

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



## **Assessment Report**

**for the Application of the „Bioterra“ University of Bucharest, Romania**

**for the Accreditation of the Study Program “Engineering and Management  
in Public Food and Agrotourism” (part-time education),  
Bachelor of Engineering and Management in Agriculture and Rural  
Development**

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Decision

September 18, 2023

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## 1 Introduction

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

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

The AHPGS Accreditation Agency was tasked with the periodical evaluation of study programs offered by “Bioterra” University of Bucharest, Romania in December 2021.

In February 2023, the relevant evaluation documents were forwarded to the experts in order for them to review the available information, to determine particular strengths and weaknesses as well as to identify open questions regarding the study programs in writing.

The site visit at the University took place on May 23-25, 2023. During the 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, computer classes and the library.

The following six study programs were subjects of the accreditation procedure:

**Faculty of Control and Expertise of Food Products:**

- “Control and Expertise of Food Products” (full-time education), Bachelor of Engineering in Food Products
- “Control and Expertise of Food Products” (part-time education), Bachelor of Engineering in Food Products
- “Inspection, Expertise and Legislation in Food Safety, Environmental Protection and Consumer Protection”, Master of Engineering in Food Products

**Faculty of Agrotourism Management:**

- “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (full-time education), Bachelor of Engineering and Management in Agriculture and Rural Development,
- “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (part-time education), Bachelor of Engineering and Management in Agriculture and Rural Development,
- “Performing Management in Public Food, Agritourism and Consumer Protection”, Master of Engineering and Management in Agriculture and Rural Development.

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

**As representatives of academic institutions:**

**Jens-Mirco Engbrink**

**Münster University of Applied Sciences, Germany**

Student of Nutrition Science and Home Economics

**Prof. Dr. Markus Fischer**

**University of Hamburg, Germany**

University Professor of Food Chemistry at the University of Hamburg, Germany

Executive Director at the Institute of Food Chemistry at the University of Hamburg

Head of Hamburg School of Food Science, Head of Department of Chemistry, Spokesperson of the scientific part of the Cluster of Excellence UWA.

**Prof. Dr. Kathrin Kohlenberg-Müller**

**Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany**

Professor of Nutrition and Diseases at the Fulda University of Applied Sciences

Former head of the study programs Public Health Nutrition (M.Sc.) and Dietetics (B.Sc.).

Member of the German Nutrition Society, of the German Society for Nutritional Medicine and of the Germany Society of Public Health

**Prof. em. Dr. med. Manfred Müller**

**Christian Albrecht University of Kiel, Germany**

Retired Professor of Human Nutrition

Former president of the German Obesity Society (DAG)

Speaker of the Competent Network of Obesity (CNO) of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Member of the German Alliance against Non-Communicable Diseases (DANK)

**Prof. Dr. Georg Wittich**

**Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences, Germany**

Professor for food science, especially food chemistry, analysis and law at the

Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences

Dean of the Faculty of Food and Nutrition Sciences, Niederrhein University of Applied Science

Coordinator of the study programs for food sciences at the Faculty of Food and Nutrition Sciences, Niederrhein University of Applied Science

**Prof. Dr. Jana Wolf Sussman**

**Aalen University, Germany**

Professor at Aalen University, Department of Healthcare Management

Research in the field of change management, international healthcare management, leadership in healthcare

Healthcare Economics fellow position with focus on pharmaceuticals (valuation, cost-effectiveness studies)

The proceedings of the process of accreditation conform to the 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 programs 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 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 fulfillment 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 programs and the University were assessed by the expert group with respect to the corresponding criteria and standards: (A) Institutional capacity, (B) Educational effectiveness, and (C) Quality management, each with the corresponding criteria and standards.



## **2 The study program to be accredited**

The Bachelor study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (part-time education) was evaluated together with the Bachelor study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (full-time education). The programs are offered by “Bioterra” University of Bucharest, Romania, Faculty of Agrotourism Management. The period of education is eight semesters (four years). The form of studies is either full-time or part-time.

The program is taught in Romanian. The main objective of the study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” is to train competent specialists in the field of tourism and public catering, who know very well the specificity of the field of license and specialization and who can occupy a wide range of jobs”.

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 the program. One CP is equivalent to 25 workload hours. The total workload of the program is 6,000 hours, which is divided into 2,940 contact hours, 300 hours for practical training and 2,760 hours of independent work.

The program consists of 63 modules, out of which 51 are compulsory and 12 modules are optional. The full-time study program takes place from Monday to Friday and consists of seminars, courses and practical labs, whereas the part-time study program focus lies on the weekend and consists of seminars and practical labs only. The part-time study program represents a flexible form of study that is particularly popular with working students.

Admission requirements are centralized within the University. They include a Baccalaureate degree or equivalent diploma. Students are informed about the amount of the tuition fees in advance. The tuition fee is around 450-500 Euro per year.

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, composed in both Romanian and English. Graduates of the Bachelor study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” are awarded the academic degree “Bachelor of Engineering and Management in Agriculture and Rural Development”.

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

The first cohort of the "Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism" study program was admitted in 2002.

In the academic year 2022/2023, the total number of students enrolled is 409. The number of full-time students is 98 and the number of part-time students is 311. Annual admissions are organized in two sessions during July and September.

### **3 Expert Report**

In February 2023, the application documents of the University were made available to the expert group for written evaluation. The expert group assessed the “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” study program based on the Romanian standards and regulations specified under Section 1. They have also examined the factual and other program-related aspects described in the documents. The results of this review were forwarded to the AHPGS in April 2023.

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

#### **A. Institutional Capacity**

##### **A.1. Institutional, administrative and management structures**

The “Bioterra” University Bucharest (BUB) is a private Institution of Higher Education and was accredited in 2002 by Law 480/2002 published in the Official Gazette no. 512/2002. It was initially part of the “Bioterra” University Foundation Bucharest which was legally established in 1994.

Currently, the University has four faculties: Faculty of Agrotourism Management, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Control and Expertise of Food Products, and Faculty of General Medical Assistance.

The University offers six accredited Bachelor programs, which include “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism”, “Food Engineering”, “Law”, “Control and Expertise of Food Products”, “Consumer Protection and the Environment” and “General Medical Assistance”.

Moreover, three accredited Master programs are offered: “Investigation of Acts of Terrorism and Public Security”, “Performing Management in Public Food, Agrotourism and Consumer Protection”, and “Inspection, Expertise and Legislation on Food Safety, Environmental Protection and Consumer Protection”.

In the academic year 2022/2023, the total number of enrolled students at the University is 2,660 in full-time and part-time Bachelor programs and 271 in Master programs. The overall number of students is increasing.

During the site visit, 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 programs and staff in line with the aims and objectives of the program and common standards of integrity (e.g. "University Code of Ethics").

The mission 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 mission and objectives are coherent. The University's portfolio of study programs is diverse. The experts asked the University about its strategic goal for the next years. According to the University, the number of students should increase further, and new study programs will be developed in a long term. Due to the diverse range of study programs offered at Bioterra University of Bucharest, the experts recommend to further sharpening the University's strategic focus.

The University states, that the institution has a tradition in bioscience. The Faculty of Agrotourism Management area of specialization is therefore based on the tradition of the University. Unfortunately, in talks with the experts, the University was not able to define a unique selling point of the study program "Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism". The experts strongly suggest reflecting on this question and defining the unique selling point as well as the target group of the study program.

The expert group has been convinced of the University's commitment – as an institution – to offer high quality education opportunities. It was asserted that the University and its study programs function within the Romanian legal framework and that the institution promotes academic integrity and freedom among its students. Besides, the University regularly monitors its own activities, and students take an active part in management. Moreover, the needs of students with disabilities are taken into consideration (e.g. admission, 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.

Moreover, they have identified a clear division of the hierarchical units and their functions in the University. All members of the University are aware of the strategy of the institution, and they actively contribute to the achievement of its goals.

Regarding the internationality, the experts took notice of the measures put in place by the University in order to pursue its international orientation. According to the University, the internationalization was mainly organized virtually during the last years due to the pandemic and restricted mobility. The University achieves mobility of its students by means of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as well as taking part in Erasmus exchange programs. Unfortunately, there was no international mobility at the Faculty of Agrotourism Management during the last academic year. In the previous years, there were one-week mobilities of teaching staff and students in Italy, Spain and Egypt.

The experts highly recommend expanding the possibilities of going abroad through short-term stays. Shorter periods abroad, for example within the scope of an internship or summer school, could be more attractive and easier to finance for students. Furthermore, the experts recommend finding creative ways of internationalization, for example internationalization from home or online conferences, to include their students in the international scientific community. One of the reasons the University provides for the lack of international mobility is the high number of part-time students, who work alongside their studies.

The program "Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism" is offered in Romanian.

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

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

A unique selling point and target group of the study program has to be defined.

## **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 being offered. Facilities are fully in possession of the University. According to the University, the

institution possesses sufficient financial resources and equipment for the program.

Regarding the premises and resources available for the desired number of students in the study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (150 per year), the experts conclude that the University is able to offer this number of study places. The experts also point out that scholarships are foreseen in the “Scholarship Regulations” 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. computers). Nevertheless, it became clear that the program-specific literature is insufficient and outdated. Therefore, the experts urge the University to extend the library regarding both 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 a 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 financial sources. Although student numbers have risen in recent years, demographic changes are causing declining numbers of high school graduates. The experts recommend developing a strategy for possible financial losses. New means of funding should be sought.

The expert group considers Criterion A.2 to be partially fulfilled.

The library has to be extended regarding both printed and electronic books, as well as databases.

## **B. Educational Effectiveness**

### **B.1. Content of the study program**

The study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” is offered at the Faculty of Agrotourism Management at Bioterra University

of Bucharest. The study program's mission, general and specific learning objectives, curriculum and outcome competences were presented in the written documentation. The curriculum description specifies the qualification objectives, competences (knowledge and understanding, explanation and interpretation etc.) and learning outcomes for each module. The experts point out that the structure of the study program includes a set of relevant topics.

The study program's goal is to train competent specialists in field of tourism and public catering, who know very well the specificity of the field of license and specialization. The specific objectives of the study programs "Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism", aim to ensure the understanding and application of the fundamental principles necessary for the exercise of the future profession, through the assimilation, understanding and proper interpretation of economic and technical knowledge, the stimulation of scientific research, innovation and individual study methods, and the creation of specific cognitive skills. The study program has an interdisciplinary outlook to the field, aiming to develop students' critical thinking and merge technological engineering and management knowledge. Judging from the curriculum and module descriptions, students completing the program are fit for a professional position in Romania.

Graduates of the study program have the opportunity to develop their own businesses, in the field of tourism and public food. Also, the graduates, based on the skills acquired, can work in specialized economic entities.

The experts agree with the above-mentioned qualification objectives. Moreover, the study program "Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism" also focuses on qualifying students for social responsibility and personal development throughout all modules. The experts conclude that graduates have good employment opportunities on the Romanian job market.

The curriculum of the study program "Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism" comprises compulsory, optional and elective modules. Compulsory and optional subjects are an obligatory part of the curriculum. Elective modules are not necessary in order to graduate, but they are offered to enrich the curriculum. 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 program consists of 63 modules, out of which 51 are compulsory.

The experts especially appreciate the optional and elective modules, which complement the offered courses very well. The program is also well-structured; modules are described in detail (e.g. with objectives, aimed competences, content and literature) and the program is relevant as the intended career is clear. Graduates are fit for a professional position in Romania and beyond. However, the experts discuss the lack of coherence between the titles of the modules and their content. It is necessary to improve the module descriptions in its alignment of module title and content.

Alongside the theoretical curriculum, lab courses are part of the study program. Students complete weekly laboratory hours in several subjects, respectively four hours for each year of study for 14 weeks per semester. According to the University, in addition to the labs at the University, labs in cooperating companies are also available for students. The experts appreciate the cooperations with companies and also the amount of lab hours in the curriculum.

Also, an internship focusing on practical training is mandatory. The practical training includes a total of 300 hours. 90 hours in year 1, 2 and 3 and 30 hours in year 4.

The internship topics are established by the supervising teacher and the respective tutor appointed by the internship partner. Under the terms of the agreement, the internship partner shall guarantee the suitable conditions for students to obtain the professional competences specified for the internship period. The experts welcome the internship and the University's connections to local companies and institutes.

The experts miss a module for research methods in the curriculum. According to the University, research methods are included in a few modules of the curriculum. Furthermore, the scientific research activity is mainly carried out by the teachers within the faculty. Findings of individual and collective scientific research of the teachers are presented in the classes. According to the expert group, the integration of research conducted by the teaching staff should be more transparent in the curriculum. Also, the experts highly recommend integrating the students further in the research of their teachers and also integrating research methods into the curriculum of the study program.

The credit system applied in the "Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism" study program and at the University in general complies with



the Order of the Romanian Ministry of Education no.3617/2005 on the generalized application of the European Credit Transfer System.

The study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” contains 240 ECTS credits. The study program does not include a Bachelor thesis. The curriculum comprises 63 modules. The study program is offered on a full-time and part-time basis. The full-time study program takes place from Monday to Friday and consists of seminars, courses and practical labs, whereas the part-time study program focus lies on the weekend and consists of seminars and practical labs only. The part-time study program represents a flexible form of study that is particularly popular with working students.

The total workload of the program is 6,000 hours, which is divided into 2,940 contact hours, 300 hours for practical training and 2,760 hours of independent work.

In talks with the University, it became clear for the experts that there is a limited flexibility in the contents of the curriculum due to national regulations. However, the experts encourage the University to use the available flexibility to adapt the curriculum to current developments and the need of the labor market consulting students and business partners. Students would also benefit from interdisciplinary modules.

The subjects in the curriculum are evaluated at the end of the semester through written and oral (colloquiums) exams. The evaluation is based on the specific procedures stipulated by the Quality Manual. Usually, one assessment method is applied per module. The experts highlight that all exams should be competence-oriented, and thus multiple-choice tests should be reduced if not discarded in general. Furthermore, the experts recommend offering written exams in the first year and oral exams as well as project works in the higher semesters.

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, re-examinations may be taken during a re-examination period. Re-examination periods take place at the end of the academic year in September. Each exam may be re-examined once.

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.

Furthermore, the experts encourage the University to introduce a Bachelor thesis as a final qualification at the end of the study program. Instead of writing an exam, the students would have the possibility to research a freely chosen topic as a final examination.

Due to the high number of modules (often credited with less than 5 CP) the workload for students appears to be relatively high. From the experts' point of view, the student workload should be evaluated on a regular basis in order to make sure that students are not overloaded or under 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 competence orientation.

The expert group evaluates the fundamental structure of the study program to be coherent and reasonable. The course content and examinations are considered to be feasible and capable of being accomplished within the envisaged period of time.

Yet, 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 respect, the experts also want to draw attention to the process of recognizing externally achieved credit points. On one hand, the recognition of vocational learning and informally acquired competencies and on the other hand, 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 assessment<sup>1</sup>.

The admission procedures of the program are determined by the *Regulations regarding students admission* and *the students registration form* on the University level. Based on that, the experts confirm that the University applies a transparent policy regarding the admission procedure. The study program's

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<sup>1</sup> (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))

admission requirements include a high school diploma or equivalent. There is no subject specific test for applicants to the study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism”.

From the experts’ point of view, the admission procedure of the program complies with the requirements of the University as well as with national standards. The experts point out that the admission procedure provides equal opportunities to all applicants regardless of gender, origin or social class.

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

The recognition of vocational learning and informally acquired competencies and 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 study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” can be successfully classified within the Romanian higher education system. The final qualification responds to the demands of the national labor market. The knowledge, competencies and abilities gained throughout the study program correspond to the final academic degree to be awarded. The practical activity, which has been described under criterion B.1, enables students to adapt to real life circumstances and to directly apply their theoretical knowledge.

Judging from the curriculum and the module descriptions, students completing the program obtain an overview on the subject. They obtain knowledge as well as explicative-interpretative, procedural/instrumental-applicative and attitudinal competencies to be used in various work environments.

The educational concept of the study program is coherent and well-designed. Within the modules, adequate forms of teaching (e.g. lectures, seminars, practical work) are employed. From the experts’ point of view, the mix between methods, as listed in the curriculum, could be improved, for example by including interactive learning methods or group and project work. According to the University, the main responsibility of each course instructor is to apply student-centered methods of teaching and to create a productive learning environment.

Furthermore, course instructors are responsible for the development of students' degree-specific as well as general competencies, which are specified in the course descriptions provided by the University.

Electronic/multimedia forms of instruction and learning (e.g. learning platform) are integrated into the methods of teaching (lectures, seminars, exercises, project work, study groups, work placement phases). The University has a functional e-learning system, the UMS platform, accessible to all students enrolled at the "Bioterra" University of Bucharest and to the professors / secretariat, which also serves the Faculty of Agrotourism Management.

In talks with the University, the experts discussed the dropout rate of students in the study program. In the past three years, between 9% and 15% of students dropped out of the full-time program. The dropout rate during the last three years in the part-time program lies between 10% and 18%. The experts are aware that the increased rate among part-time students in particular is due to the pandemic and the side jobs of part-time students. The experts trust the University to have processes in place to further monitor the developments.

The expert group thinks that employability is given for graduates of this program.

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

### **B.3. Scientific research activity**

According to the University, the Faculty of Agrotourism Management has been involved in international research, development and innovation projects obtained through competition, contract or grant. Also, scientific sessions, symposia, conferences, round tables with professors, researchers, students and graduates are organized systematically.

The organization of a scientific symposium at the University has become a tradition. Each year, professors and researchers come together to share their latest findings, exchange views, and discuss current issues of scientific interest. For students at the faculty, it is an opportunity to get involved in scientific research while still in university, to collaborate with their professors on joint projects and to develop from the point of view of intellectually and professionally.

The experts conclude that research will be carried out by staff according to the "Research Plan". 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. 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.

Considering these observations, the expert group regards criterion B.3. 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, it could also be helpful for a sustainable financing 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 they are "prepared and able to progressively ensure, for all years of study, the financial support necessary for the program to function in conditions that correspond to the standards of the Romanian program of studies".

Criterion B.4 is regarded as fulfilled.

### **C. Quality Management**

#### **C.1. Quality assurance strategies and procedures**

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

The quality management system that was designed and implemented at "Bio-terra" 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 a 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 University points out that it has its

own University Ethics Code. The code lays down rules of conduct, ethics, and deontology for all members of the academic community of the University.

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

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

The experts highlight that the quality management system is ensured by central and decentral commissions and a quality management department. The commissions act in accordance with the quality assurance strategy of the University. Moreover, a "Quality Manual" is approved by the Senate 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 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 over-bureaucratization. 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 about the teaching staff of the study program.

The teaching staff of the Faculty of Agrotourism Management is composed of 23 people, of which 18 full-time employees at the University and 5 associates as follows: 5 full-time university professors at the University, 2 full-time associate professors at the University, 16 university lecturers with basic norm in the University of which 11 with basic norm in the University and 5 associates. All 23 teachers hold a PhD in science. The student/teacher ratio is 5:1 (118



students to 23 teachers). Additionally, other human resources include administrative and support staff.

With the curriculum of the Bachelor study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” in mind, the ratio between students and teachers is very good. Considering that this is an undergraduate program, it is noteworthy that the entire program is taught by professors.

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, Government Decision no.36/2013, Order no.6560/2012, Order no. 4204/2013). According to these regulations, teaching and other positions are publicly announced and the University chooses candidates for these positions based on an open and independent procedure. These procedures are transparent and available for potential candidates from the academic 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 experts take note that all teaching positions are established in compliance with the requirements of legal norms and completed with tenured teaching staff in higher education in accordance with the Romanian law.

The 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 fulfilled.

### **C.5. Learning resources accessibility**

Overall, the experts conclude that the University offers appropriate facilities of sufficient number and good quality for the execution of its currently running study programs. 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 “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” program could be enhanced. The experts urge the University to significantly expand the library in terms of printed and electronic books, journals and databases and recommend to use open access resources for teaching (*see also A.2*).

The University encourages students’ learning processes by offering resources and opportunities for extracurricular activities. Moreover, the University offers various forms of academic support and counselling to students: consultations and tutorials. However, regarding infrastructure, accessibility for people with a disability should be improved. Additionally, the experts urge the University to improve 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 partly fulfilled.

Program-specific literature should be expanded.

### **C.6. Systematically updated database, regarding the internal quality assurance**

The University has designed an internal quality assurance system and established structures for monitoring and developing the quality assurance concept. Parts of the internal quality assurance system are regular peer and students’ reviews, as well as the feedback meetings organized for this purpose. A more detailed description can be found under criteria C.3. and C.4. A regular track of the evaluation and review results is maintained by the University. Strategies for improvement are designed therefrom. A corresponding electronic system and database are also implemented. The experts conclude that the data and information policy seem to be adequate at the University.

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

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

The results of quality assurance activities are summarized in a report, in order to improve the “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” 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.

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 “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (part-time education) study program and to verify its compliance with European and Romanian regulations (*see part 1 Introduction*).

In the view of the expert group, the “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (part-time education) study program complies with Romanian regulations as specified in the “Methodology” and the “Law of National Education”. Hence, the study program complies with the pertinent Romanian conventions as well as with all legal normative requirements.

The expert group acknowledges the high motivation and engagement of the students studying in the program. In addition, they are satisfied with the University and the commitment of their teachers.

In addition, 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, striving to become relevant in an international context by defining its unique selling point.

The on-site visit, in addition to the documentation provided by the University, enabled the expert group to recommend the re-accreditation of the “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (part-time education) study program offered by “Bioterra” University of Bucharest, to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS.

Given the fact that the program meets all normative requirements and standards listed in the performance indicators determined by the Romanian national quality assurance agency, the expert group recommends the re-accreditation of the “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (part-time education) study program also by the Romanian Ministry of Education.

The experts outline the following conditions:

- A unique selling point and target group of the study program has to be defined. (A.1)

- The University has to provide students of “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” with a wider range of databases as well as learning and scientific material. (A.2)
- The module descriptions are in need of revision and coherence between the title of the module and its content must be created. (B.1)
- The recognition of vocational learning and informally acquired competencies has to be regulated. (B.1)
- 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.1)

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

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

#### A) Institutional Capacity:

- The possibilities of going abroad through short-term stays should be expanded, for example internship or summer school.
- Creative ways of internationalization should be found, for example internationalization from home or online conferences, to include their students in the international scientific community.
- The University should expand the search for additional funding sources, such as support from the local authorities, national foundations, sponsorships from companies or private donors/alumni.

## B) Educational Effectiveness:

- The integration of research conducted by the teaching staff should be more transparent in the curriculum.
- Students should be further integrated in the research of their teachers.
- A module for research methods should be integrated into the curriculum of the study program.
- The University should use its available flexibility to adapt the curriculum to current developments.
- Interdisciplinary modules should be offered.
- Written exams should be located in the first year of studies. In higher semesters, oral exams and more project work should be applied. All exams should be competence-oriented.
- A Bachelor thesis as a final qualification in the end of the study program should be introduced.
- The implementation of evaluation results to improve the study programs should be clearly documented.
- Combining smaller modules into larger units to emphasize competence orientation is suggested.
- 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.
- Sustainable financing to consider other financial options besides relying on students' tuition fees should be established.

C) Quality Management:

- The use of ISO standards bears the danger of over-bureaucratization and could, therefore, be reviewed.
- The University should improve the accessibility for people with a disability through elevators and wheelchair accessible buildings.
- The website should also be offered in English in order to improve visibility and promotion of English speaking study programs.

## **5 Decision of the accreditation commission**

### **Decision of the accreditation commission September 18, 2023**

This resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS is based on the University's application, as well as the expert review and the site visit covered in the Assessment Report. The Accreditation Commission has also taken the response opinion of the University regarding the study program into account.

The site visit of the University took place on May 23-25, 2023 according to the previously agreed-upon schedule.

The accreditation procedure is structured according to the Accreditation Criteria developed by the AHPGS. The Accreditation Criteria are developed by the AHPGS in close accordance with the existing criteria and requirements valid in the Federal Republic of Germany and based on the „Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area“ (ESG), established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) 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 Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS discussed the procedural documents and the vote of the expert group regarding the Assessment Report.

The Bachelor study program "Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism" (part-time education) is offered by the Faculty of Agrotourism Management at "Bioterra" University of Bucharest, Romania. The regulated study period is eight semesters (four years). The Bachelor study program is offered in Romanian.

240 credit points (CP), i.e., according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) are required in order to graduate from the program. One CP is equivalent to 25 workload hours. The total workload of the program is 6,000 hours, which is divided into 2,940 contact hours, 300 hours for practical training and 2,760 hours of independent work.



The program consists of 63 modules, out of which 51 are compulsory and twelve modules are optional. The Bachelor study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (part-time education) is completed with awarding of the academic degree “Bachelor of Engineering and Management in Agriculture and Rural Development”.

The Accreditation Commission does not consider the expert-recommended condition to define a unique selling point and the target group of the study program to be criteria-based. The experts state that the study program concept is coherent and that the title of the study program is supported by modules and module contents. Beyond that, a unique selling point cannot be formulated. Also, the admission requirements are regulated and adequate, so that the target group of the study program is already defined. The Accreditation Commission therefore does not impose the condition.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS considers that the 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 partially fulfilled and therefore adopts the following decision:

The Bachelor study program “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (part-time education) is recommended to be accredited for the duration of five years until September 30, 2028.

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

1. The University has to provide students of “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agrotourism” (part-time education) with a wider range of databases as well as learning and scientific material. (A.2)
2. The module descriptions are in need of revision and coherence between the title of the module and its content must be created. (B.1)

3. The recognition of vocational learning and informally acquired competencies has to be regulated. (B.1)
4. 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.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 Assessment Report.