



**Accreditation of Study Programmes  
Assessment Report**

**Institution: Alecu Russo State University of Bălți, Republic of Moldova**

**Study programme: Business Law**

**Assessment committee:**

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**Coordinator: Ms Tiia Bach, Assessment Coordinator, Estonian Quality Agency for Higher Education and VET, Estonia**

**Date of the assessment visit: 20 May 2015**

**Assessment committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA: 6 July 2015**

**Assessment committee received the comments of the institution under accreditation: 22 July 2015**

**Assessment committee approved the final version of component assessment with 4 votes in favour and 0 votes against.**

**Date: 09 September 2015**

**I Summary of the assessment (mark with 'X'):**

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
Study programme and its development			X
Teaching and learning			X
Teaching staff		X	
Students		X	
Resources		X	

**General introduction:**

Alecu Russo Balti State University is a state institution of higher education that was transformed into a university in 1992 and is a successor of the former State Pedagogical Institute which was established already in 1945. The University has, in total, 4 Faculties: Faculty of Philology; Faculty of Exact, Economic and Environmental Sciences; Faculty of Educational Sciences, Psychology and Arts; and the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences. Studies are conducted at 3 levels of education: Bachelor’s (1st cycle), Master’s (2nd cycle) and Doctoral (3rd cycle).

In the field of law, studies are conducted on one programme at Bachelor’s level (Law) and two programmes at Master’s level (“Business law”, and “Criminal Sciences and Criminology”) in the Department of Law, Faculty of Law and Social Sciences.

The professional Master’s programme under evaluation – Business Law – was initiated in 2008 and is conducted in the form of full-time studies with the duration of 1.5 years and the volume of 90 ECTS.

**Comments:**

The strategic planning of the development of the study programme is informal; there has been no actual developing of the study programme since 2009. The title, content and learning outcomes of the study programme are not consistent. Currently, the programme lacks a number of courses necessary for a Business Law programme at Master level. It is not clear according to which criteria the size of the courses (ECTS credits) are chosen. The study-load of the students is not more than 20 hours per week – being clearly too low – and this is not sufficient for a full-time programme. There is no actual cooperation with the representatives of the labour market about the development of the study programme. It is not clear what the expectations of the labour market are.

The teaching staff is aware of the objectives of their own courses, but they have not been thinking how their courses contribute to the achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of the whole study programme. In the MA thesis there is almost none of the content based on international literature other than that published in Romania and Russia.

Study management is regulated, but there is only limited access to the texts of the regulations on the website. The students give their feedback on courses electronically, which is seen as positive. Yet there is no general system for using feedback for the improvement of study management.

The use of modern and interactive teaching strategies is very limited; the teaching methods focus on improving the practical skills of the students.

The library of the University is lacking textbooks and appropriate legal literature. In writing their MA theses students use out-of-date materials. The organisation of internship is regulated, but the duration of internship is too short for 10 ECTS.

The average grades of the students are unreasonably high. The implementation of the grading system does not make it possible to distinguish the students according to their knowledge acquired. The recognition of prior learning and work experience has not been implemented.

The formal requirements regarding the qualification of staff are fulfilled. However, the staff size is small (9 persons) and so is the student body in this programme and therefore the Committee has some doubts about the adequacy (size) of the staff and its long term capabilities to teach courses in many specialist areas at the master level. There has been some experiences with inviting visiting staff from outside Moldova to teach on the programme, but such involvement has been so far quite limited and should definitely be expanded and developed. Moreover, it was firmly established that there is lack of participation in international research projects and networks, one of the reasons being that staff needs to fully cover all related costs.

Also, students' individual work is less than it is foreseen in the course programs and required for 90 credits, so there are obvious problems with workload of teaching staff in organising and monitoring students individual work.

There are clear requirements for admission and the assessment of the academic progress, and admission requirements are adequate for students to complete their studies on the programme. The systems for career guidance of its students and career monitoring of the graduates,

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however, are not well-established and need to be improved. Possibilities for student mobility exist, but students have not actively used those opportunities. At present time, plagiarism detection mechanisms have not been fully developed. The drop-out rates do not present a threat for the sustainability of the MA programme and the graduates are considered to be competitive, especially for the northern region of the country.

One of the most critical issues is a declining number of students enrolled in the programme. The Committee has concluded that it is unable to find that the programme conforms to all requirements with respect to resources, since resources are too scarce to meet all requirements and make the necessary investments and bring the programme to the level of sufficient number of students, library facilities, well trained staff, and an upgrade of the courses.

**In conclusion:** The Committee is of the opinion that the Business Law programme is small and not meeting standards one may require from a master programme, such as the study load of the students and the grades obtained by the students. The programme is not really developed into a master programme, but was set up as a private law programme. That aspect has led to a programme which is not structurally planned nor developed and which has not been set up from the perspective of the labour market or needed knowledge of the graduates, but from the perspective of the suppliers and the (expertise or interest of the) present staff. The Committee has also noted that the challenges posed by the programme are not what ought to be expected of a master programme and do not relate to exigencies of international businesses or international or European law and seem to be isolated from international literature and academic minimum requirements. The University, furthermore, is not demanding enough in setting standards for programme development, career perspectives and career guidance, contacts with the labour market, seeking benchmarks from other institutions and similar programmes in Moldova and abroad, and pushing international collaboration and exchanges. Furthermore, we have noted that the University has taken quite a few initiatives, as we have indicated below, in setting structures and putting systems in place, however, without rigorously implementing them and incorporating them in Human resources and evaluating systems and structures.

The University owes to students and the labour market and Moldovan society that the programme will be substantially strengthened and updated to international standards and academic master level.

### **Commendation:**

- The programme and the institution enjoy the benefit of a truly academic campus. This facility will, if fully making use of it, benefit the academic exchange and culture, and can lead to a prospering of programmes through multi-disciplinary exchange.

### **Recommendations:**

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- If the current programme is intended to be Business Law programme, the content should be revised accordingly and business law oriented courses should be added. If, however, the programme is intended to have private law content then the title should be changed accordingly.
- It is recommended to revamp and upgrade the programme and make it into a much more challenging and demanding programme which meets master level requirements and makes students study the allotted ECTS hours. In that respect, the system of grading and assessment also must be amended so as to distinguish between students and be aligned with study load.
- The size of the programme is also small, in student numbers and staff, which poses a risk from a sustainability perspective and from the perspective of quality of the programme and its content.
- Furthermore, the programme has to be opened up to foreign influences and benchmarks, through visiting staff, international education and research exchanges, of staff and students.
- The programme and the University are recommended to consider a thorough evaluation of the programme and also to look for collaboration in order to remain able to offer a viable programme in business law. The intake has to be substantially increased; staff has to grow in size and expertise; resources for library and various support systems must be made available; and research in line with the programme must be strengthened. The resources that will be needed for these endeavours do need collaboration and do presume a programme with substantially higher student numbers.

### **Recommendations to the Ministry of Education:**

- The Committee is of the opinion that the present Framework Plan adopted by the Ministry of Education is far too inflexible in terms of stipulating the volume of fundamental, specialised and optional courses, allowing the volumes of courses to be strictly 5/10/15 ECTS and subsequently one semester up to 6-2 courses/modules. It is strongly advisable to reconsider giving higher education institutions greater freedom to decide upon the volume of obligatory and optional courses in the programme, thereby expanding students' choices. Furthermore, institutions could be allowed to have courses with volumes bigger or smaller than 5 ECTS, depending on the content of the specific course, and not simply 5 ECTS in order to fulfil some formal requirements.
- The Committee is of the opinion that the requirement established by the state in terms of having a dormitory for *all* the students is superfluous and too expensive and should be revisited, since many students have their own abode. Instead of having its own dormitory, it could be considered to cooperate with other real-estate companies or proprietors offering accommodation. So is the requirement regarding the provision of medical service – it is outdated, too expensive, not efficient, and therefore too much a burden on small institutions and programmes with low funding.

II Assessment areas and requirements

1. STUDY PROGRAMME AND ITS DEVELOPMENT	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'			X
<p><b>Collected evidence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annex D7.1: Strategic Plan of the University 2013-2018</li> <li>- Annex D.2: Strategic Plan of the Department of Law 2013-2018</li> <li>- Annex D7.3: Plan of the Department of Law for the academic year 2014 – 2015</li> <li>- Annex D 1.2: Master’s study programme “Business Law”</li> <li>- Annex D2: Study plan for Bachelor’s programme in Law</li> <li>- Annex D3.2: Course descriptions of the “Business Law” Master’s programme</li> <li>- Information obtained during the interviews</li> <li>- Information available in the Self-Evaluation Report</li> </ul>			
<p><b>General comments:</b></p> <p>The strategic planning of the development of the study programme is informal; there is no systematic implementation of the development plan and no system for using the experience of the previous periods for planning the next period. There has been no actual developing of the study programme since 2009.</p> <p>The title, content and learning outcomes of the study programme are not consistent. The content of the study programme is sporadic and insufficient. It is lacking many disciplines that are constitutive to a Business Law MA programme. It is not clear, according to which criteria the courses and their size and scope have been included into the programme.</p> <p>The study-load of the students is not more than 20 hours per week and this is not sufficient for a full-time programme.</p> <p>There is no actual cooperation with the representatives of the labour market about the development of the study programme. It is not clear what the expectations of the labour market are.</p> <p>The teaching staff is aware of the objectives of their own courses, but they have not been thinking about how their courses contribute to the</p>			

achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme as a whole.

The MA theses almost contain nothing based on international literature other than that published in Romania and Russia. A prerequisite for the inclusion of foreign language literature is improving the command of foreign languages of students and staff alike.

Recommendations:

- If the current programme is intended to be a Business Law programme, the content should be revised accordingly and business law oriented courses should be added. If, however, the programme is intended to have private law content then the title should be changed accordingly.
- Clearly plan, implement and monitor the development of the study programme.
- Create conditions that are conducive to raising the awareness of teaching staff about the objectives of the programme.
- Critically reflect on the content of the programme and its constituent courses.
- Rephrase the learning outcomes and adjust these to the programme.
- Increase the study-load of the students and increase students' challenges.
- Deepen the academic and theoretical knowledge and international knowledge and scope.
- Cooperate with the labour market.
- Improve the foreign language skills of the staff and students.
- It is recommended to set the requirements for the MA thesis to use at least some sources in the English or French languages as one of the main sources of the thesis.
- Build in the programme specific elements that are geared towards academic research and may entice students' interest in a pursuit of doctoral studies.

**1.1. REQUIREMENT: A higher education institution regularly plans its development: the higher education institution has a development plan accompanied by an action plan to ensure sustainability both in the institution and in a given study programme. The implementation of the action plan is analysed and forms the basis for planning of the next development period.**

Comments:

The University has adopted the documents connected to planning its development: a strategic development plan of the University for 2013-

2018; the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences activity plan for the current academic year; the Department of Law strategic plan for 2013-2018 and an operational plan for 2014-2015.

The strategic plan includes a lot of statistical data about previous periods, the aim of which is not clear because it is not linked to the targets of the next period. The Department of Law has a strategic plan for 2013-2018 and the operational activity plan for 2014-2015. The strategic plan and the activity plan of the Department are quite specific, including among others some activities to improve the quality of the study programme of Business Law. The activity plan includes deadlines and names of people responsible for specific actions. The activity plan is more oriented towards describing the everyday activities, and not so much towards development. In the Self-Evaluation report it is said that the plans are implemented and the results are analysed, but it is not clear whether it is done systematically and how, and if this information is used for planning the next period at all.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to concentrate on development issues in activity plans and to monitor the implementation of the strategic and action plans and use the data gathered for planning the next periods.
- Create in that respect a full-fledged and effective circle of planning and evaluation.

**1.2. REQUIREMENT: A study programme is authorized and functions in accordance with the normative acts in force.**

Comments:

The MA programme “Business Law” is authorised by the Order of the Ministry of Education no. 391 of May 30th, 2008. The Framework Plan for higher education approved by the Order no. 455 of the Ministry of Education issued on June 3, 2011, establishes requirements for the study plans at Master’s level. It is the requirement for the professional Master’s programmes (90 credits) to be structured in the following way: Master thesis (30 ECTS), Internship (10 ECTS), Fundamental disciplines (15-25 ECTS), and Specialized disciplines (25-35 ECTS) among which there should be up to 20% optional disciplines.

The structure of the programme “Business Law” is built up as follows: Master thesis (30 ECTS), Internship (10 ECTS), Fundamental disciplines (25 ECTS), and Specialized disciplines (25 ECTS), which include one optional discipline in the volume of 5 ECTS. Additionally, the programme offers two free-choice disciplines. It should be noted that one of the free-choice electives (Theory of Civil Actions) is presented as a fundamental course; yet, free-choice electives cannot be fundamental, since fundamental courses must be obligatory in the programme.

The programme corresponds formally to the requirements of the Framework Plan. However, the Committee would like to point out that the courses chosen to be as fundamental are content-wise not appropriate to be considered fundamental in the Business Law programme. Therefore, the selection of fundamental courses in the programme should be reconsidered.

The Committee is of the opinion that the present Framework Plan adopted by the Ministry of Education is far too inflexible in terms of stipulating the volume of fundamental, specialised and optional courses, allowing the volumes of courses to be strictly 5/10/15 ECTS and subsequently one semester up to 6-2 courses/modules. It is strongly advisable to reconsider giving higher education institutions greater freedom to decide upon the volume of obligatory and optional courses in the programme, thereby expanding students' choices. Furthermore, institutions could be allowed to have courses with volumes bigger or smaller than 5 ECTS, depending on the content of the specific course, and not simply 5 ECTS in order to fulfil some formal requirements.

**1.3. REQUIREMENT: The title of a study programme is consistent with its content.**

Comments:

The content of the Business Law programme is too sporadic and insufficient. For example, it is lacking many disciplines without which a business lawyer would be lacking relevant expertise. Obvious examples are subjects such as Intellectual Property, Tax Law, Antitrust Law, and Trade. It is not clear, according to which criteria the courses have been chosen to the programme. The Committee has the understanding that the programme was intended to fit in the domain of private law, more than being a business law programme, and that the courses which were selected were the kind of courses for which expertise was available, instead of being selected as necessary and fitting courses within the context of business law.

Recommendation:

- If the current programme is intended to be Business Law programme, the content should be revised accordingly and business law oriented courses should be added. If, however, the programme is intended to have private law content then the title should be changed accordingly.

**1.4. REQUIREMENT: The conduct of studies, including the student workload of independent work and internship, support achievement of the objectives of the study programme.**

Comments:

Internship at the end of both semesters is a very good opportunity to give the students a new perspective of their studies. Relating the internship with the MA thesis could add extra value. However, it is not clear how it is ensured that the students are properly supervised and given tasks that really improve their skills during the internship. The aim of the MA thesis is to combine the application of the theoretical research results in some practical situations, which definitely supports the achievement of the objectives of the study programme. The programme includes 1980 hours of independent work, which is almost 75% of the total content of the programme. According to the

interviews with the teaching staff and students, the overall study-load of the students is not more than 20 hours per week, which is half as much as required according to the study programme and according to the legal and ECTS standards. The University should urgently address this issue, since it is the heart of the quality of the master programme.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that the management of the University addresses the issue of insufficient study-load of the students very seriously and initiates the discussions among the teaching staff to make them analyse the syllabuses and components of their courses and introduce new teaching strategies that make the students do more independent work.
- It is urgently needed to develop the programme into a full-fledged full-time programme, enabling the staff to make the programme more challenging and add to its depth.

**1.5. REQUIREMENT: The objectives and learning outcomes of a study programme are in coherence with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The structure and content of the study programme is internationally comparable.**

Comments:

The formal learning outcomes stated in the Education Plan are in coherence with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF level 7). On the other hand, there is a high probability that the learning outcomes of this study programme are not to be achieved. The learning outcomes of the Business Law MA programme do not really correspond to business law, but more likely to business administration. The learning outcomes do not fit with the content of the programme either, i.e. the courses incorporated in the study programme. The content of the study programme does not enable to achieve the learning outcomes stated in the education plan. In the learning outcomes, the management skills and ability to orientate in the economic climate is emphasized. For instance, one of the learning outcomes mentioned is understanding of economic, social and financial forces, which influence the planning and decision-making process in business projects. At the same time, the programme does not include any courses about financial or tax law, financial planning, business management etc. The choice of courses in the programme seems coincidental and driven not by the aim of achieving the objectives and learning outcomes of the programme, but most probably by the availability of teaching staff of specific courses.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended to analyse the learning outcomes written down in the Education Plan and to rephrase them so that they would correspond to a true programme in business law at MA level. One of the suggestions of the Committee in this respect is to orient on practices in other countries and select the best suited and available practice, and seek to implement it whilst also training the staff.

<p><b>1.6. REQUIREMENT</b> The objectives, content and learning outcomes of the Master’s study programme are clearly distinguishable from those of the Bachelor’s study programme.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The objectives, content and learning outcomes of the Business Law MA programme are distinguishable from those of the Law BA programme.</p>	
<p><b>1.7. REQUIREMENT:</b> Study disciplines of the study programme are presented in a logical succession.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>Is not clear according to which criteria the size and scope of the courses (all courses are 5 ECTS) are chosen. For instance, it seems unbalanced to have the courses “Individual Employment Contract” (there was a 4 ECTS course of Employment Law also in the Bachelor’s programme) and “Collective Bargaining and Administering Collective Agreements”, 5 ECTS each; to have a course about Collective Bargaining Agreement before Individual Employment Contract does not seem very logical either. At the same time, such important subjects as for example Tax Law, Intellectual Property, Competition Law, or Trade Law are missing from the programme. Decision Theory in Law, Legal Research Methodology and Judicial Ethics are very important disciplines in legal education, but to spend 1/5 of the volume of all subjects to these subjects appears unbalanced and requires at least a proper justification and adjustment in the learning outcomes and strategy. The more so, because the presence of the courses appears not leaving enough room for the component of specialization courses in the domain of business law.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is highly recommended to analyse the content of the programme from the point of view how all specific courses contribute to achieving the learning outcomes of the whole study programme. If necessary, the scope of some courses could be reduced making room for new ones.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1.8. REQUIREMENT:</b> Development of a study programme takes into consideration the needs of the labour market.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Education Plan includes a sub-section “Arguments on specialist demands on the labour market”, which actually does not describe the need for business lawyers in the labour market. The statement in the Self-Evaluation Report that the development of the MA programme Business Law is dictated by the complexity of legal realities in continuous transformation in the field of entrepreneurial activity, which requires training specialised staff that would be able to strengthen the climate of business practice in the Republic of Moldova, is declarative. It does not provide proof from the labour market and its demands.</p> <p>There is a list of partner organisations with which the University has cooperation agreements, but during the visit, the staff of the University</p>	

could not convince the Committee that the University discusses the issues about developing the Business Law MA study programme with the representatives of the labour market and that their ideas and needs are taken into consideration. The Committee was not offered an opportunity to meet any of the employers who have hired graduates from Business Law MA programme, since they were not present in the meetings during the on site visit.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to monitor the needs of the labour market in the sphere of private law and discuss with the potential employers what kind of knowledge and qualities of the employees they lack. In that respect, it is to be considered that business law operates in the domains of public law and private law: intellectual property law and trade law are to a high extent public and so are public procurement and competition. One may expect that the programme on Business Law does also take into account the labour market at state authorities.

**1.9. REQUIREMENT: Study programme development is a continuous process which, among others, involves feedback from students, employers and other relevant stakeholders.**

Comments:

In the self-evaluation report, it is stated that the development of the study programme has been a continuous process and the programme has undergone different changes to meet the expectations of students and employers. However, the changes have been made only in the names of some academic disciplines. As a formal remark, it is notable that even the academic calendar in the Education Plan is from the academic year of 2009-2010.

Feedback is gathered from the students and the results are analysed and presented to the teaching staff, but there is no system of considering this feedback for developing the structure and components of the study programme. Each member of the teaching staff can use this information for developing his or her course, but the study programme development as a whole cannot be considered a continuous process, which among others involves feedback from students.

According to the interview with the Vice-Rector, feedback about the quality of education is gathered from the employers, the last survey was carried out in 2012. There were no representatives of the potential employers of Business Law MA programme present in the interview with the Committee, so the Committee could not assess, whether they were aware of this survey and whether they have been involved.

However, there is no evidence of the substantial development of the study programme or even of any discussions about the need of development initiated as a result if the feedback of employers since 2009/2010, or about the shifts in the legal world, which necessitates a restructuring of the programme and the inclusion of a wider variety of courses and subjects.

<p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is recommended to gather feedback about the Business Law MA programme from the employers systematically and periodically and use this information together with the information gathered through feedback from the students for developing and updating the study programme.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1.10. REQUIREMENT: The members of the teaching staff are aware of the objectives of a study programme and of their role in achieving these objectives.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>From what the representatives of the teaching staff told during the interview it can be inferred that they are aware of the objectives of their own courses, but they have not been reflecting how their courses contribute to the achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of the whole Business Law MA programme. The Committee found during the interviews that the teaching staff is not aware of the objectives and learning outcomes of Business Law MA programme. For instance the professor teaching the courses “Individual Employment Contract” and “Collective Bargaining and Administering Collective Agreements” could not credibly explain how these courses contribute to the achievement of learning outcomes of the whole programme.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is recommended to introduce measures that create a common understanding about the objectives of the study programme and awareness of the role of the teaching staff in achieving these objectives, i.e. draft the strategy of developing the Business Law MA programme, prepare instructions about study programme development and organise discussions among the teaching staff.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1.11. REQUIREMENT: Study programme provides opportunities for further education at doctoral level.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The graduates of the MA programme have the qualification that enables access to doctoral education. In reality, the graduates of the MA programme “Business Law” do not continue their education at doctoral level. None of the graduates have applied for doctoral studies so far. One reason for that could be that Alecu Russo Balti State University does not have the programme of doctoral studies itself. But it is also notable that among the learning outcomes access to the doctoral studies is not stated as one of the goals. The structure of the education plan where the whole 3<sup>rd</sup> semester is dedicated to writing the MA thesis could provide preparation for continuing towards research-oriented doctoral studies. A course on Legal Research Methodology is incorporated in the programme. On the other hand, the theses do not include almost at all international literature and because of that the students are not competitive for PhD studies, especially outside of Moldova. In the</p>	

opinion of the Committee, the theses do not prove that students are geared towards academic research. Thus, formally the MA programme allows access to continuation of studies at PhD level, but learning outcomes should foresee the development of students' research skills and orientation towards (international) research and literature.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to set the requirements for the MA thesis to use at least some sources in the English or French languages as one of the main sources of the thesis. At the same time, all measures should be taken to improve the foreign language skills of the staff and students.
- It may also be recommended to set higher standards for the thesis in the sense of research question, originality of research, scope of analysis and in-depth research based upon a wide variety of sources, national and international, scholarly and professional.
- Build in the programme specific elements that are geared towards academic research and may entice students' interest in a pursuit of doctoral studies.

2. TEACHING AND LEARNING	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'			X
<p><b>Collected evidence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annex D 1.2: Master's study programme "Business Law"</li> <li>- Annex D3.2: Course descriptions of the "Business Law" Master's programme</li> <li>- Information obtained during the interviews</li> <li>- Information available in the Self-Evaluation Report</li> </ul>			

**General comments:**

Study management is regulated, but there is only limited access to the texts of the regulations on the website. The students give their feedback electronically; the University makes an electronic report to each professor about the feedback. There is no general system for using feedback for the improvement of study management.

The use of modern and interactive teaching strategies is very limited; the teaching methods focus on improving the practical skills of the students.

The library of the University is lacking textbooks and appropriate legal literature. In writing their MA thesis students use out-of-date materials.

The organisation of internship is regulated, but the duration of internship is too short for 10 ECTS. The cooperation with the employers offering the students internship places is not very active; all students might not have appropriate internship places.

The average grades of the students are unreasonably high. The implementation of the grading system does not make it possible to distinguish the students according to their knowledge acquired.

The management and teaching staff are aware of the public legislation about recognition of prior learning experience, but it has not been implemented.

Commendations:

- Electronic feedback system is commendable.

Recommendations:

- Publish all the regulations about study management on the website.
- Encourage the teaching staff to use modern and interactive teaching methods.
- Encourage the students and staff to search for and use more up-to-date literature and learning materials.
- It is recommended to analyse the duration of the internship and the volume of work the students have to do during the internship and adjust them so that the weekly workload of the students would be reasonable and achievable.
- Analyse the implementation of the grading system and give the teaching staff instructions about correct implementation of the system.

- Make the recognition of prior learning and work experience a common practice.
- It is recommended to make the analysis of achievement of learning outcomes a systematic procedure and use those analysis as well as feedback gathered from the students and employers for building up the continuous process of developing the study programme.

**2.1. REQUIREMENT: Study management is regulated, publicly available, and supports the achievement of learning outcomes. In course of study management development, the results of feedback surveys and the analysis of learning activities are taken into account.**

Comments:

Study management is regulated, but there is only limited access to the texts of the regulations on the website of the University. According to the Head of the Unit of Quality Assurance, the feedback from the students is gathered at the end of each course; however, an overall system of using feedback for the improvement of the study process is missing. The students give their feedback electronically, after which the University makes an electronic report to each professor about the feedback given to his or her course. It is not sure whether this information is further generalised and used for the overall improvement of study management.

Commendation:

- It is commendable that an electronic feedback system has been developed, avoiding filling in questionnaires on paper. The electronic system helps to save time of both the students and staff, to better preserve and analyse the results of feedback and to make it more easily accessible to wider circle of counterparts.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to publish all the regulations about study management adopted by the University on its website.
- It is also recommended to make the outcomes of feedback/evaluations as well as the follow up available.

**2.2. REQUIREMENT: Within the education process of study programme, efficient teaching strategies are applied (modern, interactive, teamwork-based, etc.) and oriented towards active learning of the students.**

Comments:

The Self-Evaluation Report contains references to two websites where the academic staff can upload the courses, methodological guidelines,

curricula, questionnaires, individual work tasks etc. However, the activity in these websites seems quite low. The Moodle platform contains courses of different educational establishments of Balti and there are all together two courses in humanities and social sciences on MA level. Another website contains the materials about the courses of law only, all of them created and conducted by the same people and the latest activity is from April 29 and before that March 31.

The students named seminars, lectures, debates over cases and comparative analyses of different countries as teaching methods that they have experienced. The teaching methods seem to focus more on improving the practical skills of students; case-studies, problem-based learning etc. are often used.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to introduce a regular course for the teaching staff about modern and interactive teaching methods to encourage them to use these in the teaching process.
- And furthermore, to facilitate teaching staff to visit didactical meetings and specific programmes abroad that are renowned for teaching. Exchanges and the visit of foreign staff may also be extremely helpful, or the invitation of peers to give guidance and advice about the study materials and study processes and teaching modes.

**2.3. REQUIREMENT: Within the education process of study programme, up-to-date teaching materials are used.**

Comments:

The library of the University is lacking textbooks and appropriate legal literature, especially for the MA level programmes. Students mentioned that they miss up-to-date teaching materials.

In writing their MA theses, students use outdated materials, the vast majority of the references are to the sources published more than 10 years ago and earlier. There are no references to the materials in the English language and the other foreign languages besides Russian. There are references to free databases of teaching and research materials on the website, but during the interviews the teaching staff and the students did not claim that they use them.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to introduce staff and students to the resources of electronic legal databases and teach to use them.
- Furthermore, investment in the library is needed.

**2.4. REQUIREMENT: Organisation of internship is clearly regulated, the requirements for the completion of internship are determined, the instructions for conducting the internship are available and the supervision of students in work**

<p><b>environment is ensured.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The organisation of internship is regulated. According to the Self-Evaluation Report, the students have got a supervisor from the University and from the institution where internship is carried out. Work practice on a legal position is recognised as internship without further assessment. Students make a report summarizing the internship and take an exam that verifies the objectives set by the internship coordinator. The duration of internship is 5 weeks, the students get 10 ECTS for the internship and are expected to work 300 hours for that. According to that the work load per one week is 60 hours. The period of internship is too short for 10 ECTS and should be revised.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended to analyse the duration of internship and the volume of work the students have to do during the internship and adjust them so that the weekly workload of the students would be reasonable and more likely achievable.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.5. REQUIREMENT: The higher education institution has a network of partner organisations offering internship opportunities for students and supporting the achievement of learning outcomes of study programmes.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Self-Evaluation Report presents a list of organisations where Business Law students can perform their internship, but during the interviews no clear evidence of cooperation with the organisations was presented. The Committee did also not have a chance to meet any employers with the experience of having interns or employees from Business Law programme in their company. In the Report the University admitted that the current inoperativeness of the Laboratory of Comparative Private Law, which was established in 2006, affects the organization of internships in Business Law specialisation. The Committee was not convinced that the one relates to the other and was inclined to believe that no structural embedding exists.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended to introduce the activities of the University in the field of business law and the Business Law MA programme to potential employers and to establish a network of partner organisations offering internship places to the students in the field of business law. That could be in the private and the public sector; in the region and abroad.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.6. REQUIREMENT: Assessment of learning outcomes of students is performed in accordance with the existing requirements. Assessment methodology is consistent with learning outcomes and includes feedback supporting student development.</b></p>	

Comments:

The assessment of learning outcomes of students is regulated by the requirements adopted by the Senate of the University. The result of formative/summative evaluation constitutes 60% of the final grade of a course, and at the final examination of a course constitutes 40% of the grade. According to the Self-Evaluation Report, the students have the right to contest the result of the final assessment if they do not agree with the examiner's decision concerning the grade.

According to the Report, the average grade of the students of Criminal Sciences and Criminology MA programme was 9.19 for the exams passed in 2014 and 9.14 for the MA theses defended in 2015. Those grades are remarkably high, taking into account that the grading system used has "10" as the highest grade and "5" as the pass rate (lowest positive grade). It is also important to mention that the grading system used does not even formally conform to the ECTS grading scale, where "A" is the highest positive grade and "E" marks the pass rate. During the interviews, the staff could not give any probable explanations about this situation and told that the grades are so high because the students are wise. The Committee opines that either the study load or challenges posed by it are far below what ought to be expected in a master programme and/or that an upward pressure for solely high grades does exist. No matter what, the combination of low study load and high grades made the Committee doubt the quality of the programme and grading.

Recommendation:

- It is highly recommended to analyse speedily the grading system and the practice of implementing this system and give the teaching staff instructions about its correct implementation. If really the reason for high grades is the outstanding performance of almost all of the students, the level of teaching at this MA programme is undoubtedly too low and should be revised. There seems to be ample room for raising the level, considering the study load and the quality of the theses.

**2.7. REQUIREMENT: The higher education institution recognizes prior learning and work experiences.**

Comments:

According to the interviews conducted during the site visit, the management and teaching staff are aware of the public legislation about recognition of prior learning and work experience, but there is no system of implementing it in the University and no cases of actual recognition have been recorded.

Prior work experience is recognised as performing the internship. According to the Self-Evaluation Report and also the interviews with the management of the University, practical experience of at least 2 years in a field relevant to the specialisation of Business Law is recognized as performing the internship without any further assessment of the outcomes of this experience. If the students present the copy of the Record of Employment, they are given 10 ECTS for performing the internship without any further questions.

<p><u>Recommendations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended to encourage academic mobility and implement the national legislation by creating a transparent and internationally comparable system of recognising prior learning experience acquired abroad or in other Moldovan universities as fulfilling parts of the study programmes at Alecu Russo Balti State University.</li> <li>• It is recommended to assess the actual achievement of the outcomes of the work student has done prior to his/her studies in the field on the basis of the list of tasks fulfilled at the working place, the characterization by the employer and the report completed by the student about his/her work experience.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.8. REQUIREMENT: Systematic analysis of achievement of learning outcomes is performed and improvement measures are undertaken.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>During the visit the staff could not convince the Committee that they are aware of the learning outcomes of the Business Law MA programme as stated in the Education Plan. The achievement of learning outcomes is not analysed. During the interviews the teaching staff claimed that they analyse the achievement of each particular course and take measures to improve the achievement.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended to revise the whole Business Law MA programme and to start with re-thinking the objectives and learning outcomes of the programme. It does not make sense to analyse the achievement of learning outcomes if the learning outcomes themselves are set randomly and without sufficient analysis. This will require a structural strategic approach aligning learning outcomes, objectives of the programme, skills, competences and substance.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.9. REQUIREMENT: Students are involved in research and development activities, the supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, applied projects, final thesis) is well organised and the satisfaction rate with the quality of supervision is high.</b></p>	

Comments:

The students are not involved in research and development activities to a sufficient extent. The reason for that is said to be the lack of time of the students, as they have to combine their everyday work and studies. Nevertheless, this is a full-time study programme and the involvement of students on research and development activities is supposed to be part of fulfilling the programme, not as an additional activity. However, on the initiative of the visiting professor from Romania a first edition of the Journal of the Faculty of Law was published, containing articles written by MA students.

According to the interviews, the satisfaction of the students with the quality of supervision is not measured. In their interviews the students claimed that they are very satisfied with the supervision.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to systematically gather feedback about the satisfaction with the quality of supervision from the students after they have defended their thesis and use this feedback for improving the skills of supervision of the teaching staff.
- It is recommended to invest on continuing the initiative of publishing a journal which offers the MA students a good opportunity to practice writing articles. It is also suggested to continue this Journal as a widely available E-journal or publication.
- Involvement of students in research implies a wide array of staff research. For reasons explained below, the presence of full scale staff research is to be doubted, considering the small size of full time available staff.

3. TEACHING STAFF	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'		X	
<p><b>Collected evidence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annex O10.2: International mobility of the staff of the Department of Law (2010-2014)</li> <li>- Annex O10.3: List of scientific conferences</li> <li>- Information obtained during the interviews</li> <li>- Information available in the Self-Evaluation Report</li> </ul>			

**General comments:**

The formal requirements regarding the qualification of staff are fulfilled. However, the staff size is small (9 persons) and so is the student body in this programme and therefore the Committee has some doubts about the adequacy (size) of the staff and its long term capabilities to teach courses in many specialist areas at the master level. These aspects endanger the sustainability and make the programme vulnerable and too much dependent on one or two persons. It also endangers the link between research and teaching in the master programme.

Also, students' individual work is less than it is foreseen in the course programs and required for 90 credits, so there are obvious problems with workload of teaching staff in organising and monitoring students individual work.

There has been some experiences with inviting visiting staff from outside Moldova to teach on the programme, but such involvement has been so far quite limited and should definitely be expanded and developed.

Moreover, it was firmly established that there is lack of participation in international research projects and networks. One of the reasons for this is the responsibility of staff to cover all expenses on their own, should they wish to take part in such activities. The proposals to participate in forums, national and international scientific conferences are coming not from the Faculty or the Chair, but rather from the lecturers themselves. It is positive, however, that the University has established a motivation system for the teaching staff according to which the performance indicators (of which 80% are related to research activities) are being applied and salaries raised accordingly. This will hopefully be a positive incentive to encourage participation in national and international research projects, in forums, and national and international scientific conferences.

**Recommendations:**

- Staff size is small and ought to be enlarged because of the wide scope of the programme and the link between research and teaching in a master programme. Present staff size is too small to be able to teach a full-fledged master programme with all its specialised master courses.
- International mobility must be enhanced and promoted and visiting staff from a diversity of foreign countries ought to be invited and given a role in the programme. It could also be considered to invite practitioners as guest lecturers to various courses of the programme. Both exchanges can assist in improving the courses and the teaching and the research and can link the programme to best practices elsewhere.
- The role of the Chair in organising lecturers' scientific activities should be more active and financial costs of lecturers' participation in forums, national and international scientific conferences should be fully covered by the Faculty.

**3.1. REQUIREMENT: The number and qualification of full-time teaching staff complies with the requirements established by**

<p><b>legislation. At least 60% of the study programme is covered by full-time staff. 100% of full-time staff involved in the study programme have PhD degree or equal.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Self-Evaluation Report, the CVs of teaching staff and the interviews confirmed that the number and qualification of full-time teaching staff comply with the requirements established by legislation. The programme Business Law is implemented by 9 teaching staff members, all of them having a doctoral degree in law. 7 lecturers are employed full time, and 1 lecturer is employed from within the University on hourly basis and 1 employed from outside the University on hourly basis (both employed part-time).</p>	
<p><b>3.2. REQUIREMENT: Distribution of full-time teaching staff by age, and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff, ensures the sustainability of studies in a higher education institution and a study programme.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>There are 7 full time teaching staff members involved in professional training in Business Law programme aged between 30-40 years old; 1 is internal hourly employee aged 74 and 1 external hourly employee aged between 40-50 years. Thus, as there is a strong presence of younger generation of staff, the information submitted to the Committee confirmed that the distribution of full-time teaching staff by age, and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff, ensures the sustainability of the study programme.</p>	
<p><b>3.3. REQUIREMENT: The total number and qualification of teaching staff is – based on their responsibilities, workload and the number of supervised students – sufficient and adequate for achieving the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programmes at MA level.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The overall number of the academics involved in professional training of the Business Law programme is 9 persons. The lists of the themes of master theses and supervisors proves that the number of supervised students for each lecturer is adequate, but interviews with the students showed that students' individual work is less than it is foreseen in the course programs and required for 90 credits, so there are obvious problems with workload of teaching staff in organising and monitoring students individual work. The qualification of academic staff is adequate for achieving the learning outcomes of the programme. However, the Committee has its doubts about the adequacy (size) of the staff and its long term capabilities to teach courses in many specialist areas at the master level, with also an appropriate link with competitive research, taking into consideration also the fact that academics currently teaching on the programme also teach in other programmes and courses. Therefore, it is highly recommended that staff is expanded with specialist expertise.</p>	

<p><b>3.4. REQUIREMENT: The members of the teaching staff have an adequate teaching competence and improve their teaching methods.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Annex 010.2 on international mobility projects of teaching staff provides information that 3 lecturers of the Business Law programme are participating in international mobility projects (E.Boisteanu, V.Pinzari, S.Boca). The interviews with students and teaching staff confirmed that lecturers have adequate teaching competences and are using various interactive teaching methods. According to the Self-Evaluation Report, "... in 2013–2015, 4 lawyers participated in professional development seminars organized by the Union of Lawyers of the Republic of Moldova, the National Council of State Guaranteed Legal Assistance, Moldova Institute for Human Rights, 4 persons have completed the psycho-pedagogical module." The meeting with the teaching staff confirmed this information.</p>	
<p><b>3.5. REQUIREMENT: The staff development system is effective: the members of the teaching staff have opportunities for self-improvement, staff development methods are applied by the higher education institution.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the Self-Evaluation Report, "the employing institution provides access to self-improvement of teachers by organizing psycho-pedagogical training courses for non-pedagogical specialties attended by the employees of the Department of Law who participate in the Master's degree professional training programme, cycle, II. In addition, foreign language courses are organized for the employees. However, full-time academic staff members involved in Master's degree programmes under evaluation are excessively busy: the majority have a teaching load of 1.5, but for one academic from each Master's programme and they are also practitioners, so their real-time volume for self-improvement is limited." The meeting with the teaching staff confirmed this information.</p>	
<p><b>3.6. REQUIREMENT: Visiting members of the teaching staff (including from foreign higher education institutions) are involved in teaching in a study programme.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the Self-Evaluation Report (ANNEX 010.2), "Eugen Huruba, Associate Professor, PhD, teaches courses in Business Law (90 credits) and is an external employee of the Faculty of Law, Balti. He is President of the Chamber of bailiffs in Targu-Mures, Romania and teaches courses at Petru Maior University, Tîrgu-Mureş, Romania. In the period of 2010 - 2015, 4 academics (Pînzari Veacheslav Boişteanu Eduard, Boca Sergiu, Valentin Cazacu) had mobility internships in higher education institutions from Romania (Iasi, Targu-Mures, Cluj-Napoca) and taught within the Bachelor's/Master's degree programmes (Boişteanu Eduard, Pînzari Veacheslav, Boca Sergiu)." During the meeting students expressed their wish to have more visiting members of the teaching staff from foreign universities. It could also be considered to invite practitioners as guest lecturers to various courses of this study programme. Meeting with employers/practitioners showed that such practice is not applied. It is</p>	

therefore recommended that efforts in this domain are necessary.	
<b>3.7. REQUIREMENT: The members of the full-time teaching staff of a higher education institution regularly develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions and participate in international networks.</b>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The Annex 010.2 on international mobility projects provides information that 3 lecturers of the Business Law programme are participating in international mobility projects (E.Boisteanu, V.Pinzari, S.Boca). However, the meeting with lecturers and their CVs provided the opposite evidence – namely, that lecturers do not participate in international networks. However, the University approved the motivation system for the teaching staff – the performance indicators (both teaching and research related) of staff is related with the lecturers’ salaries. These performance indicators should be treated as a very positive tool for ensuring that the staff members will aim to regularly develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions and participate in international networks.</p>	
<b>3.8. REQUIREMENT: Teaching staff are involved in national and international research projects and participate in forums, national and international scientific conferences.</b>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the Self-Evaluation Report (ANNEX O10.3) informs that „During the evaluated period, the academics involved in Master's programmes under evaluation participated in over 50 national and international scientific conferences.” The Annex provides information on the involvement of the teaching staff (5 lecturers) in national and international scientific conferences. There is no data about the involvement of teaching staff in international research projects and the meeting with the lecturers confirmed the lack of such projects. The motivation system for the teaching staff – the performance indicators – can be treated a very positive tool to motivate lecturers to participate in national and international research projects and in forums, national and international scientific conferences. During the meeting with lecturers it was stated that the financial burden of participation in the international scientific conferences and publication of scientific articles is resting on lecturers. The proposals to participate in forums, national and international scientific conferences are not coming from the Faculty or the Chair, but from the lecturers themselves. All this suggests that the role of the Chair in organising lecturers’ scientific activities should be more active and financial costs of lecturers’ participation in forums, national and international scientific conferences should be fully covered by the Faculty. Unfortunately, due to problems in knowing foreign languages, lecturers are mainly participating in conferences organised in Moldova and Romania.</p>	
<b>3.9. REQUIREMENT: Research activities of the teaching staff are planned and monitored efficiently.</b>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p>	

Interviews confirmed that research activities of the teaching staff are planned and monitored efficiently. There are plans of the research activities of the Chair and also the plans of the individual teacher. There exists a monitoring system and the motivation system for the teaching staff – the performance indicators –providing incentives for the lecturers to implement the plans. What has appeared missing is a research plan for the Chair and a research strategy for research activities, strategies and research collaboration aimed at strengthening the master programme.

4. STUDENTS	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'		X	
<p><b>Collected evidence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regulation on the admission process approved by the Senate on 28 of May 2014 for the year of study 2014-2015 (<a href="http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Admitere_2014/acte_normative/Reg_adm_USARB_2014_MASTER.pdf">http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Admitere_2014/acte_normative/Reg_adm_USARB_2014_MASTER.pdf</a>)</li> <li>- Information on the admission process (<a href="http://www.usarb.md/admitere/admitere-2014/masterat/">http://www.usarb.md/admitere/admitere-2014/masterat/</a>)</li> <li>- Information regarding the dynamic of the admission process (<a href="http://www.usarb.md/admitere/admitere-2014/masterat/dinamica3/sdss0/2-08-m-dss/">http://www.usarb.md/admitere/admitere-2014/masterat/dinamica3/sdss0/2-08-m-dss/</a>)</li> <li>- Cooperation agreements with foreign universities from Romania, Russia and Ukraine (available during the visit)</li> <li>- Cooperation agreements with other universities from Moldova: State University of Moldova, Free International University and Academy of Public Administration (available during the visit)</li> <li>- Information about the EMERGE mobility project (<a href="http://emerge.uaic.ro/partner-universities/partner-universities">http://emerge.uaic.ro/partner-universities/partner-universities</a>)</li> <li>- Regulation on the activity of Students' Senate (<a href="http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Senatul_studentesc/regulament_final_-_kopija.pdf">http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Senatul_studentesc/regulament_final_-_kopija.pdf</a>)</li> <li>- Regulation on the activity of the Quality Council (<a href="http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Dep_calitatii/Regulamentul_CC_pentru_site.PDF">http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Dep_calitatii/Regulamentul_CC_pentru_site.PDF</a>)</li> <li>- Report on the assessment of the quality of the teaching and research activities of the Faculty of Law and Science (<a href="http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/facultati/drept/Raport_FDSS.pdf">http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/facultati/drept/Raport_FDSS.pdf</a>)</li> <li>- Cooperation agreements with the representatives of the labour market: Anticorruption Centre, Forensic and judicial expertise Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Social Insurance Agency, Territorial Labour Inspectorate, Probation Office, Institute for Criminal Reforms, National Council for legal assistance, about 10 agreements with private and lawyers' offices (available</li> </ul>			

during the visit)

- Information obtained during the interviews and available in the Self-Evaluation Report

**General comments:**

There are clear requirements for admission and the assessment of the academic progress. The University undertakes certain measures for career guidance of its students and career monitoring of the graduates, however the systems are not well-established and need to be improved. Although students have access to information about various student motility opportunities offered by the University, these are not used and applied for.

The plans of the University to create a special centre and an alumni association are encouraged. The university proved sufficient awareness about the academic fraud phenomenon. Nevertheless, it still needs to develop its internal data-base and the anti-plagiarism soft-ware. The drop-out rates do not present a threat for the sustainability of the MA programme and the graduates are considered to be competitive, especially for the northern region of the country.

The University has made good efforts to identify internship and eventual employment places for its students; it is still encouraged to better learn about the labour market of other parts of the country and ensure that its graduates are equally competitive outside the northern region.

Commendations:

- Clear and transparent admission requirements
- Good cooperation relations and mobility opportunities with universities from Romania

Recommendations:

- Ensure to have in place well-established systems for career guidance, psychological counselling and a tracking mechanism for monitoring the career development of the graduates.
- Further encourage and facilitate student mobility and develop cooperation relations with institutions from other EU countries.
- Improve the anti-plagiarism system and set in place the necessary software and its use.

**4.1. REQUIREMENT: The admission requirements for student applicants are based on qualities necessary for completing the study programme. The admission of students is performed by procedures stipulated in the normative acts.**

Comments:

The admission process is organised based on the provisions of the Government Decision no 1544 of 24.12.2007 on the organisation of the MA studies and internal Regulations which are revised and approved annually. The last Regulation on the admission process was approved by the Senate on 28 of May 2014 for the year of study 2014-2015.

([http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Admitere\\_2014/acte\\_normative/Reg\\_adm\\_USARB\\_2014\\_MASTER.pdf](http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Admitere_2014/acte_normative/Reg_adm_USARB_2014_MASTER.pdf)). The content of the national and internal legal framework seems to establish clear requirements for the applicants and impose additionally 30 mandatory ECTS for those applicants with a Bachelor degree in an unrelated field. Likewise, the regulation provides a special procedure of recognition of the studies related to Law within a Bachelor programme in another field.

The admission requirements are transparent and the web-page dedicated to the admission process contains detailed information: The Regulation on the admission process; the methodology for the organisation of the admission exams; list of necessary acts; the document for enrolment; the admission plan/offer; the subjects for the specialty exam; description of the dynamic of the admission process indicating the number of applications and available places; the results of the admission process indicating the list of the successful candidates and their marks; tuition fee, etc. (<http://www.usarb.md/admitere/admitere-2014/masterat/>)

The table on page 27 of the Self-Evaluation Report indicates a declining number of enrolled students and a higher number of students in the Criminal Science and Criminology MA programme. Nevertheless, if analysing the applications the numbers are almost equal – 21 for Criminal Sciences and Criminology and 22 for Business Law (<http://www.usarb.md/admitere/admitere-2014/masterat/dinamica3/sdss0/2-08-m-dss/>). According to the Regulation on the organisation of the master studies, the minimum number of students for an academic group is 15. However, the Business Law programme seems to enrol less – 11 students –, even if the number of the applications is higher – 22. One of the reasons explained in the Self-Evaluation Report on page 24 and confirmed by the university during the visit is that the students often withdraw their applications due to the fact that they have been accepted by other universities from Romania.

**4.2. REQUIREMENT: The counselling system of students (including study, career and psychological counselling) is planned/targeted and effective.**

Comments:

The management of the University informed that currently there is no unit dealing with career guidance and psychological counselling, but there were recent discussions in the Senate regarding the plans to establish a career guidance centre and an alumni association. The Self-Evaluation Report states on page 24 that the University is trying to ensure some career guidance by offering specialised internship that would be connected with the research topic of the student. This was confirmed by the management of the university who informed about continuous efforts to cooperate with the labour market, a recent example being two cooperation agreements signed with regional subdivisions of law enforcement authorities. Nevertheless, currently there are no well-established, effective systems for students' counselling. The University is

<p>aware of the importance of this issue and the students stressed the need for such advice. Therefore, the university is encouraged to develop the necessary systems and implement its current plans.</p>	
<p><b>4.3. REQUIREMENT: Students are provided with internal and external mobility opportunities.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The university has established international mobility as one of the main strategic objectives of its development programme for 2013-2018 and makes efforts to offer mobility opportunities through mobility programmes such as Erasmus, CEEPUS, AUF, TEMPUS, UNESCO, DAAD, Fulbright, Pestalozzi, Edmund S. Muskie, etc. The students the Committee met confirmed that they have access to information, including on the university's web-site, and that they are regularly informed about the opportunities by the dean/staff. However, due to the fact that they are already employed and have families they are not interested to apply.</p> <p>The university has cooperation agreements with foreign universities from Romania, Russia and Ukraine. The Committee learned that there is a particularly strong cooperation with higher education institutions from Romania and a recent agreement with a university from Iasi (2014) enables student and teacher mobility, joint research activities, organisation of summers schools and conferences, as well as cooperation with regard to doctoral schools. The cooperation with other universities from Moldova includes State University of Moldova, Free International University and Academy of Public Administration based on the concluded agreements.</p> <p>The University is recommended to implement the activities pursuant to the existing cooperation agreements with the universities from Romania and seek ways to extend its cooperation relations with institutions from other EU countries. And furthermore, to ensure that student numbers in exchange programmes will go up and students will be able to make use of them for short term exchanges, summer schools, longer term study abroad experiences and the like.</p>	
<p><b>4.4. REQUIREMENT: Students participate in international mobility programmes. The percentage of students participating in student mobility is stable or growing.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>There are 3 master students participating in mobility programmes, but they are not related to this MA programme, so no student exchange has happened with respect to the Business Law students. The Self-Evaluation Report states on page 25 that international mobility programme became more popular among students since the academic year 2013-2014.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The University is recommended to further encourage student mobility and develop cooperation relations with institutions from other EU countries.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>4.5. REQUIREMENT: Students are involved in the decision-making process at different levels of the higher education institution.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>Students are involved in the decision-making process through their representatives in the Senate and the Faculty of Law Council. Students have a self-organised body – Students’ Senate. Its activity is regulated by an internal act on Students’ Senate. Par. 7 of the Regulation provides that students’ representation in the Senate and Faculty Council shall be in a proportion of at least ¼ and maximum 1/5 out of the total members. The representatives are elected and delegated by the Students’ Senate (<a href="http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Senatul_studentesc/regulament_final_-_kopija.pdf">http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Senatul_studentesc/regulament_final_-_kopija.pdf</a>). Likewise, the Regulation on the activity of the Quality Council, art. 7, ensures that two representatives of the students delegated by the Students’ Senate are also members of the Council. (<a href="http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Dep_calitatii/Regulamentul_CC_pentru_site.PDF">http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/universitate/Dep_calitatii/Regulamentul_CC_pentru_site.PDF</a>)</p>	
<p><b>4.6. REQUIREMENT: A system has been established for the detection and prevention of academic fraud.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The university has no specific anti-plagiarism software in place. The management of the university is aware of the importance of such a software and informed the team about current efforts for establishing an internal data-base. For that purpose, each Master thesis is also submitted in electronic form (on CDs). Likewise, each master thesis must be accompanied by a Statement on the original content of the thesis which is signed by the student. As an intermediary solution, anti-plagiarism Romanian web-sites are used (for example, <a href="https://www.sistemantiplagiat.ro/pagina-principala">https://www.sistemantiplagiat.ro/pagina-principala</a>). The representatives of the teaching staff met by the team were able to explain the strategies applied for preventing plagiarism: encourage students choosing their own topic of interest and motivate them to research it, explaining the Guidelines of the university on drafting the Master thesis, using anti-plagiarism Romanian web-sites for checking and encouraging students to perform their own checks, etc. The management of the University informed about several cases related to BA studies where about 6 theses were cancelled due to plagiarism, but no such cases happened in relation to Master thesis. This was confirmed by the students who were aware of the existing rules and guidelines.</p> <p>According to the internal regulation no 9 approved by the Senate on 16.03.2011 on the evaluation of students’ academic results, the teachers are allowed to expel the student from the examination room in case of cheating or other breach of ethic or integrity rules. No such examples were presented to the team.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledging the current efforts to prevent academic fraud and plagiarism, the University is recommended to enhance its system and to use a full-fledged and effective anti-plagiarism software speedily.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>4.7. REQUIREMENT: Higher education institution has a tracking mechanism of graduates' employment and is monitoring the evolution of graduates' career.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>No well-established tracking mechanism of the graduates' employment and on their career evolution is in place currently. However, the University has certain information on the employment rate and working places of its graduates due to 2 studies prepared by the current or former academics of the University (the most recent one was carried out in 2013). Likewise, the University collects information on the number of graduates employed by various law enforcement bodies and courts (<i>letters requesting the number of employed graduates from the prosecutors' offices, ministry of internal affairs, courts – available during the visit</i>). This enables the University to have a better understanding of the employability of the graduates of the MA programme in Criminal Science, but not of those of the MA programme in Business Law. The Committee also learned about the meetings organised by the university with employers where the students can find about employment opportunities. Some statements of the employers' representatives confirmed these affirmations. The management of the University informed the Committee about the plans to establish a career guidance centre and an alumni association which will deal with monitoring the career development of its graduates and help establishing better cooperation with the labour market. The university is recommended to implement these objectives and to establish a well-organised tracking mechanism. However, the Committee cannot but conclude that presently no tracking mechanism existed for business law graduates.</p>	
<p><b>4.8. REQUIREMENT: The competitiveness of the graduates of a study programme is demonstrated by employment rate according to obtained qualification; unemployment rate; employment rate in other fields than the one studied within the programme.</b></p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The information obtained from the authorities from the region based on the official requests of the University indicates a high employment rate and the University is of the opinion that this demonstrates the competitiveness of its graduates on the labour market in the region (<i>Self-Evaluation Report, pp. 26-27 and the letters and replies of the authorities available on-site</i>). The employers had a high opinion about the MA programme and its graduates, though the need of more practical skills was stressed during the meetings.</p> <p>The Self-Evaluation Report indicates an employment rate of 71.42% for the Business Law programme (<i>Self-Evaluation Report, p. 27</i>). The Committee is not entirely convinced by the accuracy of this data. Nevertheless, it learned during the visit about the cooperation agreements between the University and various representatives of the labour market and about the pro-active approach of the institution to identify internship and eventual employment places for its students, which demonstrates the efforts of the University in this respect. This led to the conclusion that the graduates of the MA programme are competitive on the labour market of the northern region of the country. Nevertheless, the university is encouraged to better learn about the labour market of other parts of the country and to ensure that its graduates are competitive as well outside the northern region.</p>	

<b>4.9. REQUIREMENT: There is a system in place for monitoring academic progress. Graduation of students per each year meets the legal requirements. Effective measures are implemented to reduce the drop-out rates.</b>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>Pursuant to the internal regulation on the evaluation of students' academic progress, approved by the Senate on 16.03.2011, there is a well-established mechanism for monitoring academic progress which can be performed at the level of departments and faculties. The Report on the assessment of the quality of the teaching and research activities of the Faculty of Law and Science (p. 14) presents the results of the master thesis/exams for the 2014 year for all MA programmes: 39% out of the 105 students received 10; 33% - 9; 24% - 8 and 4% - 7. (<a href="http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/facultati/drept/Raport_FDSS.pdf">http://www.usarb.md/fileadmin/facultati/drept/Raport_FDSS.pdf</a>) Nevertheless, the results for the MA programme presented to the Committee during the visit indicated only grades above 8.</p> <p>The drop-out rates may vary between 12.5% and 14.5% (<i>Self-Evaluation Report, table on p. 27</i>). The University claims that most of the students are usually re-enrolled in the subsequent academic years and the real number of drop-outs is insignificant. Among the measures for reducing the drop-outs the following were mentioned: organisation of two re-examination periods; a more flexible schedule if needed; organising classes on Saturdays, etc. The measures are considered to be sufficient and effective by the University.</p>	

<b>5. RESOURCES</b>	<b>conforms to requirements</b>	<b>partially conforms to requirements</b>	<b>does not conform to requirements</b>
<b>mark with 'X'</b>		<b>X</b>	
<p><b>Collected evidence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annex D9 of the Self-Evaluation Report: Financial data about the university</li> <li>- Information obtained during the interviews</li> <li>- Information available in the Self-Evaluation Report</li> </ul>			

**General comments:**

The Committee cannot but conclude that an intake of 11 students is insufficient for a mature, sound and stable Master programme, considering the fact that student intake has declined in recent years.

The Committee is unable to find that the programme conforms to all requirements with respect to resources, since resources are too scarce to meet all requirements and make the necessary investments and bring the programme to the level of sufficient number of students, library facilities, well trained staff, and an upgrade of the courses.

Commendation:

- The Business Law programme is run on a small sized facility of a truly campus University. This has many benefits for an academic programme.

Recommendations:

- To invest substantially in funding for the programme in order to enable the programme to meet all its requirements.
- To invest in the information systems and make these information systems part of decision-making about programmes and courses, study load, careers and drop-out rates.
- To invest in the library with the purchase of up-to-date literature and foreign books and periodicals.

<p><b>5.1. REQUIREMENT: The financial resources of a higher education institution are adequate for conducting studies, development activities related to studies and supporting the development of the teaching staff.</b></p>	
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Comments:

The financial resources come mostly from the state budget and tuition fees, some revenue is received from various research projects. The operating income of the University from 2010 to 2014 has been rather stable (62 056 MDL in 2014). The management reported during the meeting that they started to raise the salaries of all staff members – by 20% last year and 15% this year – taking into account performance indicators annually (personal performance related to scientific and educational activity); the increase in staff costs reflected in the table with financial data (Annex D9) seems to confirm this. Staff costs have risen from 41 891MDL in 2010 to 46 198 MDL in 2014 (increase by about 10%). The University has had a budget deficit during the last two years.

According to the information provided above, resources are not abundant, but the University has financial stability and no fear of bankruptcy.

**5.2. REQUIREMENT: Trends in the number of students and graduates, and the budget of a higher education institution in the last three to five years indicate sustainability.**

Comments:

The programme of Business Law is a small programme.

The numbers of enrolment (Report, p. 27) of the programme during the past 3 years have been the following:

2012 – 14; 2013 – 13; 2014 – 11.

The numbers of graduation: 2012-2013 – 14; 2013-2014 – 11 students. (Report, p.29)

Thus, in 2014, the admission numbers were below the minimum requirements set for a student group (15 students should be enrolled) and the numbers are clearly declining, making this programme less sustainable than Criminal Sciences and Criminology programme. Student numbers do also depend on government permission. It does appear to the Committee that numbers of students for this programme are low and that no expectations are present that more sustainable numbers can be reached.

The University has financial stability, but funds are nevertheless too scarce to support a full-fledged master programme. This poses a challenge to be able to invest in staff expertise and sufficient specialists to cover all courses and connect these indispensable aspects with quality research. The programme can be considered to be running on the present level, however to be able to invest in tools and instruments in order to meet all requirements and to be able to structurally offer an academic level master programme, more resources are necessary. Without these the programme will struggle to meet the minimum standards if it at all can meet them.

To conclude: In terms of number of students enrolled in the programme, on the one hand, and the restricted budget of the institution on the other, the situation merits improvement and substantial growth regarding student numbers as well as funds in order to establish a programme which can substantially and safely meet the minimum requirements and be fully sustainable.

**5.3. REQUIREMENT: Teaching and learning environments have been developed according to the teaching and learning objectives, include all facilities necessary for conducting studies in a given study programme and are of adequate capacity considering the number of students (auditoriums, seminar rooms, laboratories, rooms for students independent work and recreation, video projectors, internet etc.).**

Comments:

The facilities have been visited and inspected. A relatively large university campus accommodates all the necessary facilities for teaching and learning process, including classrooms, computer classes, auditoriums, laboratories, the library, and canteen. These are considered sufficient and equipped adequately. But there is certainly room for upgrades and improvement. The University has made a contract with “Moldtelecom”, which provides internet service to the entire institution.

Commendation:

- The Business Law programme is run on a small sized facility of a truly campus University. This has many benefits for an academic programme.

**5.4. REQUIREMENT: Both the conduct of studies and other activities of a higher education institution are supported by up-to-date information technology solutions, including the study information system, e-learning opportunities, and communication portals for students and teaching staff.**

Comments:

The Committee has observed that to a large extent these systems do exist (e.g., there are currently two e-learning platforms: Moodle and Mahara), however they also need to be improved and structurally incorporated in the processes of decision-making and feedback. Work has to be done to make them fully operational, specifically such systems as communication portals, E-learning facilities and information systems.

**5.5. REQUIREMENT: The students are provided with dormitories and medical service.**

Comments:

The University has currently five dormitories with 1150 places that are ready to accommodate students. One dormitory is used as a study building. Medical service is also available and meeting the demands and requirements.

The Committee is of the opinion that the requirement established by the state in terms of having a dormitory for all the students is superfluous and too expensive and should be revisited, since many students have their own abode. Instead of having its own dormitory, it could be considered to cooperate with other real-estate companies or proprietors offering accommodation. So is the requirement regarding the provision of medical service – it is outdated, too expensive, not efficient, and therefore too much a burden on small institutions and programmes with low funding.

**5.6. REQUIREMENT: A library supports the conduct of studies ensuring that up-to-date information sources are available, and provides students with the opportunities for independent work.**



Comments:

Indeed, an equipped library of some proportions does exist, which also has access to information systems and data bases. However, it must be expected for a full-fledged master programme that foreign literature will be more present. Furthermore, the students noted that there is a lack of up-to-date books and electronic resources.