

Assessment Report

on the Re-Accreditation of

the Study Program
"Law" (Bachelor of Law)
and

on the Provisional Authorization of

the Study Program
"European and International Law"
(Bachelor of Law)

at "Bioterra" University of Bucharest, 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 two subsequent cohorts (taking approximately five years for four 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 or provisionally authorize the study program.

The AHPGS Accreditation Agency was tasked with accrediting and provisionally authorizing Bachelor study programs offered by the "Bioterra" University of Bucharest, Romania (hereupon: the University) in April 2018.

In Ocotber 2018, the experts received 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.

The on-site visit of the University took place on January 24-26, 2019. In the course of the on-site visit, experts conducted discussions with the University management, representatives of the faculties, the teaching staff of the programs as well as with students currently studying in the programs. Furthermore, they inspected the learning premises, such as lecture halls, seminar rooms, classrooms, library, and computer classes. Moreover, experts had the opportunity to see the equipment and the capacity of the laboratories.

The following four Bachelor study programs were subjects of the periodical evaluation procedure:

Faculty of Computer Sciences:

"Applied Computer Sciences"

Faculty of Law:

- "Law",
- "European and International Law"

Faculty of General Medical Assistance:

"General Medical Assistance"

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS nominated the following experts to conduct the on-site visit:

As representatives of academic institutions:

Alexander Bordan (B.A.)

Albert-Ludwigs University Freiburg, Germany

Prof. Dr. Gabriele Roth-Dietrich

Mannheim University of Applied Sciences, Germany

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University of Applied Sciences Neu-Ulm, Germany

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SRH University Heidelberg, Germany

¹ The experts shown in italics did not participate in the on-site visit of the University.

Prof. Dr. Uta Gaidys

Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Prof. Dr. Jan Keogh

Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Prof. Dr. Marion Halfmann

Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, Kleve, Germany

Prof. Dr. Edgar Kösler

Catholic University of Applied Sciences Freiburg, Germany

Dr. Rolf Heusser

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The proceedings of the Process of Accreditation and provisional authorization 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 Evaluation, 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 documents submitted by the University, the experts' feedback to the documents, the observations made during the on-site visit, the results of discussions with the representatives of the University serve as the basis for the statements made in the Expert Report. Since the Expert Report 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 programs to be accredited and provisionally authorized

"Bioterra" University of Bucharest offers the program "Law" at the Faculty of Law and intends to offer the program "European and International Law" starting with the academic year 2019/2020. The study period is completed in eight semesters (four years). Starting with the academic year 2007/2008, the "Law" program was offered in Romanian in Bucharest.

In addition, the "European and International Law" study program will be launched within the Faculty of Law, starting with the academic year 2019/2020 in Romanian and in English language in Bucharest. The University seeks re-accreditation for the "Law" program in Bucharest and provisional authorization for the "Law" study program in Buzau. Both are offered in Romanian. The University seeks provisional authorization for the study program "European and International Law" in Romanian in Bucharest and in English in Buzau.

The main objective of the Faculty of Law is to teach and deepen legal knowledge in the field of public and private law of Romania and the EU. Moreover, students shall be prepared to practice law with professional excellence and commitment to fairness, justice, compassion as well as the highest ethical standards. 240 credit points (CP), i.e. 30 CP per semester, according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) are required in order to graduate from each program. One CP is equivalent to 25 workload hours. The total workload of each program constitutes 6,224 hours, of which 2,532 are contact hours, 224 hours are practical training hours and 3,468 are independent study hours. To the total amount of 240 CP another 10 CP are added for the Bachelor thesis (see B.1 in detail).

The study programs "Law" and "European and International Law" both consist of 67 subjects/modules. 55 modules are obligatory (including eleven optional modules) and twelve modules are facultative modules. All modules are program-specific modules and have to be completed one semester. Modules are divided into compulsory, optional, and facultative modules. Compulsory and optional modules are an obligatory part of the curriculum. Facultative modules are not compulsory in order to graduate but are offered to enrich the curriculum. Credit points allocated to the facultative modules are added on top of the required total of 240 CP and are mentioned separately in the transcript of records.

Admission requirements are centralized within the University. They include a Baccalaureate degree or equivalent diploma. Foreign students have to provide a Romanian language certificate (level C1) issued by institutions authorized by the Ministry of National Education. Applicants for the English-taught program will have to turn in an English language certificate (level C1). Students receive information about the amount of the tuition fees in advance.

Upon graduation, students are awarded a Bachelor graduation diploma (Diploma de Licenta, cf. Law of National Education no. 1 from 2011), as well as a Diploma Supplement, comprised in both Romanian and English. Graduates of the bachelor study programs "Law" and "European and International Law" are awarded with the academic degree "Bachelor of Law".

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

The "Law" study program was accredited in 2007. The University offers the program in Bucharest (in Romanian). The program is affiliated to the Faculty of Law.

In the academic year 2017/2018 339 students were enrolled in the "Law" program. Since the study program "European and International Law" will start in 2019/2020, no students are enrolled in this program yet.

The total number of law graduates in 2018 is 123. Annual admissions are organized in two sessions during July and September. According to the numbers provided, the amount of students enrolling for the first year has not decreased over the years. However, there is a high drop-out rate after the first year of studies. The University, explains that this rate is due to students not passing the required exams or changing to other universities. Nevertheless, the University also states that they receive transfer students from other universities as well.

Annual admissions are organized in two sessions during July and September. The University with its Administration Board confirms in a formal declaration that it is prepared and able to provide the financial support necessary for the effective functioning of the programs in conditions that correspond to the standards of the study program in Romania.

3 Expert Report

At the beginning of October 2018, the application documents of the University were made available to the expert group for written evaluation. The expert group assessed the study programs "Law" and "European and International Law" 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 November 2018.

Based on the written evaluation of each expert and the on-site visit, the expert group jointly agreed upon an Expert Report. Due the large overlap between the curricula of the two study programs, "Law" and International and European Law" will be evaluated in one Expert Report.

A. Institutional Capacity

A.1. Institutional, administrative and management structures

"Bioterra" University of Bucharest is a private University that was accredited in 2002 by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) by Law no. 480/2002, published in the Official Gazette no. 512/2002. 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 the course of this program accreditation and provisional authorization procedure, the University was also subject to an External Institutional Evaluation carried out by AHPGS.

The University was initially part of the "Bioterra" University Foundation Bucharest which was legally established in 1994 following the initiative of leading personalities of the didactic and scientific life in applied bioengineering, economic engineering, rural tourism, industry food, phytosanitary and zoo veterinary control of food, law and legislation.

Currently, the University has five faculties: Faculty of Agrotouristic Management, Faculty of Food Products Engineering, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Food Control and Expertise and Faculty of General Medical Assistance. There are six accredited bachelor's degree programs offered by the University. The University intends to offer the bachelor programs "European and International Law" and "Applied Computer Sciences" starting with the academic year 2019/2020.

Moreover, three accredited master programs are offered: "Investigation of Acts of Terrorism and Public Security", "Performance Management in Public Catering, Agrotourism and Consumer Protection", and "Inspection, Expertise and Legislation on Food Safety, Environmental Protection and Consumer Protection".

There is a total of 1,958 students enrolled in the University, 1,406 studying for a bachelor's degree and 240 for a master's degree. A total of 552 students are studying in one of the branches (300 in Buzau, 88 in Focsani, 96 in Alexandria, and 68 in Slobozia). Overall, 1,718 students are studying in a bachelor's degree.

There are branch managers in every study location who ensure the operative management of the branches. The branch manager and the individuals respon-

sible for study programs are kept in permanent connection with University, Faculty and Department management bodies in meetings in Bucharest. The curriculum of each study program is consistent across University locations.

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. The programs aim at meeting the needs of the Romanian labor market and comply with national and international standards of education. The experts discern that there is a good regional focus. 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. "University Code of Ethics").

Missions and objectives of the programs are stated by the University. With a glance at the study programs currently offered at the University, it becomes clear that these formulated missions and objectives are coherent. The University's portfolio of study programs is diverse.

However, with the two new programs offered ("Applied Computer Sciences" (2019/2020) and "General Medical Assistance" (2017/2018), the University's portfolio extends to health and IT study programs.

According to the University, the new study programs correspond to market demands, which will concomitantly lead to an increase of student numbers. From the perspective of the experts, this argumentation is comprehensible. Nevertheless, the University should keep in mind that economic and market-based objectives could eventually collide with academic freedom. In addition, an increased orientation towards the University's mission slogan "Sustainability" (specifically in the ecological sense) would be a desirable direction of development in order to highlight the unique characteristics of the University's study programs.

Another aspect of the University's mission, as stated in the research plan, is to sustain and further intensify research activity among students with the goal of enabling them to contribute to the general advancement of knowledge in their respective fields.

With regard to the administrative structure concerning the collaboration between the department, faculty and University units, the experts encourage the University to look for common interests and to combine 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 educational 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, and students take an active part in the management. Moreover, the needs of students with disabilities are taken into consideration (e.g. admission and exam requirements).

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. Nevertheless, the experts recommend that the University divides hierarchical units and their functions within the University clearly, thus promoting transparency. The University has developed an ethical code of which its members are aware.

Regarding the internationality, the experts took notice of 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 the Erasmus exchange program. The study recognition under the Erasmus program is considered a strength. Still, from the experts' point of view, the University, apart from maintaining its role in Bucharest and its surroundings, should present its internationalization measures in a more open and distinct manner (e.g. setting up more Englishtaught programs as well as partnerships with foreign universities). This way, it could further promote its attractiveness and character by standing out from other higher education institutions. In addition, setting up international summer schools could help to establish connections between international students and students of the University.

The experts recognize the possibilities for further development in the strategic alignment of the University in general.

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

A.2. Material Resources and Infrastructure

Overall, the experts notice that the University has sufficient material and financial resources with regard to the study programs currently offered. All facilities are in possession of the University. According to the "Institutional Assumption of Bioterra University Bucharest", the institution possesses sufficient financial resources and equipment to ensure the future functioning of the two programs "Law" and "European and International Law".

Regarding the premises and resources available for the desired number of students in the two study programs ("Law" study program: 150 per year in the Romanian-taught study program full-time (FE) in Bucharest, 60 per year in the Romanian-taught study program full-time (FE) in Buzau, "European and International Law" study program: 50 per year in the Romanian-taught study program (LF) in Bucharest and 70 per year in the English-taught program (LF) in Bucharest), the experts conclude that the University is able to offer this number of study places. The study program "Law" is offered since 2007. The study program "European and International Law" is planned to start in 2019/2020. The experts also point out that scholarships are foreseen in the "Scholarship Regulation" of the University.

With respect 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. whiteboards, portable projectors). Nevertheless, it became clear that the program-specific literature is currently not sufficient. Therefore, the experts urge the University to extend the library significantly both regarding printed and electronic books as well as databases. In this regard, the expert group encourages the University to establish more partnerships with similar national and international institutions (libraries, publishing houses) in order to provide students and teachers' access to an even wider range of databases as well as learning and scientific material. Additionally, the condition of the lecture halls and other facilities are quite heterogeneous. In some cases, modernization measures should be initiated with respect to safety issues on the one hand and better learning conditions and equipment on the other hand.

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 financing 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 first and foremost recommend raising the attractiveness of the University by offering the current study programs also in English in order to attract not only interested Romanian but also foreign students.

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

The University has to provide students with a wider range of databases as well as learning and scientific material.

B. Educational Effectiveness

B.1. Content of the study program

The study program "Law" is affiliated with the Faculty of Law. The same will apply for the "European and International Law" study program. The study programs' mission, general and specific learning objectives, curriculum and outcome competencies were presented in the written documentation for both programs. The curriculum description specifies the qualification objectives, competencies (knowledge and understanding, explanation and interpretation etc.) and learning outcomes for each module.

The mission of the Faculty of Law is to teach and deepen legal knowledge in the field of public and private law of Romania and the EU. The programs should, therefore, prepare students to practice law with professional excellence and commitment to fairness, justice, compassion, and the highest ethical standards. According to the University, graduates of the study programs "Law" and "European and International Law" can access the labor market as lawyers, magistracy, attorney of law, notary, legal advisor, mediator, bailiff, insolvency practitioner, intellectual property counselor, forensic expert, diplomat, researcher in legal sciences or academic didactic personnel. Furthermore, the University also mentions a possible career in EU institutions and within national and local public administration.

According to graduate surveys by the University, over 50 % of the graduates in the study program "Law" are practitioners in the legal field, have connections with such activities or work in other law-connected fields, such as public

safety. The number of graduates who continue with a Master's degree in the field of law is about 40 %.

The experts agree with the above-mentioned qualification objectives. Moreover, the study programs also focus on qualifying students for social responsibility and personal development. The experts conclude that graduates have good employment opportunities on the Romanian job market.

The curricula of the study programs "Law" and "European and International Law" comprises compulsory, optional and elective subjects. Compulsory and optional subjects are an obligatory part of the curriculum. Regarding the optional modules, students have a choice between two modules. Elective modules are not necessary in order to graduate but they are offered to enrich the curriculum (e.g. "Physical Education"). Credit points allocated to elective subjects will be added on top of the 240 credit points obtained by the students upon graduation and will be mentioned separately in the transcript of records.

The experts appreciate the optional modules which complement the offered courses. The "Law" program is well structured; modules are descripted in detail (e.g. with objectives, aimed competencies, content and literature) and the program is relevant as the intended career is clear.

The experts take note of the fact that 100 % of the curriculum is laid down as a rule on a national level with regard to the module titles and the title of the study program. Even though the University is free to design the study program's content, from the experts' point of view, this appears to be quite restrictive and, thus, limiting the academic freedom. The experts encourage the University to use the academic freedom wherever possible, especially within the preset modules, to sharpen its profile and strategy as well as to adhere to European standards, striving to become relevant in an international context by defining its unique selling point.

For the curriculum of the "European and International Law" study program, the experts recommend highlighting the differences and the uniqueness of the study program in contrast to the already existing "Law" program. This, for example, could be achieved by offering the program as a Master's degree program. It would allow a greater focus on the European and international aspects without the need of providing fundamental law courses beforehand. Additionally, this would offer graduates of the "Law" program, who are inter-

ested in the field of European and international law, another opportunity to continue their studies at the University.

Alongside the theoretical curriculum, practical training (224 hours) is part of the curriculum in both programs. It is conducted during the 2nd, 4th, and 6th semester in law firms, notary offices, local government institutions, and non-governmental organizations. 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. Nevertheless, the University should try to collaborate with international employers to offer the students perspective and various possibilities for practical training.

In addition, the experts take note of the internationality of contents, e.g. Legal English courses and courses concerning international law topics are offered.

Research within the study program "Law" is carried out within national or international research projects, signed with internal or external beneficiaries. The expert group points out that the Faculty of Law has a research institute in which students and teachers engage in research partnerships with law institutions in Romania. Moreover, methods of teaching are related to research and to the transfer of research into legislation. Hence, students can develop a basic understanding of qualitative and quantitative research. The experts strongly recommend using synergies by increasing interdisciplinarity among the study programs wherever possible, e.g. when communicating research methods.

The credit system applied in the "Law" and "European and International Law" study programs 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 subjects in the curriculum are evaluated at the end of the semester through both written and oral (colloquiums) exams. The evaluation is based on the "Regulation on Evaluation and Notification of Knowledge and Practical Dependents of Students in Frequency and Reduced Frequency Education Forms". Usually one assessment method is applied per module. The experts

highlight that all exams should be competence-oriented, i.e. written and oral evaluations of legal cases.

There are winter and summer exam sessions. They extend over a period of three to four weeks after the period of teaching activities. Should a student not pass the exams during these sessions, reexaminations may be taken during a re-examination period. Re-examination periods take place after each academic year. Each exam may be re-examined one time.

For the evaluation of the students' performance in exams, the University applies a 10-point grading system (10 being the highest grade). The minimum passing grade is 5 points. The minimum grade for passing the graduation exam is 6.

The study programs are completed by composing a bachelor's thesis (10 CP).

In order to complete their studies, students are required to pass a written exam and defend their bachelor thesis. The bachelor examination is successful if the student obtains a minimum grade of 6 in each of the two tests.

The Bachelor degree examination takes place in accordance with the Ministry Decree regarding the general framework for organizing final examinations in higher education and based on the institution's own procedure approved annually by the University Senate. The Bachelor degree examination can consist, according to regulations in force, in one or two tests, as follows:

- a) Test 1: assessing fundamental and specialized knowledge
- b) Test 2: presenting and defending the Bachelor's thesis

According to the new "Specific Standards regarding External Academic Quality Assessment for Associated Bachelor and Master level studies" the number of credits allotted to the promotion of the license thesis (10 CP) is added to the 240 ECTS credit points for the entire program. From the experts' point of view, the thesis is an obligatory part of the curriculum. Thus, the final thesis should be part of the official workload of the study program. Nevertheless, the experts acknowledge that the addition is a singularity in Romania due to the National Law.

In conclusion, graduates of the study programs "Law" and "European and International Law" appear to have ample employment opportunities. However,

regarding the structure, the European perspective could be more emphasized in the curricula. Hence, the University should try to close some gaps (e.g. workload, examination) in order to guarantee international applicability of the Romanian degree in other European countries. In this regard, the experts also want to draw attention to the process of recognizing 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 (national and international) should be regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, i.e. the burden of proof to demonstrate that an application does not fulfill the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment².

The study programs "Law" and "European and International Law" contain 240+10 credits. The curriculums are comprised of 67 modules each. The "Law" program is offered on a full-time (eight semesters/four years) basis. Studying on a low-frequency basis is possible and dependent on the individual case. The same will apply to the "European and International Law" program. The total workload of the programs are 6,224 hours each, which is divided into 2,532 contact hours, 224 hours of practical training and 3,468 hours of individual work.

From the experts' point of view, the student workload should be evaluated on a regular basis in order to make sure that students are adequately challenged. 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 to emphasize a competence orientation.

According to the University, the admission requirements are centralized within the University and, thus, no specific requirements are given for the bachelor study programs. General admission procedures are stated in the operational procedure "Methodology for Organization and Implementation of Admission".

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² (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))

The University assures to prioritize academic equality and enforcement of the ethics policies contained in the "Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity", amongst others. By virtue of the "Regulation regarding the Evaluation and Assurance of Quality of Education in Bioterra" Chapter IX, students may apply for academic or social welfare scholarships in order to assure equality throughout the University.

Annual admissions are organized in two sessions during July and September. Foreign students must submit a Romanian language certificate (level B1/C1), issued by institutions authorized by the Ministry of National Education. Applicants for the English-taught program will have to present a language certificate (level B1/C1), for the English language.

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 general recruitment and admission policies for students of the University are clearly stated. The University makes it also clear that all discrimination is prohibited.

Based on the described conclusions, the expert group considers criterion B.1 to be partially fulfilled.

The recognition of credits transferred from other Universities (national and international) has to be regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

B.2. Learning outcomes

From the experts' point of view, the "Law" and "European and International Law" study programs can be sufficiently 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 apply their theoretical knowledge. The Faculty of Law carried out a graduate survey in which 50 % of the graduates who responded work in the legal field. Bachelor graduates can continue their studies with the Master study program "Investigation of Acts of Terrorism and Public Security".

Judging from the curriculum and the module descriptions, students completing the program obtain an overview on the subject of law. Students obtain knowledge as well as explicative-interpretative, procedural/instrumental-applicative and attitudinal competencies to be used in various work environments. Still, in the opinion of the experts, the European perspective could be more emphasized in the curriculum.

The teaching and didactic methods are student-centered. The didactic methodology is based on a combination of lectures, interactive group discussions, creative critical analysis combined with current didactic technologies based on IT. From the experts' point of view, a mix between methods including interactive learning methods is applied. According to the University, the main responsibility of each course instructor is to increase student training according to their needs, expectations and goals. Furthermore, course instructors are responsible for the development of students' degree-specific as well as general competencies, which are specified in the course descriptions provided by the University.

The expert group is of the opinion that employability is given for graduates of these programs. The experts conclude that this positive outcome and development stems on the one hand from the dedicated academic staff and on the other hand from the open atmosphere and communication ethics at the University.

Regarding student support measures, tutors serve as mentors for the students throughout the course of the study program. In addition, legal career days are offered.

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

B.3. Scientific research activity

The research within the Faculty of Law is carried out within national or international research projects, signed with internal or external beneficiaries. Results of student research are presented at the students' scientific events organized within the faculty, e.g. scientific sessions, student workshops, camps and study tours

The experts conclude that research is carried out by the staff. 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. Staff in the faculties should strive for more public, international, ideally peer-reviewed methods to achieve a wider distribution of their results. In terms of further development opportunities, the experts recommend that the University finalizes the implementation of the research strategy already developed. Moreover, the research evaluation should be clearly documented. Staff at the faculties should strive for more public, international, and, ideally, peer-reviewed methods for disseminating their results.

The expert group also recommends that the University increases its research projects involving students. Very likely, this will positively affect the structure of students' independent study hours.

Criterion B.3. is regarded as fulfilled.

B.4. Financial activity

Currently, the financial resources of the University are primarily composed of own income, that is, tuition fees and financial support from the foundation. Nevertheless, for a sustainable financing it could also be helpful to consider other financial options besides relying on students' tuition fees (e.g. sponsoring, joint research projects, further education; *see also A.2*).

The University has confirmed in a formal declaration that "the endowment and facilities for the Bachelor study program "Law" at "Bioterra" University Bucharest is ensured for the future, including all building, equipment, apparatuses and personnel necessary for the implementation of the program." The same was confirmed in a formal declaration for the study program "European and International Law".

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 management system that was designed and implemented at "Bioterra" University of Bucharest aims at fulfilling the requirements of the SR EN

ISO 9001: 2008 Quality Management System standard. Furthermore, the principles of quality management at the University are in accordance with the ISO 9000: 2000 standard. The Coordination of the activities related to Quality Management within the University is carried out by the Quality Assurance Department, which includes the members of all faculties, students and graduates. This committee is subordinated to the competency commissions established at the faculty level and the study programs. The entire internal evaluation and quality assurance activity is based on the "Quality Evaluation and Quality Assurance Regulation" and Quality System Documents, specifying that the university policies are centered on quality and means of delivery, aiming at the implementation and application to promote quality culture at all institutional levels.

With regard to the transparency of the quality assurance policies and developments, the University issues an annual report on the quality of educational services in the University and proposes new measures to increase quality. This annual report is sent to the Senate.

The Commission for Quality Assessment consists of five members. These five members consist of four representatives of the teaching staff, of which one is the president, and one a student representative. The Commission collaborates with all departments and faculties of the University. It coordinates the application of quality assessment and quality assurance procedures and methodologies approved by the Senate of the University.

The University has an internal quality management system in which students take part; they are required to fill out course evaluations and provide feedback on the teaching performance. The results are processed by the Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance Committee, which then integrates the final recommendation into its report. The results of the teaching staff assessments are presented annually in the Senate where student representatives take part.

The experts suggest that the University attaches greater importance to the feedback of the evaluation results by the students (e.g. regarding workload). This is imperative for a functioning quality management system since 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 on the results is given regularly to all external and internal stakeholders.

With regard to the students' development of social responsibility and personal development in the course of studies, the expert point out that the University 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 for 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 annual self-evaluations and peer-assessments annually whereas students evaluate the teaching process every six months.

The experts conclude that the study programs are evaluated by different stakeholders on a regular basis by means of rational and effective methods.

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 upcoming academic years. Nevertheless, the experts point out that the use of ISO standards bears the danger of overbureaucratization. Therefore, the experts recommend re-considering this quality assurance approach.

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 ("ECTS Implementation", "ECTS Application", "Organization License Exams/Diploma and Dissertation" and "Students with physical disabilities and chronic diseases"). Furthermore, the form of examination and the learning outcomes are 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 oral 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 present (see B.1 for details). The forms of examinations generally fit the competence aimed for by the study program and the modules. The evaluation of learning outcomes is, thus, appropriate.

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 of the teaching staff at the study programs.

25 university teachers are involved in the two programs: six professors, five associate professors, ten lecturers, four assistant lecturers, and one university assistant. Among the teaching staff is the dean of the Faculty who is also the

coordinator of the program. The staff/student ratio for the academic year 2017/2018 has been calculated as 1/14 (25 teachers/339 students). Additional human resources include: Department Director, Secretary, Accountant, Cashier, Administrator, HR Inspector, Librarian, and Computer Scientist.

With the curricula of the Bachelor study programs "Law" and "European and International Law" in mind, the ratio between professors and lecturers appears to be balanced, despite the fact that professors are not dominant in lectures. Overall, the teaching and academic staff of the University shows a high level of commitment to the execution and further development of the study programs. Still, from the experts' point of view, it is desirable to increase the percentage of professors in the program. Furthermore, concerning the English track of the "European and International Law" study program, the University has to prove that the English language skills of the staff are adequate to ensure the teaching quality of the program.

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.

Teachers' performance is evaluated at the University every year by a third party. Mutual respect is assured and confidentiality is guaranteed between the rector, dean and the evaluated teacher. 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 "Contest Methodology for the occupation of teaching and research positions" as well as by the Romanian legal requirements (Law of National Education no.1/2011, Government Decision no.457/2011, Order of the Minister no. 6129 / 14.02.2017). 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 as well as from the work field. By means of such transparent contest regulations, the University seeks to strengthen its competitiveness together with its national and international visibility.

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 processed by the Quality assessment and Quality Assurance Committee. Students are informed about the results of the evaluations through their student representatives in the Senate. Should a member of the teaching staff receive an unsatisfactory evaluation result, a course of actions will be implemented in order to eliminate the existing problems. Hence, the results are carefully monitored, and the improvements are continuously observed.

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

Concerning the English track of the "European and International Law" study program, the University has to prove that the English language skills of the staff are adequate to ensure the teaching quality of the program.

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. The students have access to the main University Library from Monday to Friday between 08:00 a.m. to 06.00 or 07:00 p.m.

After visiting the library, the experts discerned that the program-specific literature for the "Law" and "European and International Law" programs is not sufficient. The experts urge the University to significantly expand the library in terms of printed and electronic books, journals, and databases (see also A.2).

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 counseling to students: e.g. consultations and tutorials. However, regarding infrastructure, accessibility for people with a disability should be improved. Additionally, the experts urge the University to enhance its lecture halls and other facilities in terms of working safety (e.g. remove loose power outlets, secure easy access to all rooms, etc. ...). The safety of students and staff should be ensured at all times.

The expert group considers criterion C.5. as partially fulfilled.

Program-specific literature should be expanded.

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 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. 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 of the study program "Law" are summarized in a report, in order to improve the programs' quality.

Through its website, the University supplies relevant information concerning its programs and its structures to the public. Thus, the University promotes its study programs online, through local printed media, and by running open days and workshops at high-schools and other institutions. Nevertheless, in light of internationalization, the experts urge the University to offer an English version of its website. This can help to improve visibility and the promotion of English-speaking study programs and, thus, potentially counter the decreasing number of students.

The experts conclude that the University provides information on qualifications, study programs, diplomas, teaching and research staff, student facilities and other aspects. The website should be revised though in order to offer the latest and relevant information.

All in all, 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 currently 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 "Law" and the planned "European and International Law" study programs and to verify their compliance with European and Romanian regulations (see part 1 Introduction).

In the view of the expert group, the "Law" and the "European and International Law" study programs comply with Romanian regulations as specified in the "Methodology" and the "Law of National Education". Hence, the study programs comply with the pertinent Romanian conventions as well as with all legal normative requirements.

The expert group acknowledges the high motivation and engagement of all persons involved in the programs. In addition, the students are satisfied with the University and the commitment of their teachers. Nevertheless, it became apparent to the experts that the University has to close some gaps in order to guarantee international applicability of the Romanian degree in other European countries. Hence, the experts encourage the University to use the academic freedom wherever possible, to sharpen its profile and strategy as well as adhere to European standards, striving to become relevant in an international context by defining its unique selling point.

The expert group highlights that the "Law" study program is running since 2007. Graduates have good access to jobs in their field. However, the profile of the study program "International and European Law" and the distinction from the "Law" program should be more accentuated. The need for graduates of the study program in Romania is also uncertain due to a lack of evidenced based market analyses. In the experts' opinion, a Master study program in "International and European Law" with a particular focus on the content on Master level might be more productive in order to emphasize the need for the program and to contribute to the distinct specialty of the field.

In addition to the documentation provided by the University, the on-site visit enabled the expert group to recommend the re-accreditation of the "Law" and the provisional authorization of the "European and International Law" study programs offered by "Bioterra" University of Bucharest, to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS.

Given the fact that the programs meet all normative requirements and standards listed in the performance indicators determined by the Romanian national quality assurance agency, the expert group recommends the re-accreditation of the "Law" and the provisional authorization of the "European and International Law" study program also by the Romanian Ministry of Education.

The experts outline the following conditions:

- The University has to provide students with a wider range of databases as well as learning and scientific material. (A.2)
- 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)
- Concerning the English track of the "European and International Law" study program, the University has to prove that the English language skills of the staff are adequate to ensure the teaching quality of the program. (C.4)

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 missions and objectives of the two study programs should be streamlined in order to set clear priorities and keep a better focus. (A.1)
- The University should look for common interests between the faculties and, thus, combine forces and resources. (A.1)
- The division of the hierarchical units and their functions within the University should be made clearer in order to promote transparency. (A.1)
- The University should enhance its lecture halls and other facilities in terms of working safety (e.g. remove loose power outlets, secure easy access to all rooms, etc. ...). (A.1)

- Internationalization measures should be presented in a more open and distinct manner so that, apart from maintaining its significant role in Bucharest and its surroundings, it promotes its attractiveness (e.g. setting up more English-taught programs, partnerships with foreign universities, summer schools). (A.1, A.2)
- 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, databases as well as learning and scientific material, especially for the new programs. (A.2)
- Offering the current study programs also in English in order to attract not only Romanian but also foreign students and, thus, counter the decreasing number of students. (A.2)

B) Educational Effectiveness:

- Academic freedom should be used wherever possible, especially within the preset modules, to sharpen its profile and strategy as well as to adhere to European standards, striving to become relevant in an international context by defining its unique selling point. (B.1)
- The European perspective could be more emphasized in the curricula.
 (B.1)
- For the curriculum of the "European and International Law" study program, highlighting the differences and the uniqueness of the study program in contrast to the already existing "Law" program (e.g. by offering the program as a Master's degree program) is a necessity. (B.1)
- Interdisciplinarity among the study programs should be increased wherever possible to use synergies, e.g. when communicating research methods. (B.1)
- All exams should be competence-oriented, i.e. written and oral evaluations of legal cases. (B.1)
- Obligatory credits to be awarded for the final exam should be part of the workload of the study program. (B.1)

- Focusing on competence, modules should be combined into larger module units and the student workload should be evaluated on a regular basis. (B.1)
- The staff should strive for more public, international, ideally peerreviewed methods of publishing scientific articles to achieve a wider distribution of their results. (B.3)
- In terms of further development opportunities, the Faculty of Law should finalize the implementation of the already developed research strategy. Evaluation of research should also be clearly documented. (B.3)
- Research activities among students could be increased to have a positive effect on structuring student's independent study hours and motivate students to continue their studies after graduating from Bachelor programs. (B.3)

C) Quality Management:

- The University should attach greater importance to the feedback on the evaluation results by the students (e.g. regarding workload or giving feedback to external and internal stakeholders). (C.1)
- The use of ISO standards bear the danger of over-bureaucratization and could, therefore, be reviewed. (C.2)
- The percentage of professors teaching in the program should be increased. (C.4)
- Regarding infrastructure, the accessibility for people with a disability should be improved. (C.5)
- The website should also be offered in English in order to improve visibility and promotion of English speaking study programs. (C.7)

5 Decision

Decision of the accreditation commission of the 25 June 2019

Study Program "Law" (Bachelor of Law)

The proposed resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS is based on the University's application, as well as the expert review and the onsite visit described in the Expert Report.

The on-site visit of the University took place on January 24-26, 2019 according to the previously agreed schedule.

The accreditation decision is based on the Expert Report. The Expert Report, i.e. the proceedings of the Re-Accreditation and the Provisional Authorization 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.

The standard study period in the full-time program "Law" is four years/eight semesters. The study program encompasses 240 CP and comprises 67 mandatory modules of which 55 are obligatory and twelve are optional. The bachelor program "Law" is completed with the conferral of the academic degree "Bachelor of Law". The study program is offered in Bucharest and in Buzau in Romanian. The University offers 150 study places in Bucharest and 60 study places in Buzau.

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 study program "Law" is recommended to maintain and extend the accreditation at the study site in Bucharest and to obtain provisional authorization at the study site in Buzau.

Based on the Expert Report, the Accreditation Commission outlines the following conditions:

- The University has to provide students with a wider range of databases as well as learning and scientific material. (A.2)
- 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 study program and the University as a whole, the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS supports the recommendations articulated in the Expert Report.

Study Program "European and International Law" (Bachelor of Law)

The proposed resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS is based on the University's application, as well as the expert review and the onsite visit described in the Expert Report.

The on-site visit of the University took place on January 24-26, 2019 according to the previously agreed schedule.

The accreditation decision is based on the Expert Report. The Expert Report, i.e. the proceedings of the Provisional Authorization Process conform to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as well as to the European and International 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.

The standard study period in the full-time program "European and International Law" is four years/eight semesters. The study program encompasses 240 CP and comprises 67 mandatory modules of which 55 are obligatory and twelve are optional. The bachelor program "European and International Law" is completed with the conferral of the academic degree "Bachelor of European and International Law". It is solely offered in Bucharest. The University offers 70 study places for the study program in English and 50 study places for the study program in Romanian.

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 European and International 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 study program "European and International Law" is recommended to obtain provisional authorization.

Based on the Expert Report, the Accreditation Commission outlines the following conditions:

- The University has to provide students with a wider range of databases as well as learning and scientific material. (A.2)
- 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)

- Concerning the English track of the study program, the University has to prove that the English language skills of the staff are adequate to ensure the teaching quality of the program. (C.4)

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