

**Decision of the Accreditation Commission of AQAS
on the degree programme**

▪ **Licenciate in Political Science “Public Administration”
at the Cahul State University (Republic of Moldova)**

Based on the report of the expert panel and the discussions of the Accreditation Commission in it’s 61th meeting on 30. November/01. December 2015, the Accreditation Commission decides:

1. The Bachelors-level programme “**Political Science**” (**Licenciate in Political Science**) offered by the **Cahul State University (Moldova)** is accredited according to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The accreditation is **conditional**.

2. The study programme essentially complies with the requirements defined by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version. The required adjustments can be processed within a time period of nine months.
3. The conditions have to be fulfilled. The fulfilment of the conditions has to be documented and reported to AQAS no later then **30. September 2016**
4. The accreditation is given for the period of **five years** and is valid until **30. September 2021**.

Conditions:

1. The module/course handbook must be reviewed and updated with regard to the following aspects:
 - a. The learning outcomes must be more specific and in accordance with the appropriate and intended level of a bachelors programme and documented in the module/course descriptions.
 - b. All module descriptions must include the specific assessment method used in each course/module that matches the described learning outcomes.
 - c. The complete handbook must be available to students.
2. The “unnamed optional disciplines” must be reduced or replaced (or a combination of both) in the curriculum by a more informative description.
3. Competencies covering “the role of the nation state in democracies”, “multi-level governance in Europe” and “accounting in public administration” must be included in the programme.

4. The availability of current literature and online resources must be improved.
5. The currently misleading name of the degree (Bachelor in Political Science) must correspond with the acquired competencies and content of the programme.

The conditions were fulfilled within the given timescale.

The Accreditation Commission confirms the fulfilment of the conditions in its decision of 04./05.12.2017.

The following **recommendations** are given for further improvement of the program:

1. The number of modules should be reduced by merging courses of the same domain to larger modules with a clear (maybe wider) denomination/topic.
2. Courses focusing on practical skills as well as courses in English language should be elaborated.
3. Additional attention shall be paid to the training of didactics and new/alternative teaching methods for staff.
4. The internationalization efforts shall be strengthened and used for an exchange of experiences.
5. The implementation of the university wide quality mechanisms on the programme level should be improved and the active role of students strengthened.

With regard to the reasons for this decision the Accreditation Commission refers to the attached assessment report.



Experts' Report

on the bachelor degree programme:

“Public Administration” (Bachelor in Political Science)

offered by the Cahul State University

Visit to the University: 12th - 14th of October 2015

Panel of Experts:

Arus Harutyunyan	Student at the Armenian State University of Economics, Yerevan (student representative)
Margareta Ivan	National Qualification Authority of Romania, Bucharest (representative from the professional field)
Prof. Dr. Nicole Kuchler-Stahn	University of Applied Sciences Frankfurt, Germany Public & Nonprofit Management
Prof. Dr. Ferdinand Müller-Rommel	University of Lüneburg, Germany Center for the Study of Democracy
Prof. Dr. Bogdan Murgescu	University Bucharest, Center for Administrative, Cultural and Economic Studies
Coordinator: Ronny Heintze / Dr. Katarina Löbel	AQAS e.V., Cologne, Germany

1 Introduction

This report results from the external review of the Bachelor programme in Public Administration offered by the Cahul State University (CSU) in Cahul, Moldova. The review is based on the criteria that were developed jointly as part of a TEMPUS project under participation of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova. They are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) that were developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and presented to the Bologna Follow-Up group in 2005.

The University produced a Self Evaluation Report. The accreditation procedure was officially initialized by a decision of the AQAS Accreditation Commission on 18./19.05.2015. The Accreditation Commission nominated the before mentioned expert panel and the University did not raise any concerns against the composition of the panel.

After a review of the Self Evaluation Report, from 12th to 14th of October 2015 a site visit to the University took place. On site, the experts interviewed different stakeholders and consulted additional documentation and student work. The visit concluded with the presentation of the preliminary findings by the group of experts to the University representatives.

2 General Information

Cahul State University "Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu" is a public institution founded on 7 June 1999 having the aim to prepare and provide southern Moldova localities with highly qualified staff. The University "B.P. Hasdeu" has three faculties: Faculty of Philology and History; Faculty of Law and Public Administration and Faculty of Economics, Computer Science and Mathematics.

The study programme for Public Administration is offered by the Political Science Department of the university. This department, rather small in size, comprised of three professors and academic staff offers, besides the Bachelor programme under review, offers three Master programs.

3 Profile / Outcomes of the Programme

Graduate students will become "Licentiate in Political Science" and are supposed to be able to work as civil servants. This also means they shall be able to work in positions like: secretary in administrative units, desk officer in compartments for public relations, in human resources management, in legal administrative departments, experts and advisers at various levels in public administration issues etc. Similarly they can become active in public or private organizations of public interest that requires specialists in public administration (insurance companies, health insurance houses, pension funds, funds and agencies, non-profit organizations etc.).

Graduates shall have the following qualifications in different fields of competencies:

Epistemological Competence:

- knowledge of theoretical foundations of administrative sciences;
- identification of the sources of information and effective training in public administration;
- realization of the role of public administration system in the socio-economic development of the Republic of Moldova

Prognostic Competence:

- predicting the systemic development of public administration;
- project elaboration of professional activities in public administration;

- evaluation of public administration reforms in the context of European integration;

Management Competence:

- determination of the aim and mission (philosophy) of public or private organizations;
- planning activities for public or private organizations, monitoring activities;
- elaboration of development strategies, collaboration among stakeholders for realizing activities of public or private organizations;

Evaluation competence of professional activity results:

- determination of public administration evaluation criteria in specific social context;
- evaluation of professional activities according to the requirements of public or private organizations;

Communicative competence and of social integration:

- adaptation of communication to different practical circumstances;
- usage of different forms of communication in professional practice;
- efficient transmission of information in the public or private organizations.

The admission to the programme is realized by a contest according to the provisions prescribed in the “Regulation of organization and development of admission in higher education institutions in Moldova”, approved by the Minister, within the plan of registration. Applicants must hold a baccalaureate degree. Subjects of the contest are: history, geography, math, Romanian language and literature, and foreign languages.

Experts’ Evaluation

The intended learning outcomes are defined and are part of the module descriptions included in the self-evaluation report (SER) that was made available to the group of experts. Nevertheless these descriptions do not seem to play a major role in the daily business. For example the talk to the heads of departments revealed that the staff members at the beginning of each semester present “their ideas of their courses to the students”. As a result, students seem to be well informed about the contents of each module; the learning outcomes however are not specifically used in this process. To make this process less dependent on the motivation of each staff member it is highly recommended to ensure a regular use of the module descriptions through making the full compendium accessible to all students at every time for example via Moodle. In general, the learning outcomes must be more specific regarding the level of competencies taught in each module. While it is possible to have an idea about the character of the programme based on the defined outcomes, the general character of the outcome descriptions in the course/module descriptions is not yet specific enough to the intended level. **(Finding 1)** As this is not currently the case, module descriptions should also include the specific assessment method used in each course and a comprehensible link between the assessment method used and the described learning outcomes shall be established. **(Finding 2)** In doing so students will have reliable knowledge about the expected requirements in advance; information which is of high value especially for those studying part-time.

On the general level it shall be recognised that - compared to the times before the newly proclaimed Code of Education - the university gained more autonomy regarding the outline of their programmes. Meanwhile it seems to the experts that an existing framework from the Ministry of Education still highly limits a fully autonomous development of the programmes. As a result, the programme “Public Administration” yet not fully reflects the academic requirements associated with comparable programmes worldwide. One important factor is the obvious imbalance between the programmes three main pillars: law, economics and social sciences. [please refer to section “Curriculum”]. However, on the level of the defined learning outcomes for the programme the experts agree that these generally meet the requirements of the Bachelor level of the European Qualifications Framework.

Current labour market requirements within the mentioned restrictions seem to be well represented in the development of the programme. Based on the experts impression this holds especially true for representatives from public institutions providing job opportunities for interns or graduates. While this might have a positive impact on the employability of graduates it is also a threat to the curriculum as such, since it might hinder the implementation of an academically well balanced programme. Therefore a more transparent process for the integration of new “labour market-driven” modules in the curriculum that also balances the academic requirements might be helpful for the further development of the programme.

The University of Cahul regards itself as an institution constantly facing a growing lack of graduates of higher education. Therefore all programmes are focussed on training specialists for different branches especially for the southern part of Moldova. The Public Administration programme was the first of three programmes offering a comparable education in Moldova. The programme – regardless of the low number of enrolled students – strongly serves this purpose, foremost through the well-established bonds with future employers from the Cahul district.

This very strong regional character is also fostered by the research undertaken by the staff which focuses mainly on national – and even regional – issues in the field of Public Administration/Public Management. Remarkable is also the fact that quite a number of students return to the University as part-time lectures or even members of staff. These people serve not only as great role models for recent students and graduates but they help to build a strong relationship between current and future students and their alma mater. Nevertheless in terms of internationalization there shall be different efforts (teacher’s ERASMUS, visit of international/English-speaking conferences, English literature etc.) to develop a broader and more international approach to Public Administration/Public Management in the very near future.

Entrance requirements and the respective selection processes as described by the University are clearly defined and seem to be adequate. Striking is the number of enrolled students which has dropped significantly during the time period from 2008 to 2014. Joint efforts shall be undertaken to raise the number of students in this valuable programme not only to raise the efficiency but the effectiveness of the Public Administration programme. In this context the expert recognise that this phenomenon is not specific to the programme, but much more a reflection of the national situation.

While the title of the programme – beside the points worked out above – mostly reflects the contents of the curriculum, this does not hold true for the denomination of the degree awarded to the graduates. The contents of the curriculum do not meet the standards internationally applied to those programmes awarding a bachelor’s degree in Political Sciences. The denomination of the programme is therefore highly misleading. **(Finding 3)** The group of experts understands that the study programme was developed on the basis of the nomenclature of the national Ministry of Education. Although the staff members themselves regard the name as misleading, the department has no power to change the denomination without the ministry’s permission what shall be respected. However, it does not produce a satisfying situation regarding transparency and academic compatibility.

4 Curriculum

The programme lasts three years and equals 180 CP of the ECTS.

The subjects are divided into groups in curriculum:

- Basic courses
- Courses developing general skills and competencies
- Social orientation courses

- Courses from another field of formation,
- Psychopedagogy (including pedagogical training).

Basic courses equal 60 CP, while general skills and competencies make up 10 CP of the program. Social orientation courses fill 20 CP, while 70 CP focus on the basic specialization courses.

Each semester equals 30 CP while every CP is defined as 30 hours of student workload. In order to progress in the curriculum every student must reach at least 40 out of 60 CP per semester to ensure a timely progression of students in the program.

Experts' Evaluation

Overall, the expert team confirms that the aims of the programme comply with the profile of the institution and the department, particularly with respect to teaching. Furthermore, the student workload for each course is clearly documented in the descriptions. The number of working hours in class and on individual level as well as the total number of working hours per week is calculated for all elements of the program. Moreover, clear information is given on the number of credits for each module.

These generally positive signs are, however, shadowed by some substantial challenges that are related to the structure and the content of the study programme. First, although the majority of the modules are described in detail in the handbook, many course/module descriptions are missing. Furthermore, the description of learning outcomes of the modules in several cases is unspecific. Consequently there is a lack of transparency when it comes to the description of the curriculum. Discussions on site showed that the problem lies with the documentation instead of the implementation. Consequently the module/course descriptions must be reviewed regarding the specificity of learning outcomes. **(Finding 4)** In addition, a clearly defined "heading/title" of modules is missing for several elements. Instead of one overall labelling, many modules cover three electives with totally different topics (e.g. Module S 03 consists of 4 credits and covers either Social Psychology or Conflictology or Protocol and Public Relations in Public Administration). Among the majority of those modules with three electives one of the three electives is entitled "unnamed optional discipline". These courses are not specifically described in the curriculum. This structure makes it extremely hard to guarantee a comparable qualification profile of graduates. Furthermore it seems possible that a student may finish this study programme by having taken eight to ten courses that are "unnamed". The number and position of these unnamed optional disciplines should be put in context with the intended character of the programme and the balance of the different fields in the curriculum. The expert team therefore requests that the "unnamed optional disciplines" must be reduced or replaced (or a combination of both) in the curriculum by a more informative description. **(Finding 5)**

Furthermore it is obvious to the experts that the curriculum includes a very high number – if not too many modules. Depending on his or her specialization, a student has to take between 42 and 45 modules in the wider discipline of Public Administration plus nine modules in the field of psychology and pedagogics. This not only creates a fragmented picture of the discipline, it also makes it harder for students to learn about the connections between different aspects and acquire generic and non-field specific competencies. The expert team highly suggests reducing the number of modules by merging courses of the same domain to larger modules with a clear (maybe wider) denomination/topic. **(Finding 6)**

Recognising the variety of courses offered in the curriculum the distribution of topics in the three pillars of Public Administration studies seems imbalanced. For a programme in Public Administration, major modules are missing, for instance a more general module covering "the role of the nation state in democracies", or a module on "multi-level governance in Europe" or on "accounting in public administration". Competencies in this field are of vital importance for graduates and the experts strongly suggest including these modules in an updated version of the curriculum. **(Find-**

ing 7) This reflection holds true for the programme in Public Administration, even without the additional challenge caused by the awarded degree in Political Science.

As it was discussed on site the link between research and teaching is of vital importance for the academic qualification of graduates. The discussions provided encouraging aspects in this regard with a particular strength in the regional orientation of the research of the staff involved. The experts explicitly encourage incorporating this aspect when reviewing the programme documentation in order to increase the transparency on that issue in the documents available to students and the public. This includes specifications on which courses include the training of competencies for scientific skills.

In the discussions on site particular attention was paid to the field of practical orientation of courses and contents as well as their applicability. While this is closely linked to the field of employability it also covers practical aspects of research methodology and courses that will enable students to transfer theoretical knowledge to the practice. In this area the experts see additional room for improvement by further strengthening courses focusing on practical skills but also training students in English language. **(Finding 8)** This could be realized by offering courses in English as well as by widening language acquisition courses.

5 Student Support

Following the Self Evaluation Report, consulting and guidance activities are provided by each teacher for his/her subjects. For this purpose a system of consulting days was established, generically called "service graphic ". The service graphic which indicates the name of the teacher, day and time, is supposed to be approved at the beginning of each semester.

Based on the information provided by the department, there is also a person responsible for guidance and consulting students depending on specialty who is called curator. This person is responsible to prepare a programme for teaching and extracurricular activities at the beginning of each semester. Beyond this students are supposed to be involved in the programme development process and can approach the academic staff with some suggestions or proposals.

Academic results obtained in other higher education institutions are supposed to be recognised according to a defined recognition procedure. ECTS Learning agreements shall guarantee the transfer of credits for realized and promoted courses by the student within the compatibility of education aims and the curricula of the institutions involved.

Experts' Evaluation

Based on the discussions on site, evaluation forms and methods of assessment are regularly discussed at the managerial level of the faculty; there are established mechanisms and assessment methods include oral and written exams, testing, group assignments or projects. Teachers announce the assessment policy in the beginning of each course. Beyond this the students have the opportunity to go to the Dean to consult the programme documentation and the module descriptions. Furthermore some descriptions are also available on the Moodle platform.

The university regulates assessment by the composition of the final mark and the assessments methods. The usual composition of a mark is a combination of 60% for the seminar activity including two mandatory written tests, seminar activities depending on the subject specifics (e.g. portfolios, case studies, presentation), and individual work. A final exam contributes the other 40% of the mark.

The chosen methods of assessment are generally appropriate to the content, however sometimes a stronger link from acquired competency to assessment method could be helpful. The forms of examination allow students to concentrate on developing various kinds of skills including team

works, oral and written communication and presentation. The assessments are performed by the professors who have led the course. Based on the discussions on site it seems to the experts that many professors implement alternative teaching methods in their practice. Student's feedback is valued.

The exams are organised according to the publicly available plan and take place on time, also according to a previously defined plan. The results of the exams are available to the students. While regulations concerning the assessment are clear and seem to be well practiced the experts do not see the additional value represented by the additional final exam. It seems much more in line to assess the final level of achievement of the intended outcomes of an academic programme by closely assessing the final thesis written by the students. Adding the additional requirement of a centralized final exam does not stipulate an understanding of an active role of the learner during the process and gives away the chance to use the final thesis (that is written anyway) as a demonstration of the academic achievements of the Bachelor-candidate. Following the information available to the panel of experts this procedure results from national regulations and this cannot be adjusted within the scope of this procedure. However, in order to further support the academic character of the programme the department might consider to move the existing course/module "introduction to scientific research" from the optional part of the curriculum to the compulsory section.

There are clear requirements and assessment practices to be respected by the evaluators for student assessment/exams, which are stressed in the SER and academic staff tends to follow those criteria. The organisation of exams is appropriate with regard to timing. There is an opportunity for resits, and students who failed a course are granted the opportunity to retake it. Regulations for compensation of disadvantages are in place. The distribution of grades in the grading spectrum is analysed. There are personal dossiers for the students including their progress sheets and grades.

At this time Moodle is the main tool when it comes to the use of ICT and it is currently only used to a limited extent in the teaching-learning-assessment processes.

An important role for student counselling and support falls to the faculties methodologists who also handles students' future employment issues. They also ask the students about their opinion about the programme. The tasks, position and function of a methodologist were discussed intensively during the site visit to better understand the position.

The information about the study programmes is available on the university's website; every spring there is a campaign to the high schools to inform potential applicants on the available course. Beyond this the experts welcome that first year students also undergo special introductory seminars that allow them to adapt easier.

From the expert's perspective student advisory services are quite well developed. There is a service for guidance and career so the students can receive support after graduation. The university has a vice rector on education and extracurricular activities who holds primary responsibility for these services on the level of the top management. There is a good practice of curators/mentors whom the students can turn to in case of any questions regarding their academic life.

Also there is a good practice of student's psychological support, as there is a psychology centre operating in the university to ensure support for those students who need consultation. There is a clear vision and motivation from the management perspective on student involvement. Student movement is encouraged and is ready to be supported. There are several clubs, student corners and support mechanisms for organising extracurricular activities and leisure, as well as structures for social support. In the future, the students could benefit from a stronger self empowered students movement enabling them to speak with a more independent voice.

At this time it has to be recognised that there are not many incoming or outgoing students, mainly due to the financial reasons. However it has to be recognised that the university has an understanding of the need for increased need for internationalization and has started to develop good connections with Romanian Galati University and has signed agreements with universities from Romania, Ukraine, Italy, France, Portugal and Spain. Beyond this the University is involved in some Tempus projects. Internationalization is clearly a field of action that requires further development in order to increase the competitiveness of the institutions and its programmes.

While not used in many cases in practice, students may request transfer from one institution to another or switch faculties. The process is organised according to a National System of Study Credits. The transfer can be made only for the second and following years. In the discussion the faculty could provide examples when students were transferred from one university to another or abroad.

6 Employability

The programme under review is supposed to contribute to the students' qualification process in the administration and political sciences domain. Its graduates are supposed perform functions within the public administration at different specializations levels as well as within other public or private structures of public interests. The department refers to secretary functions, administrative-territorial units, public relations compartments reviewers, human resources administration, administrative disputed claims office, housing, different levels of experts and counsellors in public administration issues, etc. Fields of work are also supposed to be found in public and private structures of public interest which require public administration domain specialists (insurance companies, health insurance companies, retirement funds, funds and agencies, non-profit organizations, etc.)

Experts' Evaluation

Based on the information provided by the department in the documentation of the programme as well as in the discussions on site it became obvious that the programme has a solid orientation to the requirements of the labour market. It became obvious that the management of the faculty as well as the teaching staff pay considerable attention of having good relation with the potential employers of the graduates of the programme. Recognizing the importance of personal contacts through alumni and former or actual professors and collaborators of the teaching staff, nevertheless some institutional agreements have been signed, especially on the purpose of internships. The students have access to different kind of information and even get recommendations from the professors. Examples of exchange could be given and the department could proof successfully that there is a clear picture on the fields of employment for graduates.

A diploma supplement is handed to the students upon completion of the programme reflecting the qualifications achieved through it. A sample of that supplement was available to the experts as an appendix to the documentation provided by the university.

Regarding the process of defining the intended learning outcomes the management of the Faculty of Law and Public Administration outlined their approach to include the labour market demands, which is done by the teaching staff during meetings with the employer's representatives. For having a little more flexibility in providing the knowledge and the skills asked by the employers, the curriculum provides several optional disciplines which are not-named, but established at the beginning of each academic year. From the perspective of flexibility toward the labour market this is a benefit, however this has to be put into context with the need to a clearly profiled programme. **(see finding 5)**

Different suggestions were discussed during the site visit how the employability of graduates could be improved even further. However, these more general ideas mainly address options be-

yond the scope of a single programme, but much more create options for university wide options. As an example the establishment of a Career Guidance Centre at the university level shall be outlined, which will increase on one hand the transparency of the learning outcomes provided by the study programme for the employers and on the other hand will give to students, graduates and alumni a space to meet each other, to change information and build projects. Beyond this, and keeping in mind the fact that the Cahul State University sees itself as a local/regional university, it might also be helpful for the employability of its graduates to establish at the university level a platform for regular and open discussions with the employer's representatives of the region.

In addition to this positive note it shall be recognized that – despite the contacts with the labour market – it might be helpful to include more practical skills and competencies in the programme. The discussions on site left the experts optimistic that – applying new teaching methods as well as more competence oriented assessment methods – more practical skills can be integrated in the curriculum of the programme **(see Finding 8)**

After graduation, a diploma supplement is handed to the graduates reflecting and outlining the competencies and the character of their qualifications.

7 Resources

Following the information provided by the department, the ministry has set limit of admission not to exceed the number of 25-30 students per intake. Consequently student groups were formed with respect to the limit admission plans for each academic year.

To have its programs organized, the Political Science and Public Administration Department describes that it has access to all the main rooms belonging to the Faculty, based on the programming schedule of classes and seminars. In addition, the Department has specifically the Chair Office at their disposal for individual consultations.

The outline of the human resource structure and distribution in the Department is as follows: 2 full-time professors and four lecturers supported by part time staff and numerous support staff.

Experts' Evaluation

During the accreditation process the University presented an overview over all staff involved in the teaching of the programme. The CVs included give a comprehensive overview over the staff's academic qualifications. The experts agree that the quality and quantity of staff are appropriate to meet the requirements resulting from the intended learning outcomes. Three of the seven academics presented in the document hold a PhD-Degree.

That is the reason why development of staff – based on the interviews with the management and the staff member's – is mainly carried out through supporting the doctoral studies of the staff members. These studies are without any doubt of high value for the teaching and research capacities of the faculty and this support should continue. Nevertheless they do not substitute trainings which ensure appropriate, up-to date didactic qualifications of the entire teaching staff. The experts identify some unused potential in this field that could help improve the quality of teaching and learning. For this reason additional attention should be paid to the training of these aspects, e.g. the management should try to initialize a number of diverse workshops and trainings especially in the field of didactics and new/alternative teaching methods. At the same time the staff is encouraged to make use of these methods. **(Finding 9)**

As far as the financial constraints allow, members of staff are currently supported to take part in national and international conferences and receive financial funds for the publications of their research findings. With regard to the internationalization of the University as well as the pro-

gramme it is highly recommended to empower the staff members to publish in English and to strengthen their international network outside Eastern Europe through the participation in conferences such as EGPA (European Group for Public Administration) or IRSPM (International Research Society for Public Management) in the next years. More international exchange will allow staff members to integrate new approaches and also increase the competitiveness of the programme. **(Finding 10)**

The University of Cahul provides a well-designed process for the filling of positions expiring during time of accreditation. All members of teaching staff are hired for five years; the dean is responsible for appointing the staff taking into account a list of criteria, such as the participation in national and international conferences as well as the number and quality of publications during the past years. The dean's decision has to be approved by the senate. These criteria also apply to lecturers who are applying for a second five-year period of engagement. Undoubtedly a priority in the upcoming years shall be the increase of the number of PhD holders with relevant research as well as teaching and working experience in the field of Public Administration/Public Management.

All people interviewed show a very high level of intrinsic motivation and strong will to build an institution offering job opportunities for young people in an economically extremely tense area. To ensure the quality of the teaching students evaluate every teacher each semester. The questionnaires are filled in online also leaving room for free answers. Moreover teachers access each other's lecture through a process of peer coaching on a voluntary basis. The implementation of these mechanisms demonstrates a deep commitment of the university to assure a high quality of teaching and performance improvement if necessary. The concrete effects and results of this process on the level of the programme were not yet fully clear to the expert team (see Quality Assurance).

The budget for the entire institution is limited on a low level. About 50 percent of the budget is spent on staff costs. Nevertheless appropriate resources such as computer workplaces (with internet access) – reflecting current technical standards – are available for carrying out the study programme in question. The technical equipment is adequate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. As far as it may be judged by the site visit and the interviews of the students facilities are appropriate in terms of room and space required for the number of students enrolled. Definitely insufficient is the provision of current literature provided by the library. The books offered do not meet the expectations towards an internationally accepted canon of literature. This also holds true for online resources and material made available. The current EBSCO-client should be complemented by other providers such as JSTOR. Since the lack of appropriate literature was also recognised by the teaching staff itself and raised as an issue in more than one interview during the site visit, the experts are convinced that there is potential to overcome this challenge. **(Finding 11)**

In contrast the intensive support of students through methodologist and tutors should be highlighted positively. Methodologist who are at the same time part of the teaching staff organize the process of signing study contracts at the beginning of each academic year, perform the evaluation of teachers by the students and familiarize first year students with peculiarities of studies according to ECTS / NSCC etc. Moreover they consult and guide students with regard to their future employment. Tutors on the other hand work more on the student's demands and provide consultancy on a more operational level.

8 Quality Assurance

Based on the information provided in the application of the department, the Department of Political Science and Public Administration does not have its own quality system. The system is provided by the unique policy of the university, including the evaluation of teachers

Information on student satisfaction in the programme is gathered through questionnaires completed by ECTS departmental teaching and quality staff. The questionnaire is completed by students in online version. Students are supposed to be trained beforehand in order to complete the evaluation sheets. Students are informed that questionnaires are anonymous and shall not affect in any way their situation. The results are confidential, being accessible only to the dean, quality manager and the person assessed.

Experts' Evaluation

The expert-team confirms that the department follows clear policy procedures regarding the strategy and organization of the quality assurance system that is provided by the university. Thus, the department has implemented a feedback committee that meets twice a semester. It consists of the Head of the Department, the Dean of the Faculty, and the tutors of the study programme („methodologists“). Furthermore, the quality assurance activities on departmental level closely follow the rules and procedures of the Quality Commission that operates on faculty level. This commission ensures (among others) the quality of the teaching staff. However, recognizing the well developed framework for quality assurance on the University level two aspects did not fully become clear to the experts: 1.) It seems that active student participation in the feedback mechanisms on department and faculty level is limited or even non existent. Allowing students to understand that they have an active role in the processes and that their active participation is a prerequisite for improvements in the programme is vital 2.) It could not clearly be identified how the results of surveys are made available to and discussed with students other than reporting them to the faculty-board or senate. Consequently the implementation of the well defined quality mechanisms on the programme level could be improved. **(Finding 12)**

The majority of the module/course descriptions are available to all students, but the expert-team feels that the information flow is not very efficient. Only some module descriptions are available on internet (Moodle Platform). For the rest of the module descriptions, students can consult the Dean and ask him for permission to look into all module descriptions of the study program. On a substantive level, however, all module descriptions that are attached to the departments' application contain intended learning outcomes (see above), methods of learning and teaching, assessment methods (see above), and the expected workload. Some modules/courses were not part of the handbook and need to be added. Once completed it seems advisable to the experts to make the handbook publicly available (e.g. on the website). **(Finding 13)**

Furthermore, the expert-team agreed that the study programme is organized in a way that allows students to complete their studies in the advised regular course duration. The students unanimously confirmed this view in a conversation during the site-visit.

The quality related information systems covers the student population, their evaluation of courses and staff, and a list of possible employers of students. Although the study programme is in its fourth year, an alumni strategy does not yet exist. In the discussions the management agreed that a more systematic approach towards alumni would be beneficial for the strategic development of the programme. Beyond this the department should also consider to intensify the contacts not only to (potential) local employers but extend the range to regional, national actors to broaden the input of requirements from the professional field. These links could help providing job opportuni-

ties for the students, but may also assist the study programme coordinators to improve the content of the modules according to the (changing) requests of the labour market.

9 Recommendations of the panel of experts

The panel of experts recommends accrediting the Bachelor programme “**Public Administration**” offered by **the Cahul State University** in Cahul, Republic of Moldova **with conditions**.

Findings:

1. The learning outcomes must be specified in accordance with the appropriate and intended level of a bachelors programme and documented in the module/course descriptions.
2. All module descriptions must include the specific assessment method used in each course/module that matches the described learning outcomes.
3. The denomination of the programme (Bachelor in Political Science) is misleading as it does not reflect the contents and the acquired qualifications of graduates.
4. The module/course descriptions must be reviewed regarding the specificity of learning outcomes.
5. The “unnamed optional disciplines” must be reduced or replaced (or a combination of both) in the curriculum by a more informative description.
6. The number of modules shall be reduced by merging courses of the same domain to larger modules with a clear (maybe wider) denomination/topic.
7. Competencies covering “the role of the nation state in democracies”, “multi-level governance in Europe” and “accounting in public administration” must be included in the programme.
8. Courses focusing on practical skills as well as courses in English language shall be elaborated.
9. Additional attention should be paid to the training of of didactics and new/alternative teaching methods for staff.
10. The internationalization efforts should be strengthened and used for an exchange of experiences.
11. The availability of current literature and online resources must be improved.
12. The implementation of the university wide quality mechanisms on the programme level should be improved and the active role of students strengthened.
13. The module/course handbook must be completed. It should be publicly available.