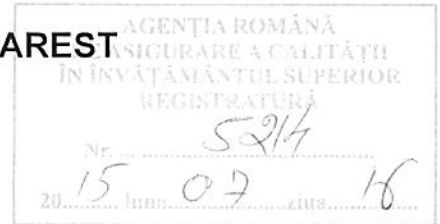


**EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT
FOR ARACIS OF
"ATHENAEUM" UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST
2015**



Introduction

I was appointed as a Foreign External Expert Evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) and was consequently invited to join the evaluation team for the institutional evaluation process of Athenaeum University of Bucharest (ATHU). The audit took place between Wednesday 24 June and Friday 26 June 2015.

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

Prof. univ. dr. Gabriel Ispas – Mission Director
Prof. univ. dr. Razvan Nistor – Coordinator of the Experts Evaluator Team
Prof. univ. dr. Paul Serban Agachi – Advisory Commission Expert
Prof. univ. dr. Adriana Giurgiu – Institutional Commission Expert
Prof. univ. dr. Roman Cristina Teodora – Program Expert (Business administration)
Mihai Marcu – Technical Secretary
Oana Onicas – Student Evaluator (ANOSR)
Sebastian Stefaniga – Student Evaluator (UNSR)

The evaluation process began on Wednesday 24th June at 9 a.m. in one hall of the ATHU. First Prof. univ. dr. Emilia Vasile the Rector welcomed the evaluation team. Next Prof. univ. dr. Razvan Nistor the coordinator of the experts evaluator team told the introductory statements.

From 9.30 a.m. the evaluation team discussed the most important aspects that should be considered during the audit. This was followed by a tour at the university to see the infrastructure of the institution.

U.S.

Between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. the group of experts was working on different aspects of the evaluation. In my role as Foreign Expert Evaluator, I was responsible for establishing an overview of the whole institution and was allowed to move freely, talking to members of staff and students of AUTH. At 5 p.m. we had an appointment with a group of 22 undergraduate students and at 6 p.m. there was a one hour meeting with a group of 20 former students of ATHU. At 7 p.m. we had a one hour long meeting with a group of about 27 graduates' employers.

The team continued the evaluation process on Thursday 25th June starting at 9 a.m. and ending at 7 p.m. In the morning EDATA information system and e-learning platform was shown for me.

The evaluation process was finished on Friday 26th June when the team of experts prepared the final report. The evaluation process was conducted in open and collegial manner.

General Statements

The institution started its operation in 1990, within the framework of "Athenaeum" University Academy Foundation. The institution's activity was initially held according to the Government Decision no. 568/1995 on provisional operation authorization for the Finance, Accounting and Computer Science specialization and subsequently for the other majors. ATHU is a private higher education institution accredited under the Law no.135/24 of May 2005 and ARACIS reaccredited in 2009.

The didactic structure of ATHU is very simple as it has two faculties, namely the Faculty of ECONOMIC SCIENCES and the Faculty of PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION. Originally ATHU has 5 bachelor degree programmes (Accounting and Management Information Systems; Finance and Banking; Marketing; Business Administration; Public Administration) and 5 programmes (Accounting, Audit and Consultancy; Efficiency and Risk in Banking, Insurance and Capital Markets; Management and Business Efficiency; European Administration. Institutions and Public Policies; Executive Power and Public Administration) of master degree, but not all of them are operating at the moment.

In the academic year 2014-2015 ATHU has 547 enrolled students.

The quality of human resources at ATHU seems to be on a reasonable level but scientific potential and research should be strengthened.

Comment: The second part of self-assessment report, I received a few weeks earlier, was different to the others I usually read. It was also embarrassing for me that the annexes had no numbers in the report so it was difficult to find them in the appendix.

Managerial Structure

The management of ATHU seems to be organised in accordance with the legal obligations and with the provisions of the university's charter.

The leadership of ATHU is ensured by the Rector, the Chairman of the Administration Board, the Chairman of the Senate, the Pro-rector, the Deans, the Department Directors and by other structures (e.g. commissions, committees etc.) which support the management at the level of ATHU.

In the self-assessment report it can be read that the Senate is "consisting of 11 members from which 75% teaching and research staff, and 25% representatives of the students ...". At ATHU I got another registry of the Senate which consist of 15 (11 teaching staff and 4 students) members.

The Faculty Council is the forum of the top management of all educational and scientific activities taking place in the faculty, but ratio of the students in these bodies are very different (Faculty of ECONOMIC SCIENCES - 7 teaching staff and 3 students; Faculty of PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - 5 teaching staff and 1 student).

The Board of Administration is the supreme forum of administrative, financial and economic management of ATHU.

Comment: Comment: The formal regulations of ATHU provide the student's participation in different decision-making bodies in sufficient proportion. This principle should be validating in all bodies of ATHU. So the proportion of the students should be balanced.

Teaching Staff

The number of academic staff at the ATHU in the academic year 2014/2015 is 25. There are 17 employees in the academic staff who is employed full-time by the university and 9 (52,94%) of them are professors and associate professors. The part-time employed (8 person) academic staff is much more experienced in teaching. Unfortunately most of the assistant professors (lectors) have less than 3 years practice in higher education. Everybody of the academic staff members at ATHU is PhD holders (100%).

I was surprised when I was informed that a few members of the academic staff were doing teaching activity as volunteers.

Three persons of the teaching staff are pensioners or over the limit of retirement age.

Comment: The university management recruit competitive teachers and there are quite a few practitioners among the lectures in their field. It may be very beneficial for the students but ATHU should pay more attention to the scientific level of the academic staff.

Facilities

ATHU is housed in a building which was not designed for its current purpose. The university makes good use of its facilities, although the spaces are not too much in the building. I could not find the offices of the academic staff.

Most of the educational spaces fulfil every requirement of the European standards. I experienced that the material infrastructure at the campus on a good level.

ATHU has modern computers. Most of them are located in two informatics laboratories. In one of the informatics labs the room is not enough for the students. The computers in the library are very few. More software is needed for the computers.

There is no students' hostel and sports facilities at the campus. Regarding the sports facilities, the university has proper leased spaces for the students (contract with Dinamo Bucharest Sports Club presented in annex). Disabled people cannot move in the buildings of ATHU.

The library of ATHU has a total of 10000 volumes and 1850 titles. There is little foreign literature in the library and it has only a tiny reading room for the students which is unsuitable for intellectual activities.

Comment: Although ATHU is relatively well equipped, the university need more space for scientific and research actions.

Students

Two types of study programs (BA/BSc, MA/MSc) are available for the candidates at ATHU. There is only a little decrease in the number of students if we compare the data to the last academic years. It is a great success nowadays as the regressive tendency is very common in most of the higher education institutes because of the demographic problems and economic crises.

During my visit I asked data about the drop-out rate of the students and I got figures only from 2011. The dropping out rate was around 10% in the mentioned year.

Besides the organized appointments the chance to talk with students was limited as it was the end of the examination period of the academic year.

At the organized appointment with the students they were pleased with the education and the circumstances. One of the most important reasons of their selection among

higher educational institutions was that they could study also in the afternoons and evenings at ATHU and the fees are reasonable.

Those who had previous experience at state universities mentioned that there were no huge differences between ATHU and the state universities.

It was remarked that the participation of the lessons was about 40% of the students but they have also online access to different study material at ATHU. Every year the students evaluate the performances of the academic staff.

The students have heard about researches and conferences at ATHU but they have never taken part in any scientific event.

The undergraduate students at the appointment were fairly active. They were pleased with the education and the circumstances. They also liked that they could study also in the afternoons and evenings at ATHU.

The international activity of ATHU is very poor. There are only a few bilateral agreements existing with other universities but I could not find real activities in connection with them. They do not have even an ERASMUS contract with another higher education institute.

Comment: It is recommended to enter into different European Higher Education Programmes (CEEPUS, ERASMUS etc.), especially doing a traineeship abroad. It will help them to gain some experience abroad and it is also suits to the EU recommendations which inspire the students to study one semester abroad.

At the meeting with employers there were representatives both of the private and public sector. They seemed very satisfied with those students who graduated at ATHU. They also mentioned that the courses are up-to-date at ATHU. The adaptation of the study material to the labour market at ATHU is solved very well.

Research

The scientific research should be one of the priority areas for ATHU. Although it is mentioned in self-evaluation report that the research activity was developed by the teachers, students and master students of the university, I could not find out how much the students are involved in scientific activity. The scientific research is conducted on departments and within the Research Centre.

The research activity seems to be not satisfactory at ATHU.

Comment: Most of the members of academic staff should increase their publications and I would also encourage the university to develop its international collaborative links, as there is much to be learned from the experience of colleagues across Europe and elsewhere.

Quality Management

ATHU has structures, strategies, policies and procedures for quality assurance of the teaching and research process. In order to develop the quality within the university The Quality Assurance Department was created.

I was informed that the Quality Management System (QMS) was implemented at ATHU according to the requirements of ISO 9001: 2000 and also a Quality Manual has been setup at the University level.

The Quality Assurance Department operates the "Commission for quality and the quality assurance service", at the level of ATHU. At the level of the faculty assuring the documentation and maintaining the QMS conformity with the requirements of reference standard.

ATHU has structures, strategies, policies and procedures for quality assurance of the teaching and research process.

ATHU regularly reviews its courses and gathers student feedback.

Comment: In my opinion the quality management at ATHU is very formal. The description of the procedure is too complicated.

Conclusion

My report is based on what I have experienced, seen, read and heard. To summarize my observations and opinion: ATHU does not meet all the standards of higher education and scientific research. In the present situation I am inclined to say that ATHU does not reach the level of confidence. I hope that some of the comments which I made will help the university management in the process of improvement.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to the Rector, the Pro-rector, the Deans and all the university staff for the pleasant atmosphere and the support during my stay in Bucharest. Also much gratitude to my colleagues from the evaluation team for the professional, open and gentle way in which the audit was conducted.

At least but not last special thanks to ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this evaluation process in Romania.

Pécs, 06-07-2015



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