

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



Assessment Report

**for the Application of "Dimitrie Cantemir" University of Targu Mures,
Romania**

**for the Accreditation of the Study Program "Territorial Planning and GIS",
Master of Geography**

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1 Introduction

The Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences (AHPGS) is an interdisciplinary and multi-professional organization. Its mission is to evaluate Bachelor and Master' programs in the fields of health and social sciences, as well as in related domains such as medicine or psychology. By conducting accreditation and recommendation procedures, the AHPGS contributes to the improvement of the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, the higher education institutions remain responsible for implementing the quality assurance recommendations made by the AHPGS. Since 2004, the AHPGS has been a member of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). In 2006, the AHPGS also joined the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and became a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) in 2009. Since 2012, the AHPGS has been a member of the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA). Furthermore, the AHPGS has been listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) since 2009. On top of that, since 2023, the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) has recognized the AHPGS as an agency with recognition status for 10 years.

In carrying out accreditation procedures, the AHPGS follows the requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). In the present case, the decision regarding the accreditation of the study program is carried out by the AHPGS Accreditation Commission based on the following accreditation criteria¹:

1. Program aims and their implementation
2. Structure of the study program
3. Admission and Feasibility
4. Examination System and Transparency
5. Teaching Staff and Material Equipment
6. Quality Assurance

¹ Approved by the AHPGS Accreditation Commission

7. Gender equality and equal opportunities

The AHPGS Accreditation Commission's decision regarding the accreditation of the study program is also based on the Romanian Specific Standards applicable to the evaluated study programs.

I. The University's application

The AHPGS verifies the sufficiency of the documents submitted by the University, namely the Self-Evaluation Report and its corresponding annexes. These are to fulfil the assessment spheres as well as the AHPGS and Romanian specific standards. With this information, the AHPGS produces a summary, which is to be approved by the University and subsequently made available for the expert group, together with all other documentation.

II. Written review

The main documents are reviewed by the expert group assigned by the accreditation commission of AHPGS. This is done in order to verify the compliance of the study program with the applicable accreditation criteria valid in Romania. Consequently, the experts comprise a short summary regarding the study programs.

III. Site visit (peer-review)

The experts carry out a site visit at the University. During this visit, discussions are held with members of the University, which include University and department administration, degree program management, teachers, and students. These discussions provide the expert group with details about the study program beyond the written documents. The task of the experts during the site visit is to verify and evaluate the objectives of the program and its projected study results, its structure, staff, material resources, course of studies, methods of assessment (selection of students, assessment of achievements, students' support), as well as the program management (program administration, external assurance of study quality).

Following the site visit, the expert group evaluates the fulfilment of the criteria based on the results of the visit and the documents submitted by the HEI. This Assessment Report is based on the results of the visit, the written review of the study programs, and the documents submitted by the University. Finally, the Assessment Report is made available to the University for the opportunity to issue a response opinion.

The Assessment Report as well as the University's response opinion – together with the provided documents – is submitted to the accreditation commission of the AHPGS.

IV. The AHPGS accreditation decision

The accreditation commission of the AHPGS examines the documentation made available in the process of application, namely the University's self-evaluation report, its annexes, the Assessment Report, as well as the University's response opinion. These documents lay basis for the decision of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS regarding the accreditation of the study program.

2 Information about the University

Dimitrie Cantemir University of Targu Mures, was founded in 1991 as the first private University in Transylvania. It functions as a private University accredited by Law No. 136/2005 published in the Official Gazette No. 434 / 23.05.2005 part I.

The number of students in each faculty is reported in the following table:

Faculty	Number of students
1. Law	229
2. Economic Sciences	
Finances and Banks	43
Economy of Trade, Tourism, and Services	65
3. Psychology	240
4. Geography	60

Dimitrie Cantemir University of Targu Mures conducts scientific research through its Faculties and Research Centre, addressing fundamental and applied research topics based on demand. The institution emphasizes a balance between fundamental and applied research and encourages a multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary approach. The details of the University's research activities are outlined in the Regulation on the organization, operation, and financing of the Scientific Research Centre. Over the past three years, their research efforts have yielded publications such as books, courses, articles, PhD theses, and graduation theses. The University also actively involves Bachelor and Master students in organizing annual national and international scientific events (SER 3.1.1).

Basic data of the faculty

The Faculty of Geography and History, initially founded in 1992 within the Târgu Mures Branch of the "Dimitrie Cantemir" Ecological University of Iași, obtained provisional authorization in 1996 for double specializations in geography and history. In response to growth in students and faculty, a new specialization in

Tourism Geography was introduced in 2004. The faculty, initially part of the Faculty of History and Geography, transitioned to the Faculty of Geography in 2009 within Dimitrie Cantemir University of Târgu Mures.

3 Overview

3.1 Procedure-related documents

The Self-Evaluation Report for accreditation (without the awarding of the official seal of the Accreditation Council of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programs in Germany) of the above-mentioned study program (hereinafter the SER) of the Dimitrie Cantemir University of Targu Mures (hereinafter the University) was submitted to the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science (AHPGS) in electronic format on September 27, 2023. The contract between the University and the AHPGS was signed on October 15, 2022.

The application documentation submitted by the University follows the outline recommended by the AHPGS. Along with the application request towards accreditation of the Master study program "Territorial Planning and GIS", the following additional documents can be found in the application package (the documents submitted by the University are numbered in the following order for easier referencing):

Specific documents for the study program "Territorial Planning and GIS":

Annex	Description
Annex 01	Curriculum
Annex 02	Modules
Annex 03	CVs
Annex 04	Teaching Agreement
Annex 05	Declaration

Alongside the study-program-specific documents, the following documents pertain to all study program submitted for external evaluation:

Annex A	Practice Regulations
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Annex B	Student Rights
Annex C	International Relations Regulations
Annex D	Erasmus Recognition
Annex E	Student Activity Regulations
Annex F	Didactic Workload Regulations
Annex G	Teachers Selection and Promotion
Annex H	Tutoring and Mentoring Regulations
Annex I	Regulation for students with disabilities and chronic diseases
Annex J	Students Evaluation Regulations
Annex K	Credit Allocation Regulations
Annex L	Organization and Functioning Continuous Professional Training and Operational Programs Department
Annex M	Undergraduate and Dissertation Exam Organization
Annex N	Teaching Staff Evaluation
Annex O	Admission Procedures
Annex P	Organization and Functioning of Teaching Staff Training Department
Annex Q	Functioning of Quality Management Commission
Annex R	Code of Ethics
Annex S	University Charter
Annex T	Organisation and Functioning of Duicu Serafim Library
Annex U	Teaching Personnel Selection and Promotion Standards
Annex V	Organization and Functioning of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Professional Guidance Center
Annex W	Quality Manual
Annex X	Student Activities Regulations 2
Annex Y	Admission to University Cycles Regulations
Annex Z	Organigram

Annex AA	Overview Romanian Higher Education System
Annex BB	Strategic Plan 22-27

The application as well as the additional documents build the basis for the present Assessment Report. The layout bears no significance, as it solely reflects the agreed standard between the AHPGS and the University.

3.2 Structural data of the study program

University	Dimitrie Cantemir University of Târgu Mures
Faculty/Department	Faculty of Geography
Title of the study program	Territorial planning and GIS
Degree awarded	Master of Geography
Form of studies	Full-time, 2 years
Organizational structure	4 Semesters of 14 weeks each Classes take place Monday through Friday, 16-20.
Language of Studies	Romanian
Period of education	2 years, 4 semesters of 14 weeks each
Credit Points (CP) according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)	120 ECTS
Hours/CP	25 Hours/CP
Workload	Total: 3,000 hours Lecture Hours: 946 hours Individual Work: 1,537 hours Other activities: 409 hours Practice: 108 hours
CP for the final paper	10 ECTS for the final thesis
Launch date of the study program	Fall semester
First accreditation	n/a
Time of admission	fall

Number of available places on the program	50 available places
Number of enrolled students by now	
Tuition fees	4200 Lei

Chart 1: Structural data of the study program

4 Expert Report

The site visit was carried out on January 30-31, 2024, according to the previously agreed schedule. Representatives from the head office of AHPGS accompanied the expert group.

The expert group met on January 29, 2024, for preliminary talks prior to the site visit. They discussed the submitted application documents and the results of the written evaluation as well as questions that had been raised prior. Furthermore, they prepared the plan of the site visit at the University.

During the site visit, experts conducted discussions with the University management, representatives of the Faculty of Geography, the chair, vice chair and the teaching staff of the program "Territorial planning and GIS" as well as with students currently studying in the program. Furthermore, they inspected the learning premises, such as lecture halls, seminar classrooms, the library, and computer classrooms. Moreover, the experts had the opportunity to examine the equipment and the capacity of the laboratories.

In the course of the site visit, the University submitted the following additional documents at the request of the experts:

- Erasmus mobilities for students 2017-2023

The expert report is structured in compliance with 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).

The study program will be described and analyzed in a comprehensive manner below. 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 and Faculty of Geography serve as the foundation for the statements made in the Assessment Report.

4.1 Program aims and their implementation

The study program focuses on specific qualification objectives. These objectives cover professional and interdisciplinary aspects and particularly refer to the domain of academic or artistic competences, competences necessary for a qualified employment, skills of social commitment and personal development.

Summary

This Master's program, hosted by the Faculty of Geography, adheres to Romanian academic regulations, DCU's University Charter, and the guidelines outlined in the Quality System documents. It spans a duration of two years on a full-time basis, conducted in the Romanian language. Individuals with a bachelor's degree seeking specialization in this field are eligible to enroll. Additionally, graduates from diverse fields can pursue professional Master's programs in Geography.

In recent years, the field of territorial planning and GIS has become increasingly important in the context of sustainable development and the efficient use of territorial resources. The general objective of this program is to train specialists capable of managing, analyzing and planning territorial development using GIS technologies. This objective can be approached from several perspectives, but in general, it should be considered the following:

- Developing skills in the use of GIS technology (to collect, analyze and visualize geospatial data, to create and analyze maps, as well as managing spatial databases).
- Understanding spatial planning concepts and theories (knowledge of urban and rural development processes, natural resource management, regional development and environmental impact assessment).

- The ability to plan territorial development (to develop the skills of territorial planning and to manage the sustainable development of the territory, knowledge of the development process of public plans and policies, as well as the debates surrounding territorial development and their incorporation into the decision-making process).
- Understanding the relationship between GIS and spatial planning (how spatial data can be used to assess the impact of spatial development, as well as how GIS can be used to support the spatial planning process).

Labor market

Graduates of the Master's program in spatial planning and GIS have various career paths, such as urban and regional planners involved in public or private sector development, GIS specialists utilizing geospatial data for environmental and business solutions, real estate developers identifying investment opportunities, independent consultants in spatial planning and GIS, and researchers contributing to knowledge and innovative solutions. The diverse career options align with the growing demand for these skills in both public and private sectors. Specific job titles, according to the COR (Romanian Occupation Code), include Specialist in Geographic Information Systems, Town Planner, Geographer, Specialist Geographer in Territorial Planning, Geography Research Assistant, and Cartographer (SER 1.4.1).

There is a growing demand for GIS specialists in Romania, evident in both public and private sectors. Notably, the National Agency for Cadastre and Real Estate Advertising highlights the increased need for GIS expertise in cadastre and valuation. Additionally, there is a heightened demand for territorial planning specialists, particularly in the public sector, as indicated by studies conducted by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration. These studies emphasize the shortage of qualified human resources in the field, posing a significant challenge for institutions involved in territorial planning and urban development in Romania (SER 1.4.2).

Judgement

From the experts' point of view, the Master study program "Territorial Planning and GIS" focuses on specific qualification objectives. These objectives cover professional and interdisciplinary aspects and particularly refer to the domain of academic competences, competences necessary for a qualified employment, skills of social commitment and personal development.

The experts ask whether the Master's study program is used as a follow-up to the University's own Bachelor's study programs. The University reports that both its own students are interested in the Master program and also students that graduated at other Universities are applying to the program.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

4.2 Structure of the study program

The study program aims to provide students with specialized and interdisciplinary knowledge as well as professional, methodological and general competences. The study program has a modular structure that is closely linked to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)² and a course-related examination system. Descriptions of the modules contain all necessary information, as required in the ECTS User's Guide (particularly with regard to the details about learning content and outcomes, methods of learning, prerequisites for the allocation of ECTS credits, workload).

The current state of research in the field is reflected in the curriculum of the study program.

The combination and succession of the modules of the study program are consistent with the specified qualification objectives (described earlier).

² http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/ects-guide_en.pdf

It is assured that students receive the support and guidance they need for the organization and accomplishment of assignments and the learning process in general.

The arrangement of internships in the study program allows acquisition of ECTS credits. Provided that the program offers exchange mobility gaps, they will be integrated into students' curriculum.

Study programs with special profile requirements (e.g. dual, part-time, occupational or distance learning study programs) comply with particular aspects that are considered as appropriate and proportionate. These particular aspects are continuously observed in the study program.

Summary

The program comprises 20 modules, all of which are obligatory. There are five modules in total provided for each semester. All modules have to be completed within one semester. Practical experience is allocated in semester four.

The list of modules offered:

Nr.	Title	Sem.	CP
Semester 1			
01.	Introduction to urbanism and urban design	1	6
02.	Planning and landscaping	1	6
03.	Geostatistics	1	6
04.	GIS analysis methods and techniques	1	6
05.	Evaluation of geomorphological risks	1	6
	Total		30
Semester 2			
06.	Mountain space – potential, organization, exploitation	2	6
07.	GIS and Remote Sensing	2	6

08.	Urban and rural analysis	2	6
09.	Elements of urban hydrology	2	6
10.	Geomatics applied in cadastre	2	6
	Total		30
	Semester 3		
11.	The dynamics of geographical landscapes	3	6
12.	GIS applied in the management of forests and protected areas	3	6
13.	Economy and regional development policies	3	6
14.	Legislation in urban planning and territorial development	3	6
15.	Management of land use	3	6
	Total		30
	Semester 4		
16.	Hydroclimatic risk assessment	4	7
17.	Ethics and academic integrity	4	7
18.	Scientific research	4	7
19.	Specialty practice	4	3
20.	Practice for the preparation of the dissertation*	4	6
	Sustaining the dissertation thesis	4	10
	Total		30 + 10
	Total:	4	120 + 10

Table 2: Module Oversight

The module description/catalog covers the following aspects: the goals of the module, the skills each module aims to provide, the basic topics, time allotment of lecture, seminar and applicative activities, student assessment system and minimal bibliography (SER 1.3.4).

Didactic concepts and multimedia

The information about didactic concepts and methods of teaching is present in the text. The Geography Faculty utilizes student-centered teaching methods with a focus on increasing student training. The teaching strategy involves implementing new methods and procedures, utilizing active-participative methods, employing technical and internet support, utilizing fully equipped laboratories, and incorporating computer-linked projection systems and audio-visual equipment (SER 1.2.4).

The didactic methodology is based on a combination of lectures, interactive group discussions, and creative critical analysis, supported by current didactic technologies, particularly information technology (IT). The workload for each module, including contact/practical/self-study hours, and the corresponding Credit Points (CP), is outlined in the module descriptions. These descriptions also cover qualification objectives, competences, learning outcomes, content, teaching and learning activities, credit award requirements, module examination details, usability, and recommended bibliography. Evaluation of curricula and syllabi is conducted by both students and teaching staff through questionnaires at the end of the semester, aiding in continuous improvement. The teaching approach aims to encourage independent and critical thinking among students, fostering their ability to operate in a dynamic environment. The faculty provides counseling services, and students can directly contact professors through consultation programs, ensuring access to support services and consultations (SER 1.2.4).

Students and teachers have access to the Teams platform. The platform allows professors to create courses, share materials, conduct assessments, and engage students through various features. Microsoft Teams offers a range of collaborative tools, including audio/video interaction, chat, team creation, calendar scheduling, forms for quizzes, file-sharing, screen sharing, and more. According to ARACIS regulations, the Faculty of Geography limits online teaching to a maximum of 35% for courses and 25% for practical activities (SER 1.2.5).

Practical relevance

The practical training for Master students in geography faculties is crucial, overseen by one or more teaching staff members designated by the Faculty's Council. The supervisory teacher or internship responsible is responsible for planning, organizing, and supervising the internship (SER 1.2.6).

The practical training for this Master program is conducted in various companies and institutions specializing in territorial planning and GIS. The supervisory teacher, in collaboration with the tutor appointed by the internship partner, determines internship themes aligned with the partner's field of activity and characteristics. These themes are included in the Internship Syllabus attached to the Framework Convention of Practical Training (SER 1.2.6).

The internship partner, as per the Framework Convention for the conduct of the internship, ensures compliance with training conditions and the acquisition of professional proficiencies by the student throughout the internship period. The quality assurance includes the guidance of one or more tutors and adherence to the conditions planned for the internship period. The internships contribute to Master students earning 3 credit points (SER 1.2.6).

International aspects of the curriculum

The program's curriculum resembles those of other programs in planning and GIS from Romanian and European Universities such as UCD Dublin, University of Leeds, University of Sheffield (SER 1.2.8).

Internationality of the study program

The Geography Faculty is partnered with a number of Universities in the Erasmus Programme funded by the European Commission, which allow our students to benefit from scholarships of study in international Universities.

Study Abroad Options:

1. Cag University (Turkey)
2. Dicle University (Turkey)
3. Firat University (Turkey)

4. Adnan Menderes University (Turkey)
5. Aydin University (Turkey)
6. Cankiri Karatekin University (Turkey)
7. Aksaray University (Turkey)
8. Universite de Lorraine (France)
9. Universitat de Barcelona (Spain)
10. Universita per Strannieri "Dante Aligheri" (Italy)
11. Universitat zu Koln (Germany)

Integration of the research into the course of study

The Faculty of Geography is actively engaged in research activities, with visible national and international recognition. The teaching staff has a long-standing involvement in numerous international research, development, and innovation projects. The faculty organizes regular scientific events such as symposiums, conferences, and sessions for students. Notably, an annual scientific symposium, featuring a dedicated section to tourism geography and interdisciplinary research, serves as a platform for sharing research findings. The faculty conducts 1-2 workshops annually, addressing topical subjects, with contributions from notable experts from both academic and business environments. Some recent workshops covered themes like the Practical Application of GIS, Innovative Research Methods, and Circular Economy, featuring contributions from distinguished experts. These events contribute to the intellectual and professional growth of students and faculty members alike (SER 1.2.7).

Judgement

The study program "Territorial Planning and GIS" is affiliated with the Faculty of Geography. The study program's mission, general and specific learning objectives, curriculum and outcome competences were presented in the written documentation and on site.

The University explains that both the faculty and the University as a whole have focused on expanding research in recent years. Every four years the University prepares overarching topics and the faculty creates a research plan on faculty-

level. New research projects were started and students were involved in a number of these projects. The experts conclude that the expansion of research is clearly visible and validation criteria for research activities are provided. Nevertheless, the research plan is rather based on individual research goals of the teaching staff and less on a common goal or strategy of the faculty as a whole. In terms of further development opportunities, the experts recommend developing an overall research strategy with goals and means of the faculty or institution and strategic considerations about a coherent research policy and research topics based on long-term considerations.

The general objective of this program is to train specialists capable of managing, analyzing and planning territorial development using GIS technologies. The experts agree with the above-mentioned qualification objectives. Moreover, the study program "Territorial Planning and GIS" 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 program is 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.

The experts further inquire about blended learning and online teaching. According to the University, online teaching is limited to 25 % of total teaching. The online teaching mainly takes place in the winter months. Students and teaching staff welcome this limitation and appreciate face-to-face teaching.

The Master study program "Territorial Planning and GIS" has a course-based structure and a course-related examination system. Descriptions of the courses are embedded within the module descriptions. The module description/catalog covers the following aspects: goals of the module, skills each module aims to provide, the basic topics, time allotment of lecture, seminar and applicative activities, student assessment system and minimal bibliography.

The combination and succession of the courses of the study program are consistent with the specified qualification objectives (described earlier). It is assured that students receive the support and guidance they need for the organization and accomplishment of assignments and the learning process in general.

The arrangement of internships in the study program allows the acquisition of credits. During the talks, the experts inquire about the practical training in the curriculum. In the fourth semester the practical training component (3 CP) is conducted in various companies and institutions specializing in territorial planning and GIS. The supervisory teacher, in collaboration with the tutor appointed by the internship partner, determines internship themes aligned with the partner's field of activity and characteristics. These themes are included in the Internship Syllabus attached to the Framework Convention of Practical Training. The experts take note of the cooperation agreements and conclude that the University carefully selects its cooperative partners. It became sufficiently clear that the University strives to offer the same quality of practical training for all students at various cooperation partners.

The expert group points out that also research elements are integrated in some modules, especially in the module "Scientific Research". Hence, students develop a basic understanding of research. They also develop the ability to plan and conduct a fundamental or applied research in their area of expertise. The experts recommend using synergies between the study programs wherever possible, e.g. when communicating research methods. The experts further inquire about the Master thesis. According to the University, students are provided with a two week period for preparing the thesis. The experts consider the period to be too short for a thesis and recommend that more time be made available here.

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 number of outgoing students increased during the last years. 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.

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.

The experts acknowledge the very detailed course files with its contents and aims, which allows a high level of transparency. In the experts' opinion, the structure of the curriculum seems to make the workload manageable.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

4.3 Admission and Feasibility

The admission requirements and, if applied, student selection procedures are specified. They correspond to the standards of the study program.

Feasibility of the study program is guaranteed. The amount of student workload is appropriate.

Student support services, as well as specialized and general consultations, are provided by the University in a sufficient and appropriate manner.

As a whole, the organization of the education process ensures the successful implementation of the study program.

Summary

For admission to the Master's studies cycle, candidates should hold a Bachelor's degree from undergraduate studies organized in accordance with specific laws. This includes graduates with a Bachelor's degree or equivalent from long-term undergraduate studies governed by the Law of National Education. Additionally,

graduates from studies undertaken abroad and recognized by the specialty directorate of the MNE are eligible. Citizens of EU Member States, countries in the European Economic Area, and the Swiss Confederation can apply under the same conditions as Romanian citizens. Foreign citizens seeking admission to programs with Romanian language instruction must provide a certificate of linguistic competence. The admission process for Master's studies is conducted for accredited programs, following specific procedures outlined in Annex O and Annex Y for the July/September sessions. Candidates can be admitted to a maximum of two study programs simultaneously.

Judgement

The admission policies and procedures along with the requirements are properly documented and made publicly available. Admission requirements are centralized within the University. The experts determine the admission procedures and requirements to be appropriate, as they correspond to the standards of the study program.

The experts discuss the admission requirements with the University. A Bachelor's degree in any subject area is accepted for admission to the Master study program. According to the University, this is common in Romania and applications from students outside their field of basic education are rare.

Asking the students on site about their workload, they consider the workload, the amount, and the examination cycle as appropriate. The type as well as the time of the different examinations is defined and communicated to the students transparently and at the beginning of the course.

The experts confirm that the University takes good measures to guarantee the feasibility of the study programs despite the high workload. The organization of the education process ensures the successful implementation of the study program.

The experts appreciate the fact that students with disabilities or chronic illness are offered compensatory measures when writing exams, such as extra time or writing the exam in another room.

On site, it became obvious that the teaching staff follows an “open-door-policy”. The availability and support by the teaching staff is very good, according to the students. Additionally, every batch of students has their own tutor and a representative in the Senate for overarching topics.

Furthermore, there is a financial aid system for students. Scholarships are offered for financially disadvantaged students.

Decision

From the experts’ point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

4.4 Examination system and transparency

Examinations serve to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved. These examinations are focused on students’ knowledge and competences. The requirements to students’ performance in examinations are regulated and published. The frequency of examinations, as well as their organization, is appropriate.

The University guarantees that students with disabilities or chronic illnesses receive compensation with regard to time limits and formal requirements of the study process, as well as all final and course-related performance records.

Information concerning the study program, process of education, admission requirements and the compensation regulations for students with disabilities are documented and published.

Summary

The Master's examinations aim to assess the achievement of qualification objectives, focusing on students' knowledge and competencies. The exam system is well-organized to ensure an appropriate balance between study and rest. Evaluation criteria are regulated and published, adhering to institutional regulations

(Annex M). Exams are conducted on campus with professors and specialists present, and results are documented in accordance with existing legislation, using approved forms such as catalogs and registers. Each curriculum activity, including specialized practice and the dissertation's thesis, concludes with a final evaluation, scored from 1 to 10, with a minimum passing grade of 5 (SER 1.2.3), except the grade for sustaining the dissertation thesis (minimum grade is 6) and with an additional 10 ECTS for the master dissertation's thesis.

	Evaluation type		Total
	Exam	Colloquy	
1st Semester	5	0	5
2nd Semester	5	0	5
3rd Semester	5	0	5
4th Semester	2	3	5
TOTAL	17	3	20

The exams will be scheduled at the end of each semester, in the exam session.

Those who failed the exam or were absent will have the opportunity to be re-examined in the fall session, except for the final years, when the overdue exam session is immediately after the summer session (SER 1.2.3).

The allocation of credits to a module is determined by the estimated workload needed to meet educational outcomes. Contact hours alone do not solely determine credit allocation; they constitute just a portion of the overall student activity, along with practical and self-study hours. The teaching staff actively participates in credit allocation, which is integral to both internal and external quality assurance (SER 1.2.3).

The Faculty of Geography prioritizes and supports the rights of students with physical disabilities, ensuring access to University spaces, particularly on the ground floor due to the absence of elevators. Efforts are ongoing to create inclusive spaces for academic, social, and cultural activities. The University maintains a commitment to fair and equitable treatment for all students, prohibiting discrimination and exploitation. The institution enforces measures against

discrimination, providing equal opportunities for education and employment while combating corruption and favoritism. Admission criteria are based on merit, disregarding factors like age, sex, ethnicity, religion, race, political affiliation, or chronic diseases (SER 1.2.3).

The ECT evaluation system complies with the current guidelines of the ECTS Users' Guide which was regulated in Annex K (Credit Allocation Regulation).

The recognition of credits transferred from other Universities (domestic and abroad) is regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention in Annex C (International Relation Regulation).

Regulations, in terms of timeline and formal guidelines for studies, concerning the compensations for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses you will find in Annex I.

Judgement

The University uses a continuous assessment process to ensure the quality of education for its students. The study program has a course-related examination system. Its implementation, including the grading system, course load regulations, repetition of courses and exams is regulated and transparent for the students.

From the experts' point of view, the examination serves to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved. These examinations are focused on students' knowledge and competences. The information on examination methods and of the examination schedule are transparent at the beginning of each term. The frequency of examinations, as well as their organizations, is appropriate.

Thus, the experts conclude that the examinations, serve to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved or not and are focused on students' knowledge.

The University guarantees that students with disabilities or chronic illnesses receive compensation regarding time limits, attendance and formal requirements of the study process as well as all final and course-related performance records.

The University ensures that information about its activities, particularly the programs it offers, is easily accessible to prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public. The published information includes detailed insights into the selection criteria for programs, intended learning outcomes, qualifications awarded, and the procedures employed for teaching, learning, and assessment. Furthermore, pass rates and available learning opportunities to students as well as graduate employment information are shared.

Upon graduation, students are awarded a Bachelor graduation diploma, as well as a Diploma Supplement, composed in both Romanian and English.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

4.5 Teaching staff and material equipment

Professionalism and a sufficient number of human resources assure the successful implementation of the study program. Qualifications of the teaching personnel include teaching and research abilities correspond to the requirements of the study program. Recruitment and appointment of teaching positions are appropriate. Interdisciplinary links to other study programs are taken into consideration.

Measures for the professional and personal development of the teaching personnel are provided.

Qualitative and quantitative sufficiency of the equipment and space resources assures the successful implementation of the study program.

Summary

The teaching staff at the Faculty of Geography consists of eight full-time members, including one university professor, three associate professors, and four university

lecturers. Each staff member holds a Ph.D. in their respective field. Additionally, an associate professor from the Law Faculty will contribute to teaching one of the modules for the Master's program. A practitioner specialist will also instruct Master's students, and practice tutors will collaborate for the specialty practice (SER 2.1.1).

The maximum number of students in a class is 25.

The system and criteria for selecting teaching staff encompass various factors, including academic publications and research engagement. Candidates are evaluated based on articles published in ISI-rated magazines, with attention to their relative influence score and databases. Additionally, books, book chapters, and works in conference volumes contribute to the assessment. The candidate's involvement as an editor in both foreign and domestic magazines, especially ISI-rated ones, is considered. Research coordination, participation in academic roles abroad, keynote speaking at conferences, and receiving grants or scholarships are key elements. Furthermore, initiating academic study programs and holding memberships in national committees and councils are integral to the selection process, reflecting a comprehensive approach to academic excellence. Detailed information can be found in Annex U.

Premises and Library

All faculties, including the Faculty of Geography, utilize the shared resources provided by the University. There are a total of 12 classrooms, each accommodating 60 to 120 students, and 17 seminar rooms with 30 seats, each equipped with projectors and computers for teaching activities. Additionally, there are four smaller computer rooms, capable of hosting 12-13 students each, and a larger computer room with a capacity for 23 students (SER 2.3.1).

Specifically for the Geography of Tourism specialization within the Faculty of Geography, five laboratories and rooms are allocated with equipment tailored to this field:

- Laboratory of Physical Geography (covering Climatology, Hydrology, Geomorphology)
- Cartography and GIS Laboratory
- Room of Human Geography
- Room of Tourism Geography
- Audio-visual laboratory featuring works, films, CDs, and projectors

In addition to these, all faculties, including the Faculty of Geography, share common resources, consisting of four computer rooms accommodating 12-13 students with one computer per student, as well as a room housing 13 computers grouped into four departments. These rooms are equipped with a computer network for teaching activities, featuring high-performance computers. Furthermore, all course rooms and seminar rooms are outfitted with projectors, whiteboards, and meet established performance criteria (SER 2.3.1).

The University's library, accessible to students and staff, operates daily, including Saturdays during examination sessions. It houses traditional and electronic media, including CDs, DVDs, and access to databases like JSTOR and EBSCO. The reading room has 200 seats, and the total library fund for all faculties is approximately 34,000 volumes. The Faculty of Geography contributes 9866 volumes to the library (SER 2.3.1).

Judgement

New teaching staff is thoroughly briefed about the program and their teaching responsibilities before they start teaching. Overall, the teaching and academic staff at the Dimitrie Cantemir University of Targu Mures shows a very high level of commitment and potential for the execution as well as further development of the study program they are responsible for. The experts conclude that there is a strong corporate identity and positive group dynamics among the University and the faculty administration. A high number of teachers already studied at the University, before starting to teach, and are therefore closely connected to the institution.

The experts find the number of human resources allocated to the program to be sufficient to carry out its functions. The teaching staff is well qualified and in possession of academic and technical credentials and experience adequate to their tasks.

The University informs its employees about opportunities for personal and professional development transparently and actively encourages their participation in workshops, training courses and conferences intended to improve their abilities, which is confirmed during the talks with the staff on site. On site, the teaching staff and the experts discuss the lack of time for research due to teaching responsibilities. According to the University, the teaching hours are not reduced to participate in research. The experts recommend finding a regulation for this issue.

In discussions with students and teaching staff, it became clear that an elevator is necessary to support students with disabilities and chronic illnesses and to guarantee the accessibility for students and staff. The experts highly recommend equipping the building with an elevator.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

4.6 Quality assurance

The University has developed and documented a concept of quality assurance in education process, teaching and research, which serves as the basis for the quality-oriented development and implementation of the study program.

The results of the internal quality assurance management are applied for the continuous development of the study program. In doing so, the University takes into close consideration the quality evaluation results as well as the analyses of students' workload, their academic accomplishments and feedback from graduates.

Summary

The University has established a documented Quality Assurance System to ensure that educational and related services are provided in compliance with established quality assurance objectives. The Quality Manual contains policies, strategies, and elements of the Quality Assurance System that satisfy the requirements established through specific objectives. The Procedures Manual, associated with the Quality Manual, describes in detail the processes and responsibilities assigned to the members of the organization. The University's quality assurance measures are integrated into the overarching quality assurance measures of the entire University, and the University is committed to maintaining and continuously improving academic, research, and related standards.

The Quality Manual outlines the University's quality policy, which includes setting and achieving academic standards, ensuring qualified and competent academic staff, ensuring a high degree of filling in of teaching positions, and defining the orientation, scope, and quality of scientific research. The University's quality assurance concept is supported by various organizational and decision-making structures, including the Quality Assurance Committee, the Quality Assurance Department, and the Internal Quality Assurance System (SER 1.6.1).

Furthermore, the University places a strong emphasis on measuring and monitoring educational and related processes to ensure compliance with specified requirements, their Quality Management System (QMS), planned goals, and outcomes. The Quality Management Representative (QMR) continually assesses client satisfaction, which includes students and other key stakeholders, to obtain direct feedback on how well the organization meets their needs. This feedback is gathered through various means such as student surveys, academic staff performance evaluations, and assessments of educational processes. The process of measuring client satisfaction is documented in internal procedures like "Student Satisfaction Assessment" and "Effective Resolution of Students' Suggestions and Requirements". Any necessary corrective or preventive actions are taken as per the requirements. The data from this measurement process are analyzed during

QMS analysis meetings. The results of monitoring and verification confirm the QMS's ability to meet quality objectives and defined requirements. If results fall short of requirements, corrective or preventive actions are taken. Additionally, the University follows specific procedures for student assessment, staff performance appraisal, graduation assessments, and testing in line with curriculum requirements. Re-examination sessions and procedures are provided for students who do not meet module completion deadlines, and students can suspend programs and resume them as per ECTS guidelines and specific study documents (SER 1.6.2).

The University constantly analyzes students' satisfaction, supported by student surveys, staff appraisals, and assessments of educational and related processes, implementing corrective and preventive measures as needed. Responses from former graduates can be found in SER 1.6 (quality assurance section).

The University monitors and measures the characteristics of the teaching process to ensure educational services meet internal procedures' requirements. Any nonconformities are recorded, and corrective actions are taken. "Dimitrie Cantemir" University of Targu Mures is also dedicated to continuous improvement, considering both internal and external proposals. Corrective actions are implemented to prevent the recurrence of nonconformities. The Quality Management Commission registers and monitors these actions, which may lead to procedure modifications when necessary. All staff members, based on their qualifications and competencies, participate in these corrective actions. The Quality Management Commission oversees the registration and monitoring of corrective actions and their outcomes.

In summary, the University maintains a thorough quality management system to ensure client satisfaction, adherence to standards, and continuous improvement in educational processes and services. Corrective actions and regular data analysis are essential elements of this system.

The minimum number of hours per week is 14. The ratio between course hours and applied didactic activities must be 1/1, with a maximum allowed deviation of +50% for applied activities.

According to the regulation, the QMC is responsible for several key tasks, including the development of a Quality Manual and Procedures Manual, monitoring their implementation, preparing an annual quality report for the University, evaluating the quality of educational services, conducting surveys among students and other stakeholders, and maintaining a database related to management and quality assurance. The QMC also identifies areas for improvement based on identified nonconformities and quality standards.

The structure of the QMC includes a Quality Management Representative (QMR), a secretary, and commission members representing teaching staff and students from different faculties. The QMR is nominated by the Chairman of the Board of Directors, and the secretary of the Commission is the University's lawyer.

The regulation specifies that the QMC meets quarterly to discuss and make decisions related to quality management. Decisions are recorded in meeting minutes, and the Commission ensures the execution of these decisions. The QMR represents the Commission in interactions with the Board of Directors and other academic governing bodies.

The regulation emphasizes the QMC's subordination to the Board of Directors and its role in implementing the University's policies, mission, and strategy. The QMR is required to present an annual report of the Commission's activities to the Board of Directors, including the Annual Report of Audit and Evaluation of Institutional Quality (Annex Q).

The Career Counseling and Orientation Center (CCOC) plays a vital role in offering new opportunities to students within the University's educational system through career counseling and orientation activities. Its main objective is to guide students in planning and managing their educational paths optimally, thereby reducing

University dropouts caused by career-related issues, personal reasons, or difficulty adapting to the University environment. Additionally, the center facilitates the connection between students and the job market, helping them understand the real needs and challenges of the labor market and enhancing their employability in their respective fields of study (SER 1.14).

The Center for Career Counseling and Orientation has specific goals, including informing candidates, students, and graduates about the educational opportunities available at the University. It also offers counseling on individual profiles, professional aspirations, interests, motivation, and more. Specialized services related to career choices are provided, fostering responsible and informed decision-making regarding academic and career paths. The center promotes effective communication between instructors and students and supports students through mentoring programs and tutoring, among other initiatives (SER 1.14).

The documents required for admission are annually published on the University's website. Examination criteria related to student performance are established and made available online. Additionally, themes for Bachelor's theses are proposed at least six months before the exam.

Various information such as schedules, announcements, etc., are also posted on the website for students to consult. The University is committed to establishing a distinctive identity within the higher education and Romanian scientific research framework. This involves promoting receptivity to students' concerns and needs while ensuring equal opportunities for all members of the University community.

Enrolled students have access to support services from the Counseling, Psychotherapy, and Professional Guidance Center at Dimitrie Cantemir University of Tîrgu Mureş. Furthermore, tutoring services, which cover student information, counseling, and guidance throughout their academic experience, are available. Each faculty member establishes a consultation schedule, providing an opportunity for interested students to participate. Students also have the option to seek guidance from the IT staff for the management of activities conducted on Microsoft Teams.

Judgement

From the experts' point of view, the University has a well-structured system of quality assurance spread across all of its units. The University has developed and documented a concept of quality assurance in the education process, teaching and research, which serves as the basis for the quality-oriented development and implementation of the study program "Business Financial Management".

On site, the University explains the relevance of the quality assurance system at the University. Feedback from students is highly appreciated and taken into consideration, according to students and the University.

The University consistently monitors and periodically reviews its programs to ensure alignment with established objectives, responsiveness to the evolving needs of students and society, and the facilitation of continuous program improvement. These systematic reviews are integral to the University's commitment to maintaining the relevance of study programs and fostering a supportive and effective learning environment for students. The evaluation process encompasses various aspects, including the regular examination of program content in light of the latest research in the discipline, consideration of changing societal needs, assessment of student workload, progression, and completion rates, evaluation of the effectiveness of procedures for student assessment, collection of feedback on student expectations, needs, and satisfaction regarding the program, and examination of the suitability of the learning environment and support services for the program's objectives.

The University possess a robust data collection system and gathers comprehensive data on its study programs and other activities. The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the institution. Various Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are captured by the institution. A range of information regarding study programs and activities is consistently captured by the institution. Student progression, success rates, and dropout rates are inherent considerations in the institution's analytical processes. With an established feedback mechanism, the University regularly measures student satisfaction with

their programs, the learning resources and the available student support. The University also actively tracks and analyzes the career paths of its graduates. The institution seamlessly integrates the collected information into its existing internal quality assurance system. Mechanisms are in place to ensure that the perspectives of students and staff are considered in decision-making processes.

Regular program reviews and revisions are conducted, actively involving students and other stakeholders in the process. The information collected from these reviews undergoes analysis, and program adaptations are made to ensure the program is up-to-date. Any actions planned or taken as a result of these reviews are communicated to all relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the University ensures the publication of revised program specifications, fostering transparency and keeping stakeholders informed of changes resulting from the systematic review process.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

4.7 Gender equality and equal opportunities

The University's actions on the provision of gender equality and promotion of equal opportunities for students with particular living circumstances are implemented in a transparent manner.

Summary

The University aspires to establish a unique identity within the higher education and Romanian scientific research landscape by prioritizing student well-being, offering equal opportunities to all members of the University community, and evaluating student performance based on educational engagement, final exam results, and active involvement in University life. Furthermore, the institution is committed to ensuring accessibility and tailored support for students with physical disabilities in line with relevant legal provisions. Any adjustments to the regulations are subject to approval by the University Senate, primarily in response to legislative changes or proposals from Faculty Councils (Annex I).

Judgement

During the visit, it became clear that the University has a well-established concept for gender equality. Both, the students and the University report that the concept is being put into practice.

The University demonstrates its commitment to the provision of equal opportunities for all students and shows openness for diversity and social development. Overall, the experts conclude that the University's actions on the provision of gender equality and promotion of equal opportunities for students with particular living circumstances are implemented transparently.

Decision

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

5 Conclusion

The experts appreciate the fact that the University continuously develops new study programs like "Territorial Planning and GIS". The study program is part of the Faculty of Geography.

The examination system is well-regulated and fair, with various tools available to assess student progress. The staff is qualified and there is a good balance between research and teaching. The quality assurance system in place is robust. Evaluation results are used to make changes and shared with students. The institution has non-discriminatory practices in place for admission and promotes gender equality.

Based on the information from written documents and the results of the site visit, the experts concluded that the Master study program "Territorial Planning and GIS" offered at "Dimitrie Cantemir" University of Targu Mures fulfils the above-described criteria. Hence, the experts recommended that the Accreditation Commission of AHPGS make a positive decision regarding the accreditation of the study program.

For the continuous development of the study program, the experts have outlined the following recommendations:

- an overall research strategy including faculty goals and long-term strategic considerations about a coherent research policy and research topics should be developed
- Synergies between the study programs should be used wherever possible, e.g. when communicating research methods.
- the period of writing the thesis should be extended. Sufficient knowledge in research and skills in scientific writing should be taught in the course of study.
- the possibilities of going abroad through short-term stays should be expanded. Shorter periods abroad, for example within the scope of an internship or summer school, could be more attractive and easier to finance for students.
- Creative ways of internationalization, for example internationalization from home or online conferences, to include students in the international scientific community should be sought.

- The buildings should be barrier-free. It became clear that an elevator is necessary to support students with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and to guarantee the accessibility for students and staff.
- Teaching hours should be reduced to participate in research projects

6 Decision of the accreditation commission

Decision of the accreditation commission May 14, 2024

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 January 30-31, 2024, 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 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 Master study program requires the obtainment of 120 credit points according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The regulated study period in the program "Territorial Planning and GIS" is two years (four semesters). The study program comprises a total of 20 modules, out of which all modules are mandatory. The language of instruction is Romanian. The Master study program "Territorial Planning and GIS" is completed with awarding of the academic degree "Master of Geography". Admission takes place every fall semester.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS considers that all Accreditation Criteria are fulfilled and adopts the following decision:

The Master study program "Territorial Planning and GIS" is recommended for accreditation for the duration of five years until September 30, 2029.

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