

Evaluation_of_University_of_Arts_"George_Enescu"

This report is the result of the evaluation of University of Arts George Enescu Ia. The evaluation took place in 2012-2013 in the framework of the project "Performance in Research, Performance in Teaching" Quality, Diversity, and Innovation in Romanian Universities", which aims at strengthening core elements of Romanian universities, such as their autonomy and administrative competences, by improving their quality assurance and management proficiency.

Such evaluations are taking place within the context of major reforms in the Romanian higher education system, and specifically in accordance with the provisions of the *2011 Education Act* and the various related normative documents. Whilst institutional evaluations are taking place in the context of an overall reform, each university is being assessed by an independent team, under the authority of Institutional Evaluation Programme.

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Evaluators

The evaluation team (hereinafter named the team) consisted of:

- Prof. Philippe Rousseau, Former Rector, University Charles de Gaulle - Lille 3, France, team chair
- Prof. John Butler, Professor of Art, Birmingham City University, United Kingdom
- Kotryna Peilakauskaitė, Student, Vilnius University, Lithuania
- Dr Terhi Nokkala, Research Fellow, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, team coordinator

This report is based on knowledge, which the review team gained during two visits to the university and from written materials: the self-evaluation report and some additional materials prepared by the university on request. However, there are some limitations in this form of assessment. The report of the review team is dependent on what they have been told and have seen during the visits. In some cases they heard conflicting statements reflecting the uneven perception in various parts of the institution of a fast-changing situation.

The team would like to thank the Rector Simionescu, her team, the self-evaluation group and the entire university community for the cordial reception and candid and constructive discussions throughout the entire evaluation process. Also the logistical support provided by the UEFISCDI liaisons Alexandra Roman and Virgil Brumaru, as well as help of the interpreter Lucia Petrescu was invaluable for the work of the IEP team.

Self-evaluation Process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a Self-Evaluation Group (SEG) established by the university. The SEG comprised the following people representing the faculties and units of the university:

- Mr. Doru Albu, Professor PhD, Vice-Rector for Teaching and Quality in Education ? Chairperson of SEG;
- Mr. Aurelian B?l?i?, Assistant Professor PhD ? Vice-Rector for Research;
- Mr. Florin Grigora?, Assistant Professor PhD ? Vice-Rector for International relations, Academic Image and Student affairs;
- Ms. Eugenia Maria Pa?ca, Assistant Professor PhD ? Director of the Institute for Counselling and Training in Psychology and Pedagogy (CTPP);
- Ms. Cornelia Brustureanu, Lecturer PhD ? Vice-Dean for Teaching, the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design (FVAD);
- Mr. Ion Urde?, Lecturer PhD ? representative of the Faculty of Music Performance, Composition and Theoretical Musical Studies (FMPCTMS);
- Mrs. Raluca Bujoreanu ? Hu?anu, Assistant Professor PhD ? Dean of the Faculty of Acting (FT);
- Mr. Ciprian Ion, Assistant professor PhD ? Head of Department, FMPCTMS

The self-evaluation report of UAGE, together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team on 7 November 2012. The visits of the evaluation team to Ia?i took place from 5 to 6 December 2012 and from 27 February to 1 March 2013, respectively. In between the visits the University of Arts George Enescu Ia?i provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation.

The team would like to offer the following observations concerning the self-evaluation process and report.

- There was no student representative in the self-evaluation group, which the IEP team considered somewhat puzzling. The students were, however, at least in some departments, consulted in a more informal manner.
- The staff of the various departments of the institution were asked to provide data on their activities and research and artistic production for the purposes of the self-evaluation report.
- Some had also engaged in discussions at departmental level regarding the content of the self-evaluation report.
- The self-evaluation report had been widely circulated amongst the university community.

The self-evaluation report itself is a largely descriptive document, which offers a lot of information about the intentions of the university. It would have benefitted, however, from a more critical self-evaluation of the actual situation and from additional data to substantiate statements made in the report.

The impression of the team is that because the university has gone through several evaluations of a different nature over the recent past, the IEP exercise has been somewhat new for the university, and in some occasions, its specific character had not at first been fully understood. As a result, the potential of the self-evaluation process has partially been obscured by a more accountability-driven approach. However, the benefit of the previous evaluations has been that the university has had to develop an internal information system for collecting the output data, which is also used for preparing the next strategic plan of the university.

Reporting

Governance and Institutional Decision-making

more on Governance and Institutional Decision-making at UAGE

According to the self-evaluation report, the university wants to make full use of the autonomy granted to it by the legislation of Romania to establish and fulfil its mission, described above. To do this, the university has put in place an institutional strategy, organisational structures and governing bodies, as well as procedures for preparing budgets and quality assurance.

Teaching and Learning

more on Teaching and Learning at UAGE

The university currently offers education in three domains, music, acting and visual arts. It perceives that having these three domains gives it a unique selling point in Romania, as it enables the combination of knowledge and expertise from the different fields to develop larger scale, multidisciplinary artistic productions. The university also wants to develop a new programme in scenography, which would stimulate the collaboration between the three existing domains. In terms of the educational process, the university recognises the need to adapt to the current economic and societal situation, and wants to expand its lifelong learning offer.

Research and artistic production

more on Research and artistic production at UAGE

According to the self-evaluation report, the university's research policy focuses on national and European directions of development, whose priority areas are: to create new knowledge, to increase competitiveness and promote excellence, and to implement research outcomes. The main goal of the 'George Enescu' University of the Arts of Iași is to become a nationally and internationally recognised pool of excellence. Each faculty has adopted a medium- and long-term scientific research plan approved by the Faculty Council, based on which the university's overall research policy has been established.

Service to Society

more on Service to Society at UAGE

The city of Iași is traditionally the rich cultural centre of the region, with several important cultural institutions located in the city. The university maintains close collaboration with these institutions. According to the self-evaluation report, service to society is embedded in the mission of the university through its education, research and artistic activity function: 'A major objective of the University of Arts 'George Enescu' Iași is its involvement in helping to disseminate Romanian culture on a regional and national level. Our university's collaborations with cultural institutions, economic partners as well as local and regional authorities represent important elements in developing academic-related activities. Their implication is a major part of developing study programmes by permanently collaborating to set up specific cultural events.'

Quality Culture

more on Quality Culture at UAGE

Quality culture is an overarching concept that pertains to all aspects of an academic institution. In the UAGE's self-evaluation report, the following, quality-related strategic goals are specifically mentioned:

- ?ensure a standard of excellence in training and education, artistic activities and academic research? and
- ?ensure academic quality?

Internationalisation

more on Internationalisation at UAGE

According to its mission, the university wants to operate as a recognised and respected member of the national, European and international higher education community. Due to the demographic change and declining Romanian student population, internationalisation is one of the key goals of the university: ?In perspective, the University of Arts ?George Enescu? Ia?i aims at increasing its national and international reputation by starting study programmes taught in international languages, thus attracting talented Romanians as well as foreigners to study at our university and, at the same time, by further training our staff to meet the demands of an internationally competitive higher education.?

Recommendations

Governance

- We urge the university?s leadership and community to take clear ownership of the identity and direction of the university beyond what the Ministry dictates.
- Redefine mission, goals and priorities of the university, and operationalise them as activities, with appropriate indicators and budget. Monitor these regularly and take remedial action if necessary.
- Rethink the balance between the needs of the university and the faculties within the limits of national regulations. Whilst a bottom-up process is important for the establishment of a feeling of a shared purpose, the entire university also needs to have a clear direction, which requires the university?s leadership to take comprehensive responsibility.
- Clarify the responsibilities between legislative, executive and administrative bodies. Although the process has already started, it is still at an early stage. The Senate and its committees must play a more proactive role in formulating the strategy, monitoring its implementation and controlling the Quality Assurance system.
- The possibilities of the university to flourish and develop are inevitably linked to the stability of its financial resources. In a situation where public budgets are restricted, we recommend that the university establishes relevant structures dedicated to identifying and pursuing new external funding sources, involving alumni and committed external stakeholders.

Teaching and learning

- We recommend that the university makes better use of the potential offered by the three fields of study by developing integrated interdisciplinary programmes and implementing them across the university.
- Whilst there already are, on an informal basis, some examples of students taking courses from other programmes besides their own, we recommend the university to enable flexible study across programmes

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and fields on a more formal accredited and non-accredited basis.

- The university could consider making use of an invited committee comprising external experts to evaluate the quality of programmes and ensure they are of an international standard.
- The university should also continue and expand the work it has already started in some fields with defining the expected learning outcomes for different levels of study. The university may wish to make use of different arts subject descriptors for learning outcomes developed by organisations such as the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), of which UAGE is a member (<http://www.elia-artschools.org>). It is important for the university to own the process and adapt the indicators to the specific needs of UAGE and its students.

Research and artistic production

- The university should formulate a clearer research strategy with goals and priorities, as well as implement indicators and assessment practice for research in order to systematise research activity in UAGE.
- Implement support structures for research to help teachers identify funding sources, plan projects and apply for grants. Even if establishing a fully blown research support office appear to be difficult in the context of the current economic constraints, the university should pursue that goal and consider levying an overhead for the research projects funded from external sources to cover the costs, or pooling resources with another university in Iași to do this.
- UAGE is uniquely positioned amongst Romanian arts universities due to its comprehensive profile with three fields of arts. The university should take a more systematic approach to interdisciplinary research in order to seize new funding opportunities.
- The university could also consider inviting external, international experts to help UAGE to achieve its set objectives for research.

Service to society

- The university could consider establishing a Stakeholder Council to make better use of their expertise and include them in the process of defining the university strategy.
- Similarly, the university should broaden the scope of collaboration beyond the immediate region and neighbouring countries, to include leading artistic institutions in Europe, building on its established links in Germany and ERASMUS partners further afield. Also, it has the scientific, artistic and educational resources to find European or transnational commercial, industrial or cultural partners beyond the limits of their region, taking advantage of a network of artists and friendly stakeholders.
- The university should adopt a more systematic approach to analyse the changing labour market needs and student employability. For example, establishing an alumni database and implementing a regular survey every few years may help the university to better keep track of the graduate employment and employability requirements.

Quality culture

- The university leadership and community should take responsibility for development of a comprehensive quality culture, which does not build solely on the externally mandated quantitative quality indicators. As part of this process, the university should create quality indicators arising from its own needs and strategic priorities and monitor those systematically in order to be able to make changes in their primary processes if need arises.
- The university should pursue further development of quality assurance practices at all levels of the institution, as well as develop an annual quality process for all programmes.
- The university should systematically involve students and stakeholders in all quality assurance procedures

Internationalisation

Recommendations

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- The university should define a comprehensive internationalisation strategy with explicit priorities and linked resources.
- The university should also consider establishing a strategic network of partner institutions to widen and stabilise the international horizon of the university. In this context, the university could also review and if necessary, revise, all international agreements to maximise their strategic potential.
- There is also a need for the university to implement better guidance and support structures for international income generation taking advantage of the expertise of the aforementioned network of international strategic partner institutions.

Conclusion

The team would like to conclude that the University of Arts George Enescu is a good arts university with solid educational programmes at all three levels and a good national reputation. Its position as the only arts university in Romania encompassing music, theatre and visual arts gives it unique opportunities to evolve into a comprehensive and innovative centre of arts education, research and creation in its region and wider context. The staff of UAGE is competent, dedicated and highly appreciated by the students, and the university counts many highly respected artists amongst staff and alumni. The university has active collaboration with the local community and it demonstrates willingness to change in the face of the new challenges it faces.

However, the team also recognises the following overall constraints for the thriving of the university. The mission of the university is formulated on a very general level and it fails to truly set the university apart. UAGE has started a strategy process but the university currently lacks clearly identified strategic goals. Due to the insufficient integration between the three fields, the university is not able to make full use of the opportunities presented by interdisciplinarity. Only a more integrated university will be able to thrive in the new operational context. The University of Arts George Enescu operates in a challenging economic, legislative and political environment, which requires considerable self-reflection and effort to better analyse its actual situation, including a lucid SWOT analysis, clarifying its mission and strategic goals in the new context, improving its functionality and enhancing its quality culture. Based on the material received and visits conducted during the evaluation process, the team is convinced that the university has all the tools to do this. The team is confident that UAGE will achieve its objectives and the recognition the university duly deserves.

The team would like to take this opportunity to thank the university once again for its welcoming, open, and constructive attitude during the evaluation and to wish the university best success in achieving its goals.