

**EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S  
REPORT FOR ARACIS**

**"GHEORGHE DIMA" NATIONAL  
ACADEMY OF MUSIC IN CLUJ-NAPOCA  
2021**

Introduction

I was appointed as a Foreign External Evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) and was consequently invited to join the evaluation team for the institutional evaluation process of "Gheorghe Dima" Academy Music Academy in Cluj-Napoca (GDMA). The audit took place between 8-10 December 2021. The evaluation process was conducted online.

The evaluation team consisted of the following members, in addition to myself:

Prof. univ. dr. Simona Lache – Mission Director

Prof. univ. dr. Adriana Giurgiu – Coordinator of the Experts Evaluator Team

Prof. univ. dr. Gheorghe Solomon – Advisory Commission Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Marius Gabriel Petrescu – Institutional Commission Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Ioan Ardelean – Programme Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Doru Albu – Programme Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Octavian Valescu – Programme Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Stefan Stancu – Programme Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Olguta Lupu – Programme Expert

Stefania Armaselu – Technical Secretary

Petru Apostoiaia – Student Evaluator (Aliantei Nationale a Organizatiilor Studentesti din Romania)

Roxana-Nicoleta Popa – Student Evaluator (Uniunea Nationala a Studentilor din Romania)

The evaluation process began on Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. at Webex platform with a preliminary meeting for the preparation and harmonisation of the evaluation steps in the institutional level and at the level of the university degree programmes. At 10:00 a.m., we switched to Zoom platform and the introductory statements of prof. univ. dr. Simona Lache was told. After it, she asked the members of the evaluation team to introduce themselves briefly. Then we listened the welcoming speech of the rector (prof. univ. dr. Vasile Jucan) and the summary of GDMA's history. He also introduced his colleagues.

In my role as foreign expert evaluator, I was responsible for establishing an overview of the whole university and therefore I asked for additional meetings with a few members of the staff at GDMA. I talked with the Head of External Relations Department, the representatives of the Counselling and Career Guidance Centre and the professors who are responsible for bachelor or master programmes conducted in English at GDMA. I attended the common sessions during these days. I asked for a short English summary about the meeting with the undergraduate students as it was conducted in Romanian language, which I received from one of students' representative of the evaluation team.

My findings are based on the "Internal Evaluation Report" (2021), the information I have gained from the websites of GDMA and I have heard during the meetings and interviews. The meetings and interviews were conducted in two different platforms (Webex and Zoom).

### General Statements

GDMA is a public higher education institution, operates according to the Constitution of Romania, the National Education Law and other normative acts that govern the higher education system in the country and also on the basis of the University Charter and of its own internal regulations. GDMA is one of the most important representative of the Romanian music higher education, enjoys national and international prestige, its tradition extending over a hundred years.

The institution was evaluated by ARACIS in 2015 and 2010. As a result of the latest evaluation the institution was awarded the "High Degree of Confidence" qualification.

Beside the Senate and the Administration Council, GDMA has a structure with two faculties (the Faculty of Music Performance; the Faculty of Theoretical Studies) and Piatra Neamț University Branch. The faculties are further subdivided into departments. According to the organisation chart of GDMA the Council for Doctoral Studies, the Doctoral School Council, the Commission for University Professional Ethics and Deontology, the Commission for the Evaluation and Quality Assurance can be found in the institutional structure.

GDMA has quite a number of Bachelor and Master programmes which are provided through also distance learning education activities. Study programmes also available in English. The university is recognized as an institution with the right to organize PhD studies. All study programmes of the university have been accredited/ authorized to operate.

**Comment:** I have read several self-evaluation reports since I began taking part in institutional accreditation processes but GDMA's assessment was one of the best. It is very well structured and clear.

### Managerial Structure

The leadership of the university is organised in accordance with its legal obligations. The democratic and efficient management system relies on the decision-making competencies specific to the management structures. The election mechanisms follow the principles of academic democracy at GDMA. Elections are organized for members of the Senate, the faculty councils, the departmental councils and the university branch council. All the procedures are regulated.

The Senate is the main decision making body the supreme governing board of the university. The Senate of GDMA consisting of teaching staff and the representatives of the students (25%). The Administrative Board of GDMA ensures the operational management of the university's structures, as a management body with administrative decision-making power. The rector is the president of this board and two vice-rectors support his activities. The deans, the General Administrative director, External Relations Director and a student representative are members of the Administrative Board.

The method of appointing the rector based on general elections. The Rector's duties include the strategic leadership of the university and representing the university at judicial and public bodies. He has formulated the quality policy and objectives, which are known and applicable in the entire university.

Monitoring, internal assessment (e.g. Monitoring Commission, Committee for Quality Assurance and Evaluation, Committee for Verification of Compliance of Mandatory Minimum Standards, Ethics and Professional Deontology Committee etc.) and functional (e.g. Department of External Relations, Centre for Information, Counselling and Career Guidance etc.) organizations can be found at GDMA, which are also well-structured and provide various services for the students and the staff.

The management system is based on electronic communication systems. The GDMA's website contains much information (most of them are available also in English), from legislation and the calendar of artistic and research actions to announcements of interest to the academic community, students, and faculty.

**Comment:** GDMA has a coherent, integrated, transparent management system, based on an efficient and effective administration. I noticed a minor problem in the operation of the Ethics and Professional Deontology Committee, in connection with the status of the external legal advisor's support, which has to be clarified in the future.

### Teaching Staff

77.71% (166,6) were filled of the teaching positions at GDMA in the academic year of 2020/21 from which 22.29% (47,784) were vacant, covered by basic teaching (150 positions) and covered by associate teaching staff (57 positions). The GDMA teaching staff is well known and prestigious personalities in the field of music with important distinctions awarded both in Romania and abroad. The number of teaching staff was increasing in the between the evaluated period (2015-2021).

In full-time education, the number of Bachelor and Master students is 841 (644+197), and the number of full-time and associate teachers who teach in existing programmes is 194,

which means a ratio of 4.33 students/teaching staff member. The ratio of teachers/students complies with the legal provisions in force. It is specific and characteristic of music education, where many majors take place in classes with one student, which indicates high quality of evaluation and student-professor interaction.

The structure of the teaching staff seems to be balanced. Every year the University evaluates the employees' performances. GDMA should more encourage the experienced lectures to become associate professors and the experienced associate professors to become professors in order to maintain the academic quality.

**Comment:** The quality of human resources and the scientific potential at GDMA are on a very good level. The ratio of students to teaching staff is very good. It is in accordance with the ratio existing in most of the music universities in Europe. GDMA has to maintain investing in human resource, if funds allows. It is one base of competitiveness.

### Facilities

It is very difficult to gauge that the infrastructure of GDMA fulfil all the requirements (classrooms, laboratories, libraries etc.) without being present myself on site. According to the Internal Evaluation Report and the experiences of my colleagues, who took part in the site visit, it seems that GDMA has the necessary resources to carry out a high quality educational process in accordance with the curricula and the number of students, both in the location in Cluj-Napoca and at the university branch in Piatra Neamț.

GDMA does not have a unified campus. GDMA has its own real estates, but also rented buildings. (Acquisition of former properties owned by GDMA's predecessors is expected.)

The educational and research spaces are well equipped, containing also quality musical instruments, IT and audio-video equipment, books, musical scores etc. Students have access to databases, they benefit from courses and course materials developed by GDMA teachers, as well as courses and course materials in electronic format. For the electronic format the Moodle Platform is used and for the distance learning programs the DIDFR e-Learning Platform.

GDMA provide accommodation for most students in the dormitory on Albac Street, with 124 places distributed in 62 rooms. GDMA has no sport facilities and a canteen for the students is also missing at the moment.

**Comment:** It is very much welcomed that the above-mentioned infrastructure for the students among the predictable goals.

The info-documentary support for higher education and scientific research at GDMA is assured by its library. The collection of GDMA Library is adequate to the goals of the study programmes.

GDMA ensures the printing of the lecture notes, textbooks and of the necessary documents for the implementation of the curricula by its own publishing house (MediaMusica Publishing House).

**Comment:** GDMA has adequate infrastructure, although development is need. A new building (Bucium Street) is under construction which will improve the infrastructure of GDMA. The space for the activities of GDMA will be sufficient with the completion of the new modern building and it will help the high quality artistic work also. Investment to material infrastructure has to be continued.

## Students

High quality of study programmes (BA/BSc, MA/MSc and PhD) are available for the candidates at GDMA. The number of students at GDMA is just over 2000 (including all levels, forms and types of studies) in the academic year 2020/2021 and the figures a little bit increased recently. Very few foreign students are taking part in the English conducted Bachelor and Master programmes, which is likely the consequence of the pandemic situation. The amount of information available in English for potential international students has increased significantly at GDMA, especially if I compare with other Romanian universities. In the period, 2018-2020 GDMA coordinated three projects for the

Internationalization of study programmes that brought additional results relevant to the international development strategy of the institution.

I attended the online appointment with the undergraduate students, as an observer, but had to ask for a short English summary about the meeting because it was conducted in Romanian language without translation. I received it from one of students' representative (Petru Apostoiaia) of the evaluation team.

According to the summary, the undergraduate students seem to be very pleased with GDMA and found the academic and administrative staff very good and helpful. They are generally pleased with the education, the circumstances and the infrastructure. Unfortunately not enough places are available in the dormitory, although the conditions are very good. There are nearly 80 Erasmus Mobility agreements at GDMA and they are also taking part in CEEPUS, Fulbright, DAAD. The number of outgoing students participating in Erasmus Mobility Program was increasing in the recent years. The number of incoming students in Erasmus Mobility Program could be more. They have several independent bilateral agreements also. External Relations Department manages mobility for students, professors and auxiliary staff.

During the discussion with the graduate students, they seemed pleased with the members of the academic staff and the university. Most of them have excellent relationship with their former professors. Those who had study experience abroad mentioned that it was very beneficial for them. It was emphasized that as GDMA had very good professional relationship with different artistic organizations the students could get a job easily. It was suggested to pay more attention for the marketing of GDMA.

We had a meeting with a group of about 20 employers Thursday at noon. The employers were representatives of different fields of music (e.g. The Romanian National Opera in Cluj-Napoca; "Transylvania" State Philharmonic Orchestra of Cluj-Napoca; Music High Schools etc.). They were very satisfied with those students who graduated from GDMA.

**Comment:** Increasing the number of international students would be an opportunity for GDMA after the pandemic situation.

## Research

GDMA pays special attention to scientific research and artistic creations. The main research mission at GDMA is to develop scientific research/artistic creation activities through innovation and cultural transfer. The scientific research/artistic creation activities of GDMA consider national and international trends.

The research activity is carried out mainly within the research structures that are coordinated by the Centre for Research, Professional Training and Development and has sufficient human, financial and logistical resources to achieve the proposed objectives. Scientific research in the university is structured into research laboratories and research centres: the Centre of excellence in the field of European educational, cultural and artistic connection and the Interart Centre as well as a Multimedia Centre that coordinates, through the activity of MediaMusica Publishing House and the Sound Studio, the executive actions of research/artistic creation. Research in GDMA is oriented both on theoretical and practical matters. The teaching and research staff carries out scientific research/artistic creation activities materialized in music performance and creative activities, publications in journals, conferences or symposia in the country and abroad, research projects. The academic staff publishes papers and books at MediaMusica Publishing House. Articles and studies from the conferences organized in the institution are edited in the three magazines of GDMA (Musicology papers, ICT in musical field, Musical cognition). The GDMA regularly organizes artistic activities, conferences, symposia and scientific sessions for teachers, researchers and students.

The research results and artistic performances are appreciated nationally and internationally through awards for creation and performance, citations in journals and specialized reviews.

The ambition of GDMA in research activity is quite clear: the continuous development of the performance of research in the university, and increasing the visibility in the Europe and worldwide.

## Quality Management

The internal quality management system is very well described in Internal Evaluation Report of GDMA. A well-structured organization can be found for the quality assurance of teaching, learning and research activities with coherent procedures at GDMA.

At the central level, the responsibility for quality assurance belongs to the Committee for Evaluation and Quality Assurance (CEAC), which follows the Regulations for CEAC organization and functioning. CEAC is the structure in charge of devising and implementing a quality management system across GDMA. The Rector has direct responsibility for the quality management at institutional level, but he delegates it to the vice-rector in charge of teaching activities, who acts as President of CEAC.

CEAC ensures the managerial efficiency and transparency of its activities through the Quality Assurance Programs carried out annually within the university. CEAC collaborates permanently with the persons responsible for the organizational function that ensures the efficient development of the activities of the administrative and economic departments, respectively the General Administrative Director and the Economic Director, aiming to obtain the best results and the optimal use of resources.

Besides the transparent quality assurance structure and procedures of GDMA, the university concentrate on the different fields of the quality assurance: monitoring and periodically reviewing study programmes and activities; quality assurance in teaching and scientific research; accessibility of learning resources; information management; periodical external quality assurance; transparency of public interest information regarding the academic programmes etc.

**Comment:** In my opinion, the structure and the procedures of quality assurance at GDMA are well organized. There is also internal and external control of quality assurance.

I am happy to declare my full and complete confidence in the quality assurance processes at GDMA, as well as the quality of its programmes.

## Conclusion

The basis of my report what I have read in the "Internal Evaluation Report" and I have gained from the website of GDMA, what I have heard during the meetings and interviews. I was very much satisfied what I have experienced although everybody knows the limits of an online audit. I hope that some of the comments, which I made, will help the university Management in the process of continual improvement.

The students' motivation, the staff (teachers, researches and administrators) commitments and professionalism are the basis of the success. I think that GDMA deserves a "High degree confidence" rating of ARACIS.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to leadership of GDMA and all the university staff for the support during the evaluation process. Also much gratitude to my colleagues from the evaluation team for the professional, open and gentle way in which the audit was conducted. Also thanks to ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this online evaluation process.

Pécs, 20-12-2021

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