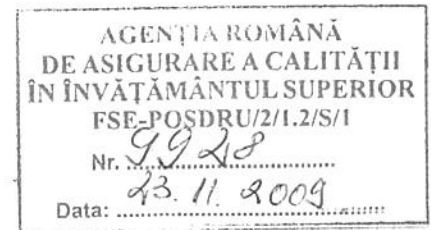


Report for ARACIS on the evaluation visit made to the University of Arts “George Enescu”, Iași, Romania, October 2009.

Professor Dr. Michael Wilson
Expert International Evaluator



Introduction

The University of Arts “George Enescu” in Iași is a specialist arts university consisting of three faculties covering the disciplines of Composition, Musicology, Musical Pedagogy and Theatre; Musical Performance; Fine Arts, Decorative Arts and Design. In addition the university has recently established a Department of Teaching Staff Training. It currently has 182 teaching staff and 1609 students in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes (just under 10% are enrolled on doctoral programmes). This represents a very healthy Staff/Student ratio of 1:8.84.

During my visit to the university (28th-30th October 2009) I was able to extensively visit all three faculties within the institution. I was able to visit the premises and the facilities, speak with staff and students and attend rehearsals and classes. I also attended consultation sessions with students, graduates and employers. I would like to extend my thanks to staff and students for their hospitality and openness in discussion.

This report is divided into three separate sections: positive findings and commendations; recommendations for future development; concluding statement.

Positive findings and commendations

I would like to commend the university on the following aspects of good practice:

- *Premises* – The university has a mixture of old and new buildings with evidence of recent substantial investment in the material estate. There is a demonstrable commitment to developing the estate and further expanding and improving the facilities of the university. Whilst further renovations and conversions are planned, these may have to be put on hold for a year or two in response to the current economic situation. Nevertheless the current premises are well-maintained and fit-for-purpose. There is also an appropriate mix of types of space for different activities – small/large; exhibition/studio, etc.
- *Staff/student relationships* – The relationship between teacher and student is, to my mind, at the very centre of effective pedagogy, especially in the creative arts. The university benefits from excellent staff/student relationships and there is evidence that staff and students enjoy intimate and mutually respectful professional relationships. Staff are skilled, experienced and highly committed to their subject and their teaching. Students are very passionate about their subject, their teachers and their university. In discussions with students, there

was a consensus that students were eager to increase their contact time with teachers, where possible, and to increase their use of facilities.

- *IT equipment and support* - The university enjoys good technological support and up-to-date Information Technology equipment, especially in the areas of Art and Design where there is an appropriate mixture of PC and Mac based facilities. Significant recent investment has enabled these facilities to be brought up-to-date.
- *Erasmus Links* – The university enjoys extensive Erasmus partnership arrangements with institutions in a number of European countries. Again these are most evident in the areas of Art and Design and these have delivered very real benefits in recent years. A number of former students who have benefited from the Erasmus programme have since returned and have joined the teaching staff at the university, bringing their overseas experiences and knowledge with them.
- *Range of programmes offered* – The university offers a very impressive range of programmes all at a high standard. These range from classical musical performance and puppetry to digital video and photography and medieval ecclesiastical art restoration.
- *Growth and expansion* – in recent years the university has been successful in growing student numbers by almost 15%. This has largely been achieved through a growth in students registering on postgraduate taught courses, although a steady increase in postgraduate research (doctoral) students is also to be noted. This would appear to be an excellent strategy as it creates less of an immediate demand on scarce resources and allows the university to enhance its reputation and to meet its own research ambitions. These postgraduate students will also likely be some of the next generation of the university's teaching and research staff.
- *Leadership*- The university benefits from excellent leadership from the Rector and his senior management team. Their management style is inclusive and collegial and designed to get the best out of the university's staffing resource.

Recommendations for future development

I would like to recommend the following areas for development and growth in the next phase of the university's development. Most of the following points sit under the broad generic umbrella of 'internationalisation'. Furthermore, many of these suggestions are already underway or planned for and, therefore, I offer them by way of encouragement and support for what the university already wishes to do.

- *Networking* - It seems that some students in Iași may feel marginalised, primarily because of the city's location at the Eastern border of Europe. This distinctiveness may, of course, be used to the university's advantage, but this does underline the need for the university to redouble its efforts to network and connect with the universities and arts organisations throughout Europe, so that students do not feel cut off from the European mainstream.
- *Erasmus* - The university should ensure that the good practice around Erasmus partnerships that is evident in some parts of the institution is embedded across the whole university.
- *International research* – Erasmus is only part of the story and the university should invest to ensure that staff have every opportunity possible to connect

with the international academic community. The university has already established excellent international networks with the artistic community through attendance at festivals, for example, but university staff need to have a presence and be visible at international academic conferences and be publishing in international journals of an academic nature. This would also be essential in supporting the university's emerging research agenda.

- *Estate and facilities* – The university should continue to invest in its estate and facilities to ensure that students and staff have access to excellent facilities and to ensure the university's reputation on an international level. Whilst current economic circumstances may limit the university's ability to invest as it might like to, it should not allow this to slip of the agenda.
- *Learning resources* – The university has a number of well-stocked and well-staffed subject specialist libraries, which appear to be well used by students and are effective in supporting students' learning. However, whilst the libraries are rich in professional and industry journals, they appear to be less well-stocked when it comes to international academic journals. As funds allow, the university should consider online subscriptions to some of the major academic journals in the field. This would also help in linking the university to the wider academic community.
- *International Strategy* – If the university does not yet have an internationalisation strategy (and I saw no evidence that it does), then I would recommend that it assembles a working group to construct one. This would facilitate planning in the realm of internationalisation, help pull together existing good practice within the university and secure its ambitions for future development.
- *Bologna* – There was extensive discussion around the Bologna Accord, which is causing significant difficulties for some programmes which are predicated on a four-year cycle. There is broad feeling amongst the staff, the students and the employers that the level of training required for entry into the profession cannot be achieved within the three years as stipulated by Bologna. However, Bologna also offers significant opportunities for the university and it can only benefit from the increased mobility of staff and students. I would recommend that the university fully engage with employers as to how it might meet its obligations under Bologna without jeopardising standards (some kind of additional work-based learning in partnership with employers might be appropriate) and also to look at how similar courses elsewhere in Europe are meeting the challenge. In the UK, for example, three-year performer training degrees have been long established.

Concluding statement

I would thank the university for its time and hospitality and the staff for the friendly and open manner in which they have received me. I would give the university a clean bill of health. There will always be issues of detail to be addressed and these will no doubt be covered in the reports of the other evaluators. Likewise there will always be visions of the future to be moved towards. Nevertheless my impression of the University of the Arts "George Enescu", Iași, is a broadly positive one. Fundamentally it is doing a good job, serving its students and the broader community well and making a positive contribution to the creative economy of the city and its

region. As an institution it also has a critical awareness of its own strengths and areas for development and demonstrates a commitment to doing a good job even better.

Professor Dr. M Wilson
2 November 2009

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Wilson', followed by a small dot.