

WEST UNIVERSITY OF TIMISOARA, ROMANIA

EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION REPORT

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AGENTIA ROMANA  
DE ASIGURARE A CALITĂȚII  
IN ÎNĂLȚĂMILE SUPERIOARE  
REGISTRATURI  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the framework of the project QUALITAS, I was invited by Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, ARACIS to take part as an external expert for institutional evaluation of West University of Timisoara.

The site visit at the university took place from 23-25 April 2015. A month prior to the visit, I have received the SER in English and all the necessary guidance from ARACIS contact person regarding the external evaluation standards and procedures.

During the site visit I have followed the two and a half day agenda set up by ARACIS and also I had the opportunity to ask WUT management for additional information and documents as the evidence to verify some of the WUT statements in the SER. All the requested documents were provided very fast by the WUT management, who I would like to thank for the cooperation and openness during the visit.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the university for the translation provided to me by their staff during the site visit.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. L. L. L.', is located at the bottom center of the page.

## 2. Background

The West University of Timisoara (WUT) is located in the most important economic and cultural center of Western Romania. It was founded by Royal Decree – Law no. 660 from December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1944, having in its structure at the time the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, the Faculty of Sciences, the Faculty of Human Medicine, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, the Faculty of Pharmacy and the Faculty of Theology. From September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1962 the university received the status of accredited national higher education institution and the name of Timisoara University, and then, by the Order of the Education Ministry no. 9874 from October 9<sup>th</sup> 1994, it reacquired its current name, West University of Timisoara. The Romanian Constitution, the Law on National Education no.1/2011, the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 regarding quality assurance in education, approved by Law no. 87/2006, with its subsequent amendments, and the internal regulations and decisions constitute the current legal framework for the functioning of the West University of Timisoara.

Currently, the following faculties operate within the West University of Timisoara:

1. Faculty of Arts and Design
2. Faculty of Chemistry, Biology, Geography
3. Faculty of Law
4. Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
5. Faculty of Physical Education and Sport
6. Faculty of Physics
7. Faculty of Letters, History and Theology
8. Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics
9. Faculty of Music and Theatre
10. Faculty of Sociology and Psychology



11. Faculty of Political Sciences, Philosophy and Communication Sciences.

### **3. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY**

#### **3.1. Mission**

Based on SER the University of Timisoara is an accredited higher education institution, which is functioning, based on university autonomy, developing its activity according to its own University and the Charter. The university autonomy is manifested by organizational and functional autonomy, didactic and scientific autonomy, as well as financial and administrative autonomy. WUT defines its general mission of advanced scientific research and education, by generation and transfer of knowledge to the society, defining itself, at the same time, as a crucial center in the dissemination of cultural and civic values in the society. With the aim to realize this mission WUT has set up its strategic objectives to accomplish which are well defined and represent a synergy between research activities, artistic creation and educational process; the implementation of quality assurance processes in didactic activities, institutional governance and services offered to the social and economic environment.

#### **3.2. Academic integrity**

Regarding the Academic freedom and integrity, West University of Timisoara has a Code of ethics and academic professional deontology through which it defends the values of academic freedom, university autonomy and ethical integrity. This code constitutes an integral part of *WUT's Charter*. Academic integrity is ensured by the independent functioning of the Ethics Commission, whose activities are conducted under a code of ethics and an ethics rules approved by the University Senate and available for members of the university community

In line with this, WUT has purchased and made available to the entire academic community several anti-plagiarism software programs - Turnitin, iThenticate to use them to verify license, dissertation and doctoral works. The application of these programs will be integrated in the regulations for completion of studies.

#### **3.3. Public responsibility and accountability**

According to the documentation provided, as a public university, WUT tries to be very active in working to promote the culture of quality in the educational and research process. The Quality



Management Department coordinates the internal evaluation of the quality of teaching within each department of WUT faculties. Based on the provision of the Law on National Education no. 1/2011, the Rector has to report annually regarding the state of West University of Timisoara. Rector's Report is published and available to the public, specifying that the structures created for supporting the carrying out of activities within WUT proved their functionality and the process of administrative-functional reorganization is a beneficial one. In order to increase the decisional transparency and the level of information of the academic community and of all those interested by the university's activity, WUT publishes the Decisions of the *WUT Senate's* and of *the WUT's Administration Council* on the institution's website. WUT also practices a transparent policy in all fields of activity, with free access of the public and the media to the information of public interest, the faculties and WUT's website posts information concerning their own regulations, curricula and other information of interest to the students and the academic staff.

With the purpose to demonstrate accountability for the good management of public money, WUT has internal auditing procedures of its finances. These procedures are aimed at the legality and opportunity of the expenses made, verifying the methods of collecting the financial resources.

#### **3.4. The organization and management system**

As stated in the SER and evidenced during the visit to the university, the WUT has a coherent and transparent management system, with a competent and committed leadership supported by an efficient administration to achieve the mission and strategic objectives of the university. The Senate, the Administration Council and the Doctoral Studies Council consists the managerial structures of WUT. The election of university bodies is based on the national legislation, whereas the university Charter and other internal regulations regulate the functionality. The management structures within eleven WUT faculties are: Faculty Council and Department Council, and the management functions are: Dean, Vice-dean, Department Director, Doctoral School Director.

The students are represented in all managerial level of the WUT and represent 25% of the Senate, Administration Council, Code of Ethics, Commission for quality assurance and evaluation and of the Commissions for accommodation, scholarship granting and distribution of places in the WUT camps.

The university has its own Auditing system that controls the internal processes, didactic and financial ones. Apart from managerial structures, WUT has administrative departments that help conduct the activities and contribute also to achieving the university's goals.



The university is using an e-uvt platform to facilitate good communication at institutional level between all the members of the academic community.

Regarding the strategic management, for the period 2012-2018 WUT's strategy follows the *Rector's Management Program* taking into account the university's mission, the situation of the faculties, and of the university as a whole, the diversity of the available educational programs and the existing human and material resources. According to this program, WUT's strategy aims the application of objective-based management principles, at every organizational level (faculties, academic staff, research and administrative departments), by assuming the obligation of formulating the key-performance indicators and the creation of a management control network with clear channels for reporting. Regarding the university research and creation fields, the main strategic objectives refer to: the fostering of excellence in scientific research and artistic creation, stimulation of competitiveness in attracting national and international funds, ensuring an infrastructure comparable to that of foreign universities and transforming WUT into an active party within the social-economic environment and into a culture promoter at local, regional, national and international level.

Based on the information provided in the SER and information collected during the visit, WUT operates in a competitive environment in the regional and national level where it has to make strong efforts to keep the reputation of a good university and high ranking position.

*Recommendation:* It is strongly recommended that the research activities should be the priority in most of the WUT faculties in order to achieve the excellence in scientific research and artistic creation and attract national and international funds, necessary for the financial and operational sustainability of WUT.

### **3.5. Facilities**

WUT has a number of buildings and other properties that guarantee organization of academic and research activities comparable to international standards. The total surface of all WUT properties is 26319.10 m<sup>2</sup>. There are 83 classrooms and auditoriums for course activities, 98 seminar classrooms, 168 classrooms for laboratories and 6 libraries under the management of certain faculties. The main property unit with Aula magna is located on Vasile Pârvan Str. no. 4, may host events with national and international participation. WUT has the most powerful computing infrastructure in Romania and in the region. This infrastructure is composed of the supercomputer IBM Blue Gene/P (4096 computing nodes, 4TB RAM, 13 Tflops computing power, 28TB storage capacity). The laboratory is



part of the structure of the Centre for Research in Informatics within the Department for Informatics of the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics.

The Evaluation team during the visit to facilities had the opportunity to visit the Centre for Research in Informatics which, as it was explained by responsible person, is equipped through POSCCE funding, with an INFRAGRID cluster (400 computing nodes, 13.5TB storage capacity) which is connected to the European network GRID and, by FP7 financing, with a GPU cluster (4.5Tfps). The two clusters are integrated with the supercomputer IBM BlueGene/P into a platform with a cumulated computing power of over 18Tflops and a storage capacity of over 500 TB.

All the laboratories and classrooms I had possibility to see are equipped with modern technology and facilities necessary to carryout research and academic activities in good conditions.

Apart from above mentioned properties, WUT has 10 functional student hostels with a capacity of over 3090 places. There is currently an on-going investment project that involves the construction of a student hostel with 678 accommodation places within a total area of 8497 m<sup>2</sup>.

University also possesses a number of sport facilities properly equipped to carry out lessons in the field specific subjects for the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport' but also for other students and public.

As regarding the equipment, all the classrooms are adequately furnished with whiteboards and flipcharts, the auditoriums have alternative systems for projection and films, which provide very good conditions for the modernization of teaching. WUT currently has 2005 computers connected in a network, with Internet access, and 163 printers and photocopies.

### **3.5. Financial resources**

Due to limited and insufficient financial resources from the state, the last years WUT's management is permanently preoccupied with ensuring better management of the existing resources and with identifying new financing sources that will compensate the funds received from the state budget.

As presented in graphic form in the SER and explained during the site visit by the vice rector for finances the total revenue decreased in the last 5 years by 14.34%. So far WUT management was successful to assure sufficient budget that enables long term sustainability of the operational activities and fulfillment of university's mission and objectives



The structure of WUT's revenues includes the following categories:

- revenues received from MEN (Ministry of National Education)
- revenues from own activities (tuition fees, donations, sponsorships,
- revenues from the activity of the publishing house,
- revenues from the accommodations activities etc.);
- revenues from the scientific research activity, advice and expertise
- Allocations from state budget for special purposes; sums from grants.

In order to attract additional financial resources and strengthen financial sustainability, WUT decided to set up a functional department to develop the relation with the business environment and to ensure a better promotion of the entrepreneurial dimension. Apart from this, WUT plans to set up this year a department that will be able to conduct commercial activities specific to each faculty or research department (advice, diagnosis, expertise activities, chemical analysis etc.).

WUT has a scholarship allocation scheme for students at bachelor and master level that is based in to the legislation in force. WUT allocates 80% from the total fund of scholarships awarded by MEN for the license studies level and 20% for the master studies level. WUT also supports the student's academic and placement mobility within European projects (ERASMUS, SEE)

**Recommendation:** The University has to constantly develop new strategies to gain extra budget incomes that will enable efficient and sustainable functioning of the WUT and guarantee the high level of quality.

#### **4. EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

##### **4.1. Student admission**

As regard to admission of students to undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate (doctoral) study programs at WUT, it is regulated with several national laws and regulations. The regulation of the admission process is the competence of the universities' Senate.





As explained in SER, the admission procedures are published on time and transparent. The information regarding the enrolment quotas and related fees for all cycles and forms of education are published annually in compliance with the legal deadline.

With the aim to attract the best students, WUT organizes open Doors Day, training sessions for high school graduation.

The study places offered at WUT are the places subsidized by state budget and places with tuition fee, for full-time, distance and limited attendance learning. As shown in the SER, the last three academic years there was an increase of the study places financed by public money, and a variation in numbers of places with tuition fee, which can have an impact in the total budget of the university.

#### **4.2. Study Programs: Structure and Presentation**

On my request to see a model of a study plan in one of the departments of the WUT, a template of a study plan in the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Chemistry, Biology and Geography was presented to me. Based on this evidence, the template or curricula and subject descriptions is comparable to international standards and includes all necessary data: general and specific objectives of the study program, subject specific and transversal competences, cross-curricular competencies generated by the study program, elective and complementary subjects; data regarding advancement to the next higher year and bachelor's cycle graduation, subjects arranged successively, according to semesters and years, the number of didactic hours and ECTS credits as well as the distribution of credits by reference to generated competences.

#### **4.3. Capitalizing on the qualifications obtained according to the graduate's employability in the specialization field of his / her qualification**

The employability of the graduates is one of the key indicators of the quality of study programs oriented toward development of student abilities and competencies.

In academic year 2014-2015, through its Department of Quality Management and the expertise offered by the Department of Sociology, WUT has conducted the study of graduate inclusion in the labor market. The presented results show that during the first 12 months from their graduation 52% of graduates already have a job, 32.2% have continued their studies, 7.5% could not get employed and 8% other.

In the meeting with employers during the on site visit, most of the presented employers of WUT



graduates stated that they were satisfied with professional and academic level of WUT graduates.

**Recommendation:** WUT should involve the business sector in curriculum design in order to make their programs answer to the job market needs and establish good contacts with companies.

#### **4.4. The students' level of satisfaction in connection with their professional and personal development provided by the university**

The evaluation of academic staff by students as the main beneficiary part of the WUT services is a regular process and is realized in conformity with the internal regulation. At the end of each semester, students have the opportunity to express their opinion regarding the classes and seminars they have taken by filling in evaluation forms for the academic and administrative staff. Department of Quality Management manages the process.

As presented in the SER, the WUT students' level of satisfaction is also polled using the study conducted by Trendence Institute in Berlin, regarding the education and career – Trendence Graduate Barometer. According to three reports provided, one in general and two other for subject disciplines, the overall degree of student satisfaction regarding WUT equals or above the Romanian average and above the European average.

In the meeting with students and alumni during the on site visit, most of the presented students were satisfied with the quality of their teaching staff and the level of collaboration with students. However, they stated that the feedback to students is not satisfying.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the student feedback after the evaluation of the teaching activities and administrative services should be better and more visible for students.

#### **4.5. Student-centered learning methods**

The improvement of the teaching methods at WUT is a process supported by offering continuing professional development, student-focused teacher training sessions and modern IT technology. Centre for academic development" (CAD) is established to support the academic's professional development.

#### **4.6. Students' career orientation**

University has a career orientation center, which also offers the psychological counseling for students. The *Centre for Psychological Counseling and Career Orientation* has two full time staff



that offers counseling for students regarding the internship in companies, debut of academic activity, in order to prevent first year student drop- out and organizes workshops according to student needs.

#### **4.7. Scientific Research Activities**

Based on all provided information in the SER, annexes and during the site visit, it is evident that the research is one of the most important activities at WUT and as such it is included in the mission statement of the university. The Scientific Research and Academic Creation Regulation regulate the research activity.

The strategic objectives of WUT are in agreement with the project for the National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation for 2014-2020, it underlies the development plans and policies of the European Research Area (ERA), the current research framework program 2007-2013, and the Research and Innovation Framework Program 2014-2020 (Horizon 2020).

Within WUT there are 4 research institutes, 2 laboratories, 37 research centres, 2 platforms and 4 work groups that are certified at national level or at the university or faculty level. There are 3 spin-offs functioning within WUT and the FEBA Counseling Centre for businesses and institutions within the country or from abroad within the Foundation “Oeconomica Timisiensis”.

The University has following research centers: The Research Centre for Crystal Growth, the Laboratories for Advanced Environmental Research (LAER); the High Performance Calculus Centre; Institute for Advanced Environmental Research (IAER)

According to the SER, the high quality standards in scientific research is proven by the fact that, over the past year, in the most recent international rankings, WUT has occupied similar positions with its four partners of the Universitaria Consortium. Another indicator of the research activities and quality is a considerable increase in number of research articles published in ISI journals. In 2013 the number of published articles being 31% higher than in 2010.

#### **4.8. Capitalizing on research**

Based on the presented data, the research articles published in ISI journals increased considerably in the last years. In 2013 the number of published articles was 31% higher comparing to 2010 According to WEB of Science, at WUT level, 261 ISI papers were published in 2014 (of which 209



were catalogued as articles, 48 as conference proceedings and 2 as book chapters.

According to SCOPUS, in 2014, 262 papers whose authors are affiliated to WUT were published, of which the majority – 257 (97.6%) – are scientific articles published in academic journals or conference proceedings.

Editura Universitatii de Vest is a publishing house of the University that publishes and disseminates the research results of the WUT. There are 36 in print or online journals edited by WUT.

WUT organizes annually a series of events whose aim is to capitalize on the results of scientific research and academic creation.

#### **4.9. Financial activities**

The annual budget of income and expenses are approved by the WUT Senate and drawn up in strict agreement with legal provisions (Law no. 500/2002, Law concerning public finances). The institution has an annual budget and a budget projection for a three-year period. The Department of Economics and Accounting (DEA) carry out the financing and accounting activity

#### **4.10. Auditing and public liability**

The Office for Internal Public Audit (IPA), carries out public auditing activity at WUT. It is responsible to the Rector and the Department for Internal Managerial Control, established in concordance with OMFP 946/2005. The external auditing of WUT's financial activity is performed by the Romanian Court of Auditors, which last audited WUT in December 2013.

### **5. QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

#### **5.1. Strategies and Procedures for Quality Assurance Standard C.1.1. Structures and Policies for Quality Assurance**

The quality assurance and internal evaluation of quality at WUT is the responsibility of Quality Assurance Department and are regulated by the Code for Quality Assurance at WUT (CQA) and the WUT Quality Assurance Handbook. The aim of the QAD is to promote quality culture at the institution. At the level of each faculty, there is a Commission for Quality Management (CQM), which takes part in drafting evaluation and quality assurance instruments for academic programs, as well as in establishing quality standards for each faculty. In quality assurance processes are involved all academic and administrative staff, as well as students that participate in WUT Senate, in



faculty's CQM, as well as in the university's Commission for Evaluation and Quality Assurance (CEQA). QA activities are based on a number of actions that aim at promoting the quality improvement and transparency at the WUT, such as initiation of new curricula and their approbation, internal evaluation of study programs, evaluation of academic staff and administrative services by students, financial support to research infrastructure and publication. With the aim to strengthen the quality culture and implement its policy in an efficient manner, WUT has participated in several projects related to quality assurance of the Romanian educational system.

## **5.2. Objective and Transparent Procedures to Evaluate Learning Results Standard C. Evaluation of Students**

According to provided documents, WUT has transparent regulations for examination and marking of students, which stipulate the rights and obligations of students that are included in the Code of rights and obligations for undergraduate and graduate students of the West University of Timisoara and in the Charter of the West University of Timisoara. As regards graduation exams at bachelor and master level, it is also regulated by internal Regulations for the organization of graduation exams for bachelor's degree studies and Regulations for the organization of graduation exams for master's degree studies.

During the meeting with students of WUT, it was stated by students that it happens that professors sometimes give higher than deserved marks to students in order to motivate them for further studies.

**Recommendation:** Although the teaching staff's duty should be to motivate students for learning and successful completion of the studies, however I would recommend that the marking process of the students should be based on their achievement of learning outcomes of the certain course.

## **5.3. Procedures for Periodic Evaluation of the Quality of Teaching Staff**

The evaluation of teaching staff for their teaching activity and interaction with students at WUT is organized not only through students' assessment but also through evaluation by their own peers from the same study program. The Teacher Training Department designs a peer evaluation instrument available to all faculties and all study programs.

The student evaluation takes place at the end of each semester and consists in the students' completing anonymous and confidential questionnaires. As stated in the SER the results are used in



synthesis reports at university and department level, which are made available to all interested parties on the websites of each faculty and of DQM.

#### **5.4. The accessibility of proper learning resources**

The Central University Library "Eugen Todoran" (BCUT) was one of the university facilities visited by evaluation team during the visit to WUT. As it was explained by its director, this is a public library of national interest, functioning as a legal body under the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research and it is financed according to National Education Law no. 84/1995, Library Law 334/2002 and GR no. 741/2003. The library provides access not only to electronic databases, but also to a considerable number of subject specific books and journals published both nationally and internationally for each main subject of a study program. It has around 100 seats for the students and offers its services to students up to 1 o'clock after the midnight. As mentioned above, WUT has its own publishing house, West University Publishing House (EUV -<http://www.editura.uvt.ro/>) which is one of the most important publishing houses in Romania.

The publications of EUV are part of the BCUT library's collections and support the entire tertiary education system in the western part of the country.

#### **5.5. Student services**

Based on the documentation, WUT provides a satisfying number of social, cultural and sporting activities for its students. This includes medical services, accommodation facilities, sporting centers, laboratories, recreation units, counseling services and cafeterias.

#### **5.6. Information Systems**

Managed by the Department of Information and Communication Technology, WUT ensures the functionality of the information system at the level of all administrative and academic structural units. There is an Integrated Informatics System ACADEMIS for collection, processing, and data analyzing for assessment of the quality at institutional level. The internet access is available for all students and academic staff to all locations, including the student campus. Apart from this, starting with the academic year 2013-2014, WUT has implemented the e-uvt collaborative platform that collects and stores the information in a cloud computing system. The system utilizes data provided by SCOPUS and ScimagoIR to evaluate the status of scientific research in WUT in comparison to other national and international universities.



### 5.7. The availability of public information

Based on the self report and evidence during the on site visit, WUT has in place different mechanisms for the dissemination of public information both within the academic community and within society. The website of the university is the main point of the communication with the society about the educational process and other WUT activities. The Senate decisions; student admission procedures and other relevant information for students are made public through the university website; The means of dissemination include:

Press releases from the *Department of Communication, Identity and Institutional Promotion (DCIIP)*;

☐ press conferences;

☐ Internet postings on the web pages of faculties/ WUT;

☐ Announcement boards in the university buildings;

☐ Newsletters (WUT newsletter – monthly publication

☐ WUT Press – Magazine

☐ Booklets (Undergraduate Admission Booklet

☐ Graduate Studies – Admission Booklet

**Recommendation:** Although the website of the WUT offers information in English language , it is recommended to expand the information in this language in order to make it more useful for foreign students.

**Conclusion:** West University of Timisoara is well organized and managed university with nationally and internationally acknowledged achievements in pedagogical and research level. As such it stands at European universities standards and has an important position and role in the city of Timisoara as well in Romania. It should be appreciated the effort and the commitment of the management and academic staff to transform WUT into a pole of excellence that will generate knowledge through scientific research, development and innovation, as well as artistic creation. I suggest granting Full trust.

