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Institutional Evaluation Programme

*Performance in Research, Performance in Teaching – Quality, Diversity, and
Innovation in Romanian Universities Project*

University Alexander Ioan Cuza - Iași

EVALUATION REPORT

November 2012

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Project co-financed through European Social Fund by Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013



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Table of contents

1.	Introduction	3
1.1.	The Institutional Evaluation Programme	3
1.2.	<i>University Alexander Ioan Cuza</i> and the national context	4
1.3.	The self- evaluation process	5
1.4.	The evaluation team	7
2.	Governance and institutional decision-making	9
3.	Teaching and learning	11
4.	Research	13
5.	Service to society	15
6.	Quality culture	17
7.	Internationalisation	19
	Conclusion	20

1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the University Alexander Ioan Cuza. The evaluation took place in 2012 in the framework of the project "Performance in Research, Performance in Teaching – Quality, Diversity, and Innovation in Romanian Universities", which aims at strengthening core elements of Romanian universities, such as their autonomy and administrative competences, by improving their quality assurance and management proficiency.

The evaluations are taking place within the context of major reforms in the Romanian higher education system, and specifically in accordance with the provisions of the 2011 Law on Education and the various related normative acts.

While the institutional evaluations are taking place in the context of an overall reform, each university is assessed by an independent IEP team, using the IEP methodology described below.

1.1 The Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. The IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.



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The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a “fitness for (and of) purpose” approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does it know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2. *University Alexander Ioan Cuza and the national context*

University Alexander Ioan Cuza (UIAC) is an old and traditional public university in the region of Moldova with a very strong attachment to its historical position and traditions. The university is strongly committed to the region and nation. There is a good atmosphere and collaborative environment within the institution. The premises, facilities and equipment are well-kept, and there is visible care for existing infrastructure. The university has started to develop a common institutional quality system.

UAIC enjoys a positive image by the outside community. The university holds a leading position within the country in several areas and is making efforts to promote greater internationalisation of its activities. UAIC presents visible research strengths that are recognised nationally and internationally.

Like many other universities, UAIC faces a very challenging environment. The complex context faced by UAIC is due to a multifaceted set of factors. The Romanian system of higher education has undergone, like many of its European counterparts, a period of intense and rapid massification over the last decades. This was caused both by social demand and policies geared towards the improvement of labour force qualifications, national competitiveness and social opportunities. However, in recent years, demographic changes have negatively affected the patterns of demand and UAIC has been facing a very adverse context in this respect. Although this adverse context is not unique in the Romanian context, it is nevertheless certainly significant given its location in one of the poorest regions in the European Union.

To these challenges should be added important systemic constraints felt throughout the Romanian higher education system. The current economic crisis has enhanced severe financial constraints that affect Romanian public universities and reflect the constraints faced in public expenditure. This has led to important financial cuts and to restrictions regarding the recruitment of new staff and the promotion of the existing one.

To these financial limitations should be added a context of important limitations to institutional autonomy. Like the rest of Romanian public higher education institutions, UAIC faces not only very detailed national regulations that hinder its capacity to develop an



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autonomous strategy of development, but also a context of legal instability that undermine the potential to pursue its mission and strategy in a consistent manner.

This challenging context has made it difficult for the university to attract and hold onto the best students and staff. Both the financial and demographic factors create strong competition for attracting the best students, since many of them are tempted to move abroad and apply to non-Romanian universities. The financial and regulatory obstacles have created important obstacles in attracting and keeping the best academic staff, especially at junior level, since they tend to be more mobile and it is difficult for the university to compete with the financial and institutional capacity of strong foreign institutions.

The challenges faced by European universities are not restricted to a national level, but are increasingly taking on a European and international dimension. In fact, one of the major driving forces for recent changes in universities has been the process of reform of the European Higher Education Area, to which is central the Bologna Process. Among the major priorities of the Bologna Process mention ought to be made of the structural changes associated with the introduction of the three cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate), the strengthening of quality assurance mechanisms, and the recognition of qualifications and periods of study across Europe. The development of this Process has led to intense discussions and policy changes in many European countries and Romania is no exception.

Current trends require universities to be more responsive and capable of reflecting on their mission and refining their major priorities. However, universities often face significant constraints regarding their capacity to live up to those challenges. On the one hand, for many European universities this has only recently become a major issue of concern and they are still adapting to those changing times. On the other hand, many European universities also have a limited degree of institutional autonomy, though this has improved in recent decades.

Despite the challenging context and its more peripheral location, UAIC has been developing a vision of both a European and national reference university and it has worked to fulfil that objective. We hope that the following report may help the university to better fulfil its mission and priorities.

1.3. The self-evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a team composed of the following members of the university: Vice-rector Rev., Ph.D. Professor Gheorghe POPA; Vice-rector Ph.D. Professor Dumitru LUCA; Vice-rector Ph.D. Professor Ovidiu Gabriel IANCU; Vice-rector Ph.D. Professor Cătălin TĂNASE; Vice-rector Ph.D. Professor Carmen CREȚU; Vice-rector Ph.D. Professor Gheorghe IACOB; Deputy General Director, Ec. Ph.D. Cornelia-Mirela MEDELEANU;



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Financial Accounting Director, Ec. Liliana IFTIMIA; Quality Assurance Officer, Alexandra VOSNIUC; and student Magda CATARGIU.

The evaluation team is grateful for the significant effort undertaken by these persons to develop the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), which has been an important first step in building a self-evaluation culture. The team believes that the preparation of the SER helped UAIC to develop a better degree of self-knowledge through discussion of the current situation and collection of relevant data.

The composition of the Self-Evaluation Team (SET) was very close to the leadership of the university. This had the advantage of including members who are very knowledgeable about each specific aspect of the UAIC's activities. The self-evaluation process (SEP) has indicated that the university has very detailed knowledge about itself, benefitting from previous experience with quality assessment at national and international levels. The SEP has been developed in good cooperation with faculties, but with limited engagement of students, which is a frequent difficulty observed in many institutions. This should require additional attention in the future of the university's quality assessment activities.

However, the close overlap of the composition of the SET and the leadership of the UAIC hindered the capacity to have a more distanced appreciation of the current situation of the university, its positioning, and its main objectives of development. Hence, the team considers that the SEP was an important first step in building a self-evaluation culture at the UAIC, but that this should be further developed through more critical reflection about the institution and the mobilisation of the whole university along that process.

The SER provided extensive information about the UAIC, especially through the numerous and detailed appendices. The review team considered it very detailed, comprehensive, and helpful. Nevertheless, the team also regarded it as somewhat descriptive and not as analytical as it could have been. The team thinks that this may reflect the approach taken by the Self Evaluation Team (SET), by allocating specific topics to specific members of the SET in order to take advantage of their specific expertise. Although this approach has obvious practical advantages, it should also be complemented by significant interaction and discussion among the members of the SET. The SER suggests that the SEP does not seem to have stimulated a sufficient degree of interaction among the members of the SET and between the SET and the university as a whole.

The team feels that the SEP was closer to a piecemeal reflection than a truly integrated analysis of the university. This is illustrated by the long list of strengths and weaknesses which suggests a somewhat unclear definition of priorities. However, the team believes that the SEP has helped the UAIC to improve its degree of self-knowledge through discussion of its current strategy and a reflection on future developments.



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1.5. The evaluation team

The self-evaluation report of the University Alexander Ioan Cuza, together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team in May 2012. The visits of the team to Iași took place from 13 to 15 June 2012 and from 30 September to 3 October 2012, respectively. In between visits the university provided the team with some additional documentation.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Fuada Stankovic, former Rector, University of Novi Sad, Serbia, as Team Chair
- Hanne Leth Andersen, Pro Rector, University of Roskilde, Denmark
- Moritz Maikämper, European Students' Union and Brandenburg University of Technology, Germany
- Pedro Teixeira, Professor of Economics, University of Porto and Director of CIPES – Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, Portugal, as Team Coordinator

Professor Richard Lewis was initially appointed to be part of the team but unfortunately had to cancel his participation due to health problems. The fact that this situation emerged just before the first visit prevented his replacement.

During the two visits, the review team had the opportunity to discuss the situation of the UAIC with many of its actors and with the main stakeholders:

- With the leadership of the UAIC;
- With members of the academic and the administrative staff;
- With students;
- With representatives of public authorities and other external stakeholders.

The discussions with the members of UAIC have greatly helped the team to understand better some aspects of the university's internal organisation, its history and its dynamics. The participation of all those involved in the evaluation was very positive. The current report benefitted greatly from the engagement of the various internal and external stakeholders of the university in those meetings.

The team wants to express its gratitude to all participants of the interviews for the openness and willingness to discuss all issues concerning the university during the meetings. Special thanks go to Ms. Alexandra Vosniuc who acted as liaison person between the UAIC and the review team, and who was responsible for the efficient organisation of all the meetings and discussions. Finally, the review team would like to express its sincere thanks to the Rector



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Prof. Vasile Isan and to the UAIC for the hospitality and providing an efficient and welcoming context within which the evaluation process was able to take place.



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2. Governance and institutional decision-making

The university shows a very strong attachment to its historical position and traditions and this is reflected in its mission statement. However, like in many other cases, the current mission statement is very generic and does not reflect a clear vision. The multiple and complex challenges that universities face nowadays require them to have a clear perception of their purpose, of the constituencies they are trying to serve and how they are trying to serve them. This requires a much more intense process of discussion and determination of the institutional mission from universities.

The team considers that the definition of a clear institutional mission is important and that it should be a clear starting point for the definition of institutional policies and strategies. The team believes that UAIC could benefit from developing a clearer and more focused mission statement that reflected the university's institutional positioning regarding regional needs and the Romanian national higher education system. Following previous remarks on the self-evaluation process, the team considers that UAIC will be able to develop a clearer mission statement through a stronger commitment to self-analysis and the participation of the whole university and that this will contribute to develop a stronger institutional identity.

The team thinks that UAIC's leadership shows a high level of commitment to the institution. The team also identified a general appreciation of the institutional leadership. This corresponds to good levels of institutional loyalty and dedication from academic and non-academic staff. This is something that should be underlined given the current difficulties faced by the university regarding its human resources management, notably the fact that new positions and promotions have been blocked for several years.

The organisational layout of UAIC seems to be complex, yet clear and with no obvious overlaps. The team did not find examples of obvious redundancy and duplication of tasks in its organisational structure. However, the university is often perceived, even by internal stakeholders, as having a culture of excessive compliance regarding national rules and a cumbersome decision-making process. The team considers that this may be due to a limited reflection on how to use existing institutional autonomy and in finding ways to explore potential opportunities in order to make the university more flexible and agile in its decision-making processes.

Although the team considers that the university's strong attachment to its historical position and traditions are an important part of its identity and should be preserved, the team also felt, throughout the two visits, that this seems to hinder the development of a more ambitious and proactive attitude across the university. The team often felt during the meetings with several of the internal stakeholders that the university was somewhat too attached to its past



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achievements. Although this understandably provides comfort regarding current difficulties, it should not distract the university from addressing its present challenges in a dynamic and effective way.

The university also seemed a bit prone to blame external constraints for the current difficulties and devoted insufficient attention to a critical and constructive analysis of its shortcomings. The team is aware that the university has started to develop strategic planning and this may help to unleash its great potential and aim higher, both nationally and internationally. The use of these tools should not be regarded as a threat to its notable and important traditions, but as an instrument to preserve the historically relevant role of UAIC in Romanian higher education.

Being one of the oldest and most highly reputed universities in Romania, UAIC should aim at playing a very important role in the development of Romanian higher education and in contributing actively to the policy debates on higher education and research.

In accordance with these observations the team recommends that UAIC:

- develops a more focused vision and mission, which should be sustained by a more self-critical and proactive attitude;
- pursues more aggressively its agenda in decision-making arenas;
- is ambitious in finding ways of attaining a stronger presence locally, nationally and internationally according to its agenda;
- and explores ways of streamlining internal procedures.



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3. Teaching and learning

The UAIC has a very good local and national reputation regarding teaching. The team has identified a general appreciation by students of the dedication of the teaching staff and this seems to be a very important part of a wider high degree of satisfaction expressed by students regarding the university.

UAIC has shown important efforts to follow the main developments associated with the development of the European Higher Education Area and has achieved a formal implementation of the Bologna cycles and introduction of ECTS. However, the team found a limited awareness of changes in teaching and learning promoted by the Bologna Process such as student-centred learning. Moreover, this is convergent with the perception that there is insufficient emphasis on practical learning in some areas where it might be relevant.

The team thinks that the university should develop greater commitment regarding pedagogical innovativeness and effectiveness. Despite the existing significant constraints, especially regarding the recruitment and promotion of academic staff, the team believes that the university has the capacity to make some visible improvements, namely by relying less on classical models of knowledge transmission and by emphasising more the learning of students in training and professional environments.

Regarding pedagogic and scientific coordination, the team felt that across the university, curriculum and syllabus issues seem to be mostly a matter of individual scientific authority. The team believes that there is some room for improvement regarding coordination between courses. The team also found that programmes are almost exclusively regarded as an internal issue to the university (or even to faculties and departments), with very limited interaction with the external stakeholders. For instance, more feedback could be drawn from relevant actors such as alumni and employers.

This broader consultation seems even more relevant in view of the fact that some of the courses taught face significant problems with low enrolments and the need to improve attractiveness. This difficulty in attracting a significant number of very good and motivated students is certainly related to the demographic and economic constraints alluded to earlier in this report. Nevertheless, this difficulty needs to be tackled by the university in order to avoid a situation in which UAIC risks enrolling some students who lack the level of motivation and commitment required and who do not correspond to the ambitions and reputation of the university.

The attraction of good and motivated students is also a very relevant factor regarding some other important challenges faced by UAIC, i.e. graduates' employability and their transition to the labour market. The team considers that UAIC is taking visible steps to improve its tracking



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of employability. This is particularly important considering the aforementioned challenging economic context, both regionally and nationally. Some of the aspects that require greater attention regarding employability include the need for greater adaptability of graduates and proactive attitudes regarding labour market needs. The team finds the existing career service to be positive aspect, but considers that its focus seems, at the moment, to be somewhat narrowly defined and that UAIC could benefit from exploring its potential more fully. Also in this respect the university could benefit from greater links with employers and alumni.

Finally, the team identified a perception that there is limited involvement of students in the many social and extra-curricular activities available. Although the university devotes significant attention to the promotion of these activities, it would be important to explore ways to involve more students in those activities. Moreover, this could be regarded as an important tool to promote greater proactivity and institutional commitment among students that could nurture important positive side-effects on their employability and entrepreneurship.

In accordance with these observations the team recommends that UAIC:

- promotes existing efforts of adaptation of teaching methods and encourage more innovative approaches to teaching and learning;
- encourages interdisciplinarity in programmes throughout the university;
- promotes more systematic consultation of external stakeholders (including alumni) regarding curriculum and organisation of programmes;
- pays greater attention to lifelong learning through a dedicated structure;
- stimulates wider involvement of students in university life broadly considered;
- gives more visibility to the role of students in university's activities and structures;
- and uses the knowledge developed by the career service in a more significant role in supporting university's activities at the programme level.



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4. Research

UAIC is regarded as one of the leading universities in Romania regarding its contribution to research activities. The team observed during the two visits that there is a strong emphasis on research orientation across the university. The university also enjoys a very high reputation in a number of fields and exhibits a few centres of excellence, obtained through national competition, all of which confirm and consolidate the university's research focus and reputation.

The team has also identified some interesting developments in the research activity of UAIC. Among these, the team would like to highlight some developments in the promotion of more interdisciplinary and applied research. The team also observed several recent efforts to modernise infrastructure and research equipment. The role of the leadership of UAIC has been very significant in these developments by providing crucial financial and administrative support to the advancement of important research projects. This should be particularly underlined given the existing financial constraints faced by the university and show a strong institutional commitment to the research mission.

These developments highlight that the university, including its leadership, regard research reputation as one of its main assets. The team observed that the research reputation enjoyed by UAIC was regarded by several stakeholders as an important asset of the university. This commitment has helped UAIC to sustain its good research output, which is regarded as one of the best nationally. The team agrees that there are clear reasons to justify the perception that UAIC enjoys a very good national reputation in research.

However, the team found that there are a few aspects regarding the university's approach to research that could benefit from greater attention and reflection. The team found that some units have experience with the involvement of students in research projects with visible positive results, though this close interaction between teaching and research does not seem to be a generalised practice. The team considers that the university could also devote more attention to promoting the international visibility of its research. This may have significant scientific and financial advantages, by opening new possibilities of scientific collaboration but also by improving the university's capacity to diversify its research funding through international sources. These are two examples of areas where there would be room for improvement and for enhancing the university's strong commitment to research.

Like many European universities, UAIC has been placing great emphasis on research activities and outputs at a time of increasing financial constraints, especially from public sources. Thus, like many other institutions, UAIC is pressed to improve its performance in the latter aspect, with a growing pressure to enlarge and diversify their research budgets through innovative



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and dynamic initiatives. The leadership of UAIC should give particular attention to this aspect given its strong research commitment and the existing financial restrictions limiting Romanian public funding.

Finally, the team considers that, despite the fact that UAIC presents a clear institutional commitment to research activities, a clearly articulated institutional research strategy could not be identified. The self-evaluation report presented several important reflections, but it was not clear either in the report or throughout the visits what the priorities in research were and how possible priorities were articulated with other dimensions of the university's activity. The team is nevertheless confident that the university is in the process of developing a more clear research strategy based on its obvious research strengths and in the aforementioned institutional commitment to those activities.

In accordance with these observations the team recommends that UAIC:

- stimulates further the interaction between teaching and research.
- consolidates the positive efforts to promote greater interdisciplinarity.
- gives greater priority to improve the international visibility of university's research.
- is creative in finding ways to overcome constraints (revenue diversification; definition of strategic priorities; develop partnerships; share resources).



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5. Service to society

One of the major challenges faced by European universities refers to their capacity to develop activities that are economically and socially relevant for its local, regional, and national environment. This relationship with their external environment is one of the dimensions of universities' mission that has been receiving increasing attention in recent years. This poses significant challenges to universities since it constitutes a complex and multifarious network of institutional and individual relationships within universities who continuously show their contribution to the various communities they are serving.

UAIC feels this very strongly due to the aforementioned challenging local and regional context and it is clear that the university regards the economic, cultural, and social relevance of the activities developed as a relevant part of its mission. The university is strongly committed to its region and is perceived as having a very positive contribution to the local environment. Moreover, the team identified a general perception that this has improved over the years. An important part of this positive image is due to the fact that graduates from the university have a good reputation among employers and that UAIC is perceived as providing a solid open-minded, and balanced education. Moreover, during the visits and through the self-evaluation report, the team identified several positive examples of collaborations including internships, joint projects, and recruitment of graduates.

However, as is the case with many European universities, there is a general perception that the relationship with the outside community could still be improved. Many existing collaborations are the result of individual ad-hoc initiatives. Although this is often a privileged vehicle in the development of interactions, the experience of many institutions indicates that it is not the most adequate for an institution that wants to regard this dimension of service to society as an important part of its activities. If UAIC wishes to regard the development of the so-called third mission as a major part of its mission, it needs to make a stronger institutional commitment to those activities that can encourage, help, and sustain individual and institutionally-led initiatives.

One of the areas where the university is also starting to take promising steps is in its relationship with its alumni. This group can be a source of support and feedback for the university's activities and can help the university to develop its mission more effectively. Alumni can also provide important additional sources of revenue, either through donations or as a network for disseminating lifelong learning activities. However, the team considers that this requires a much greater effort and institutional support in order to provide an important return for the life of UAIC, and that the university should face this not merely as a potential source of additional revenue to deal with short-term financial constraints, but more as a long-term relationship.



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In accordance with these observations the team recommends that UAIC:

- develops a structure that could coordinate more efficiently the collaborations with society.
- devotes more attention to exploring the mutual relationship and potential contribution of alumni to the university.
- pays greater attention to external needs and potential collaboration with SMEs.
- promotes more fully its pivotal role in a knowledge society (e.g. technology and knowledge transfer; lifelong learning; student training and graduate placement).



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6. Quality culture

In recent years quality has become a growing concern in higher education for policy-makers and institutions. This has led to a rise in quality assurance mechanisms that aim both at self-improvement and accountability purposes. In many countries, regulators have placed increasing demands on universities regarding quality issues and the need to make their daily commitment to permanent quality improvement more explicit. Therefore, one of the major aims of the IEP process is to help institutions to develop a stronger quality culture.

In the Romanian case there is the perception among universities that more attention is being paid to quality enhancement. One of the first steps for an institution to develop an effective quality system is to know what is happening and how it is happening. The team thinks that UAIC has demonstrated good capacity to document its activities. All the relevant information was, in general, available and with sufficient level of detail. This is certainly an important step in building a quality culture. Moreover, the previous experience of the university with other processes of quality assessment has also helped the institution in dealing with the demands of the IEP evaluation.

The growing prominence of debates on quality in higher education policy has led universities to document their activities more effectively and in greater detail, though it has not necessarily stimulated significant analysis of the data produced. In the case of UAIC it was not clear for the team how the data collected influences strategic decisions. Many universities face this same problem of collecting a burgeoning set of data that is used to a limited extent in supporting and framing internal decision-making and the definition of priorities. The team perceived an insufficient reflection about the data available, but underlines that the wealth of information has the potential to be of crucial help to the university.

The team thinks it is very important that the university re-evaluates the adequacy and effectiveness of some of its current mechanisms of quality assessment. One of the dimensions of the university's mission which has shown the relevance of such weakness was regarding students' feedback and teaching activities. The team considers that their contribution to quality assessment seems to be quite dependent on a traditional and passive view of their role in the learning process and does not really reflect the vision of active students in a learner centred approach to higher education.

The development of a quality culture aims at gathering feedback from multiple stakeholders and improving their perceptions about the university. This is an important development in moving from a paradigm of quality development focused on public accountability to quality development as a multidimensional tool to monitor and improve the relationship between the university and its multiple internal and external communities. The team identified efforts



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in collecting feedback from some important stakeholders such as employers and alumni and encourages the UAIC to pursue further these activities.

The team considers that the university does not yet have an integrated quality system that assesses and enhances all its various missions. The team encourages the university to reflect upon its views on quality assessment and the possibility of seeing it less as a mechanism of public accountability, but more as an instrument of self-improvement in full alignment with the university's values on education and research.

In accordance with these observations the team recommends that UAIC:

- regards quality enhancement not so much as a burden but rather as an instrument of self-improvement that permeates the routines of the university and improves its daily life.
- encourages students' involvement in quality enhancement (including self-assessment) and regards it as an important step in the development of a lively institutional quality culture.
- faces with confidence and decisiveness the challenge to consolidate its institutional quality system and to nurture a strong quality culture.

7. Internationalisation

This is another aspect that has gained increasing visibility among European universities' strategic priorities. Many institutions have been striving to attain greater internationalisation through training and research activities. The current trends in higher education clearly underline this necessity and the move towards a more integrated higher education framework in Europe is only a more visible development of a broader and deeper trend. Hence, growing mobility among students and staff is likely to become a central issue for many universities, especially within the European Higher Education Area.

The UAIC regards internationalisation as an important strategic objective in its development and fulfilling its mission. The university also sees the internationalisation of its activities as a competitive advantage regarding other local and national universities. This institutional commitment has led the university to actively participate in several important international networks (such as the Coimbra Group and the Utrecht Network).

The team identified a good commitment to internationalisation in several of the activities of UAIC. This is clearly visible in teaching activities, with a growing emphasis on the mobility of students, some mobility of the academic staff and instruction in foreign languages. The team identified significant, multilingual, and diverse activities of internationalisation in research activities. The participation of students in several international students' associations should also be mentioned, which has been an important complement to the aforementioned internationalisation in teaching activities. Thus, despite the difficulties, UAIC has been working to make internationalization an important dimension of its institutional life and a distinctive feature regarding its Romanian counterparts.

However, internationalisation seems to be partly the result of individual initiatives. The team recognises that the university supports those initiatives and regards them as important contributions. In several cases the Team was told that it was possible to turn them into stronger institutional links. Nevertheless, the Team considers that the University should devote greater attention to develop a consolidated structure to support and promote these internationalisation activities more profoundly. Individual initiatives are certainly important and reveal the dynamism of internal members, but they are not sufficient if the university wants to be consequential in making internationalisation a strategic objective.

In accordance with these observations the team recommends that UAIC:

- pursues more actively advanced stages of internationalisation in teaching activities (e.g. double and joint degrees).
- attempts to improve conditions to enhance its attractiveness to incoming students and academic staff.



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- pursues further the efforts to take advantage of individual initiatives and to transform them into consolidated activities.



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Conclusion

Overall, the convergence of the international, national and regional challenges described in the introduction and throughout this evaluation report has made this a timely occasion to reflect on the current situation of UAIC, the challenges ahead and to propose some possible initiatives to successfully overcome them. The team appreciates the significant effort undertaken by UAIC in performing this exercise and would like to commend the leadership of the university for taking the institution through this process of self-discovery and analysis with conviction and transparency.

However, the team hopes that the process will not end here. On the contrary, it must be a starting point. The team believes that the university will be capable of continuing these efforts in order to develop a strong quality culture and help UAIC to make its vision explicit with more ambition, strong participation and collective responsibility. Despite the aforementioned constraints, the team believes that the university should explore further its present autonomy, in order to be less law-driven and more proactive and hopes this evaluation process may prove to be an important contribution in this respect, as a point of departure for a stronger focus on quality development in collaboration with students, researchers, teaching staff, alumni and external partners.

The team is convinced that UAIC is a strong research university which should foster greater ambitions. Hence, the team has attempted to develop an extensive list of recommendations that it regards as adequate given the importance and potential of UAIC for its region and for the Romanian higher education system. The team is confident that UAIC has the potential to become a more visible player in the European Higher Education Area and hopes that these recommendations may contribute to help the UAIC to develop an ambitious agenda of change and improvement that can build on its long history and strong traditions in order to develop a clearer vision and strategy for the future.

Main recommendations:

- 1) Governance and decision-making
 - The UAIC should develop a more focused vision and mission, which should be sustained by a more self-critical and proactive attitude.
 - The university should be ambitious in finding ways of attaining a stronger presence locally, nationally and internationally according to its agenda.
 - The university should explore ways of streamlining internal procedures.



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2) Teaching and Learning

- The leadership should promote existing efforts of adaptation of teaching methods and encourage more innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning throughout the university.
- The leadership should promote more systematic consultation of external stakeholders regarding curriculum and organisation of programmes.
- The university should give more visibility to the role of students in university's activities and structures.

3) Research

- Consolidate the positive efforts to promote greater interdisciplinarity.
- Give greater priority to improve the international visibility of university's research.
- Be creative in finding ways to overcome constraints (revenue diversification; definition of strategic priorities; develop partnerships; share resources).

4) Service to society

- The university could promote further its pivotal role in a knowledge society (e.g. technology and knowledge transfer; lifelong learning; student training and graduate placement).
- The university should develop a structure for better coordination of collaborations with society. More attention should be devoted to exploring the relationship and potential contribution of alumni to the university.

5) Quality Culture

- Quality enhancement should not be regarded as a burden but rather an instrument of self-improvement that permeates the routines of the university and improves its daily life.
- The university should encourage students' involvement in quality enhancement (including self-assessment) as an important step in the development of a lively institutional quality culture.
- UAIC should face the challenge to consolidate its institutional quality system and to nurture a strong quality culture.

6) Internationalisation

- The UAIC should pursue more actively advanced stages of internationalisation in teaching activities (e.g. double and joint degrees).



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- The university should improve conditions to enhance its attractiveness to incoming students and academic staff.
- The university should pursue further its efforts to take advantage of individual initiatives and transforming them into consolidated activities.