



Expert Report on the On-Site Visit

January 24-26, 2019

External Institutional Evaluation

Bioterra University of Bucharest

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1 Introduction to the External Institutional Evaluation

1.1 Basic information on the Evaluation process

The main aim of an External Institutional Evaluation in higher education is to improve the quality of teaching, research and services at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This evaluation highlights the Universities' responsibility for quality assurance of their study programs following the European understanding of institutional autonomy in higher education. Standardized procedures help to objectively assess the performances of the evaluated universities and facilitate international recognition of these Universities and their study programs.

The Bioterra University of Bucharest (hereafter the University or Bioterra University of Bucharest) commissioned the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences (AHPGS) to execute of an External Institutional Evaluation, in order to assess the University's internal mechanisms and quality management processes. The proceedings of this evaluation conform to the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG). As agreed upon in the contract between AHPGS and Bioterra University Bucharest (signed on March 28, 2018), the proceedings for the External Institutional Evaluation are based on the "General Information on Institutional Audit and Quality Assurance Procedures" (Resolution of the Board of AHPGS of February 14, 2013).

The AHPGS is a member of international associations and networks, namely the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA), the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). The AHPGS is also listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

As an organization, the AHPGS is an independent body.

Any external evaluation criteria applied by the AHPGS are in accordance with criteria and requirements based on the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG), as established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The criteria address general areas for evaluation when implementing external quality assurance procedures at HEIs. The central focus of the external evaluation procedure is the assessment of the following areas:

Area A. Profile, objectives and strategy of the institution

Area B. Quality assurance and quality management system

Area C. Institutional management and administration

Area D. Educational activities, including study programs

Area E. Infrastructure and functional resources

The External Institutional Evaluation was conducted in the following five steps:

- 1.) **A self-evaluation report (SER)** was submitted by the University on June 26, 2018. The AHPGS has reviewed the presented documentation and its compliance with the University's strategies and objectives. Based on the provided documents, AHPGS has posed open questions to the University on September 6, 2018. The University has answered to these questions on September 17, 2018. Additional documents were provided.
- 2.) In addition to the SER, the following documents were provided by the University:

Annex A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Law Regarding the Establishment of "Bioterra" University Bucharest II. Law no. 1 of the 5th of January 2011 III. Formal Declaration
Annex B	University Charter
Annex C	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity of Bioterra University Bucharest II. Ethics Commission Report 2016-2017
Annex D	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Strategic Plan of the "Bioterra" University Bucharest for the period 2016-2020 II. Financial Strategy and Functional Resources (University Campuses)
Annex E	International Collaboration Partnerships

Annex F	Management Organization and Commissions of BUB
Annex G	Decisions on Bachelor and Master Studies in the Academic Year 2018-2019
Annex H	<p>Procedures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Quality Management Manual II. Quality Study Programs III. Evaluation and Assessment forms IV. Guidance Activities of Evaluation Quality Programs of Study University and of Higher Education Institutions V. Evaluation results of BUB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agrotouristic Management - Law - Food Products Engineering - Consumer Protection and Environment Control and Expertise of Food Products VI. Results and evaluation of research activity VII. Request to be included in graduates' database
Annex I	<p>Regulations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Evaluation and Assurance of Quality of Education in Bioterra University II. Internal Order III. ECTS Implementation IV. ECTS Application V. Evaluation and Notification of Knowledge and Practical Dependents of Students in Frequency and Reduced Frequency Education Forms VI. Students with physical disabilities and chronic diseases VII. Organization of scientific research VIII. Professional Activity of Students/Masterants IX. Scholarship Regulation X. On the Organization License Exams / Diploma and Dissertation XI. Activity Work Students/MA XII. Erasmus + Incoming Mobilities XIII. Erasmus + Outgoing Mobilities
Annex J	Self-Evaluation Report of Academic Quality Assurance of Bioterra University Bucharest 2016-2017
Annex K	Contest Methodology for the occupation of teaching and research positions

Annex L	Agreements with Recruitment agencies for students
Annex M	Qualifications, Missions, and Curricula of Study Programs
Annex N	Diploma Supplement
Annex O	Methodology for Organization and Implementation of Admission
Annex P	Additional Educational Courses
Annex Q	Educational Activities, including Study Programs – Training through Teaching Degrees (Agreement of Friendship and Cooperation “The-science.com”)
Annex R	BUB Practice Regulation – BUB Practice Protocols
Annex S	Premises of BUB
Annex T	Library - Books Access: http://www.bioterra.ro/suport-curs (Username: bioterra2011, Password: bioterra2011)
Annex U	Student Counseling and Assistance
Annex V	Research Strategy
Annex W	Scientific Activity of the BUB
Annex X	Participation of Teachers and Students in Research
Annex Y	Available Electronic Resources
Annex Z	Staff: Teaching Staff and Leadership (Job Descripton) Teaching Staff List

3.) On October 12, 2018, the complete documentation submitted by the University was forwarded to the nominated expert group who reviewed the documents based on the aforementioned criteria as well as substantive aspects. In December 2018, the expert group produced a document based on the written evaluation of the institution, to determine particular strengths and weaknesses, and to identify any open questions regarding the higher education institution in writing. The experts' statements based on these evaluations were summarized by the AHPGS and used for the preparation of the on-site visit at the University.

4.) **The on-site visit** took place on January 24-26, 2019 according to a previously agreed-upon schedule (*see Annex 1*). Representatives from the central office of the AHPGS accompanied the expert group during the meeting. Prior to the meeting with the University, the expert group met on January 24, 2019 for the initial discussion and briefing by the APHGS. The group discussed the submitted application documents (self-evaluation report and appendix) and the results of the written evaluations, as well as any procedure-related questions and foreseeable issues. Furthermore, the group finalized the plan for the meeting with the University members. During the on-site visit, the experts had transparent, productive and in-depth discussions with the representatives of the University management, faculty management, program representatives, as well as with a group of students currently enrolled at the University and graduates. Furthermore, the experts assessed the study facilities and the equipment in teaching laboratories. They discussed a comprehensive spectrum of education-related issues with representatives of the University. Moreover, the consistency of the submitted documentation was verified. Additional aspects were also reviewed, open questions were identified and additional information/documentation was requested from the University.

5.) During the visit, the University submitted the following **additional documents**:

- Situation of Study Places Requested for Accreditation/Re-Accreditation/Provisional Authorization.
- List of studying programs that are held in the University of Bioterra Bucharest,
- Official confirmation (in Romanian language) of authorized study programs by the Romanian Ministry of Education.

The expert group took the additional documentation into account. The group finalized **the External Institutional Evaluation**. At the same time, the expert group conducted the procedure of program accreditation affiliated to the Faculties of "Law", "General Medical Assistance" and "Computer Sciences". In this way, the experts can **take samples from the program accreditation of Bachelor study programs** in order to get an impression of the study programs and hence the portfolio of the University. For this reason, the expert group consists of experts responsible for the External Institutional Evaluation (EIE) as well as experts responsible for the Program Accreditation (PA). On these grounds, the experts can also examine more closely further aspects of the institution, such as planned and current study programs, infrastructure, organizational and management structure.

The **expert report** sums up the key aspects and preliminary outcomes of the visit and the reviewed documents. The summary concludes the **strengths and weaknesses of the institution and also encompasses a list of recommendations** for further development of the University. The University has the opportunity to comment on the expert report.

1.2 Expert Group

The following experts who participated in the on-site visit were appointed by the accreditation commission of the AHPGS for the External Institutional Evaluation process:

Prof. Dr. Marion Halfmann

Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, Kleve, Germany
Vice President for Teaching, Learning and Further Education
Professor for Business Administration, Marketing and market-oriented management

Dr. Rolf Heusser

Director of NICER, Zurich, Switzerland
Member of the Swiss Medical Association
Former Director of the Swiss national accreditation agency (OAQ)
Former Chairman of the European Consortium of Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA)

Prof. Dr. Edgar Köslér

Catholic University of Applied Science Freiburg, Germany
Professor for Management and Formation, President and CEO

For a complete list of all experts involved in the different steps of the evaluation process, please see Annex 2.

2 Expert Report

2.1 On-site visit

The on-site visits took place at Bioterra University of Bucharest. Bioterra University is a private university and was initially part of the Bioterra University Foundation Bucharest which was legally established in 1994. The University was first accredited in 2002.

During the on-site visit on January 24-26, 2019, the expert group had talks with the management of the University.

Topics were the governance of the University; its profile, strategy, staff, resources of the departments and faculties, the study programs and support offers.

On the first day, January 24 the University prepared a brief presentation of the University, its affiliated branches (Buzau, Alexandria, Focsani, Slobozia) and its Faculties mentioned below:

- Faculty of Agrotouristic Management
- Faculty of Food Products Engineering
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Food Control and Expertise
- Faculty of General Medical Assistance
- Faculty of Computer Sciences (*in the process of formation*)

In addition to the University management, the dean and a representative of the Faculty of Computer Sciences were present. The primary aim of this meeting was to assess of the overall strategy of the University.

On January 25, the expert group held several meetings with the University management, the Faculty management and the program representatives.

Topics were the strategy of the faculties, leadership and organizational culture, conditions and resources for teaching as well as research and working conditions at the faculties. Furthermore, the significance and organization of quality assurance; quality assurance of teaching and learning at the faculties and of the study programs; quality assurance of research at the faculties and the documentation of results and implementation of measures were discussed.

On this day, the expert group visited the faculties, e.g. working premises of students and staff, research conditions, libraries, cafeteria, offices, laboratories etc. In addition,

the expert group had talks with the management of the University regarding the finalization of the External Institutional Evaluation.

On January 26, the expert group had talks with student representatives of each Faculty (except for the Faculty of Computer Sciences, as this Faculty is in the process of implementation).

Topics were the experience of the students at the University, the Faculty and in the study programs. Additionally, they were asked about the academic demands, professional qualifications and personal development, availability of resources, means of support (tutorials, mentoring programs, advisory service, etc.) and their personal experiences with quality assurance procedures.

During the on-site visit, the experts also gained an understanding of the branches, i.e. the external learning locations in Buzau, Focsani, Alexandria and Slobozia.

2.2 Assessment Areas

Area A. Profile, objectives and strategy of the institution

The HEI has established a clear profile and its mission and strategy are congruent to it. It developed a corresponding strategic plan and formulated short, medium and long-term development plans. It set future-oriented goals and developed feasible strategies for implementing these. The objectives formulated by the HEI can be traced back to its overall strategy and development plans, which are internally and externally oriented. All personnel – teaching and non-teaching – and groups of students are actively involved in the HEI's strategy. They are aware of and work towards achieving the goals established by the HEI. External stakeholders also participate in the HEI's strategy. Institutional autonomy is a key value within the HEI. Academic freedom, diversity, research, teaching and corporate responsibility are encouraged within the institution.

Evaluation

Bioterra University Bucharest is a private, community-based university with strong links to the local labor market and the local authorities. The institution appears to be a modern University and has a clear vision (as outlined in the “University Charter”) as well as a mission and strategy which are operationalized in action plans.

The general mission of the University is to contribute to the achievement of Romanian higher education through education and scientific research (outlined in “Strategic Plan of the Bioterra University Bucharest 2016-2020”), by generating and transferring knowledge to the society.

The objective of the University is quality assurance of education through a student-focused education. The strategic goals are achieved based on the above-mentioned plan of the University.

According to Art. 12 of the “University Charter” Art. 12., the educational strategy, in order to accomplish the mission and objectives set, consists of:

(1) Promoting the principles and values adopted within the European Higher Education Area.

- (2) Preserving the values and traditions of Romanian higher education in the context of incorporating the experience of other universities in the accredited field.
- (3) The assumption of personal and structural responsibility, based on the professional competence of the members of the academic community.
- (4) Ensure an organizational structure that achieves an optimal climate, capable of providing transparency and equal opportunities to all members of the academic community.
- (5) Education in Romanian, with the exception of courses and activities designed to solve the needs of collaboration with partner universities abroad, which may also be conducted in foreign languages.
- (6) Ensure the educational endings at the level of general and specific standards.
- (7) Establishment of management structures and occupation of management positions with strict observance of the law.
- (8) Representation and participation of students in the life of the university community, in the collective management structures, according to the legislation in force.
- (9) Compliance with the provisions of national legislation on institutional evaluation and accreditation and study programs.
- (10) Ensure and maintain an open and balanced climate in relation to public opinion and the media by providing data and information of public interest established by law.

This strategy refers to teaching, research as well as internationalization and management.

From the experts' point of view, the University should rethink its strategy in light of recent changes in the legal and financial environment. The list of strategic goals appears to be too large and unsorted. Strategic priorities should be stated as clear as possible in order to be measurable. These priorities should also be determined according to the strengths of the University and include short-, middle-, and long-term goals. Educational provisions and research might be clustered around these strategic priorities. Specific features and competitive advantages of the University should be emphasized in order to create a distinct identity among the students as well as the staff. In the experts' opinion, a remodeling of the University's strategy according to the University's mission slogan "Sustainability" may well function in order to form such a unique characteristic.

Internationalization is a clear priority and should be used in order to increase the attractiveness of the Bioterra University of Bucharest for an audience outside of Romania. With regard to this, the experts emphatically recommend that the University establishes English study programs and offers language courses for staff and students. Moreover, the experts advise the University to increase collaborations with international university partners. At the same time, the University shall maintain its strength to act as a community-rooted University with strong links to the local and regional stakeholders. Particularly, the “practice centers” in the University’s branches are favorably accepted by the students. By virtue of the University owned practice centers, students are able to apply their theoretical knowledge to the practical field without having to clumsily look for apt institutions. This contributes significantly to the attractiveness of the University.

In its four-year strategy, the University places an emphasis on qualitative improvement and expansion. The participation of internal and external stakeholders as described in the strategy, is perceptible. The University pursues a participatory approach in which all personnel (teaching, non-teaching, students) are aware of and work towards achieving the goals established by the University.

The University offers a sophisticated range of study programs. It is the only private university accredited in Romania to promote faculties and specializations in the field of agri-food. Staff and students and external stakeholders, such as potential employers for graduates, are actively involved in the strategic developments. The University has established a hierarchical system that guarantees systematic planning both on the level of the faculties as well as on the institutional level as a whole.

However, the experts suggest that the University revisits and prioritizes the strategic goals and proposed actions concentrating on the key competences of the University stakeholders and the changing regional and especially financial environment. Those changes stem from a decrease of student numbers in the study programs due to demographic changes. It should also be assured that the measures outlined in the strategy plan are successfully implemented.

With respect to the branches, the experts acknowledge their role on two levels: firstly, concerning the regional development, and, secondly, regarding the attractiveness of the University for students, since the branches also feature “practice centers” where

students undergo their practical training. The University should take the chance, however, to increase the visibility of the quality assurance system in the branches, i.e. to make it clearer that it uses the same system as the University as a whole.

The Bioterra University of Bucharest has a strong focus in the field of agri-food, with local, national and international goals. From the experts' perspective, this profile should be interfacing with the domains of medicine, computer sciences and law. Within the framework of existing legislation, collaborations among the faculties should be established. Nevertheless, the main target group of the University is visible in the profile. Next to the student clientele in the areas of agri-food and law, the University tries to address a new audience in the fields of nursing and information technology.

In general, the experts acknowledge the University's research plan. They urge the University, however, to ensure the implementation of the research strategies. From the experts' point of view, improving the national and international visibility is a necessary step as stipulated in the research strategy. For example, the strategic objective to organize new master study programs, e.g. pedagogical masters in order to pursue a teaching career, can be one building block in achieving this goal. However, it remains unclear at this stage what the priorities in the overall goals of the University and in research are.

From the experts' point of view, institutional autonomy is a core value within this higher education institution. A "Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity of Bioterra University" is established. The aspect of diversity and students' rights regarding disabilities and chronic illnesses are also regulated by the "Regulation on Students with physical disabilities and chronic diseases". The University states that students with physical disabilities are ensured 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

The Bioterra University of Bucharest complies with national regulations while assuring also compatibility with the European Bologna area (e.g. Diploma supplement, Nomenclature of degrees, learning outcome driven curricula etc.). Nevertheless, it became evident, that the University is still trying to improve the implementation and use of ECTS points regarding student mobility and recognition of credits between institutions in the country and abroad. Thus, the experts support the University's general operational objective in this regard. It should be evaluated how the ECTS grading system can

be strengthened within the University and assured that the Lisbon Recognition Convention is sufficiently considered.

Area B. Quality assurance and quality management system

The HEI develops a quality management system and has clearly-defined objectives. It implements policies and procedures for quality assurance and promotes a quality assurance culture. This follows a quality control loop (PDCA Cycle). Tasks are responsibly divided among the bodies and personnel at the HEI. The quality assurance mechanisms are designed to accomplish the set objectives. Effectiveness is constantly monitored, and enhancement is sought. Internal quality assurance includes evaluation mechanisms that are run regularly and cover all areas of activity within the HEI. The evaluation results are documented and made public. Internal steering processes are identifiable and aim at sustained improvement. The HEI continuously develops plans for improving the quality management system, which is integrated into the HEI's strategic plan. It works at different organizational levels and involves all the HEI's staff.

The University has built up a rigorous internal quality assurance system with clearly defined objectives. This system has been implemented: structures, responsibilities and procedures are in place. Furthermore, the University has established a regulation on the "Evaluation and Assurance of Quality of Education" which regulates the quality assurance of education, with predilection on teaching and learning, learning environment, relevant links with research and innovation in the University. The term „quality assurance" in this regulation is used to describe all activities in the cycle of continuous improvement, so that the study programs and the services offered meet the expectations of beneficiaries (internal and external stakeholders). The internal quality management system respects the European standards and guidelines for quality assurance (ESG).

The University is run by the Senate, based on the "University Charter". The Department for Quality Assurance and Quality Assurance (mandatory by Romanian law) collaborates with all departments and faculties within the University. The faculties are headed by the Council, composed of representatives of the teaching staff and students. The faculty management is assured by the dean of the faculty. Each faculty has an evaluation commission, members of which have to be reapproved annually through the faculty council. Additionally, each faculty provides internal reports as requested per the Romanian National Standards.

The University has a "Quality Assurance Manual" at its disposal. It presents the quality policy and makes reference to the procedures of the quality assurance system. Furthermore, it describes interactions between the system processes and presents the structure of documentation used within the quality management system. The Quality Manual is structured according to SR ISO 9001- 2008. A management information system is built up and profits from a recently modernized IT-structure.

The experts noticed that the internal quality system of the Bioterra University of Bucharest is based on ISO norms. It does not follow a Total-Quality-Management approach. On the longer run, this may result in a disadvantage as it tends to lead to a quite bureaucratic system of internal control and regulation thus reducing flexibility. The experts emphasize the importance of an Internal Quality Assurance System (IQS) that is as lean as possible to ensure long-term acceptance and sustainability. With this viewpoint, the IQS System should be periodically reviewed and improved.

Furthermore, the experts recommend the University to systematically close the Quality Assurance feedback-loops in order to inform all stakeholder about the results, to publish the evaluation results, to build up an encompassing Management Information System and to use this information not merely to control but also to steer the University. In this regard, the University should also consistently use the results when adjusting the strategy. As a second step, the adjustment of the structure should follow. The same quality assurance system should also be applied in the branches.

The experts want to draw the University's attention to the development of key figures. Otherwise, the analysis of trends is hardly possible. As far as the experts can discern, there is need for action regarding several programs due to small numbers of students. The same limitations (critical mass of students not reached) has also been reported from Master programs.

Therefore, the expert panel suggests that the portfolio should not be expanded. Instead it should be streamlined and focused on subject areas in high demand. Moreover, the University's unique characteristic should find expression in the study programs. In order to match the overarching goal of internationalization and increase the amount of students, English study programs should be implemented and collaborations with international universities should be developed. In addition, the experts recommend that the University conduct market analyses that target students' expectations with regard to e.g. study content or employment opportunities in order to incorporate the results into the development of the curricula.

The University should take action in case that the number of enrolled students in a study program remains continuously low, or in case the dropout rate in a study program is continuously high. A minimum number of students should be set for running a program.

Area C. Institutional management and administration

The HEI's organizational structure demonstrates a clear and transparent division of responsibilities, duties and authorities. External stakeholders, students and other relevant parties are involved in the administrative and decision-making processes and the organizational structure responds to the strategy and objectives set by the HEI. The HEI regulates the division of tasks and responsibilities, which are unambiguous and transparent. Members of the HEI are aware of their tasks and responsibilities. Information systems are developed for monitoring and evaluating the effective management of the study programs and all other activities within the HEI. The qualification and experience of the personnel are adequate to ensure the proper operation of the HEI and the appropriateness of HEI employees.

The structures of the University have been established in a way that allows the University to reach its intended goals in education, research and services (depicted in the document "Management Organization and Commissions"). The various stakeholder groups (internal and external) participate in the decision-making process (e.g. Faculty councils including 25 % students and 75 % staff). Transparent regulations apply to all steps of the educational process. Nonetheless, over-structuration appears to be a threat (e.g. too many commissions and redundancies). Nevertheless, responsibilities and tasks of various bodies should be made more visible.

From the experts' point of view, the collaboration with other universities in Romania and abroad can be enhanced. The documentation provided by the University gave sufficient insight into existing cooperations. During the on-site visit, the experts explored the desirability and feasibility of establishing intra-university cooperations (e.g. interdisciplinary modules and study programs). Thus, the interaction between faculties should be improved and strengthened. In this regard, the University is encouraged to develop and discuss concrete plans.

The academic organization of the Bioterra University of Bucharest is clearly defined on a hierarchical basis. However, it should be made clear how the structure and strategy of the University are coordinated („structure follows strategy“) and who has the final say (also in the academic area). That is why it seems to be reasonable to revisit the structure in light of a lean strategic structure. In the experts' opinion, the University should have a replacement strategy in case of the dropping out of the University management. Furthermore, the expert group recommends reconsidering the frequency of

Senate meetings in order to be as sufficient as possible for the high amount of tasks and competences.

The experts point out that the management positions within the University are filled in a way that obeys the conditions stipulated in Chapter XI, Sections 1-2, Chapter XII, Sections 2-4 of the "Law of National Education" in Romania no. 1/2001. According to the legislation in force, for the term 2016-2020, the management positions were filled either by general elections or public contest, depending on the case. The students are represented with a 25% share in all management structures except the Board of Directors, according to the previously mentioned legal regulations. The President and the members of the Board of Directors, in case of private universities, are appointed by the founding members, according to Art. 211 of the "Law of National Education". Subsequently, appointing of the members of the Board of Directors is done in accordance with Art. 10 of the Foundation Statute.

In addition to the demands of the Romanian Law with regard to the qualification and experience of the personnel, the expert group once again highlights the importance of internationalization (see remarks in Area B and D).

Area D. Educational activities, including study programs

The HEI defines clear goals for each of its study programs, which correspond and relate to the HEI's profile and mission, thus corresponding to the desired qualification level and being thereto comparable on an educational level. Nevertheless, the study programs offered are recognized as unitary due to their particularities. The HEI develops quality management procedures for the planning of teaching and learning processes and the implementation of study programs. The results achieved are continuously monitored and documented. The HEI also provides additional educational programs to cover the continuous training of its personnel and the enhancement of student training in the form of workshops, conferences, internal training or further educational programs. The HEI provides adequate premises for implementing its study programs. The HEI has a library providing adequate learning resources for its study programs. Should the profiles of the study programs require it, the HEI holds additional premises available for practical activities (e.g. laboratories or computer rooms). Admission requirements and student evaluation methods are clear, manageable and publicized. The HEI has established mechanisms relating to student support and advice. The HEI promotes exchange programs and international mobility among its students and teaching personnel. The HEI promotes research and scientific activity. It has developed a strategy which sets corresponding goals. The study programs encompass research-related components, depending on the profile and final qualification. The HEI has sufficient material, spatial and financial resources to develop its current and planned research activities.

Goals of the various study programs are clearly defined. Learning outcomes and performance indicators for assessing achieved learning outcomes are in place. The University develops quality management procedures for planning teaching and learning process and implementing study programs. The results achieved are continuously monitored and documented. The students have expressed their full satisfaction with the study programs and learning environment.

On the basis of additional documentation, such as a list of Bachelor and Master study programs, and the self-evaluation reports for the periodical evaluation of Bachelor study programs (affiliated to the Faculty of Computer Science; the Faculty of Law; the Faculty of General Medical Assistance), the study programs were assessed according to the national regulations as well as the European Standard Guidelines. The programs are set

up in a comparable way with those in the European Higher Education Area (ECTS, Diploma supplement etc.). They also encompass research-related components, depending on the profile and final qualification. A research strategy is described. According to the experts, however, the University should make sure that research conducted by the teaching staff is more thoroughly integrated into the study programs.

The University has a library providing learning resources for the study programs. For improvement, the experts suggest an electronic library especially for the branches. Furthermore, more international literature should be offered.

Various support mechanisms for students are in place. Student satisfaction seems to be very good. Admission requirements and student evaluation methods are clear, the information is publicly available.

During the on-site visit, both the staff situation and the use of continuous education programs for staff were discussed. Regarding the continuous aspect of internationalization, the experts recommend making making a C1 proficiency level in English (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) a requirement for professors teaching in English study programs. English language courses should be mandatory for all personnel who have not yet attained C1 English competencies. Nevertheless, the University could also think about offering incentives to increase the motivation of the teaching staff to participate in courses for further development.

Furthermore, the University should invest in recruitment efforts both domestic and abroad. This can be done, for instance, by building up more English courses and also by supporting and assisting the mobility of students and teachers. The visibility of the study programs should be improved by underlining unique features, such as the practical centers in the branches, which are described as a crucial reason for students to enroll at the University.

The experts have also discussed the process for the recognition of externally achieved credit points. The University recognizes credits obtained in other universities if these comply with the regulations on students' professional activity. For this purpose, a credit recognition committee inside each faculty evaluates the equivalence of credits.

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 responsibility to demonstrate that an appli-

cation does not fulfil the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment (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)).

Also connected to this is the calculation of credit points. The University applies the ECTS system to calculate and rank students' individual performance as approved by the order of the Romanian Ministry of Education no. 3617/2005 on the generalized application of the European Credit Transfer System. The experts noticed that at the national level, there is a certain flexibility regarding the number of hours allocated per credit point. For instance, certain subjects succeed the 180 credit points mandatory to graduate from a Bachelor program with six semesters.

Still, to ensure fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study etc., as well as to ensure students' progress in their studies while promoting mobility, the amount of workload (in hours) for one credit point should be regulated and stipulated in an easily accessible way. The credit points awarded for writing the Bachelor thesis, for instance, constitute an important part of an academic study process and requires a considerable amount of effort and time investment from students. This input should therefore be reflected appropriately in the workload of 180 credit points of the study program. This is a standard practice on the international level.

The quality management includes processes for the evaluation and development of study plans, learning processes and learning outcomes. The creation process of new study programs is not clear and should be outlined in more detail. Moreover, before the backdrop of the legal possibilities and concerning the study programs, interfaculty and interdisciplinary approaches should be devised.

Area E. Infrastructure and functional resources

The HEI provides evidence that it has sufficient spatial, material and functional resources available to ensure the proper functioning of all teaching, learning, research and administrative activities. They are adequate in relation to the number of students enrolled and the number of teaching and administrative personnel. The HEI develops plans for constantly enhancing its resources. The HEI has a mechanism for recruiting personnel. There are corresponding regulations in force for recruiting teaching and administrative personnel, which are clear and transparent and promote equality and recognition based on qualification and experience. The duties and responsibilities of the personnel correspond to their qualifications and experience. The personnel is aware of their tasks and contribute to enhancing the HEI's strategy and activities. The number of personnel employed is adequate for developing all the HEI's current and planned activities. The HEI secures sufficient revenue and its budget is clearly and transparently planned and covers all incurred costs.

The University is financed on a private basis. Tuition fees cover a substantial part of the budget. The Bioterra University Foundation Bucharest that is also the proprietor of the University provides further monetary support. Based on the "Financial Strategy and Functional Resources (University Campuses)" provided by the University, the experts determined that, at the moment, the University has sufficient material and spatial resources to develop its current and planned activities. The University has a library providing learning resources concerning its study programs. Both human and financial resources are adequate for reaching the intended objectives of the University. Furthermore, the student-to-teacher ratio is excellent. The students' satisfaction regarding the services offered was visible. The University's infrastructure and equipment is qualitatively heterogeneous. In some cases, the experts deem it necessary to modernize equipment and renovate facilities not merely for safety reasons but also in light of a better visibility of the University. There are clear and rigorous rules on the selection of staff and there are good procedures in place in case vacancies occur.

Being realistic about future outlook, student numbers may fall due to demographic changes. To compensate for the financial losses, new funding sources must be found. The experts recommend that the University income should not solely depend on tuition fees but that other sources of financial income are sought for. Those could take the shape of joint research projects, a more active involvement on a communal level, such

as the provision of paid services, or the implementation of entrepreneurial activities of the staff. With regard to the branches, the experts acknowledge the importance for the local labor market and the attractiveness for the students. However, the cost-benefit ratio has been decreasing due to declining numbers of students enrolled. The University should make sure that the branches keep on operating in a self-sustainable way without being financially dependent on the University's Bucharest campus in order to guarantee the responsibility and quality of the branches in the long term. The expert group deems it necessary for the University to write a business plan.

The University has a mechanism for recruiting personnel. There are corresponding regulations in force for recruiting teaching and administrative personnel, which are clear and transparent and promote equality and recognition based on qualification and experience. The duties and responsibilities of the personnel correspond to their qualifications and experience. Nevertheless, the number of full-time professors appears to be relatively low. There does not seem to be an adequate scope for development of a research culture. This could also be facilitated by a more streamlined and focused research approach.

2.3 Conclusion

To sum up, this expert report has preliminarily evaluated the self-evaluation report submitted by the University and the talks between the University representatives and the experts with regard to pre-agreed upon assessment areas. The on-site visit was aimed at pointing out strengths and weaknesses, and to reach a common level of discussion for further enhancement of the quality of teaching, learning and research within the University.

This expert report concludes the External Institutional Evaluation. It shows the collection of answers to the open questions and completion of all the information necessary in order to evaluate the University's internal mechanisms and quality management processes, coming to a final result in this expert report.

As agreed upon, the proceedings of the External Institutional Evaluation conform to the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) and the procedure is based on the "General Information on Institutional Audit and Quality Assurance Procedures" (Resolution of the Board of AHPGS of February 14, 2013). Accordingly, the expert report sums up the key aspects and preliminary outcomes of the visit and the reviewed documents, whereas the summary concludes the strengths and weaknesses of the institution.

The External Institutional Evaluation focused on the assessment of the following areas: Areas A. Profile, objectives and strategy of the institution / Area B. Quality assurance and quality management system / Area C. Institutional management and administration / Area D. Educational activities, including study programs / Area E. Infrastructure and functional resources. The experts were able to assure themselves that the University fulfills the criteria as stipulated in the assessment areas A to E, thus verifying the quality standards of the Higher Education Institution. The criteria address general areas for evaluation when implementing external quality assurance procedures at Higher Education Institutions. Besides having assessed of the infrastructure and organizational/management structure, the experts examined further aspects of the institution, such as planned and current study programs.

To sum up the External Institutional Evaluation, the experts positively judge the institutional component of the University. The experts acknowledge the University's ambitious strategy plan and view the existence of the research plan favorably. However, from the experts' perspective, the strategic plan should exhibit a clearer order of priority goals as well as more precise descriptions of how and when the University intends to reach these goals within an optimal timeline and in consideration of national and financial possibilities. Likewise, the experts recommend a sharpening of the University's profile in order to highlight the University's unique characteristics. According to the experts, this can well be achieved by aligning the study programs to the University's original guiding principle, that is, "Sustainability". Especially in the fields of medicine and law, competition is high. With a focus on sustainability, the University's study programs would stick out of the masses, which would make them and the University as a whole more attractive for internal and external stakeholders.

In the experts' assessment of the University's quality assurance system, they found that structures are in place and procedures apparent. The university conducts evaluations in education and research. However, the experts underline the importance of closing the feedback-loops, that is, stakeholders need to be informed about the results. Additionally, results should not merely be used to control but also to steer the University in a direction that is in accordance with the strategic goals. Furthermore, the quality assurance should expand to an evaluation of all parts of the institution, such as the management and the University's resources, in the sense of a Total-Quality-Management.

Both the institutional management and administration are transparently depicted in the University's organigram. The experts also welcome the participation of students in the process. However, responsibilities and tasks of the various bodies can be illustrated more comprehensively.

In the opinion of the experts, a clear advantage of the University consists in the spacious premises and the "practice centers" that are located in the branches. In this context, the experts see positive that the University is the sole proprietor of these premises, which constitutes financial security and possibilities to add to the University's income.

Nevertheless, with regard to the financial situation, the experts call for action due to decreasing student numbers. To work against this, the establishment of a business plan seems to be advisable.

According to the experts, the issue of safeguarding financial stability should be linked to the internationalization strategy of the University. Internationalization constitutes one of the most ambitious and most important goals in the University's overall strategy plan. In the expert's point of view, offering study programs in English as well as structurally establishing and extending cooperation projects with University's abroad will likely lead to higher student numbers, which will have a decisive effect on the University's financial situation. In particular, this is necessary in order to improve the quality of the facilities and technical equipment, which, in the experts' opinion, are quite heterogeneous and, in some cases, in need of modernization or renovation.

The following recommendations, aimed at strengthening and making use of its existing assets, as well as improving the quality of teaching, learning and research and to emphasizing the University's responsibility for quality assurance of its study programs following the European understanding of institutional autonomy in higher education, are strongly proposed for the University's consideration:

Area A

- The University's strategy goals should be streamlined and articulated plainly. A clear list of priorities should be established according to the University's key competences as well as national and financial possibilities.
- The University's profile Sustainability should be sharpened and study programs should be adjusted to this.
- Unique features and competitive advantages should be emphasized in order to highlight the University's attractiveness.
- The implementation of the research strategy should occur, thus, improving the national and international visibility.
- It should be evaluated how the ECTS grading system can be strengthened within the University and assured that the Lisbon Recognition Convention is sufficiently considered.

Area B

- Feedback loops should be closed e.g. by publishing evaluation results in order to inform external and internal stakeholders.
- Most relevant aspects should be targeted, e.g. through the development of key figures, and an over-bureaucratization should be avoided.
- Results, e.g. from market analyses that target students' expectations, should be utilized in order to govern the University in accordance with the strategy plan.
- The portfolio should not be expanded but instead streamlined and focus on subject areas in high demand. Moreover, the University's unique characteristic should find expression in the study programs. In order to match the overarching goal of internationalization and increase of student numbers, English study programs should be implemented and collaborations with international universities should be set up.
- Quality assurance should adhere to a Total-Quality-Management and, thus, be extended to all parts of the University.
- A minimum number of students should be set for running a program.

Area C

- It should be made clear how the structure and strategy of the University are coordinated („structure follows strategy“) and who finally decides (also in the academic area). For this reason, it is reasonable to revise the structure in light of a lean strategic structure. The University should have a replacement strategy in case of the dropping out of the University management. Responsibilities and tasks of various bodies should be made more visible. The visibility of the University should improve, and a financial strategy should be devised due to decreasing student numbers.
- Cooperation projects among faculties and other universities should be elaborated and linked to the labor market.

Area D

- The University should invest in recruitment efforts both domestic and abroad. English language courses for staff (and students) should be introduced in order to attract national and international students.

- A C1 proficiency level in English (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) should be a requirement for personnel teaching in the English study programs.
- The integration of research in the study programs should be pursued.
- Within the realm of legal frameworks, interfaculty and interdisciplinary approaches should be established.
- The University's unique assets, such as the practical centers, should be highlighted in order to support further enrollments.
- The creation process for new study programs should be made clear.

Area E

- Infrastructure and scientific equipment should be modernized on the main campus and in the branches (e.g. electronic library, international literature etc.).
- Financial strategies should be developed in order to find alternative financial sources by way of, for example, joint research projects, the provision of paid services or entrepreneurial activities of the staff.
- The University should make sure that the branches keep on operating in a self-sustainable way.
- The University should write a business plan.
- The number of full-time professors may be incremented in order to guarantee an adequate scope for the development of a research culture.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of multilateral activities on the material basis, the provision of teaching staff, the measures taken to increase the number of students, the practical training of students in their own practice centers, from mountain, sea, delta and abroad (Germany), the experts appreciate that the activity at the institutional level presents confidence and justifies maintaining the accreditation of the Bioterra University in Bucharest, which will certainly allow the qualitative increase of the educational processes.

Taking into account the timely and constructive recommendations and suggestions made during the evaluation process, both through permanent correspondence and consultation, especially during the working visit to Bucharest, the experts are convinced that the entire leadership of the university will be mobilized to correct weaker points in order to achieve an education that meets the standards and quality criteria.

3 Annex 1 Schedule on-site visit: January 24-26, 2019

Timetable of the On-Site Visit at the Bioterra University Bucharest on January 24-26, 2019

- External Institutional Evaluation
- Bachelor Study Programs "Law", "European and International Law", "General Medical Assistance" and "Applied Computer Science"



The Expert group consists of 1. experts responsible for the External Institutional Evaluation (IE) and 2. experts responsible for the Program Accreditation (PA).

1 st day / January 24	Topic	Participants	
13:40	Arrival at Bucharest Airport and transfer to the hotel (Grand Hotel Continental) 56 Calea Victoriei, 010083, Bucharest)	Transfer organized by the university	
16:00-17:00	Meeting in the hotel (meeting room in the hotel)	Expert groups and AHPGS representatives	
17:00-18:30	Talks with the management of the university (meeting room in the hotel) Key aspects: General Information about the university, guiding principles an strategy, understanding of the branches, internationalization strategy etc.	University Management: University Professor Nicolae Ion, University Professor Nicolae Floarea, University Professor Petculescu Livia, University Professor Nicolae Marian, Associate Professor Florescu Doina Geanina, Lecturer Ph.D. Hussam Salman, Expert groups and AHPGS representatives	
19:00	Internal dinner	Expert groups and AHPGS representatives	
2 nd day / January 25	Topic	Expert Groups	Participants University
08:30-09:00	Transfer to the university		Organized by the university

<p>09:00-09:45</p>	<p>Talks with the management of the higher education institution</p> <p>Key aspects: System governance of the higher education institution and quality assurance at different levels (profile of the higher education institution; significance and organization of quality assurance at the higher education institution; significance and organization of quality assurance in teaching and learning at the higher education institution, the department/faculty, and in the study programs being accredited; documentation and implementation of the results of quality assurance, etc.); research; understanding of the branches.</p>	<p>Expert Group IE and PA</p>	<p>University Management: University Professor Nicolae Ion, University Professor Nicolae Floarea, University Professor Petculescu Livia, University Professor Nicolae Marian, Associate Professor Florescu Doina Geanina</p>
<p>09:45-10:00</p>	<p>Break, internal discussions</p>	<p>Expert groups and AHPGS representatives</p>	
<p>10:00-11:00</p>	<p>Talks with the faculty management of the Faculties of Law, General Medical Assistance, Computer Sciences, Agrotouristic Management, Food Products Engineering and Food Control and Expertise</p> <p>Key aspects: Quality assurance at the department/faculty; Strategy of the Faculty; leadership and organizational culture, conditions and resources for teaching, conditions and resources for research, working conditions at the Faculty; experience with gender equality and disabled students transparency and documentation; development prospects at the department / faculty (with regard to resources and additional study offers, among other things); research etc.; assurance of the personnel, material and spatial resources of the department/faculty (with consideration of potential linkages to other study programs), disciplinary and interdisciplinary supervisory and support offers</p>	<p>Expert Group IE and PA</p>	<p>Faculty of Law: University Professor Ciongaru Emilian, University Professor Tanasescu Tudor, Associate Professor Trandafir Cornel</p> <p>Faculty of General Medical Assistance: Lecturer Ph.D. Sararu Sia, Lecturer Ph.D. Eremia Florentina</p> <p>Faculty of Computer Sciences: University Professor Nicolae Marian, Associate Professor Beteringhe Adrian</p> <p>Faculty of Agrotouristic Management: Lecturer Ph.D. Pirvulescu Mihaela,,Lecturer Ph.D. Cotianu Razvan Daniel</p> <p>Faculty of Food Products Engineering: Associate Professor Negut Lucica Elena, Lecturer Ph.D. Popirlan Alina, Lecturer Ph.D. Oprea Alexandru</p> <p>Faculty of Food Control and Expertise: University Professor Meica Sergiu, Associate Professor Mihaila Daniela Fanuta</p> <p>Note :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the experts will have specific questions ; please be prepared to answer questions in English only (no simultaneous translation

			<p>no power point presentation or individual speeches)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - please invite no more than five representatives per faculty/program
11:00-11:15	Break, Internal Discussion		
11:15-12:45	<p>Talks with programme directors / teaching staff of the study programs to be evaluated (when indicated in groups)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Law (30 min.) • Faculty of General Medical Assistance (30 min.) • Faculty of Computer Sciences (30 min.) <p>Key aspects: Qualification objectives of the study programs (academic qualifications, professional qualifications, etc.); Study programs concept (coherent overall concept; conveyance of disciplinary knowledge and interdisciplinary knowledge; conveyance of methodological and generic skills; pedagogical and didactic concept; coherent structure of the study programs; defined education goals; feasibility of the study programs with regard to the work-load, examination system; support offers; design of practically oriented components; rules for recognition of credits from other study programmes etc.); rights to participate in civic action, potential for personality development; implementation of evaluation outcomes and results, etc.</p>	Expert Group PA	<p>Faculty of Law: University Professor Mihaila Stefan Lecturer Ph.D. Mitric Bogdan Lecturer Ph.D. Ungureanu Gabriel Lecturer Ph.D. Gabriel Micu Lecturer Ph.D. Boboc Stefan</p> <p>Faculty of General Medical Assistance: University Professor Delion Doru Sabin Lecturer Ph.D. Popescu Daniela Lecturer Ph.D. Vlasceanu Gabriela Antoaneta Lecturer Ph.D. Coculescu Bogdan Lecturer Ph.D. Hanna Ioan Adrian</p> <p>Faculty of Computer Sciences: University Professor Nicolae Marian Associate Professor Beteringhe Adrian Lecturer Ph.D. Salman Hussam Lecturer Ph.D. Lițan Daniela</p> <p>Note :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the experts (program accreditation) will have specific questions ; please be prepared to answer questions in English only (no simultaneous translation ; no power point presentation or individual speeches) - please invite no more than five representatives per program
11:15-12:45	<p>Talks with the management of the higher education institution/faculty management</p> <p>Topics: Remaining open questions regarding the external institutional evaluation</p>	Expert Group IE	Representatives of the management of the University and the faculty management

12:45-13:00	Break, Internal discussion		
13:00 -14:30	Lunch at the University		
14:30-16:30	Tour of the institution Visitation, working premises of students, library; cafeteria, lecture hall, administration, office situation etc.	Expert groups and AHPGS representatives	Representatives of university
16:30	Transfer to the hotel		Organized by the university
19:00	Dinner with university representatives	Expert groups and AHPGS representatives	
3rd day / January 26	Topic	Expert Groups	Participants University
08:30-09:00	Transfer to the university		Organized by the university
09:00-10:30	<p>Talks with students</p> <p>Key aspects: Experiences of students in the study programs with regard to its content, academic demands and professional qualifications and personality development (expectations and reality, strengths and weaknesses); availability of resources from the perspective of students; support (tutorials, mentoring programmes, advisory service, etc.); experiences with regard to measures to promote gender equality and the concerns of students with handicaps.</p>	Expert Group IE and PA	<p>Students : Taraboanta Andreea Madalina, Alecu Petru Alexandru, Nascoapa Mihai Florin, Stancila Alexandra, Beu Maria Cristina, Andrei M. Florica, Dicieanu N. Theodor Gabriel, Malciu E. Mariana, Oancea Mihaiela Cristina, Pop I. Mircea Alexandru, Anghel f. Alexandra, Coman Adriana, Dragan Angelica Loredana, Musat Silvana Madalina, Olteanu Monica, Bibac Dana Georgiana, Tomescu Catalin, Emanoil Andrei, Alexandrescu Georgiana, Vedeanu Victor Constantin, Constantin Robert Vasile, Gheorghe Rares Mihai, Maican Florin, Constantin Andrei Victor, Dinu Alexandru Gianini, Chiru Valerica, Scarlat Carmen ;</p> <p>Graduates : Radulescu Milica, Manolache Cosmin, Bogzeanu Adina, Alecu Razvan Florin, Carabăț Maria Cristina, Carabăț Daniel-Laurentiu</p> <p>Note : the experts will have specific questions ; please be prepared to answer</p>

			questions in English only (no simultaneous translation)
10:30-12:00	<p>Meeting with representatives of the management of the higher education institution/faculty management to clarify any remaining issues</p> <p>Internal discussions: Short Written Assessment/check of the evaluation sheets</p>	Expert groups and AHPGS representatives	
12:00-12:30	Feedback to the University	Expert groups and AHPGS representatives	Management of the university
12:30-13:00	Snack for lunch at the university		
13:00	Transfer to the airport		Organized by the university

4 Annex 2 Complete list of experts involved in the different steps of the evaluation process

Expert group for the External Institutional Evaluation:

Prof. Dr. Marion Halfmann, Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, Kleve, Germany

Dr. Rolf Heusser, NICER, Zurich, Switzerland

Prof. Dr. Edgar Köslér, Catholic University of Applied Science Freiburg, Germany

Expert group for the program accreditation process:

Mr. Alexander Bordan, Student at the Albert-Ludwigs University Freiburg, Germany

Prof. Dr. Uta Gaidys, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Prof. Dr. Johannes Keogh, Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Prof. Dr. Gabriele Roth-Dietrich, Mannheim University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Prof. Dr. Peter Schäfer, Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences, Mönchengladbach, Germany

Prof. Dr. Carolin Sutter, SRH University Heidelberg, Germany

Prof. Dr. Walter Swoboda, University of Neu-Ulm, Germany