

Akkreditierungsagentur
im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales
Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science



Assessment Report

on the accreditation of

the “Teacher Training Program”

**consisting of the “Psychopedagogical Training Program – level I”
and “Psychopedagogical Training Program – level II”**

**at Dimitrie Cantemir University,
Targu Mures, Romania**

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1 Introduction

Study programs in Romania require authorization for provisional functioning, as established by Law no. 87 of 2006, which approved the Emergency Decree no. 75 of 2005. The Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport is responsible for authorizing provisional functioning of study programs. According to the Law of National Education no.1 of 2011 (hereinafter "Law of National Education") Art. 150, Par. 1, the decision of whether to grant authorization is contingent upon the evaluation and subsequent recommendation of the study program by an external quality assurance agency registered in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

After authorization for provisional functioning has been granted by the Romanian Ministry, the applicant higher education institution may enroll students in the respective study program. Following the successful graduation of three subsequent cohorts (taking approximately five years for three year study programs), the higher education institution must submit its application for accreditation. The accreditation procedure is similar to that for authorization for provisional functioning: an external evaluation by an EQAR-listed quality assurance agency, takes place on the basis of which the Government decides whether to accredit the study program.

The "Teacher Training Program" is an additional qualification obtainable for students or graduates at Romanian Universities in order to receive a teaching authorization in Romania. The program consists of 60 European Credit Transfer System Points and the curriculum is bound to national Romanian legislation.

The AHPGS Accreditation Agency was tasked with accrediting the "Teacher Training Program" offered by the Dimitrie Cantemir University, Targu Mures, Romania.

In September 2017, to the experts were forwarded the relevant documents for the evaluation of the program and to review the available information, determine particular strengths and weaknesses, and identify any open questions regarding the study programs in writing.

Given the fact that the University (including the Teacher Training Department) went through an institutional audit carried out by AHPGS in 2014 and based

on the extensive written documentation provided by the University, there was no separate on-site visit scheduled for this program.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS nominated the following experts to conduct the written evaluation of the program:

Prof. Dr. Andrea Eickhoff Óhidy

Professor for Educational Sciences with a focus on School Pedagogics and vice-director of the Institute for Educational Sciences, University of Education Freiburg, Germany.

Prof. Dr. Ludwig Haag

Professor for School Pedagogy at Bayreuth University, Germany; Visiting lecturer at ETH Zurich, Switzerland and at Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy.

Prof. Dr. Christoph Mischo

Professor for Educational Psychology, University of Education Freiburg, Germany.

Jaqueline Veenker

Master studies in Teacher Training in Vocational Schools at Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany; Bachelor of Arts in Vocational Education Studies in Social Pedagogy at Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany; Registered Social Education Worker.

The proceedings of the Process of Accreditation conform to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as well as to the Art. 150 of Romania's Law no. 1 of National Education 2011; the Quality Evaluation Activities Guide for University Study Programs and for Higher Education Institutions: Part 1 Study Programs Accreditation External Evaluation Guide, and the Methodology for External Evalu-

ation, Standards, Standards of Reference, and List of Performance Indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (“Methodology”).

The expert group surveyed the proper implementation of the criteria, standards and performance indicators, as specified in the above mentioned legal texts as well as the compliance of the program with the normative criteria, as stated in the “Methodology”.

The following Expert Report summarizes the results of the written evaluation of the application documents. Since it investigates the fulfilment of the standards and criteria specified in the “Methodology”, the structure of the Expert Report follows the logical succession of these criteria, as they are formulated in the document.

The following Fields of Activity pertaining to the program and the University were assessed by the expert group with respect to the corresponding criteria and standards: (A) Institutional capacity, (B) Educational effectiveness, and (C) Quality management, each with the corresponding Criteria and Standards.

2 The study program to be accredited

The “Teacher Training Program” (TTP) offered by Dimitrie Cantemir University of Targu Mures, Romania, Teacher Training Department, consists of the “Psychopedagogical Training Program – level I” and the “Psychopedagogical Training Program – level II”. The period of education ranges between two and ten semesters (between one and five years) for the whole program depending on whether the students pursue the two levels part-time or postgraduate: a) level I takes six semesters/three year part-time, i.e. in parallel with the bachelor study program, or one semester when studied postgraduate in full-time mode, b) level II takes four semesters/two years part-time, i.e. in parallel with the master study program, or one semester when studied postgraduate in full-time mode.

The program is taught in Romanian language. The main objective of the “Teacher Training Program” is to train students pedagogically in order to enable them to become qualified teachers in their respective field of studies in Romania. 60 credit points (CP), i.e. 30 CP per level, according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) are required in order to graduate from the program. One CP is equivalent to 25 workload hours. The total workload of the program constitutes 1,500 hours (750 hours for each level), of which 252 are contact hours, 358 are practical training hours and 890 are independent study hours.

The program consists of 14 modules (eight in level I and six in level II). All modules are program-specific modules. In level I, all modules are obligatory. In level II, two out of six modules are optional. If students pursue the TTP in parallel to their bachelor or master study program, they study a maximum of two modules per semester in the TTP. All modules have to be completed within one semester (or in 14 weeks during the academic year in case of postgraduate studies).

Admission requirements to level I (bachelor level) include a high school diploma or equivalent. Admission requirements to level II (master level) include a bachelor degree or equivalent as well as prove that level I has been completed. Foreign students also have to provide a language competence certificate in Romanian due to the instruction language of the program. Students are informed about the amount of the tuition fees in advance.

Upon completion of the study program, students are awarded a “Psycho-Pedagogic training program graduation certificate” stating that the holder of this certificate meets the conditions regarding training for the didactic profession and is granted the rights provided by Romanian law. The certificate is issued by the Romanian Ministry of Education and Scientific Research. Students complete their studies by fulfilling the course requirements and passing their final examination.

The experts take note that the formal requirements of the study program are in accordance with the national Romanian requirements.

The TTP was evaluated by ARACIS (Romanian Accreditation Agency) in 2010 and, as a result, it was accredited by the Order of the Minister of National Education no. 3027/2010. There were no recommendations for further improvement of the program. Hence, the program has not changed in its structure since the first batch of students was enrolled in 2009/2010. Until the winter semester 2016/2017 a total of 1,716 students were enrolled in level I (502 part-time and 1,214 postgraduate) and 1,065 were enrolled postgraduate in level II. 356 students have graduated from level I (58 students in part-time mode, and 298 postgraduate) and 206 students have graduated from level II. 73 % of the graduates are female.

According to the new Romanian “Order of the Minister of National Education No. 3850/2017 for the approval of the Framework Methodology for the organization of psycho-pedagogic training programs in higher education institutions accredited for certification of competences for the didactic profession” it is regulated that the maximum number of students who can be enrolled is proposed by the quality assurance agency that has assessed the program. The University seeks to offer 600 study places for graduates in level I and additionally another 600 places for graduates in level II. The admission shall take place every winter semester. There is no restricted number of study places for part-time studies.

The University explains that most students pursuing TTP in postgraduate mode work in education as unqualified substitute teachers. Completing the TTP offers them the possibility to obtain the desired qualification and become qualified teachers.

The University confirms in a formal declaration that the "Quality Evaluation Activities Guide for University Study Programs and for Higher Education Institutions: Part I Study Programs Accreditation External Evaluation Guide" has been respected, i.e. that, the "Compulsory Normative Requirements for Study Programs Accreditation" have been followed with regard to:

- the legal organization framework and functioning of the higher education institution as an education providing institution, its mission and objectives,
- the teaching staff,
- the educational process content,
- the students,
- scientific research and
- the material basis.

3 Expert Report

In September 2017, the application documents of the University were made available to the expert group for written evaluation. The expert group assessed the “Teacher Training Program” based on the Romanian standards and regulations specified under Section 1. They have also examined the factual and other program-related aspects described in the documents. The results of this review were forwarded to the AHPGS in October 2017.

Based on the written evaluation of each expert, the expert group jointly agreed upon an expert report.

A. Institutional Capacity

A.1. Institutional, administrative and management structures

Dimitrie Cantemir University (hereupon. the University) was founded in 1991 and functions as a private University accredited by Law no. 136/2005, published in the Official Gazette no. 434 2005 part I. In 2006, the University was certified by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). Based on that, it is assured that the University meets the requirements set by the national Romanian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Moreover, in 2014 the University was also subject to an Institutional Audit carried out by AHPGS.

Currently, the University has four faculties: the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Economic Sciences, the Faculty of Geography and the Faculty of Psychology. Moreover, there is the Department of Continuous Training, the Department of International Relations and the Department of Practice to ensure the complementarity and the proper working of different activities within the University and the community. The other two faculties, Medical Dentistry and Balneofizioterapie, are under authorization. There are six Bachelor degree programs and seven Master degree programs offered by the University. In total 904 students are currently enrolled at the University. Thereof, eight students currently are international students (Erasmus).

The Department of Continuous Training is also known as the "Teacher Training Department" to which the "Teacher Training Program" is affiliated. The Teacher Training Department has been operating since 2009, following the external evaluation carried out by ARACIS and the decision of this agency, from the 25th of June 2009, according to which the University is granted the quality of an institution providing Initial training programs for professionalization in the teaching career".

The Teacher Training Department is an autonomous, self-financing didactic-scientific and administrative university institution, directly subordinated to the University Senate and will function with the approval of the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, according to the law and to the provisions of the University Charter (see Regulation regarding Organization and Functioning of the Teaching Staff Training Department). It has a didactic and a mission of scientific research, in the area of the training of the

didactic personnel, and consists of the promotion of a formative, modern education, centered on the subject of learning, adapted to the European requirements regarding the psycho-pedagogical training programs, pragmatically oriented to the real needs of the society and its current educational priorities. The Teacher Training Department has set four objectives:

- 1.) *the initial training* for the didactic profession of the students and, as appropriate, of the graduates of the academic education, in order to acquire the competences for the required official certification for the occupation of the didactic positions in the pre-university and the academic education;
- 2.) *continuous training* of the didactic personnel, by periodic training/improvement programs, by master's degree university education programs and also by organizing the training courses and the exams for the achievement of the upper level and didactic degrees by the didactic personnel in the pre-university education;
- 3.) *scientific research*, theoretical and applicative, in the area of the educational sciences, according to the development requirements of the educational process and to the educational standards and the evolution perspectives of the education and of the educational sciences, on national and European plan;
- 4.) *continuous training of the adults*, by supplying educational programs for the purpose of the personal development, of the initiation, specialization and improvement in different areas of activity, according to the training requirements identified on individual and/or organizational level and to the requests advanced on European level, regarding the development of the basic competencies of the adults.

The Council and the director of the University are in charge of the Teacher Training Department. The director is elected by the council and functions as the chair of the department. The council consists of four members: the director of the department, two members of the teaching staff, one of whom is the scientific secretary of the department, and a student representative. A secretariat and two commissions (*initial training commission* and *continuous training commission*) belong to the department.

The expert group assessed the compatibility of the written documentation and the University's mission and objectives. Based on the information provided in

the written documentation, the experts have determined that the main objective of the University is to offer a variety of higher education study programs which meet the needs of the Romanian labor market and which are compatible with national and international standards of education. Nevertheless, the University should keep in mind that economical and market-based objectives could eventually collide with academic freedom. One of the main tasks of the University is to contribute to the social and cultural life of the local community of Targu Mures. Moreover, through the "Teacher Training Program" the University also strives to professionalize teachers in Romania. Missions and objectives are clearly stated, and the institution supports the program and staff in line with the aims and objectives of the program and common standards of integrity (e.g. see "University Charter" and "University Code of Ethics"). Furthermore, the experts presume the effectiveness and efficacy of the administration as the TTP has already been installed and accredited.

With a glance at the study programs currently offered at the University, it becomes clear that the formulated mission and objectives are coherent. However, with the two new programs offered (Dental Medicine and Balneofiziokinetotherapy and Recovery), the portfolio of the University is expanding to health-related study programs, which is a new field for the University. From the perspective of the experts, it is sensible to expand the existing fields of the University.

Another aspect of the University mission is to sustain and further intensify research activity among students, thus enabling them to contribute to the general advancement of knowledge in their respective fields. Research is an important aspect, especially in the field of health related study programs overall but also regarding the psycho-pedagogical field.

With regard to the administrative structure concerning the collaboration between the department, faculty and University units, the experts encourage looking for common interests and to combining forces and resources. This will also help to facilitate the coordination of research activities.

The expert group has been convinced of the University's commitment – as an institution – to offer high quality education opportunities. It was asserted that the University and its study programs function within the Romanian legal framework and that the institution promotes academic integrity and freedom

among its students. Besides, the University regularly monitors its own activities. What is more, students take an active part in management.

Internal assessment and audit processes take place in order to monitor the achievement of the objectives of the University. The experts have observed an active collaboration between the administrative and teaching structures, and have also identified a clear division of the hierarchical units and their functions in the University. The University has developed an ethical code, and its members are aware of this code.

Regarding the internationality, the experts positively noticed the measures put in place by the University in order to pursue its international orientation. The University achieves mobility of its students by means of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and by taking part in Erasmus exchange programs. The study recognition under the ERASMUS program is seen as a strength.

Furthermore, the University follows the standards for the field of Teacher Training determined by the "Order of the Minister of National Education No. 3850/2017 for the approval of the Framework Methodology for the organization of psycho-pedagogic training programs in higher education institutions accredited for certification of competences for the didactic profession".

From the experts' point of view, the University should present its internationalization measures in a more open and distinct manner so that, apart from maintaining its significant role in the region, it could further promote its attractiveness and unique character, which differentiate it from other higher education institutions.

The experts discern the possibilities for further development in the strategic alignment of the University in general. The University especially should think about its role in the local community of Targu Mures.

Taking these facts into account, the expert group regards Criterion A.1 as fulfilled.

A.2. Material resources and infrastructure

Overall, the experts discern that the University has sufficient material and financial resources with regard to the study programs currently being offered. Facilities are fully in possession of the University. According to the "Declaration of the Administration Board of Dimitrie Cantemir University", the institu-

tion possesses sufficient financial resources and equipment for the program and a system of scholarship has been established. Looking at the premises and resources available for the desired number of students (600 per year and level), the experts conclude that the University can offer the study places in question.

Furthermore, with regard to the library and lecture halls, the experts assess that the lecture halls and seminar rooms are sufficiently equipped for providing adequate teaching and learning processes (e.g. computer/media/audio-visual equipment) and it became clear that the program-specific literature is adequate.

Nevertheless, the expert group encourages the University to establish partnerships with similar institutions (libraries, publishing houses) within the country and abroad, in order to provide students and teachers with access to an even wider range of data bases as well as learning and scientific material.

Taking into account the University's endeavor to enhance its infrastructure and to improve the teaching and learning settings, the expert group considers Criterion A.2 to be fulfilled.

With regard to the aspect of financing, the experts recognize that the University, whose main source of funding is students' tuition fees, is quite restricted in terms of finding new financial sources. This is caused by the declining number of students in the region, as a result of significant demographic changes in Romania. As a response to the current difficult situation, the experts recommend the development of a fundraising system in order to generate external financial support for the students. This system should include local industries, private donors and alumni.

B. Educational Effectiveness

B.1. Content of the study program

The "Teacher Training Program" is affiliated with the Teacher Training Department. The study program's mission, general and specific learning objectives, curriculum and outcome competences were presented in the written documentation. The curriculum description specifies the qualification objectives, competences (knowledge and understanding, explanation and interpretation etc.) and learning outcomes for each module.

The study program's goal is to train students in order to become qualified teachers. Regarding the objectives of the "Teacher Training Program", the University explains that competencies are defined as integrative knowledge, skills, motivations and attitudes that mediate the professional conduct and ensure expert action in specific contexts for the teaching profession. The main areas that define the adequate skills for the teaching profession which are designed, operated and evaluated by the teacher training programs are: 1. the specialty according to the disciplines of education and teaching position held by the teacher; 2. pedagogy and educational psychology; 3. didactics / specialist didactics; 4. educational management and school legislation; 5. information and communication techniques applied in teaching and learning, in institutional management and data management; 6. inter- and transdisciplinary areas aimed at alternative and complementary training strategies, research and innovation, communication and partnerships with the social environment, etc.

The experts agree with the above mentioned qualification objectives. Moreover, the "Teacher Training Program" also focuses on qualifying students for social responsibility and personal development throughout all modules. The experts conclude that graduates have good employment opportunities on the Romanian job market. Nevertheless, the experts want to draw the attention to the UNESCO guidelines "Education for all" presented in 2009. The aspect of inclusive education is an important factor and should be included in the curriculum. The experts suggest to include this topic in the module "Pedagogy I" (e.g. add "inclusive systems at all levels" under number 13).

The expert group highlights that the educational plan of the Teacher Training Department is established on a national level. The curriculum of the "Teacher Training Program" comprises of 1. a *core curriculum* for level I and II: Fundamental psycho-pedagogical training disciplines (18 CP) and specialty didactic and practical training disciplines (12 CP), 2. an *extended curriculum* in level II: Psycho-pedagogical training extension disciplines (10 CP) and specialty didactic and practical training extension disciplines (10 CP), 3. an *optional curriculum* in level II: one discipline is chosen (10 CP). The experts especially appreciate the optional curriculum which complete the courses offered very well. The program is also well structured; modules are described in detail (e.g. with objectives, aimed competences, content and literature) and the program is relevant as the intended career is clear. Moreover, the program offers different training levels (from initial training to adult education).

Alongside the theoretical curriculum, practical training is part of the curriculum and also regulated by Romanian law (see a. "Approval of the Framework Methodology for organizing psycho-pedagogical training programs within accredited higher education institutions, for the purpose of certifying skills required for the teaching profession"; b. "Approval for founding the Teacher Training Department within Dimitrie Cantemir University of Tirgu Mures"). The decrees stipulate that higher education institutions providing psycho-pedagogic training conclude framework-agreements with the school inspectorates to which the education institutions in which specialized teaching practice takes place belong (see art. 3 (3)). The pedagogical practice is conducted in the units of practice with which the University has signed a contract, namely the County School Inspectorate, Omega Gymnasium, Art Lyceum and Economic College Transilvania. The practical training is coordinated by a representative of the University and by mentors in the training schools. They are teachers, with various degrees of expertise in education, they hold Bachelor and Master diplomas, and some have PhDs. The students are assigned to mentors according to their specialization.

Level I has the following practical training modules: 1. "Teaching practice in compulsory pre-university education 1", which consists of observing practice, and 2. "Teaching practice in compulsory pre-university education 2" which consists of demonstrative practice. The workload is composed of 78 contact hours and 125 individual workload hours. Level II contains the practical training module "Teaching practice (secondary, postsecondary and higher education level)". The workload is composed of 42 practice hours and 83 individual workload hours.

The experts take note of the cooperation agreements and come to the conclusion that the University carefully selects its cooperative partners. It became sufficiently clear that the University strives to offer the same quality of practical training for all students at various cooperation partners.

The expert group points out that also research elements are integrated in some modules for instance in the module "Research Methods in Education" where students conduct their own research project. Hence, students develop a basic understanding of qualitative and quantitative research. They also develop the ability to plan and conduct a fundamental or applied research in their area of expertise.

The credit system applied in the "Teacher Training Program" and at the University in general complies with the *Order of the Romanian Ministry of Education no.3617/2005* on the generalized application of the European Credit Transfer System. The University informs that the normative acts governing the psycho-pedagogic training programs (Order of the Minister of National Education No. 3850/2017 for the approval of the Framework Methodology for the organization of psycho-pedagogic training programs in higher education institutions accredited for certification of competences for the didactic profession, In the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, No 361 of May 16, 2017) have been updated. Order no. 3850/2017 is an update / completion of the Order of the Minister of National Education no. 5745/2012, on the basis of which the psycho-pedagogic training program at the University has been functioning so far. Order no. 3850/2017 regulates the procedure for the organization of psycho-pedagogic training programs, both at the level of bachelor and master's programs, as well as at the level of postgraduate programs. The experts take note of this new regulation "Specific standards regarding external academic quality assessment for associated bachelor and master level studies" which has been approved on October 1, 2017 by ARACIS. The University highlights the following aspects: 1. All students enrolled in "Dimitrie Cantemir" University of Târgu Mureş have the right to attend Level 1 of psycho-pedagogic training. For the development of the didactic activities during Level I of psycho-pedagogic training, during the three years of bachelor studies, according to the Framework Methodology, the subjects in the curriculum are distributed equally in all six semesters of the bachelor studies, so as not to cause an excessive workload for students. The University makes sure that the credit points for the mandatory final exam are not allocated above the 30 credit points which are necessary in order to graduate a level.

The experts also want to draw the attention to the process for the recognition of externally achieved credit points. The University recognizes credits obtained at other universities if they comply with the regulations on students' professional activity; the equivalence of credits is evaluated by an internal credit recognition committee inside each faculty. From the experts' point of view, the recognition of credits transferred from other Universities (domestic and abroad) should be regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, i.e. the burden of proof to demonstrate that an appli-

cation does not fulfill the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment¹.

The "Teacher Training Program" contains 60 credits. The curriculum is comprised of 14 modules. The program is offered on a full-time and part-time basis (between two semesters/one year and ten semesters/five years). The total workload of the program is 1,500 hours, which is divided into a) 140 contact hours, 218 hours of practical training and 392 hours of individual work in level I and b) 112 contact hours, 140 hours of practical training and 498 hours of individual work in level II.

The subjects in the curriculum can be evaluated at the end of the semester through: exams, oral exams (colloquiums) and verifications (tests). The evaluation is based on the specific procedures from the Quality Manual. Level I comprises of five written exams and three colloquiums plus the final exam (portfolio). Level II also comprises five written exams and one colloquium plus the final exam (portfolio). Thus, one assessment method is applied per module. In case that students study the "Teacher Training Program" parallel to their bachelor or master studies they have a maximum of two assessments per semester. After graduation, they can study the TTP full-time and have eight (level I) or six (level II) assessments per semester.

The TTP is completed by an exam which consists of a didactic portfolio. It is regulated by Romanian law that the structure and content of the teaching portfolio is determined by the students' own methodology (art.10 (3)). In regard to this, the University has provided its "Methodology for Graduation Exams" for this program: "The purpose of conducting the portfolio and the evaluation is to highlight the quality and certification of the methodological skills, communication and networking, pupils and students' assessment, psycho-social, technical and technological competences, career management, specific to the teaching profession, acquired by the students of the psychopedagogical study program corresponding to level I and level II. The portfolio is the collection of works that a student develops in order to highlight the efforts, progress and results of the theoretical and practical strategies, corre-

¹ (Art 3.3 (5)); Each Party shall recognize periods of study completed within the framework of a higher education program in another Party. This recognition shall comprise such periods of study towards the completion of a higher education program in the Party in which recognition is sought, unless substantial differences can be shown between the periods of study completed in another Party and the part of the higher education program which they would replace in the Party in which recognition is sought (Art.5.1 (1))

sponding to level I and level II respectively, of the psycho-pedagogical program" (examples: didactic projects, extra-didactic activity projects, curricula, syllabi in a specialized field, self-reflective analyses, self-assessment on personal psycho-pedagogic abilities at the moment the program is finalized, continuous development projects, etc.).

From the experts view, the student workload should be evaluated on a regular basis (currently either at the end of the semester or at the end of the study program) in order to make sure that students are not overloaded, for example, with examinations. Additionally, the implementation of evaluation results to improve the study programs should be clearly documented. The experts also suggest combining smaller modules into larger units in order to reduce the student workload regarding examinations.

For the evaluation of the students' performance in exams, the University applies a 10-point grading system, 1-3 being the lowest grade and 10 being the highest grade. The minimum passing grade is 5 points. Verifications may also be graded with the qualifications 'passed' or 'failed'. The minimum grade for passing the graduation exam is 7.

The admission procedure in the program is determined by the "Order of the Minister of National Education No. 3850/2017 for the approval of the Framework Methodology for the organization of psycho-pedagogic training programs in higher education institutions accredited for certification of competences for the didactic profession" Art.5 (1)". It states that admission to psycho-pedagogic training programs is based on an examination/interview, under the conditions established by the institution's own methodology. In this regard, the University has handed in its "Regulation regarding Admission in the University Cycles". Thus, the admission is in accordance with the current Romanian legislation. The Admission requirements for the "Teacher Training Program" include a high school diploma or equivalent for level I and a bachelor degree or equivalent plus proof of passing level I for level II. Moreover, a language competence certificate in Romanian language is necessary for foreign students.

From the experts' point of view, the admission procedure of the program complies with the requirements of the University as well as with the national standards. The recruitment and admission policies for students of the University in general is clearly stated, but the recruitment and concrete admission

practice for the postgraduate program, which is open to students of other universities still remains somewhat unclear: What are the criteria in the interview “under the conditions established by the institution’s own methodology”? How does TTP deal with heterogeneous competences of students? The experts point out that the admission procedure provides equal opportunities to all applicants regardless of gender, origin or social class. In addition, according to the “Regulation regarding Students with Locomotor Disabilities and Chronic Diseases”, students with physical disabilities have the right to have access to all university spaces and to have unimpeded access to all university premises. In addition, the University provides space tailored to their needs so they can carry out academic, social, and cultural activities. Moreover, students with disabilities may be awarded with scholarships (full or partial fee exemption).

Based on the described conclusions, the expert group considers Criterion B.1 to be partly fulfilled.

The recognition of credits transferred from other Universities (domestic and abroad) should be regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

The criteria in the interview for admission should be clearly stated.

B.2. Learning outcomes

From the experts’ point of view, the “Teacher Training Program” can be successfully classified within the Romanian higher education system. The final qualification gained by its graduates corresponds to the demands of the Romanian labor market. The knowledge, competencies and abilities gained throughout the study program correspond to the final academic certificate to be awarded. The practical activity, which has been described under Criterion B.1, enables students to adapt to real life circumstances and to directly apply their theoretical knowledge.

The teaching and didactic methods are student-oriented (research and competence-based) and the evaluation system is individualized. From the experts’ point of view, there is a good mix between methods and interactive learning methods (e.g. working in groups, role plays etc.). According to the University, the main responsibility of each course instructor is to apply student-centered methods of teaching and to create a productive learning environment. Furthermore, course instructors are responsible for the development of students’

degree-specific as well as general competences, which are specified in the course descriptions provided by the University.

The University explains that the TTP has no shared courses. Accumulating 30 CP in level I grants graduates of a bachelor study program the right to occupy didactic positions in the compulsory pre-university education in their respective field of studies. Accumulating another 30 CP in level II, i.e. 60 CP in total, grants graduates of a master study program the right to occupy didactic positions in the high-school, college and university education in their respective field of studies.

In the opinion of the experts, the European and historical perspective could be more emphasized in the curriculum.

The results of the evaluations among students reveal that 50 % of the students have a positive appreciation of the learning/development environment provided by the University, as well as their own learning track. In comparison to the academic year 2015/2016, the number of students has increased in 2016/2017. In addition, the drop-out rate is under 1 % and most graduates are employed in education, according to the level they have completed. The expert group thinks that employability is given for graduates of this program. The experts conclude that this positive outcome and development stems on the one hand from the curriculum but on the other hand also from the open atmosphere and communication ethics at the University. Regarding student support measures, members of the teaching staff have regular office hours where they can provide academic guidance to individual students. The University also encourages its alumni to pursue postgraduate studies in master programs at the institution. It also supports the participation in international conferences and workshops, as well as publications in national and international journals.

The expert group considers Criterion B.2 to be fulfilled.

B.3. Scientific research activity

The University develops and implements short-, mid- and long-term research programs (fundamental and applied research) with decentralized research structures (faculties and research center). It includes international and interdisciplinary collaborations within conferences and workshops.

The Teacher Training Department has its own scientific research plan included in the strategic plan of the University. Scientific research embraces themes from the scientific areas of educational sciences, psychology, sociology, and integrated/interdisciplinary studies. The department organizes scientific sessions, workshops and seminars together with students and graduates. The experts conclude that research is carried out by staff and students. This is documented by the overview of publications. Validation criteria for research activities are provided. However, the number of peer reviewed articles with impact factor as an indicator of high quality research seems very low. There exists a "Scientific Research Strategic Plan" but this plan only reveals individualized research goals instead of conceptual strategic considerations of the faculty or institution about future research topics and aims and means to reach these goals. The experts take note of the "Operational Plan of the Teacher Training Department for the academic year 2016/2017" which the University has provided in addition. In terms of further development opportunities, the experts recommend to develop an overall research strategy with goals and means of the faculty or institution with strategic considerations about a coherent research policy and research topics based on long-term considerations. Moreover, the evaluation of research should be clearly documented. In addition, the University should bear in mind that cooperation can turn into competition between researchers and could thus eventually become problematic.

The research activity is materially supported by the Dimitrie Cantemir publishing house, which facilitates the release of conference papers and publications.

With regard to the students, the experts pose the question as to whether there are any possibilities for students to achieve a Ph.D.

Considering these observations, the expert group regards Criterion B.3. as fulfilled.

B.4. Financial activity

Currently, the University holds and receives revenue for running study programs. Nevertheless, it could also be helpful for a sustainable financing to look for other financial options besides levying tuition fees on students (e.g. sponsoring, research, further education).

The University has confirmed in a formal declaration that they are “prepared and able to progressively ensure, for all years of study, the financial support necessary for the program to function in conditions that correspond to the standards of the Romanian program of studies”.

Criterion B.4 is regarded as fulfilled.

C. Quality Management

C.1. Quality assurance strategies and procedures

The University has developed an elaborate quality assurance system implemented by means of corresponding evaluation procedures. The University presented its quality assurance system in the written documents.

The quality assurance system of the University consists of the following units: the Senate of the Dimitrie Cantemir University, the Quality Management Commission (QMC) and the Quality Management Representative (QMR). The members of the QMC and of the Quality Assurance Department are approved by the University Senate. Department managers are in charge of monitoring the quality assurance at the faculty/department. The University has developed a “Quality Manual”, which defines the objectives and the organizational structure of quality assurance procedures, as well as units involved in it. With regard to the transparency of the quality assurance policies and developments, the University issues an “Internal Evaluation Report” annually. After approval by the University Senate, the report is published on the official website of the University at the end of each academic year.

The process of quality assurance can be described as follows: The Quality Assurance Committee from the faculty submits its conclusions regarding the internal audit report, along with the results of peer reviews, to the Faculty Council. At the end of each year, the data for the given period, including evaluations of teaching performance, are gathered and further directed to the Senate to take corrective actions and issue the quality improvement plan.

The University has an internal quality management system. Students take part in the quality management system; they are required to fill out course evaluations and provide feedback on the teaching performance. The results are processed by the Quality Assurance Committee, which then integrates the final recommendation into its report. Besides, the results of the teaching staff as-

assessments are presented annually in the Senate where student representatives take part.

The experts suggest that the University should attach great importance to the feedback of the evaluation results to the students. This is imperative for a functioning quality management system, as this is the only way to verify the measures taken by the students. Correspondingly, the University could optimize its system in such a way that the feedback of the results is done regularly.

With regard to the students' development of social responsibility and personal development in the course of studies, the University points out that it has its own University Ethics Code. The code lays down rules of conduct, ethics and deontology for all members of the academic community of the University.

Considering the thorough implementation of the quality assurance system and the active participation of all University members in quality assurance procedures, the expert group concludes that Criterion C.1 is fulfilled.

C.2. Procedures on the periodical initiation, monitoring and revision of the programs and activities carried out

The experts highlight that the quality management system is ensured by central and decentral commissions and a quality management department. The commissions act in accordance with the quality assurance strategy of the University. Moreover, a "Quality Manual" is approved by the Senate each study year. Students assess all teaching staff regularly.

The University implements procedures of periodical revision and evaluation of the study programs offered. Hence, the teaching staff is required to conduct self-evaluations and peer-assessments annually; students evaluate the teaching process every six months.

Based on the information of the written documents, the experts conclude that the study program is evaluated by different stakeholders on a regular basis by means of rational and effective methods. The experts especially highlight the teaching portfolios as a strength.

The assessment of the teaching personnel is discussed in detail below, under Criterion C.4.

The experts underline that the quality assurance system of the University enables productive application of the obtained teaching and learning evaluation results. This refers to the introduction of necessary corrective measures and better organization of the programs, as well as the improvement of teaching methods, envisaged in coming academic years.

Considering these facts, the experts conclude that Criterion C.2 is fulfilled.

C.3. Objective and transparent procedures of learning results evaluation

Based on students' evaluations, the teaching process and the learning outcomes undergo a constant optimization process. Additionally, the University has established clear examination rules and a structured process for dealing with exceptional cases. Furthermore, the form of examination is clearly specified for each module.

In order to qualify for the final examination of a module, students must have met all subject requirements: attendance, passing the ongoing assessments and practical works. These are presented to the students by the lecture coordinator in the first course lesson.

The final assessment in each course can be conducted in the form of a colloquium or an examination. Colloquiums are forms of examinations taken in for example optional courses.

Students' actions in case of appeal and re-examinations are well-defined and described in the regulations of the University. Hence, there are clear procedures established for the above-mentioned examinations and students are informed of these procedures in advance. The main function of examinations conducted in the program is to objectively evaluate students' achievement of the specific learning outcomes.

The experts sum up that criteria and regulations about grading are given. The forms of examinations are competence-oriented and generally fit to the competence aimed of the study program and the modules.

Taking the above described facts into account, the expert group concludes that Criterion C.3 is fulfilled.

C.4. Periodical evaluation procedures of teaching staff quality

The University has provided an overview about the teaching staff of the Teacher Training Department. 49 teachers are involved in the “Teacher Training Program”: six professors (12 %), 12 associate professors (24 %), 17 lecturers (35 %), eight assistant professors (16 %) and six specialists (12 %). Specialists are teachers in secondary education, selected to train students in the specialized field in which the University does not have its own teaching staff (music, art and sport). These teachers have experience in education and have level I professional training (the highest level for secondary teachers).

Moreover, there are 30 practitioners/mentors involved. All teachers involved in the program have completed the TTP. Those who teach psycho-pedagogic subjects are specialists in psycho-pedagogy, and those who teach specialty didactics hold various different specialty qualifications, for example in pedagogy, psychology and sociology.

The experts take note that all teaching positions are established in compliance with the requirements of legal norms and completed with tenured teaching staff in higher education, in accordance with the Romanian law. The University has attached the “Compulsory and Necessary Minimum Standards for Awarding Didactic Titles in the Higher Educational System, Professional Degree of Research-Development and the Authorization Certificate for the Scientific Fields Pertaining to the Panel on the P4 Fundamental Fields – Social Sciences within the National Council for the Attestation of Academic Titles, University Diplomas and Academic Certificates”.

The University explains that the ratio between the number of teachers and mentors working full time and of the number of students varies from one year to another, depending on the number of students enrolled. Last academic year, the ratio was 8,9.

Overall, the teaching and academic staff of the University shows a high level of potential for the execution and further development of the study program they are responsible for. Still, from the experts’ point of view, it is desirable to increase the percentage of professors in the program.

The curriculum follows the Romanian requirements for a Teacher Training Program. The contents of the individual modules are also adequately de-

scribed. What is more, the TTP is coordinated by a director who is a tenured professor in the University.

Teachers' performance is evaluated at the University every year. Results of these annual evaluations serve as the basis for promotion proposals. The selection and employment of teaching staff are based on the principle of public contest; these procedures are regulated by the University's "Methodology of contest for occupying the open didactic and research positions from Dimitrie Cantemir University from Targu Mures" as well as by the Romanian legal requirements (Law of National Education no.1/2011, Government Decision no.457/2011, Government Decision no.36/2013, Order no.6560/2012, Order no. 4204/2013). According to these regulations, teaching and other positions are publicly announced and the University chooses candidates for these positions based on an open and independent procedure. These procedures are transparent and available for potential candidates from the academic and work fields. By means of such transparent contest regulations, the University seeks to strengthen its competitiveness as well as its national and international visibility.

Regarding the measures for human development, the University has established the "Teacher Training Department", which has a didactic and scientific research mission, in the area of the training of the didactic personnel. The "Teacher Training Department" follows national level guidelines.

The teaching staff is periodically evaluated by means of both peer and anonymous student reviews. Student evaluations are performed at the end of each semester. They are anonymous, which encourages an objective assessment. The results of the reviews are discussed in the University Senate meetings. Following these meetings, students are informed about the results of the evaluations. Should any member of the teaching staff receive an unsatisfactory evaluation result, a course of action will be implemented in order to eliminate the existing problems. Hence, the results are carefully monitored and the improvements are continuously observed. If there is no improvement after a maximum of three evaluation periods, the respective member of the teaching staff will be dismissed.

Peer evaluations are also performed regularly. They are based on the criteria of performance and human interaction. These procedures are monitored by the quality assurance unit of the department, in which the assessed person is

tenured. Further on, peer evaluation results are analyzed and summarized by the head of the department; afterwards, they are presented to the Faculty Council as part of the quality assurance unit.

Based on these facts, the expert group considers Criterion C.4 to be fulfilled.

C.5. Learning resources accessibility

Overall, the experts conclude that the University offers appropriate facilities of sufficient number and good quality for the execution of its currently running study programs. Seminar halls and classrooms used for the education of students are all equipped with modern digital and technical equipment. The students have access to the main University Library from 08:00 a.m. to 08:00 p.m. Monday to Friday during the regular semester. During the exam session there are additional opening hours on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 04:00 p.m.

The experts discern that, regarding the "Teacher Training Program", resources and services seem to be sufficient and adequate. The University encourages students' learning processes by offering resources and opportunities for extra-curricular activities. Moreover, the University offers various forms of academic support and counselling to students: consultations, tutorials and therapy.

Whereas incentives (e.g. scholarships) for high achieving students exist, the documents provided contain no didactic concept for dealing with heterogeneity of students regarding their previous knowledge, competences and level of proficiency. The University should develop a coherent strategy in respect of remediation of proficiency-heterogeneous students.

The expert group considers Criterion C.5. as fulfilled.

C.6. Systematically updated data base, with regard to the internal quality assurance

The University has designed an internal quality assurance system and established structures for monitoring and developing the quality assurance concept. Parts of the internal quality assurance system are regular peer and students reviews, as well as the feedback meetings organized for this purpose. A more detailed description can be found under Criteria C.3. and C.4. A regular track of the evaluation and review results is maintained by the University, and strategies for improvement are designed therefrom. A corresponding electronic

system and database are also implemented. The experts conclude that the data and information policy seem to be adequate at the University.

The expert group considers Criterion C.6. as fulfilled.

C.7. Transparency of public interest information concerning study programs

The results of quality assurance activities are summarized in a report, in order to improve the programs quality.

The University promotes its study programs through the University's webpage, local printed media, and by running open days and workshops in high-schools and other institutions. The information is also available through a printed Student Guide. There is also published information concerning the compensation regulations for students with disabilities.

The experts conclude that the faculty provides accurate and updated information on qualifications, study programs, diplomas, teaching and research staff, student facilities and any other aspects.

Thus, the expert group considers criterion C.7 to be fulfilled.

C.8. Functionality of education quality assurance structures, according to the law

The expert group was provided with an overview of the quality evaluation mechanisms and institutional structures. The Quality Management Commission regularly elaborates and reviews all corresponding policies and strategies as well as operational procedures. The expert group is convinced of the validity of the information provided in the application documentation, and its accordance with the legal framework, as stated in the "Quality Manual". Quality assurance and evaluation for the current running programs is well developed at the University.

Structured processes and an evaluated organization underline the importance of the quality management at the University; the organization strives for continuous improvement. Central and decentral staff are involved in the quality assurance process. The experts conclude that the institutional structure for quality education seems to be adequate. Thus, Criterion C.8 is considered to be fulfilled.

For more details on the structure, functioning and members involved in the Quality assurance procedures at the University see also Criteria A.1, A.2 and C.1.

4 Evaluation Summary

The main task of the expert group during the peer review was to assess the running “Teacher Training Program” and to verify its compliance with European and Romanian regulations (*see part 1 Introduction*).

In the view of the expert group, the “Teacher Training Program” complies with Romanian regulations, as specified in the “Methodology” and the “Law of National Education”. Hence, the study program complies with the pertinent Romanian conventions, as well as with all legal normative requirements.

The expert group highlights that the “Teacher Training Program” incorporates practice and teaching experience, which increase the employability of the program graduates. The aforementioned aspects with regard to the quality assurance as well as the equipment of the internships have to be positively taken into account.

The documentation provided by the University enable the expert group to recommend the accreditation of the “Teacher Training Program” offered by Dimitrie Cantemir University of Targu Mures, to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS. Moreover, the expert group hereby approves the request of the University to offer 600 study places for graduates in level I and additionally another 600 places for graduates in level II of the “Teacher Training Program”.

Given the fact that the program meets all normative requirements and standards listed in the performance indicators determined by the Romanian national quality assurance agency, the expert group recommends the accreditation of the “Teacher Training Program” also by the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport.

The experts outline the following conditions:

- The recognition of credits transferred from other universities (domestic and abroad) has to be regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. (B.1)
- The criteria in the interview for admission should be clearly stated. (B.1)

At the same time, the experts attempt to provide constructive feedback and recommendations for further improvement regarding the concept, structure and content of the program.

The following recommendations are thus proposed for the University's consideration:

A) Institutional Capacity:

- The University could present its internationalization measures in a more open and distinct manner so that, apart from maintaining its significant role in the region, the University could further promote its attractiveness and unique character differentiating it from other higher education institutions. (A.1)
- The University library could establish partnerships with similar institutions (libraries, publishing houses) within the country and abroad, in order to provide students and teachers with access to a wider range of IT resources, data bases as well as learning and scientific material, especially for the new programs. (A.2)
- The University could develop a fundraising system to generate external financial support for the students. This could include local industries, private donors and alumni. (A.2)

B) Educational Effectiveness:

- The European and historical perspective could be more emphasized in the curriculum. (B.1)
- The student workload should be evaluated on a regular basis in order to make sure that students are not overloaded, e.g. with examinations. Besides, the implementation of evaluation results to improve the study programs should be clearly documented. The experts also suggest combining the smaller modules into larger units in order to reduce the student workload regarding examinations. (B.1)
- Obligatory credits to be awarded for the final exam should be part of the workload of the study program. (B.1)
- An overall research strategy with goals and means of the faculty or institution with strategic considerations about a coherent research policy

and research topics based on long-term considerations should be developed. Moreover, the evaluation of research should be documented. (B.3)

C) Quality Management:

- Feedback of the results of the quality management procedures should be given regularly to the students. (C.1)
- The percentage of professors teaching in the program should be increased. (C.4)
- The University should develop a coherent strategy in respect of remediation of proficiency-heterogeneous students. (C.5)

5 Decision

Decision of the accreditation commission of May 15, 2018

The proposed resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS is based on the University's application and the expert review covered in the expert report. The Accreditation Commission has also taken the response opinion of the University regarding the study program into account.

The accreditation decision is based on the expert report. The expert report, i.e. the proceedings of the Periodical Evaluation Process conform to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as well as to the Law no. 1 of National Education of Romania, 2011, Art.150, and Art.193; the Quality Evaluation Activities Guide for University Study Programs and for Higher Education Institutions: Part 1 Study Programs Accreditation External Evaluation Guide, and the Methodology for External Evaluation, Standards, Standards of Reference, and List of Performance Indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS discussed the procedural documents and the recommendation of the expert group and the response opinion of the University regarding the expert report.

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Based on the response opinion of the University, the Accreditation Commission discussed the recommendation of the expert group regarding the condition that the criteria in the interview for admission have to be clearly stated. The University has provided a "Methodology for organizing and carrying out the admission competition for the teacher training program, for the purpose of certifying competences for the didactic professions". The Accreditation Commission takes the Methodology provided into account and, thus, considers criterion B.1 as fulfilled regarding the admission criteria.

The regulated study period for the "Psychopedagogical Training Program – level I" is three years/six semesters (part-time) or half a year/one semester (full-time). The standard study period for the "Psychopedagogical Training

Program – level II” is two years/four semesters (part-time) or half a year/one semester (full-time). The program comprises 14 modules of which eight are in level I and six are in level II. In level I, all modules are obligatory. In level II, two out of six are optional. The “Teacher Training Program” is completed with the conferral of the “Psycho-Pedagogic training program graduation certificate”. The program was launched in 2009 and first accredited in 2010.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS considers that most Criteria (according to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as well as to the Law no. 1 of National Education of Romania, 2011, Art.150, and Art.193; the Quality Evaluation Activities Guide for University Study Programs and for Higher Education Institutions: Part 1 Study Programs Accreditation External Evaluation Guide, and the Methodology for External Evaluation, Standards, Standards of Reference, and List of Performance Indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) are fulfilled and therefore adopts the following decision:

The “Teacher Training Program” is recommended to maintain and extend the accreditation. Moreover, the expert group hereby approves the request of the University to offer 600 study places for graduates in level I and additionally another 600 places for graduates in level II of the “Teacher Training Program”.

Based on the expert report, the Accreditation Commission outlines the following conditions:

- The recognition of credits transferred from other universities (domestic and abroad) has to be regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. (B.1)

For the further development and enhancement of the program and the University as a whole, the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS supports the recommendations articulated in the expert report.