

Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Quality assurance in the Romanian higher education in European context. Development of academic quality management at system and institutional level – ACADEMIS

Activity 1: Autoevaluation and external evaluation – *preliminary results*

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Activity 1: Autoevaluation and external evaluation

*-Improving the Methodology and Guides associated with quality assurance at system level, in compliance with quality standards at European level (**AFTER** the external and internal evaluation of 46 universities)*

*-Building a central database comprising the criteria, standards and performance indicators specified in the Methodology (**AFTER** the external and internal evaluation of 46 universities).*

-The external and internal evaluation of 46 universities.

Legal basis:

Law 87/2006 on the approval of the Government Emergency Ordinance No. 75/2005 regarding the education quality assurance.

External evaluation methodology, standards, reference standards and list of performance indicators – approved by Government Ordinance nr. 1418/2006.

Law 84/1995 – Law of Education

Law 128/1997 – Statutes of Teaching staff

Government Ordinances 1731/2006 (ARACIS fees)

Quality evaluation activities guide for university study programmes and for higher education institutions:

Part I - Study programmes (Bachelor's and Master's degrees) accreditation external evaluation

Part II - Institutional authorisation/accreditation external evaluation

Part III – Academic quality external evaluation of accredited higher education institution

Part IV – External evaluation of Teaching staff training departments (TSTD)

Part V – External evaluation of distance learning study programmes (DL)

Part VI – External evaluation of part-time learning

- **Conformity with - ESG Standards and Guidelines for *Quality Assurance* in the European Higher Education Area);**
- **Institutional Evaluation include also evaluation of at least 20% of the study programs;**
- **Basic terminology used according to “international English” and Romanian language current use (main example: *audit, external review, assessment etc.* – in Romanian “*evaluare*” (evaluation) (self or external)).**

EXTERNAL EVALUATION. Time schedule (1)

- The ARACIS Quality Assurance Department takes notice of the **Application for external evaluation. (“moment zero”)**
- The **preliminary visit** of the evaluation mission director
- The Agency’s Council approves the **list of study programs** to be evaluated and the **structure of the expert evaluators’ team** (academic evaluators, foreign evaluator, students and a representative of Advisory Committee)
- The Agency receives the **SER (“moment 0” + 3 months)**
- **Meeting** of the *evaluation team coordinator with the* contact person and the students’ representative to identify **objectives the visit**

EXTERNAL EVALUATION. Time schedule

(2)

- The evaluation team visits the institution. (“moment 0” + 4 months)
- The Agency sends a letter comprising the preliminary results of the evaluation. Answering letter from the institution
- The Report of External Evaluation Department.
- The Report of ARACIS Council (“moment 0” + 6 months)
- The Reports and all documents are made public (“moment 0” + 6 months)
- Appeal procedures

- **“Judgements”** (in Romanian we call them „calificative” – in the French sense of the word, they do not mean „qualifiers” as for the World Cup) concluding the institutional exercise:

- first phase of the exercise 2007 – 2008 (prior to the project) – **three** possible types of conclusion: *High degree of confidence, Limited degree of confidence, No confidence;*
- 2nd phase of the exercise 2008 – 2010 (including the project): **four** possible types of conclusion: *High degree of confidence, Confidence, Limited degree of confidence, Lack of confidence;* allows for better differentiation in the upper part of the scale

NOTE: “*judgements*” reflect the overall quality level of how the HEI accomplish their mission(s). “*Judgments*” do not rank!

Overall quality level: three main domains specified by law:

- ***Institutional Capacity***
- ***Effectiveness of Education***
- ***Quality Management***

Results for the period 2007 – october 2010

- Total number of accredited HEIs in Romania: 56 state universities (S – 2/3 of students) ;
33 private universities (P – 1/3 of students);***
- Number of HEI evaluated: 55 (S), 16 (P)
(for 2 HEIs evaluation still in progress).***

- **Pilot project – 2007** (contract with the MoERYS): 10 universities (S – eight; P – 2) + one (S) which volunteered and covered the expenses from own revenue; 6 universities have been re-evaluated in 2009 to verify how the non-conformities with respect to Quality standards were addressed;

- **The period 2008 – 2011:** includes the project **Quality assurance in the Romanian higher education in European context. Development of academic quality management at system and institutional level** (46 universities applied: 37 (S) and 9 (P)); in the time interval 2008 - 2010 an additional number of 14 universities 9 (S) and 5 (P) have been evaluated on contractual basis.

Integration of the project in System evaluation

- The project allows for a broad collection of data on the Romanian HES
- Other previous or parallel information also important
- Overall results and data as basis for the other two actions of Activity 1 (Methodology, database)

Some terminology and more overall statistics

- **Fundamental domain (*i.e. Exact Sciences*)**
- **First cycle (licență) study domain (*i.e. Mathematics*)**
- **Study program (*i.e. Mathematics, Applied mathematics, Mathematics and Informatics*)**

No.	Fundamental Domain	No. of Domains of First Cycle Study Programs (Licence) in All (S) RO HEI (Externally Evaluated)	No. of Domains of First Cycle Study Programs (Licence) in All (P) RO HEI (Externally Evaluated)
1	Exact Sciences (Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Informatics)	62 (62)	16 (3)
2	Natural Sciences (Biology, Geography, Geology, Environmental sciences)	39 (39)	9 (6)
3	Humanities (Philosophy, Language and literature, Applied modern languages, History, Cultural studies)	75 (75)	18 (9)
4	Theology (Theology)	15 (15)	6 (1)
5	Juridical Sciences (Law)	17 (17)	22 (12)
6	Social and Political Sciences (Sociology, Social assistance, Political sciences, International relations and European studies, Administrative sciences, Communication sciences, Education sciences, Psychology)	123 (123)	71 (33)

No.	Fundamental Domain	No. of Domains of First Cycle Study Programs (Licence) in All (S) RO HEI (Externally Evaluated)	No. of Domains of First Cycle Study Programs (Licence) in All (P) RO HEI (Externally Evaluated)
7	Economic Sciences (Economy, Finances, Business administration, Accounting, Cybernetics, Statistics and economic IT, Economy and international affairs, Management, Marketing)	134 (134)	126 (51)
8	Arts (Theatre, Cinematography and media, Music, Plastic, decorative arts and design)	38 (38)	10 (3)
9	Architecture and Urban Planning (Architecture, Urban Planning)	6 (4)	2 (1)
10	Physical Education and Sports (Physical Education and Sports)	20 (20)	7 (3)
11	Agricultural and Forest Sciences (Agronomy, Horticulture, Forestry, Animal breeding, Biotechnologies)	35 (35)	2 (2)

No.	Fundamental Domain	No. of Domains of First Cycle Study Programs (Licence) in All (S) RO HEI (Externally Evaluated)	No. of Domains of First Cycle Study Programs (Licence) in All (P) RO HEI (Externally Evaluated)
12	Engineering Sciences (Computers and information technology, Sapper engineering, Geodesic engineering, Aerospacial engineering, Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Building Services Engineering, Arms engineering, Missiles and ammunition, Electrical engineering, Electronic engineering and telecommunications, Power engineering, Geological engineering, Industrial engineering, Forestry engineering, Food products engineering, Motor vehicle engineering, Materials engineering, Mechanical engineering, Environmental engineering, Naval engineering and navigation, Systems engineering, Engineering and Management, Transportation engineering, Mechatronics and robotics, Mines, oil and gas, Applied engineering sciences)	327 (327)	10 (7)
13	Military Sciences and Information (Military Sciences and Information)	4 (4)	0
14	Veterinary Medicine (Veterinary medicine)	4 (4)	1 (0)
15	Health	11 (11)	3 (2)
	GRAND TOTAL	910 (908)	303 (133)

CONCLUSION:

The vast majority of the study programs in (S) universities were evaluated externally (99,7%).

Evaluation of study programs in private universities should continue, the present percentage is only 44%.

Two different categories of universities: „specialised” and „comprehensive”

- **„Specialised” universities:** offer study programs in relation to well-defined professions (in ex. Engineers, Medical Doctors etc.) or „vocational occupations” (i.e. different artistic competences – musicians, painters etc.) or at the demand of other ministries (i.e. military professions).
- **„Comprehensive universities”:** marked by extensive „inner diversification” of Study domains and study programs, offering humanities, „hard (exact!) sciences” but in some cases also engineering, medicine, arts and sports etc.

„Specialised” universities – 33 (32 (S) + 1 (P))

Engineering – 6(S), Economics – 2 (1S+1P), Physical Education and Sports – 1 (S), Health – 6 (S), Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine – 4 (S), Arts – 7 (S), Military – 7 (S)

- limited number of study domains – but related to professions leading to work in an occupation related to the profession (i.e. a graduate in Medicine will most likely work as a doctor)***
- consistent/convergent professional interests and „mindset” - easier to manage!***
- lower no. of fee-paying students (exception: Medicine)***
- research mostly related to technology and innovation, progress in clinical medicine, imagination and creation in arts (remember „Palme d’Or” at Cannes obtained by a Romanian film-maker)***

The vast majority of „Specialised” universities” obtained *High Degree of Confidence*, with two exceptions – one (S) obtained *Confidence* (in Engineering) and one (P) *Limited degree of confidence* (in Economics)

- Question marks:

- 1. If the „judgment” is High degree of confidence is this result meaning that education offered by these universities is of „equal quality” at the highest level?***
- 2. Which university is „the best” of all in one „specialised” domain, according to some ranking criteria?***

The answers (might make unhappy those looking only at rankings!):

1. *The result means that with respect to their mission the public can be highly confident in the way the university is offering education and performing research and that the internal QA structures are functioning and managing progress in QA.*

2. *The actual procedures are not meant to lead to „national rankings”; they could only contribute with the collected data (the Reports are public!) to rankings developed by other institutions or by the media.*

„Comprehensive universities” – 52 universities, out of which have been evaluated 36 (23 (S) + 13 (P))

- ***large number of Fundamental domains and very diversified Study programs;***
- ***most private universities (all established after 1990) in this category (with only one exception!);***
- ***large number of students, with much higher percentage of fee-paying students (S);***
- ***diversified modes of educational offer: full-time, part-time, distance learning;***
- ***universities have „branches” in other cities, sometimes too many!;***
- ***diversified research fields in state universities; the fundamental research domains (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology) are concentrated mostly in this type of state universities, offering possibilities for international visibility of research;***
- ***the possible contribution of the other („non-fundamental”, more applied research domains) to the international visibility of the university is lower, with some remarkable exceptions (i.e. History, Arts etc.).***

For „comprehensive universities” the „judgments” were as follows:

- *High degree of confidence* – 21 (58,3%), *Confidence* - 7 (19,4%), *Limited degree of confidence* – 6 (16,6%); *No confidence* - 2 (5,7%);

`- eight universities which have obtained either *Limited degree of confidence* or *No confidence* are „new”, established after 1990 – rapid growth by multiplying they study offer; development of facilities and staff difficult to cope with larger and larger student numbers

- serious problems of not fulfilling QA standards and performance indicators were identified at the two universities which have been judged as showing Lack of confidence;*
- according to the law, the MoERYS was informed and they will have to submit to the agency a new SER in one year time.*

Final conclusions (partial! data still to be processed) (1)

ARACIS procedures consider the state of quality culture in RO HES:

- details needed – related to social climate – confidence must be proved (lots of evidence needed in order any judgment is accepted; however, the judgment might not be easily accepted in spite of all evidence)*
- active participation of students needed (it was remarkable!)*
- presence of evaluators from abroad sheds a different light on the factual, from another perspective*
- large number of data obtained - first transversal analysis based on comparable factual data on a significant number of universities*

Final conclusions (2)

- *there is still confusion between QA judgments and rankings; in RO everybody is a specialist in education!*
- *international visibility and high position in ranking seen as a target – but Jamil Salmi from the WB indicates which are the challenges for a country to have a “world class” university!*
- *insufficient funding level for HE, major drawback; however, financing is crucial for QA, but not sufficient!*

Final conclusions (3)

-unfavourable attitude of mass-media (in some cases there are good reasons for it!) towards HE in general; at the same time „market economy” (Get money for your newspaper or TV channel, no matter how; good news do not sell the paper etc.) leads to awkward situations: two (or even more) large pages advertising some university (mostly P!) and on the next page the same university is severely criticised for different reasons related to quality assurance etc.);

Final conclusions (4)

- *University autonomy, academic freedom vs. accountability not always understood;*
- *QA is a learning exercise for both universities and agency!*

NEED FOR:

- *new methodology – more output/outcome standards and performance indicators; separate better „normative functioning conditions: from „performance”;*
- *better relation with classification – comparable missions;*
- *better connection with funding procedures of (S) universities, to provide sound data and factual evidence;*
- *improved participation of students; NOTE: students in (P) do are not affiliated to any national confederation!*

IN PROGRESS:

- *QA with students eyes!*
- *new ARACIS methodology;*
- *new Law of education to be approved soon.*

Other contributions of the project to improved procedures of the agency (Note also: progress report of ARACIS to ENQA due 2 June 2011):

- Internal procedures improved; appeals procedures clarified and reformulated -approval by the Council in December;
- System analyses – now on a permanent basis;
- Stakeholders participation is already in place.

SOME PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING !?

QA in HE is here to remain with us for as long as universities will exist (for ever? Is there HE without universities?)

In QA we are NEVER HAPPY : the worst enemy of „good” is „better”!

Finale: looking for a good university



THANK YOU!