs Accreditation External Evaluation

Guide, and the Methodology for External Evaluation, Standards, Standards of Reference, and List of Performance Indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) are fulfilled and therefore adopts the following decision:

The study program "Tourism Geography" (at Baia Mare) is recommended to maintain and extend the accreditation.

Based on the Expert Report, the Accreditation Commission outlines the following conditions:

- The module descriptions should be more standardized. Also the competence-oriented approach should be clearly visible in the description of the module contents. Moreover, module descriptions should disclose a mandatory methodological foundation in research in the curriculum. (B.1)
- The recognition of credits transferred from other universities (domestic and abroad) should be regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. (B.1)

For further development and enhancement of the study program and the University as a whole, the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS supports the recommendations articulated in the Expert Report.